

JOUISSANCE & THE SEXUAL REALITY
OF THE (TWO) UNCONSCIOUS

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JOUISSANCE & THE SEXUAL REALITY OF THE (TWO) UNCONSCIOUS

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'R. J. Be', with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

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Abstract

The reality of the unconscious is sexual reality – an untenable truth. Jacques Lacan

The topic of *jouissance* and the sexual reality of the unconscious has been a key concern of mine from my initial years of practicing psychoanalysis in both its clinical and critical frameworks. For my PhD research, this work is significantly developed within the Freudian Field of Psychoanalysis and the Lacanian Orientation and explores, as a starting point, a broad body of literature, historical and contemporary, concerning sexual identity, *jouissance* and the sexual reality of the unconscious. The literature review highlights that despite considerations given to overcoming dichotomies in sexual difference there are issues unveiled in *late Lacanian teaching* that remain only partially addressed.

Within the mainstream of Lacanian psychoanalysis, the concepts of *jouissance* and the sexual reality of the unconscious are generally explained in terms of the possible rapport between the subject and the concepts of the phallus, the name-of-the-father and the symptom. In contradistinction, the quilting point around everything else is organized as the phenomenon of *jouissance*. Regarding *jouissance*, sexual difference is addressed, following Lacan's formula of sexuation, by a theory based on the

difference between the all-phallic *jouissance*, on the side of the *Man*, and the not-all-phallic *jouissance*, on the side of the *Woman*.

This PhD research particularly engages the different types of *jouissance* discussed by Lacan, specifically *jouissance* other than *phallic jouissance*, and their effects in the subject, as perceived in our clinical practice, mediated by language and by *lalangue*. Further to that, this research closely engages the late Lacanian thesis of the two unconscious. One reference is to the *imaginary or transference-unconscious*, the one that is deciphered in analysis and that implies fantasy and desire as supports of the subject's being, the unconscious related to language and the drives. Then there is the *real unconscious*, linked to Lacan's neologisms as speaking-being and *lalangue*. Since the unconscious has been defined as being a reality which is sexual, the two unconscious allow for a different approach to the question of the difference of the sexes. The description of the sexes in terms of symbolic constructs, as in gender studies, is clearly and paradoxically anchored in the *transference-unconscious*, which is in the imaginary power of language to distinguish between the anatomical sexes.

Moving from Lacan's formula "There is no sexual relationship" this work discusses Lacan's formula, "Jouissance is not a sign of love," emphasizing from clinical work that *jouissance* and love get knotted. This leads to a reflection on the thesis of Partner-Symptom and Partner-Sinthome. Given that there is no sexual relationship, the symptom or the *sinthome* could achieve a possible union between the discrete elements of the unconscious and *jouissance*. Therefore symptoms/sinthomes are placed as a substitute and become no longer the problem but the solution.

The research concludes with the concept of love. Lacan underlined that an aim of psychoanalytic discourse was to produce the passage from semblance to the real, from love to *jouissance*. Psychoanalysis erases, then, the difference between transference and normal love, the "There is no sexual relation" assumes the status of the Real. For speaking-beings love serves as a crutch of the sexual relation. Consequently, Lacan's central determination of the relation between love and sexuality states that love supplements the sexual relation. Regarding the relation between the *real unconscious*

and the *transference-unconscious*, this research refers to the equivocal title of Lacan's Seminar XXIV, *L'insu que sait de l'unebévue s'aile à mourre*, which could be read as *L'insuccès de l'Unbewusste, c'est l'amour*—the non-success of the unconscious is love—engaging with the question: which unconscious and which love? And, indeed, this PhD research sheds some light on how *jouissance* establishes the sexual reality of the (two) unconscious.

Preface

Situated Encounters

With this Preface I present my original engagements with the Freudian Field of Psychoanalysis at large and with the Lacanian Orientation in particular. I then identify and outline the topic of this research: *Jouissance and the Sexual Reality of the (Two) Unconscious*, including some insistent questions from my practice that acted as a motivating force and a source of inspiration for me to pursue this work.

Original Engagement

My engagement with psychoanalysis began in my late teens through discussions with friends in my hometown, Bahia Blanca, Buenos Aires, Argentina. Those discussions happened in a particularly significant period of contemporary Argentinean history, the period of the return of democracy, in the early 1980s. Those discussions, as a challenge to the established discourse, were initially about subjectivity, psychoanalysis,

philosophy, sexuality and art. My main early references were Sigmund Freud, Karl Marx, Georg W. F. Hegel, André Breton, Jacques Derrida and Jacques Lacan among others.

As a starting point to this thesis, I will quote part of an interview with Jacques Lacan, *Les clefs de la psychanalyse*, undertaken by Madeleine Chapsal and published May 31, 1957 in *L'Express*:

Interviewer: If Freud has said something new, it was that in psychic life we are ill because we conceal, we hide a part of ourselves, we repress. But the hieroglyphics themselves were not repressed, they were written on stone. So your comparison cannot be complete?

Dr. Lacan: On the contrary, it must be taken literally. What is to be deciphered in psychic analysis is all the time there, present since the beginning. You speak about repression, forgetting something. As Freud formulated it, repression is inseparable from the phenomenon of the return of the repressed. Something continues to function; something continues to speak in the place where it was repressed. Thanks to this we can locate the place of repression and of the illness, saying it is there.

This notion is difficult to understand because when we speak of repression we imagine immediately a pressure, a vesicular pressure, for example. That is, a vague mass, undefined, exerting all its weight against a door that we refuse to open. Now, in psychoanalysis, repression is not the repression of a thing, it is a repression of a truth. What happens then, when we want to repress a truth? The whole history of tyranny is there to give the answer: It is expressed elsewhere, in another register, in a ciphered, clandestine language. Well, this is exactly what is produced with consciousness. Truth, the repressed, will persist, though transposed to another language, the neurotic language. Except that we are no longer capable of saying at that moment who is the subject speaking; but, that it speaks, that it continues to speak." (Lacan, 1957c: n.p.)

That truth, which Lacan presents in a clear and indeed enigmatic way, introducing the thesis of a radical Otherness, the field of the unconscious and the field of the Real, captivated me in such way that my desire for knowledge was highlighted and since then, put to work.

My Trajectory in the Field

After exhausting that informal but fruitful dispositive of discussion with peers, I decided to develop a way that could lead to my training as an analyst and began my personal analysis with a Lacanian analyst, commencing at the same time my university studies. I studied psychology at the Universidad Argentina John F. Kennedy between 1985 and 1989, a private university in Buenos Aires, one of the firsts, if not the first, to set up a Department of Psychoanalysis. Then, I began in 1990 my clinical practice. Between 1990 and 1992 I took a specialist and doctoral course in Clinical Psychology at the same university.

After finishing my training in clinical psychology, I was invited to undertake training in psychoanalysis within the Department of Psychoanalysis. Contemporaneous with the creation of the Department of Psychoanalysis in the Universidad Argentina John F. Kennedy, was founded in Buenos Aires the Escuela de Orientación Lacaniana, which I frequented. In 1994 I received my appointment as a professor in the Department of Psychoanalysis in the Universidad Argentina John F. Kennedy and consequently I began my transmission of psychoanalysis, which continued until 1999. I worked extensively as a psychoanalyst in Buenos Aires between 1992 and 1999. This included my clinical practice as a psychoanalyst privately as well as working in NGOs.

I moved to Auckland, New Zealand, in May 1999. In Auckland, the development of the Freudian field of psychoanalysis with the Lacanian orientation was practically non-existent; there were no institutions and no activities in the field. I took up the challenge of introducing and developing the field. I worked in different institutions, firstly in an institution for the treatment of patients with drug and alcohol problems presenting also major psychiatric disorders. Later I worked for an organization for the reception and treatment of refugees, under an agreement between New Zealand and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees; within that organization we also extended our services to people from different nationalities seeking refugee status in New Zealand. I also worked as a psychoanalyst in an institution called *Auckland Family Counseling and Psychotherapy*, which was New Zealand's oldest psychoanalytic institution, within the English School of Psychoanalysis, founded in 1947. During my

early years in New Zealand and until 2006, I complemented my work in those organizations with the transmission of psychoanalysis. Along with my clinical practice, I offered study groups and supervision. I was also invited to present my work in different forums. During this time I gained my professional registrations with the NZ Psychologists and Psychotherapists boards.

In 2006, after seven years of promotion and transmission of Freudian psychoanalysis within the Lacanian Orientation, talking it through with Dr. Leonardo Rodriguez, from the *Australian Centre for Psychoanalysis* (ACP) and in collaboration with people who were in training with me and with academics interested in the Lacanian Orientation in various universities around New Zealand, the *Center for Lacanian Analysis* (CLA) was established. The CLA is the first and only institution in the Freudian Field of psychoanalysis with the Lacanian Orientation in New Zealand. I have the honor of being the Centre's first Director. The CLA established a reference point in New Zealand for Freudian psychoanalysis with the Lacanian Orientation, to train analysts and to support the extension of psychoanalysis by facilitating collaborative work between psychoanalysis and other disciplines. The Center organized annual international conferences, clinical seminars and study groups. The planning and development of the Center's activities were guided by our colleagues of the *Australian Centre for Psychoanalysis*, with whom we established solid working relationships, inviting them to our activities in Auckland and attending some of their activities.

The CLA had, twice, the honor to host Dr. Sonia Alberti, a distinguished psychoanalyst and educator from Brazil, in 2008 and 2009. Members of the CLA, including myself, engaged in discussion with Alberti regarding CLA affiliation to an international school of psychoanalysis. She introduced us to the activities of the *Ecole de Psychanalyse des Forums du Champ Lacanien*, and encouraged us to explore our desire to be part of a School of psychoanalysis. We decided to do so by creating the New Zealand Forum. In March 2009, members of the CLA presented a request to create the Forum of New Zealand and to be part of the English-speaking group. Our proposal was approved in principle, and subsequently I had the honor to represent our

Forum at the Sixth Meeting of the Forums in Rome in July 2010, where it was formally ratified.

Jouissance and the Sexual Reality of the Unconscious

The topic of *jouissance* and the sexual reality of the unconscious has been a key interest since my initial years of practicing psychoanalysis, both in its clinical and critical or theoretical frameworks. Regarding this topic, it reminds me of one of Lacan's enigmatic formulas, from Seminar 11: "the reality of the unconscious is sexual reality—an untenable truth" (Lacan, 1964b: 150) which highlighted some of the clinical concerns that I found in my practice and guided me in establishing the way to conduct this research. Some insistent questions from my practice were: (i) What do we understand about the reality of the unconscious? (ii) Which unconscious are we referring to? (iii) What is this radical Otherness that engage in the constitution of the subject? (iv) What is the Other of sexual identifications? (v) What is the role of the unconscious in this matter? (vi) What is the role of symptoms and fantasies within the sexual reality of the unconscious? (vii) What love has to do with sexuality? And (viii), the question of *jouissance*, as one of the central issues faced by psychoanalysis in clinical practice that exposes the paradox of the patient's fixation to a painful enjoyment, which constitutes the heart of the subject's complaint.

Dany Nobus, author of a number of key works on Lacan, addressed the Lacanian question—am I a man or a woman?—suggesting:

It can't be boiled down to biology ... the most important sexual organ lies between the ears ... the body does not determine sexual identity. Nor does sexual orientation dictate sexual behavior ... Gender is not the whole story of human sexuality. We're dealing with a set of components whose interrelations don't follow any preconceived paths. Human beings are neither purely the playthings of nature, nor simply followers of social forces. Reducing sexuality to nature and nurture reduces human experience" (Nobus, 2005: np.)¹

¹ Unpublished keynote presentation at the Sexuality Symposium, *Australian Centre for Psychoanalysis*, August 2005.

If sexual difference is not reducible to a biological given, nor wholly constituted by social practices, if male/female sexualities are not essential categories and masculine/feminine not just historical constructs, then what creates sexual difference? The answer to this question could be found in a particular mode of unconscious bond made by the subject.

These questions and many others that have been raised over the years will be addressed in this research, having as a framework the clinical-theoretical developments in psychoanalysis from Freud to our day.

Chapter 1

Rational & Significance

Jouissance and the Real

In this chapter I establish the rational and significance of this research, which addresses *jouissance* and the sexual reality of the unconscious.¹ I introduce what I consider to be the main theoretical paradigms within the field and present some of the main points of the Freudian account of the history of sexuality, including Freud's groundbreaking *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (Freud, 2001 [1905]), then move to Lacan's main theses about the topic, including logic and the phallus, the *formula of sexuation*, *feminine jouissance* and the mystics. At the conclusion of this chapter I formulate the arena of my original contribution for this PhD thesis.

¹ English speaking psychoanalysts borrowed the term *jouissance* from the French; the derived noun, *jouissance*, has three current meanings in French: it signifies an extreme or deep pleasure; it signifies sexual orgasm; and in law it signifies having the right to use something.

Agency of the Research

I would like to begin with this chapter with a short story from Jorge Luis Borges, “The Sect of the Phoenix”:

I have mentioned that the history of the sect does not record persecutions. Still, since there is no human group which does not include partisans of the Phoenix, it is also true that there has never been a persecution which they have not suffered or a reprisal they have not carried out. Their blood has been spilled, through the centuries, under opposing enemy flags, in the wars of the West and in the remote battles of Asia. It has availed them little to identify themselves with all the nations of the earth. Lacking a sacred book to unify them as the Scripture does Israel, lacking a common memory, lacking that other social memory which is language, scattered across the face of the earth, differing in color and features, only one thing —the Secret — unites them and will unite them until the end of time. (Borges, 1962[1952]: 3)

Borges, in “The Sect of the Phoenix,” tells the story of a sect whose members are devoted to a secret ritual. He describes the sect in fine detail, and its involvement in a great mystery. As Borges developed his description, we realize that this secret of the sect is nothing other than the secret of sexuality. In “The Sect of the Phoenix,” sexuality is what everyone has experienced but no one can talk about. Borges emphasizes that the whole world belongs to “The Sect of the Phoenix.” From this reading, one could conclude that the encounter with sexuality is an impossible encounter with the partner and an encounter with the word that separates and leaves a mark. Everybody is concerned about sexuality, everyone wants to decipher its secrets but, paradoxically, the more we want to decipher the secret, the more it remains hidden, revealing only the clue that sexuality is not fully decipherable. This research engages with the issue of how sexuality, sexual difference, symptoms, fantasies, love and *jouissance* are experienced by human beings.

Myths have often been used when we want to talk about the origin of things, since myths are able to convey a particular knowledge; they articulate a truth otherwise impossible to say. Like literature and art, mythology was one of the first cultural fields to be explored by psychoanalysis. As Sigmund Freud noted in a letter addressed to Albert Einstein: “It may perhaps seem to you as though our theories are a kind of mythology

and, in the present case, not even an agreeable one. But does not every science come in the end to a kind of mythology?" (Freud, 2001 [1933]: 204). In reference to myths, I would like to comment on an aspect of Greek mythology that engages with the origin of love. In the *Symposium* (Plato 1980 [385-380 BC]), love is examined in a sequence of dialogues given by men, each man delivering a speech in praise of Eros². Aristophanes, appearing as a character in the *Symposium*, offered a mythical account of the origin of love. His speech was an explanation as to why people in love often say they feel *whole* when they have finally found their love partner. Aristophanes began by explaining that people must understand human nature before they can address the issue of the origin of love and how love affects people throughout their lives:

... [I]n primal times people had doubled bodies, with faces and limbs turned away from one another. As somewhat spherical creatures that wheeled around like clowns doing cartwheels, these original people were very powerful. There were three sexes: the all male, the all female, and the androgynous, who was half male, half female. The males were said to have descended from the sun, the females from the earth and the androgynous couples from the moon. The creatures tried to scale the heights of heaven and planned to set upon the gods. Zeus thought about blasting them to death with thunderbolts, but did not want to deprive himself of their devotion and offerings, so he decided to cripple them by chopping them in half, in effect separating the two bodies. Zeus then commanded Apollo to turn their faces around and pulled the skin tight and stitched it up to form the navel which he chose not to heal so Man would always be reminded of this event. Ever since that time, people run around saying they are looking for their other half because they are really trying to recover their primal nature. The women who were separated from women run after their own kind, thus creating lesbians. The men split from other men also run after their own kind and love being embraced by other men. He says some people think homosexuals are shameless, but he thinks they are the bravest, most manly of all, and that many heterosexuals are adulterous men and unfaithful wives. (Plato, 1980 [385-380 BC]: 190-191)

² The *Symposium* was written as a dramatic dialogue, which was a form used by Plato in more than thirty works. It was set in Athenian social life. The *Symposium* developed its content about the subject of love and Socrates' character. Eros appears in ancient Greek sources under several guises. In the earliest sources, he was one of the primordial gods involved in the coming into being of the cosmos. In later sources, however, Eros was represented as the son of Aphrodite, whose playful interventions in the affairs of gods and mortals caused bonds of love. Ultimately, in the later satirical poets, Eros is represented as a blindfolded child, the precursor of Cupid, whereas in early Greek poetry and art, Eros was represented as an adult male who embodied sexual power. ("Eros," in S. Hornblower and A. Spawforth, Eds. *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*.)

Aristophanes then claims: “when two people who were separated from each other find each other, they never again want to be separated. This feeling is like a riddle, and cannot be explained” (192). Aristophanes concludes with: “men should fear the gods, and not neglect to worship them, lest they wield the axe again and we have to go about with our noses split apart. If men work with the god of love, they will escape this fate and instead find wholeness” (193). This account of love gives us an interesting starting point and it also introduces the idea that the human being is not a whole, is not a totality. Human beings appear, even for Plato, as divided and love has a double reference to the partner and to the god of love.

For those engaged in the clinical field, Lacan’s enigmatic formula, “there is no sexual relationship” (Lacan, 1999 [1972-73]: 35), which will be, indeed, discussed in detail in this research, comes to be useful. We hear often in our clinical practice the complaint that in love life something doesn’t work. Such complaint is expressed along with the idea that it should work, re-editing a fundamental relationship to the impossibility of having a perfect sexual rapport between partners. Perhaps one of the most universal cultural fantasies we have today is the one of finding our perfect partner and of having a completely harmonious and sexually fulfilling relationship. What we hear in analysis is either the patient’s attempts to turn the other into what he or she desires or trying to turn him- or her-self into what he or she thinks the partner desires. In other words, the major issue of subjects, regarding love, is that they do not relate to what their partners relate to in them.

A Freudian Account of the History of Sexuality

At the end of the nineteenth century, coincident with the beginning of psychoanalysis, sexology emerged as a new sub-discipline within the medical sciences. The work of the first generation of sexologists, including Richard von Krafft-Ebing and Albert Moll, were a *major source of inspiration for Sigmund Freud*.³ Although these

³ Richard von Krafft-Ebing (1840-1902) was a neuro-psychiatrist, and a pioneering researcher of sexual psychopathology. Educated in Germany and Switzerland, he was appointed professor of psychiatry at Strasbourg. He established, among other things, the relationship between syphilis and general paresis and

sexologists certainly did inspire him, Freud went beyond the then prevailing medical-sexological approach. Freud, rather than limiting himself to the study of the anatomy and physiology of the sexual apparatus, engaged with the issue of sexuality in human beings. This is evident in his handling of sexuality in his clinical work. Psychoanalysis produced some of the strongest criticisms of sexology and Freud argued against the medical-sexological idea that there are no inherent difficulties barring the full enjoyment of a completely satisfactory sexual life. Rather, he suggests that there is something intrinsic about sexuality that prevents the fulfillment of a satisfactory sexual life. In one of his last papers, *Findings, ideas, problems* (Freud, 2001 [1938a]), Freud writes: “There is always something lacking for complete discharge and satisfaction and this missing part, the reaction of orgasm, manifests itself in equivalents in other spheres, in absences, outbreaks of laughing, weeping, and perhaps other ways. Once again infantile sexuality has fixed a model in this” (Freud, 2001 [1938a]: 300). Freud’s engagement with sexuality was so meticulous that it comes as no surprise that, for example, Jean Laplanche argues: “Freud’s most radical claims were not about the unconscious, but concerned the profoundly ambivalent nature of human sexuality and its omnipresence in human thought and behavior” (Laplanche, 1985 [1970]: 27).

Psychoanalysis, from Freud’s earliest writings, has been centrally involved with the complexity of human sexuality. In his *Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria* (Freud, 2001 [1905a]), Freud acknowledged:

I was further anxious to show that sexuality does not simply intervene, on one single occasion, at some point in the working of the processes which characterize hysteria, but that it provides the motive power for every single symptom, and for every single manifestation of a symptom. The symptoms of the disease are nothing else than the patient’s sexual activity. A single case can never be capable of proving a theorem as general as this one; but I can only repeat over and over again—for I never find it otherwise—that sexuality is the key to the problem of psychoneurosis and of the neuroses in general. (Freud, 2001 [1905a]: 114-115)

performed experiments with hypnosis. Krafft-Ebing is best known today for his *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1886), a groundbreaking examination of sexual aberrations. (Encyclopedia Britannica on line, accessed on June 2013) Albert Moll (1862-1939) was a German psychiatrist and with Iwan Bloch and Magnus Hirschfeld, was the founder of modern sexology. Moll believed sexual nature involved two entirely distinct parts: sexual stimulation and sexual attraction.

Freud presented in that way the thesis, which will be further developed by Jacques Lacan and central to this research that *the symptoms of the disease are nothing else than the patient's sexual activity*, which means that the symptom, at least the neurotic symptom, addressed to one's partner, would account for the sexual life of the subject.

Freud's most systematic account of human sexuality can be found in his *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (Freud, 2001 [1905b]), where he presented a detailed description of the vicissitudes of human sexuality and particularly of sexual psychopathology. In his *Three Essays*, Freud critically reviewed the then contemporary conceptions of sexuality as exclusively biological, absent in childhood and emerging after puberty. He expanded the concept of sexuality and extended human sexuality back to the beginning of life. He also explicitly rejected the popular idea of a pre-assigned aim and object for the libido. In a section that he added to the second essay in 1915, Freud discussed "The Phases of Development of the Sexual Organization" (197) and introduced in that text the notion of pre-genital organizations, that is, oral and anal stages preceding the genital organization. In 1923 he added another note that mentions he had advanced the idea of an intermediary stage, *infantile genital organization*, about which he added: "This phase, which already deserves to be described as genital, presents a sexual object and some degree of convergence of the sexual impulses upon that object; but it is differentiated from the final organization of sexual maturity in one essential respect. For it knows only one kind of genital: the male one. For this reason I have named it the phallic stage of organization." (199-200). This development coincided with the recognition that a bond with an object happens in two periods separated by latency: from a first stage of infantile genital organization and then, once again, after a final genital organization that emerges at puberty.

Lacan's Main Theses on Sexuality

An important breaking point between views on sexuality was Freud's thesis: "anatomy is destiny". (Freud, 2001 [1924c]: 176). For Lacan, anatomy is not destiny, instead destiny is discourse. Lacan re-worked Oedipus, in particular in *L'Etourdit*

(Lacan, 2013 [1972]), where he said that man or woman is not an anatomical distinction. Such distinction is an affair of the subject and it depends on the way in which each subject inscribes him- or her-self within the phallic function. The choice of one's sex is not a function of anatomy; therefore it leaves open the question of what is the role of anatomy in the process of sexualization.

Dany Nobus, in his book *Jacques Lacan and the Freudian Practice of Psychoanalysis* (Nobus, 2000), suggests: "Jacques Lacan's work has become a standard reference in gender, women's and cultural studies. Yet despite its popularity it is frequently being overlooked as a paragon of post-modernism by scientists and literacy scholars alike" (Nobus, 2000: i). Lacanian theory challenges notions of sexuality and gender more effectively than current debates in gender studies, which are typically engaged in an imaginary impasse of one sex against or interchanged with the other. Juliet Mitchell, in *Lacanian Works* (Mitchell, 1982), her introduction to a collection of Lacan's writings about feminine sexuality, commented:

For all psychoanalysts the development of the human subject, its unconscious and its sexuality go hand-in-hand, they are causatively intertwined. A psychoanalyst could not subscribe to a currently popular sociological distinction in which a person is born with their biological gender to which society—generally environment, parents, education, the media—adds a socially defined sex, masculine or feminine. Psychoanalysis cannot make such a distinction: a person is formed through their sexuality; it could not be added to him or her. (Mitchell, 1982: 2)

Therefore, as an introduction to Lacan's views on sexuality, it could be said that it is through the assumption of a sexual identity that the subject comes into being, or more precisely into *speaking-being*. The designation of sexuality is not something that occurs in addition to a subject who is already formed. It is rather the case that there is no subject prior to this process—through the process of taking on a sexed role we are able to enter the symbolic world. How we come to be sexed subjects is exactly how we enter the world of language, rules, culture and society. The issue of one's sexual identity is not something that is divisible from the subject's unconscious. Sexual identity cannot, furthermore, be reduced to biology, or to the body, to various physical or genetic

components or to a social construction, to gender. Nor is it reducible to discourses of masculinity and femininity, to various gendered forms of social bonds and practices.

If sexual difference is not reducible to a biological given, nor wholly constituted by social practices, if male/female sexualities are not essential categories and masculine/feminine not just historical constructs, then what creates sexual difference? The answer to this question could be found in a particular mode of unconscious bond made by the subject. Darian Leader makes a similar statement in his book *Why do women write more letters than they post...?* (Leader, 1996) There he argues: “a psychological feature is a social construct and implies precisely that there is some natural, non-socially constructed reality behind it, something more Real” (Leader, 1996: 45). In what follows we come to recognize that this “unconscious bond” referenced by Leader is fundamentally engaged by Lacan in terms of the logic of the phallus, where the phallus is not reducible either to biology or to social practices but is regulated by the mediations of being and having.

Logic and the Phallus

With entry into the world of language and with the resolution of the Oedipus complex comes the realization that no one has privileged access to or possession of the phallus. “It exists only through the mediation of the other and the Symbolic order” as Elizabeth Grosz points out (Grosz, 1990: 123). The subject comes to realize that there is some difference between itself and the phallus. The subject’s access to the signifier *phallus* after entry into the world of the Symbolic is always moderated, modified by the provision of being, or having, the phallus. It is for this reason, the fact that the phallus only exists through the mediation of language, that Lacan argues that the “relations of the sexes to the phallus are regulated by the verbs being and having” (Grosz, 1990: 125).

This distinction between being and having the phallus, which in “The Signification of the Phallus” (Lacan, 2006 [1957b]) is used to approach the question of sexual difference, can be clarified by the use of logic. In the late 1960s and early 1970s,

Lacan concluded that Freud's myths of sexuality had to be approached within the language of contemporary logic. Lacan recommended his readers to follow the logician Friedrich Ludwig Gottlob Frege: "Especially for analysts ... without a reference to logic ... it is impossible to find the correct point in the subject I am putting forward here" (Lacan, 2013 [1971]: xi). He then cites Frege's *Sinn und Bedeutung* (Frege, 2009 [1892]), to consolidate theoretical advances he made earlier in "On a Question Prior to any Possible Treatment of Psychosis" (Lacan, 2006 [1957d]), where he postulates the differential diagnosis for the hysteric and the obsessional neurotic in relation to sexuality and on the basis of a logical functioning with regard to the concepts of the *phallus* and the *name-of-the-father*.⁴⁴

In the English version of Frege's article, *sinn* is translated as *sense* and *bedeutung* as *reference*. For Frege, each sign corresponds to a "definite sense and to that in turn a definite reference, to an object, whereas for each reference to an object there might be more than one sign" (Frege, 2009 [1892]: 38). Frege tell us that there are many ways to describe an object, although each way may use different signs and may allow different senses. On the other hand, Frege points out that some statements may convey a sense without necessarily having a reference to any possible object, the difference between sense and reference means that, in language, there will be a non-relation at some point. Lacan, having declared that "There is only one *Bedeutung, die Bedeutung des Phallus*" (Lacan, 2006 [1957b]: 577), he states that the phallus, even if the *only bedeutung*, does not have anything to which it corresponds. There is no object to which the phallus refers. What characterizes the phallus is not that it's a signifier of lack, but that it's that from which no word emerges: "... the fact that the phallus is a signifier requires that it be in the place of the Other that the subject has access to it. But since the signifier is there only as veiled and as ratio of the Other's desire, it is the Other's desire as such that the subject is required to recognize—in other words, the other insofar as he himself is a subject divided by the signifying *spaltung*" (560).

⁴⁴ The concept of the *name-of-the-father* will be addressed in detail in Chapter Four.

The Process of Sexuation

Sexuation is a term introduced by Lacan to designate a reality different from sexuality. Freud had already proposed his theory of sexuality, which establishes the differences between the sexuality of humans and the sexuality of other sexed beings. Lacan decided to apply his formulas of sexuation, or how speaking beings choose to align themselves as men or women, as an attempt to deal with a problem produced by nature, but which belongs, at least partially, to the order of the signifier. On the basis that there is no correlation between the sexes, Lacan concluded that human beings would assume their sex in a process of *sexuation*, rather than in a process of differentiation between the sexes given naturally by anatomical constitution. Thus the process of sexuation, the assumption of a sex, or of no sex, or of a mixture of sexes, is a logical rather than a biological process. The fact that most people decide to align themselves as men or women, apparently according to what they perceive as distinguishing the sexes, should not deceive us as to what determines how the choice has been made.

Regarding the logic of sexuation, in Seminar XIX *...Ou pire* (Lacan, 2013 [1971-72]) Lacan conveys the notion of an *irreducible gap* which is the consequence of the function of castration by referring to logic and to Kurt Gödel's theorems on non-fulfillment. Gödel showed that any set of non-contradictory axioms always contains a proposition that can be neither demonstrated nor refuted. That is, no set of non-contradictory axioms is ever complete.⁵ It also establishes that no formal axiomatic system can prove its own consistency by employing its own methods, therefore the validity of its propositions remain undecided. In that sense we could understand what Lacan calls the signifier of the lack in the Other, that is $S(\mathbb{A})$. The reference to Gödel helps Lacan overcome the difficulties involved in conveying the notion of an irreducible gap that is the consequence of the function of castration. Regarding that gap, Lacan says: "it is here, in this gap, that we designate the real" (Lacan, 2013 [1971-72]: x13).

⁵ Kurt Friedrich Gödel (1906-1978) was an Austrian American logician, mathematician, and philosopher. He founded the modern, meta-mathematical era in mathematical logic. His Incompleteness Theorems, among the most significant achievements in logic since, perhaps, those of Aristotle, are among the handful of landmark theorems in twentieth century mathematics.

The logic quantifiers introduced by Frege captured the distinction between *All* and *Some*. All became *Universal*, and Some became *Existential*. Universal quantifiers are either true or false in all possible worlds, and Existential quantifiers are true or false in some possible worlds. The quantifiers were represented by \forall for Universal and \exists for Existential, and ϕ stands for the phallic function. Those were the symbols that Lacan uses in his formulae of Sexuation:

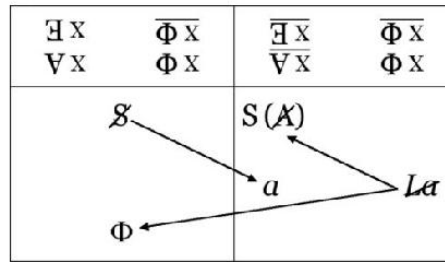


Figure 1: Lacan's Formulae of Sexuation (Lacan, 1999 [1972-73]: 78)

For Lacan, the left-hand side corresponds to the man, while the right-hand side corresponds to the woman. These are positions taken with respect to the signifier and *jouissance*. They are not biological-anatomical distinctions: "Every speaking-being situates itself on one side or the other" (Lacan, 1999 [1972-73]: 79). I will now refer to the upper part of the formula, the side of man and the side of woman.

The upper part of the formula

$$\begin{array}{cc|cc} \exists x & \overline{\phi x} & \overline{\exists x} & \overline{\phi x} \\ \forall x & \phi x & \forall x & \phi x \end{array}$$

The left side of the formula, the man's side

Upper Level

$$\exists x \cdot \overline{\phi x}$$

We could literally read that there exists at least one x who does not succumb to the phallic function. Thus, there exists a being who is not subject to the law of castration. This being did not make a sacrifice of *jouissance* in order to enter the social

field, which represents the fantasy of unlimited *jouissance*. There is a form of *jouissance* that is not subject to castration. This is what Lacan described as "That which does not cease to be written" (Lacan, 1999 [1972-73]: 59, 94). Where do we find that exception to the law of castration that sustains the universality of the law? Firstly we think of Freud's myth of the *primal father* of *Totem and Taboo* (Freud, 2001 [1913]), which exemplifies this proposition as the *primal father*⁶ who has no limits on his *jouissance*. That is, the primal father not only could enjoy *all* the women of the tribe, he could enjoy his own mother and daughters as well. God is also conceived as the exception that grounds and creates the world. God is conceptualized as omnipotent, infinite, and absolutely free or, rather, not subject to any law of limitation.

The exception of the law is what sustains the universality of the law, and it is at the same time a *fantastic* entity. We could see that the masculine side of the graph of sexuation represents a logic of incompleteness. Universalization of the law generates the necessity of an exception. There is always at least one entity that escapes or stands above the law; this exception creates the illusion that the Other exists. The upper portion of the graph thus generates a masculine fantasy that complete *jouissance* exists. Therefore, the man would find insufficient all the *jouissance* that is available to him.

Lower Level

$$\forall x \cdot \Phi x$$

The lower proposition reads that all speaking-beings are subject to the phallic function, which is to say that all speaking-beings are subject to the law of castration.⁷ For all x , the phallic function is valid. Castration is understood as the loss that the speaking-being bears as a result of being subordinated to the signifier. Castration is thus the sacrifice that *every* subject makes in order to enter the Symbolic Order and, therefore, the social field: "It is through the phallic function that man as whole acquires his inscription ... That when all is said and done, something which has been said ceases to

⁶ The primal father is a father who has in his possession and who enjoys all women and this is why the sons decide one day to murder the father. What follows is the prohibition on incest, but they can very well fantasize about it. They can fantasize about their non-castrated enjoyment.

⁷ Lacan formalizes the *Parletre* (speaking-being) to describe the speaking subject that comes into existence in the linguistics structures of the Symbolic Order.

be written, this indeed is what shows that at the limit everything is possible with words, precisely on this condition that they no longer have a meaning” (Lacan, 1999 [1972-73]: 79). When we say that there is a universal for man, we can write *all men*. Man is completely in the phallic function and it is not because the subject is man that he is in the phallic function. On the contrary, it is because, in terms of *jouissance*, an undetermined x is placed completely in the phallic function that the subject could be called a man. The signifier *man* will be imputed to every x that is completely situated in the phallic function. On this, Colette Soler notes: “This leaves entirely open the question of knowing whether even one of them exists” (Soler, 2005: 301). On this same issue, the Lacan translator of Seminar XX, Bruce Fink, notes: “There is a barrier between my desire for something articulated in signifiers and what can satisfy me. Therefore, the satisfaction I take in realizing my desire is always disappointing. This satisfaction fails to fulfill me; it always leaves something more to be desired. That is phallic *jouissance*” (Fink, 2002: 160). All *jouissance* that is mediated in the Symbolic is experienced as coming up short or lacking in some way. Therefore, the *jouissance* I obtain is less than the *jouissance* that I expect.

The right side of the formula, the woman's side

Upper Level

$$\overline{\exists x} \cdot \overline{\Phi x}$$

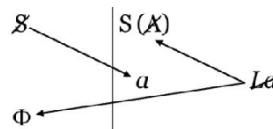
The upper level should be read as stating that there does not exist a speaking-being who is not subject to the law of castration. This is what Lacan called the “doesn't stop not being written ... on the contrary, is the impossible, as I define it on the basis of the fact that it cannot in any case be written. ... The sexual relationship doesn't stop not being written. ... What is produced is the *jouissance* that could never fail” (Lacan, 1999 [1972-73]: 59).

Lower Level

$$\overline{\forall x} \cdot \overline{\Phi x}$$

The lower level reads: for not all of x , the phallic function is valid. Not all of the woman's *jouissance* is phallic *jouissance*. It is what Lacan presented as what “stops not being written” (79). It also reads: not all of the speaking-being is subject to the law of castration. There is something of being that escapes the loss imposed by language. It is *between* these two propositions that we encounter the *inconsistency* of feminine sexuation. On the one hand, not all of the speaking-being is subject to the law of the signifier yet, on the other hand, there does not exist a speaking-being that is not subject to this law. $\overline{\forall}x \cdot \Phi x$ means that there is no universal of woman. Therefore woman does not exist; women are not wholly in the phallic function. Here we have moved from the universal quantifier (\forall) to the existential quantifier (\exists). Where masculine sexuation presents a *universal* law under which all subjects fall, feminine sexuation is premised on the *existential* or particular (\exists), where each subject is taken on a case-by-case basis. In feminine sexuation the subject is certainly subject to the law of castration but this differs for each particular individual. Lacan's formula illustrates the relationship of woman to the logic of the not-all, not all of her being is subject to the law of castration. There is not one x not submitted to the phallic function. Therefore, for not-all x , the phallic function is valid.

The lower part of the formula



At the lower part of the formulae of sexuation Lacan represents both man's side and woman's side, adding arrows that indicate what they seek in the side of their partner.

The left side of the formula, the man's side: S and Φ

The arrow goes from $\$$ to a , that is, the desire of the subject aims to find on the side of the partner, the *objet a* cause of the subject's desire.⁸ Lacan adds: "... this $\$$ only never deals with anything by way of a partner but *objet a* inscribed on the other side of the bar. He is unable to attain his sexual partner, who is the Other, except inasmuch as his partner is the cause of his desire [...] the oriented conjunction of $\$$ and a , this is nothing other than fantasy". (Lacan, 1999 [1972-73]: 80) Lacan points out that the man believes that he addresses the woman, but what he addresses is the cause of his desire. He says regarding the act of love: "To make love, as the very expression indicates, is poetry. But there is a world between poetry and the act. The act of love is the male polymorphous perversion, in the case of speaking-beings" (72).

In Seminar XXII *R.S.I.* (Lacan, 2013 [1974-75]) Lacan pointed out that the lack of any sexual relationship is correlated with the fact that the woman does not exist, in the sense of a universal. In the place of this woman who does not exist, the woman will appear as a symptom for a man, which is consistent with Freud's thesis presented earlier.

For the one encumbered with a phallus, what is a woman? It is a symptom. (...) It is clear that if there is no enjoyment of the Other as such, namely, if there is no guarantee that can be met in the enjoyment of the body of the Other which ensures that to enjoy the Other as such exists, here is the most manifest example of the hole, of what is only supported from the *objet a* itself, but by misunderstanding, by confusion. A woman, no more than a man, is not an object. She has her own... that she occupies herself with, that has nothing to do with the one by whom she is supported in some desire or other. To make this woman a symptom is all the same to situate her in this articulation to the point where phallic enjoyment as such is moreover her affair. Contrary to what is said, the woman has to undergo castration neither more nor less than the man. (62)

The right side of the formula, the woman's side $L\bar{a}$, $S(\bar{A})$ and the *objet a*

⁸ The French term, *objet a*, is generally translated into English as 'the object cause of desire'. Lacan explicitly did not have the expression translated into, for example, *objet a*, preferring to retain the French.

On the Woman's side, there are two arrows going from $\mathcal{L}a$ (Barred woman) in different directions: the arrow going to Φ , describes the phallic relationship with man; the woman seeks the semblance of the phallus in her partner, as represented by the signifier. The other arrow, which goes from $\mathcal{L}a$ to $S(A)$ designates the *not-all phallic jouissance* portion of her being, that is a *not-all-phallic jouissance*, also called *feminine jouissance* or *Other jouissance*. "Woman has a relation with $S(A)$, and it is already in that respect that she is doubled, that she is not-whole, since she can also have a relation with Φ ". (Lacan, 1999 [1972-73]: 81) This Other *jouissance* is a *jouissance* that woman experiences and about which she knows nothing. We also find in that arrow that goes from $\mathcal{L}a$ to $S(A)$ what Lacan calls *mystic jouissance*. "It is insofar as her *jouissance* is radically Other that woman has more of a relationship with God". (83). Lacan notes that the analytic discourse brings into play the fact that:

... woman will never be taken up except quoad matrem. Woman serves a function in the sexual relationship only qua mother [...] woman's *jouissance* is based on a supplementation of this not-whole. ... man is but a signifier because where he comes into play as signifier, he comes only quoad castrationem, in other words, insofar as he has a relation to phallic *jouissance*. (35)

Feminine Jouissance and the Mystics

I will take here, in more detail, the three types of *jouissance* implied by Lacan in his formulae of sexuation: female *jouissance*—also called Other *jouissance*—mystic *jouissance* and perverse *jouissance*; to address the subject position in relation to his/her partner, in those modalities of *jouissance*. Feminine *jouissance*, $S(A)$, verifies a relationship with a *jouissance* which is not correlated with the *objet a*, cause of desire and object of the fantasy, therefore feminine *jouissance* is not based on a semblance. Mystical *jouissance* is also noted as $S(A)$. This *jouissance* is described by Lacan via two women: Hadewijch of Anvers⁹ and Saint Teresa of Avila¹⁰. Mystic women happen to

⁹ Hadewijch of Anvers (1250 Circa) belonged to the Order of the Beguine, a controversial Order of 'unofficial' nuns who gathered as a working group. They did not live in a convent, but rather followed a spiritual rule, guided by Hadewijch.

result from the exemplary representatives of the Other sex and its mysteries: “...no virile role is possible in the eyes of God, in front of God. And this is why mystic men cannot do other but become women or become kids” (80).

Saint Teresa’s Holy Ecstasy

Concerning the relation of woman to the not all, Bruce Fink notes:

All the *jouissance* that exists is phallic. According to Lacan, in order to exist something must be articulated within the signifying system determined by the phallic signifier; but that does not mean that there cannot be some *jouissance* that is not phallic. It is just that it does not exist; instead, it exists. The Other *jouissance* can only ex-sist, it cannot exist, to exist it would have to be spoken, articulated, and symbolized. (Fink. 2002: 161)

Lacan hypothesized a form of *jouissance* that is outside of language. He associated this *jouissance* with the depicting of Saint Teresa by the artist Bernini. For Saint Teresa there were experiences described as ec-static or beyond finite limitations, knowing no earthly limits. In relation to the mystical experiences of Saint Teresa, Lacan remarks: “It’s like for Saint Teresa—you need to go to Rome and see the statue by Bernini to immediately understand that she’s coming. It is clear that the essential testimony of the mystics consists in saying that they experience it, but don’t know anything about it.” (Lacan, 1999 [1972-73]: 76).

¹⁰ Saint Teresa of Ávila, also called Saint Teresa of Jesus, (1515-1582, canonized 1622) a Spanish nun, was one of the great mystics and religious women of the Roman Catholic Church, and author of spiritual classics. She was the originator of the Carmelite Reform, which restored and emphasized the austerity and contemplative character of primitive Carmelite life. St. Teresa was elevated to Doctor of the Church in 1970 by Pope Paul VI, the first woman to be so honoured: <<http://www.britannica.com/>>. Accessed Jun3, 2013.



Figure 2: Partial reproduction of the Ecstasy of Saint Teresa. Santa Maria della Vittoria, Rome

Hadewijch of Anvers

Lacan also referred to the mystic love of Hadewijch, a thirteenth century Flemish Beguine. In one of her visions Hadewijch testifies to being-One with God in an orgasmic-like ecstasy so intense that it threatens life:

My heart and veins and all my limbs trembled and quivered with eager desire and, as often occurred with me, such madness and fear beset my mind that it seemed to me that if I did not content my Beloved, and my Beloved did not fulfill my desire, dying I must go mad, and going mad I must die. (Hadewijch, 1980 [1250 Circa]: 280)

She goes on to describe how at one point God comes to her in an emphatically carnal form as a man. Her response is correspondingly carnal:

With that he came in the form and clothing of a Man, as he was on the day when he gave his Body for the first time; looking like a Human Being and a Man, wonderful and beautiful, and with a glorious face, he came to me as humbly as anyone who wholly belongs to another. Then he gave himself to me in the shape of the Sacrament, in its outward form, as the custom is; and then he gave me to drink from the chalice, in form and taste, as the custom is. After that he came himself to me, took me entirely in his arms, and pressed me to him; and all my members felt his in full felicity, in accordance with the desire of my heart and my humanity. So I was outwardly satisfied and fully transported. Also then, for a short while, I had the strength to bear this; but soon, after a short time, I lost that manly beauty outwardly in the sight of his form. I saw him completely come to naught and so fade and all at once dissolve that

I could no longer distinguish him within me. Then it was to me as if we were one without difference. (281)

This vision speaks of a sexual encounter between man and woman in which Hadewijch appears to be in the position of the woman. God comes to her in the appearance, the form and clothing of a man, but this is only by way of being abandoned, giving himself to her. This is a *jouissance* barred to the subject who speaks, in encountering this excess enjoyment on the side of the woman, the phallic subject fades. And it does so just at the moment of oneness with the Other when it too fades and comes to naught. If in such an encounter with God as Love she dies, God nevertheless remains as wholly Other. Paul Mommaers argues:

In this mystical being-one as Hadewijch experiences it, God lets himself be known not only as inexhaustible and self-sufficient, but also as other, as the wholly Other, [This distinction] makes a permanent part of the most absolute love relationship. It is exactly in the being-one that Hadewijch learns a demand that relates to her as a human being. Love, who is willing to be possessed unbraked, is at the same time the Other, who tells her what is wanting to her. The same woman who can sink in abysmal fruition is immediately placed against herself: the human being truly dies in God, but not in order, as human being, to come to its end. One who experiences the blessed feeling that surpasses all things is sent back into the world with impressionable senses and sharpened spiritual powers. (Mommaers, 1980: xvi)

In approaching God, as Oneness, Hadewijch dies as a phallic subject, that is, only to encounter what is lacking to her as a subject. To approach God as the Beloved is necessarily to approach the Other. But this Other is not only the site of a wished-for Oneness, it is also the site of that Otherness which is the Symbolic. To have an intimate encounter with this Other in its radical otherness is to encounter an excess, an excess which is at once intimate and extrinsic. This is to encounter one's non-being or, to use one of Lacan's formulae, one's subjective destitution. This encounter is an impasse; this is an impossible love. But in this impasse, the subject, although it disappears, might point to a pass, designating that which is beyond. In this guise the woman does indeed function as that unseen God who, as Lacan says, is "the third party in this business of human love" (Lacan, 1999 [1972-73]: 70); she is indeed the face of God, the semblance.

Tiresias

The Greek myth of Tiresias is also useful to underline the difference between men and women in terms of *jouissance*, as Lacan pointed out: “*A congress on feminine sexuality is not going to hold over us the threat of the fate of Tiresias*” (Lacan, 2006 [1960b]: 612) meaning by this that we were not getting closer to understanding female sexuality. Tiresias is a mythological male figure, transformed into a woman for seven years and then back to a man. As a man who had experienced female *jouissance* he could be seen as a master of knowledge. However, the feminist critique of the myth of Tiresias is that this myth expresses a male account of female *jouissance*, a similar critique to the one made against Lacan’s remarks on Bernini’s *Ecstasy of Saint Teresa*. Tiresias is famous for replying to Zeus and Hera that if ten parts of love’s ecstasy were given by human beings, women took nine parts and men only one. Hera, furious that the secret for love’s ecstasy was revealed, punished Tiresias with blindness, whereas Zeus granted him with the gift of prophesy.

Regarding the Other *jouissance*, I followed Maria Helena Coelho Martinho (2013 [2011]) in her developments concerning *perverse jouissance*. Coelho Martinho, in her PhD thesis, states that:

... [W]e need to consider that the Other to which Lacan refers in his formulae of sexuation is not the same Other, to which he refers in the matheme of perversion, in “Kant with Sade” ... [(Lacan, 2006 [1962])]. The Other of the formulas is $L\bar{a}$. Therefore, Lacan represented this matheme with $L\bar{a}$ instead of A . When Lacan said that the pervert becomes an instrument of the Other's *jouissance*, the Other to which he refers is not the Other language, is not the place $L\bar{a}$. The Other of the perverse matheme of fantasy is a place occupied by the sexual partner of the pervert, that is, the barred subject, $\$$. (Coelho Martinho, 2013 [2011]: 133-34)

The perverse *jouissance* that Lacan mentions in the text “Kant with Sade” refers to the perverse *jouissance* that the pervert draws from the Other, as his sexual partner, which differs from the *jouissance* mentioned in the formulae of sexuation, when Lacan refers to $S(A)$. The *jouissance* in the formulae of sexuation refers to what Lacan calls feminine *jouissance* and *mystic jouissance*. Therefore, the *jouissance* that the pervert

draws from the Other will not pull his partner's feminine *jouissance*, precisely because this *jouissance* comes only from $L\bar{a}$.

Incompleteness and inconsistency

We may question why Lacan refers to the two sides of the graph of Sexuation with the signifiers *masculine* and *feminine*, as subjects that are biologically male and female could occupy either side. It seems to make more sense to simply refer to the two sides of the graph as *incompleteness* and *inconsistency*. While having a penis or a vagina does not assign the speaking-being to one side of the graph or another, there are certain social bonds between biological men and women that provide plausible reasons to explain why those who are biologically female tend to fall on the feminine side of the graph of Sexuation and those who are biologically male tend to fall on the masculine side.

Soler, in *What did Lacan say about women* (Soler, 2005), opens an enquiry about sexual difference by asking: “Does the subject who is divided from speech have a sex or is the difference between the sexes only a matter of either the real body or the ego?” (Soler, 2005: 299). She suggests: “The ego is involved in the question of sex” (299). However, the imaginary synthesis of the ego reaches a limit in language. As soon as the question about sex is articulated in language, the question about sexual identity no longer belongs solely to the domain of the ego, but to the domain of the subject. Therefore Soler reformulates her question by stating: “If sex would be the subject's business, what is it saying in analysis if the saying is what supports existence?” (299). She goes on to quote Lacan:

There is no sexual relation. Such is the formula that can be inferred from everything that is said about the unconscious that Freud discovered. It is not simply that analysands say, “It isn't working out”, since such an observation does not exclude the possibility that someday it will work out; the hope that it will end up working out is, in fact, the hope that leads many people into analysis. There is no sexual relation implies that people are waiting for this relation. (299)

Soler concludes: “There is no doubt, however, that what is aimed at in these cases, beyond what is imagined about men and women, is always the phallus, in terms of having or being it” (299).

Towards an Original Contribution

When engaging with contemporary literature about *jouissance* and the sexual reality of the unconscious, there are significant issues unveiled in the late Lacan that still remain only partially addressed. *Jouissance* and the sexual reality of the unconscious is explained in mainstream Lacanian psychoanalytic literature in terms of a possible rapport between the subject and the law of castration. This rapport includes the articulation of the phallus, the symptom and the *name-of-the-father*, whereas the common point around which everything else becomes organized seems to be the phenomena of *jouissance*. And regarding *jouissance*, sexual difference is addressed by a theory based on the difference between all-phallic *jouissance*, on the side of the *man*, and the not-all-phallic *jouissance*, on the side of the *woman*. However, there remains to be explored different types of *jouissance*, and specifically *jouissance* other than phallic *jouissance*, and their effects, mediated by language and by *lalangue*, regarding sexual identity, as we perceive it in our clinical work. Another thesis to be articulated alongside that of *jouissance*, language and *lalangue*, is the late Lacanian thesis of the *two unconscious* that is the *imaginary unconscious*, the unconscious that is deciphered in analysis, the one that implies fantasy and desire as supports of the subject’s being, the unconscious related to language and a body of drives, and the *real unconscious*, linked to the speaking-being and *lalangue*.¹¹ This research particularly engages the *real unconscious* of the speaking-being and *lalangue* in a manner that accounts for and bypasses the dichotomy of phallic being-and-having, in order to question, more primordially, the subject of sexual difference. In the following chapter I engage with psychoanalytic epistemology and methodology in order to build a solid ground to develop my argument.

¹¹ The concepts of *lalangue* and the *real unconscious* will be addressed in Chapter Five, “Thesis of the Two Unconscious.”

Chapter 2

Epistemology and Methodology

Knowledge & Truth

With this chapter I engage with psychoanalytic methodology and epistemology in order to establish a solid ground to develop my arguments in the context of this PhD thesis, which interrogates *jouissance* and the sexual reality of the unconscious. I address the issues of knowledge and truth with brief reference to Martin Heidegger, Alain Badiou and Lacan's developments on the topic. I then discuss psychoanalysis and science in following Lacan's reading of Aristotle's account of the four types of cause, to then present comparisons between knowledge and truth in the fields of psychoanalysis, science, religion and magic. In concluding, I develop an understanding of research methodology engaged in this thesis as a condition of possibility for research in psychoanalysis.

Psychoanalytic Epistemology

The notion of epistemology appears in the *Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud* only a few times under the term *epistemological*, as a translation of the German adjective *erkenntnistheoretisch*. The use of the term *epistemological* in the English translation obliterates the distinction between *epistemology* and *theory of knowledge*. The term *epistemological* appears for the first time in the *Standard Edition* English translation of the obituary of Viktor Tausk¹:

These writings exhibit plainly the philosophical training which the author was able so happily to combine with the exact methods of science. His strong need to establish things on a philosophical foundation and to achieve epistemological clarity compelled him to formulate, and seek as well to master, the whole profundity and comprehensive meaning of the very difficult problems involved. (Freud, 2001 [1919b]: 274)

Within that text Freud reproaches Tausk for his overestimation of the logical-deductive operations of philosophy, and thought that Tausk went too far in trying to establish the coherence of psychoanalysis on the basis of a theoretical system that was philosophical and not clinical.

Even if the term *epistemology* is rarely found in Freud's works, nevertheless a Freudian epistemology is always to be found. The epistemic identity of psychoanalysis remained that of the empirical sciences of his time, which are unrelated to the sciences of mind. Freud relied on listening with a floating attention and on inductive logic. He

¹ Viktor Tausk (1879-1919) was a student and colleague of Freud, and the earliest exponent of psychoanalytical concepts with regard to psychosis and the personality of the artist. Tausk was already a lawyer and writer when he began to study medicine, in Vienna, around 1910. He joined the *Vienna Psychoanalytic Society* and soon began to contribute with his own papers. In 1919, Tausk published a paper on the origin of a delusion common to a wide group of schizophrenic patients, which had influenced his patients' thoughts and behavior. This device was referred to as *the Influencing Machine* and the paper was called *On the Origin of the Influencing Machine in Schizophrenia*. On July 3, 1919 after Helene Deutsch had stopped Tausk's treatment because Freud had demanded it, and after a complicated relation with Sigmund Freud and Lou Andreas-Salomé, Tausk committed suicide. Freud wrote to Salomé: "I confess that I do not really miss him; I had long realized that he could be of no further service; indeed that he constituted a threat to the future" (Clark, 1980: 286).

claimed for psychoanalysis a “specific right to become the spokesman for the vision of the scientific world” (Freud, 2001 [1933]: 160). However, addressing the demands of scientific knowledge, Freud writes: “it would be illegitimate and highly inexpedient to allow these demands to be transferred to the sphere of knowledge. For this would be to lay open the paths which lead to psychosis, whether to individual or group psychosis” (274).

The path of Freudian discovery traced the passage from a therapeutic technique to an *episteme* through the implementation of a method employed within the context of a specific practice. Psychoanalytic epistemology appeared to be essential to define and to circumscribe the conditions and legitimacy of his approach. Psychoanalysis could verify the consistency of its theory by referring to the value and scope of discoveries where they originate, which is psychoanalytic praxis. Psychoanalysis does not consist of the analyst’s knowledge of the analysand’s unconscious, but it is based on a knowledge created, as much as revealed, by a particular work under transference.

Knowledge and Truth

Already in the Preface to this thesis we have encountered a significant relation to truth established within Freudian psychoanalysis. In the *L’Express* interview with Lacan that I cited, we saw Lacan emphasizing that repression is not a content pressing against a closed door of consciousness, as if it was a thing wanting to be released but, rather, repression is repression of a truth. It is within this dynamic of truth and repression that the question of knowing emerges in psychoanalytic epistemology. It is also within this dynamic that we recognize the relation between truth and unconcealing as opposed to truth and verification or veridiction.

Psychoanalytic knowledge, and particularly knowledge about sexual difference, cannot simply be exchanged or transmitted. Neither could it “be acquired once and for all: each case, each text, has its own specific, singular symbolic functioning and requires a different interpretation” (Felman, 1982: 81). Psychoanalytic knowledge must be exercised, put to work. The validity of psychoanalysis does not rely on the Freudian

claim that the analyst is always right, that is to say, if the patient accepts the analyst's intervention, that would be a straightforward confirmation of its correctness or if the patient rejects it, this would be a sign of resistance, which consequently, again confirms that the intervention has touched the truth. If we focus on the distinction between *construction* and *interpretation* in psychoanalysis, correlative to the couple of knowledge and truth, it could be said that the analysand is always in the wrong, construing a double bind of analytic intervention.

An *interpretation* has always its origin in the inter-subjective dialectic of recognition between the analysand and the analyst. It aims at bringing up the *effect* of truth related to a formation of the unconscious—a dream, a symptom, a slip of the tongue. The subject is expected to recognize him- or her-self in the signification proposed by the analyst, to assume the proposed signification as his or her own. The success of an interpretation is measured by this effect of truth, by the extent to which it affects the subjective position of the analysand, in triggering memories of a repressed traumatic encounter with the Real or provoking strong resistance.

In comparison to an interpretation, a *construction*, instead, has the status of a knowledge that could never be assumed by the subject as the truth about himself, the truth in which the subject recognizes the core of his being. A construction is a logical presupposition, for example, the second stage of the child's fantasy "A child is being beaten" (Freud, 2001 [1919a]: 210), to be read: "I am being beaten by my father" (210), which, as Freud emphasizes, is so radically unconscious that it could not ever be remembered: "This second phase is the most important and the most momentous of all. But we may say that in a certain sense it has never had a real existence. It is never remembered; it has never succeeded in becoming conscious. It is a construction of analysis, but it is no less a necessity on that account" (212). Given the fact that this phase never had a real existence, the knowledge we have of this phase is a particular knowledge in the Real, it is an a-cephalic, non-subjective knowledge. Interpretation and construction stand in relation to each other as do symptom and fantasy, been both, as I already postulated, related to *jouissance* and the sexual reality of the unconscious. Symptoms are to be interpreted; the fundamental fantasy is to be re-constructed. This

notion of a-cephalic knowledge emerges late in Lacan's teaching, after the relationship between knowledge and truth underwent a profound shift in the early 1970s.

Heidegger, Lacan and Badiou on Truth

In the first phase of Lacan's teaching, from the 1940s to the 1960s, he moved within the parameters of the standard philosophical opposition between inauthentic objective knowledge which disregards the subject's position of enunciation, and authentic truth by which one is existentially engaged. This notion of truth developed within a philosophical genealogy from Kierkegaard to Heidegger. The Freudian Field of Psychoanalysis, within the Lacanian Orientation, enabled itself to engage with the substantiality of the Real. Heidegger teaches us about the Real and how it validates Da-sein as openness to the being of beings, and thereby as the unconcealing of being. In his major work, *Being and Time* (1972 [1927]), Heidegger notes:

Even when it is not only a matter of ontic experience, but of ontological understanding, the interpretation of being initially orients itself toward the being of innerworldly beings. Here the being of things initially at hand is passed over and beings are first conceived as a context of things objectively present. Being acquires the meaning of reality. Substantiality becomes the basic of characteristic of being.... like other beings, Da-sein is also objectively present as real. (Heidegger, 1972 [1927]: 43)

Heidegger's project of fundamental ontology aimed at determining a primordial ontological structure of an existent's being-in-the-world (Da-sein) that discloses how Da-sein is for the most part *not* objectively present as real and thereby not subjectively present either, but rather is existentially openness to its authentic possibilities, to its being. In this sense, for Heidegger, as we have already noted for Lacan in an earlier quote from Bruce Fink, Da-sein does not exist, but rather ex-ists. Lacan's notion of an ex-isting speaking-being derived, to some extent, from the work of Heidegger, as did his notion of truth as *aletheia*, as unconcealing of the withdrawal of being, rather than as veracity of an objectively present entity. Heidegger suggests: "*Aletheia*, disclosure thought of as the opening of presence, is not yet truth. Is *aletheia* then less than truth?

Or is it more because it first grants truth as *adequatio* and *certitudo*, because there can be no presence and presenting outside of the realm of the opening?" (69)

In this sense, Heidegger also shows us the importance of a particular notion of being-seen, unconcealed or discovered as the basis of the truth of being: "To say that a statement is true means that it discovers the beings in themselves. It asserts, it shows, it lets beings be seen in their unconcealing. The being true (truth) of the statement must be understood as discovering. Thus, truth by no means has the structure of an agreement between knowing and the object in the sense of a correspondence of one being (subject) to another (object)" (44). One of Heidegger's crucial points was that modern science could not be reduced to some limited, ontical, socially conditioned option, expressing the interests of a certain social group, but is rather the *real* of our historical moment, that which *remains the same* in all possible symbolic universes. Precisely as long as science *doesn't think, it knows*, ignoring the dimension of truth, and is as such *drive* at its purest. In the late 1960s, however, and in relation to his engagement with Heidegger, Lacan focused his attention on the drive as a-cephalic knowledge, which involves no inherent relation to truth and no subjective position of enunciation, as the drive is in itself non-subjective, ontologically prior to the dimension of truth. The term 'ontological' becomes, then, problematic since 'ontology' may by definition be read as the logic of being as discourse on truth. Truth and knowledge are related as desire and drive: interpretation aims at the truth of the subject's desire, while construction provides knowledge about drive. Within psychoanalysis, this knowledge of the drive, which could never be subjective, assumes the form of knowledge of the subject's fundamental fantasy, the specific formula that regulates his or her access to *jouissance*.

Lacan established the object of psychoanalysis by calling it the *objet a*. However, identification of the knowledge of *objet a* with the science of psychoanalysis was, according to Lacan, "precisely the equation that must be avoided" (Lacan, 2006 [1965]: 728). Rather, the *objet a* only emerges as something "inserted ... into the division of the subject by which the psychoanalytic field is quite specifically structured" (729). According to Lacan, the *objet a* mediates between the incompatible domains of desire

and *jouissance*, in order to make possible their coupling, to guarantee a minimum of *jouissance* within the space of desire. The *objet a* is not what we desire, but rather that which sets our desire in motion, the formal frame that confers consistency to our desire.

Desire is metonymical; it shifts from one object to another. Through all its displacements, however, desire retains a minimum of formal consistency, a set of fantasy features which, when encountered in an object, ensures that we will come to desire this object. *Objet a*, as cause of desire, is nothing but this formal frame of consistency. In a slightly different way, the same mechanism regulates the subject's falling in love: the automatism of love is set in motion when some contingent, ultimately indifferent libidinal object finds itself occupying a pre-given fantasy place. This role of fantasy in the automatic emergence of love pivots on the fact that "there is no sexual relationship" (Lacan, 1999 [1972-73]: 193), no universal formula or matrix that grounds or guarantees a harmonious sexual relationship with a partner. Because of the lack of this universal formula, every individual has to invent a fantasy of his or her own, an individual formula for a sexual relationship. For each human being, a relationship with another human being is possible only inasmuch as he or she fits his or her formula.

According to Alain Badiou, philosophy is suspended from four conditions: art, love, politics, and science. Each of these is a fully independent truth procedure. Badiou consistently maintains throughout his work, but most systematically in *Manifesto for Philosophy* (Badiou, 1999), that philosophy must avoid the temptation to suture itself, that is to say, to hand over its entire intellectual effort to any one of these independent truth procedures. He argues that when philosophy does suture itself to one of its conditions, adding that the history of philosophy during the nineteenth and twentieth century is primarily a history of sutures, what results is a philosophical disaster. Philosophy is, according to Badiou, a thinking of the *compossibility* of the several truth procedures. Compossibility is a philosophical concept derived from Leibniz. According to Leibniz, a complete individual thing, for example a person, is characterized by all its properties, and these determine its relations with other persons. The existence of one

person may contradict the existence of another. A possible world is made up of persons that are compossible, that is, persons who can exist together. For Leibniz, possible worlds are worlds that exist as possibilities in the mind of God. One world among them is realized as the actual world, and this is the perfect one. Badiou borrows this concept in defining philosophy as the creation of a *space of compossibility* for heterogeneous truths.

Truth, for Badiou, is a specifically philosophical category. While philosophy's several conditions are, in their own terms, truth-procedures, producing truths as they are pursued, it is only philosophy that can speak of the several truth procedures as truth procedures. The lover, for example, does not think of his or her love as a question of truth, but simply and rightly as a question of love. Only the philosopher sees in the true lover's love the unfolding of a truth. Badiou thus has a very rigorous notion of truth, one that is strongly against the core of much of contemporary European thought. He embraces a traditional modernist notion that truths are genuinely invariant, always and everywhere the case, eternal and unchanging and in seeming contradiction to the postmodernist notion that truths are constructed through processes. The idea is that a truth's invariance makes it genuinely indiscernible: because a truth is everywhere and always the case, it passes unnoticed unless there is a rupture in the laws of being and appearance, during which the truth in question becomes, but only for a moment, discernible. Such a rupture is what Badiou calls an *event*. The notion of event was crucial in the thinking of Heidegger, as that openness to being that is human being's own most possibility to be. We see a resonance of this in Badiou, which would resonate Heidegger's *aletheia*, unconcealing of the truth of being to the event as rupturing moment in the laws of being and appearance in disclosing a space of compossibility. Badiou also has a legacy in the work of Lacan in discerning the relations of truth to knowledge.

The individual, who witnesses such an event, if he or she is faithful to what is witnessed, could then introduce the truth by naming it in worldly situations. For Badiou, it is by positioning oneself to the truth of an event that an existent becomes a subject. Subjectivity is not an inherent human trait. According to a procedure that subsequently

unfolds only if those who subject themselves to the witnessed truth continue faithfully in their work of announcing the truth in question, genuine knowledge is produced. One also thinks of Badiou's reading of St. Paul at this point. For Badiou, St. Paul is neither the venerable saint embalmed by Christian tradition, nor the venomous priest execrated by philosophers like Nietzsche. He is, instead, an original and revolutionary thinker whose invention of Christianity weaves truth and subjectivity together in a way that continues to be relevant for us today. Badiou argues that St. Paul delineates a new figure of the subject: the bearer of a universal truth that simultaneously shatters the strictures of Judaic Law and the conventions of the Greek Logos.

According to Badiou, truth procedures proceed to infinity, such that faith outstrips knowledge. Badiou, following both Lacan and Heidegger, distances truth from knowledge. The dominating ideology of the day, which Badiou calls democratic materialism, denies the existence of truth and only recognizes bodies and languages. Badiou proposes a turn towards dialectical materialism, which recognizes that there are only bodies and languages, except there are also truths.

Psychoanalysis and Science

A very important text regarding the scientific status of psychoanalysis, epistemology and its methodology is Lacan's "Science and Truth" (Lacan, 2006 [1965]).² Elisabeth Roudinesco summarized it as follows:

In this text Lacan carried out what I have called a logical revision of his structural theory of the subject and the signifier, based in part on the work of his old friend Alexandre Koyré.³ He took from him the idea that modern

² "Science and Truth" was specifically written for the first volume of the *Cahiers pour l'Analyse* and Lacan delivered it at the first session of his Seminar XIII, *The Object of Psychoanalysis*, December, 1965.

³ Alexandre Koyré (1892–1964) was a historian and philosopher of science whose theses concerning the scientific revolution augured by Galileo Galilei, were captured in one of Koyré's works, *From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe* (1957). Born in Taganrog, Russia to a Jewish family, Koyré pursued his initial university studies under David Hilbert and Edmund Husserl in Göttingen, Germany. In 1912, when Husserl failed to support his doctoral thesis, Koyré moved to Paris where he began studying with Léon Brunschvicg. Koyré's relations with Brunschvicg would be instrumental years later in the latter's extending an invitation to Husserl to speak in Paris in 1929, an event which resulted in the *Cartesian Meditations*, a key text in the development of French Phenomenology.

science – which had produced the cogito – had brought about a dramatic devaluation of being. And from Kurt Gödel he had borrowed the second incompleteness theorem: the notion that truth cannot be fully formulated. Lacan observed that this was part of the general failure of science, which was always in search of something to make its incompleteness whole. (Roudinesco, 1997: 326)

“Science and Truth” situated Lacan’s theory within an epistemological framework, and contained a discussion of the notion of truth in psychoanalysis, an interpretation of Descartes’ *cogito*, and discussion on the notion of the subject of science. Lacan approached the question of the subject by saying that the subject, as conceived by psychoanalysis, is “conveyed by a signifier in relation to another signifier” (Lacan, 2006 [1965]: 739), and must therefore be “rigorously distinguished from the biological individual as from any psychological evolution subsumable under the subject of understanding” (739).

Lacan claimed to have established the status of the subject in Seminar XII, (Lacan, 2013 [1964-65]) by developing a structure that accounts for the state of splitting encountered in psychoanalytic practice. The subject in that sense was apprehensible in the symptom, which reveals a movement of *alternation* in the relation of the subject to certain signifiers. Regarding alternation and vacillation in subjectivity, Lacan said: “Discontinuity, then, is the essential form in which the unconscious first appears to us as a phenomenon—discontinuity, in which something is manifested as a vacillation” (Lacan, 1998 [1964]: 26). He added: “It is necessary to have this element of oddity, of exception, of paradox, of appearance and disappearance founded as such, which would show us clearly that something is alternating, which is precisely the relationship of one of these signifiers with a subject” (Lacan, 2013 [1964-65]: 241).

Lacan argued that Freud did not treat those phenomena of splitting as a given, but he rather initiated the process of reduction that is proper to the birth of any science. Psychoanalysis was the name of a new science, and Lacan’s point of departure was explicitly epistemological in the sense found in the French tradition of philosophy of science in the early twentieth century, and especially in the writings of Gaston

Bachelard,⁴ Georges Canguilhem⁵ and Koyré. Lacan pursued a reduction that would articulate the object of psychoanalysis as a science, beyond all ideological conceptions of that object: “A certain reduction is necessary that is sometimes long in completion, but always decisive in the birth of a science; such a reduction truly constitutes its object. Epistemology takes upon itself the job of defining this in each and every case, without having proven, at least to my mind, equal to the task”. (727) By recommending an epistemological account of the object of psychoanalysis, Lacan was anticipating concerns that he took up in Seminar XIII, (Lacan, 2013 [1965-66]). In “Science and Truth,” Lacan restricted his focus to the epistemological break of modern Galilean physics and attempted to relate this to an account of the subject of modern science: “I do not believe that epistemology has fully accounted in this manner for the decisive change that, with physics paving the way, founded Science in the modern sense, a sense that is posited as absolute” (Lacan, 2006 [1965]: 730). Rather than conducting an epistemology of psychoanalysis, Lacan’s aim in “Science and Truth” was to identify the features of the subject that emerge with modern science, and to explore a passage leading from Galileo and Descartes in the seventeenth century to Freud’s encounter with the unconscious at the turn of the twentieth century: “It is unthinkable that psychoanalysis as a practice and the Freudian unconscious as a discovery could have taken on their roles before the birth—in the century that has been called the century of genius, that is, the seventeenth century—of science” (730).

According to Lacan, Freudian psychoanalysis was situated in the history of science, and it implicitly takes the subject of science as its object of theoretical and practical study:

⁴ Gaston Bachelard (1884–1962) was a central figure in twentieth-century French epistemology. He pursued a career engaged in poetics as well as philosophy of science. Born in Dijon, Bachelard worked as a postmaster and studied physics before becoming interested in philosophy and influenced by the anti-positivism and rationalism of Léon Brunschvicg. He was a professor in Dijon from 1930 to 1940 before becoming the inaugural chair in the history and philosophy of sciences at the Sorbonne.

⁵ Georges Canguilhem (1904–1995), along with Gaston Bachelard and Jean Cavailles, was one of the central figures in twentieth-century French epistemology and philosophy of science. He began the study of medicine shortly after his first teaching appointment in Toulouse. In 1948, Canguilhem replaced Bachelard as the director of the *Institut d’histoire des sciences* at the Sorbonne. Canguilhem also served from 1964 to 1968 as the President of the *Jury d’Agrégation* in philosophy.

I am saying, contrary to what has been trumped up about a supposed break on Freud's part with the scientism of his time, that it was this very scientism—which one might designate by its allegiance to the ideals of Brücke, themselves passed down from Helmholtz and Du Bois-Reymond's pact to reduce physiology, and the mental functions considered to be included therein, to the mathematically determined terms of thermodynamics (the latter having attained virtual completion during their lifetimes)—that led Freud, as his writings show, to pave the way that shall forever bear his name. (730)

Lacan referred to Koyré's account of the development of modern science. The birth of science in the seventeenth century had an absolute sense, overruling what formerly went under the title of science, and altering what came after. Galileo was the one who performed the epistemological break, reconstituting human perception of the universe by means of mathematical physics. Newton's achievement of constructing an entire system of knowledge on the basis of physics, as Lacan presented it in Seminar XII, was conditioned by his residual religious beliefs. Lacan argued that Newton, with his conception of a *divine sensorium*, was the only one not to realize that the subject, as it exists in the universe opened up by modern science, is nothing. In other words, "it is in the ambiguity of the relationship of a subject to knowledge, it is in the subject insofar as he still lacks knowledge, that there resides for us the nerve, the activity of the existence of a subject" (Lacan, 2013 [1965]: 4). Lacan suggested that if Galileo was the one who performed the epistemological break, Newton was the one who went beyond the break and produced an entire system of knowledge.

The problem that emerged concerned the status of the subject with respect to knowledge, the relation between a subject and a constituted body of knowledge. I will cite Lacan at length on this for how he draws out from a Newtonian universe an essential question of the relation of the subject to law and to the actions of law:

Newtonian knowledge realized, in the history of science, a sort of exemplary acme, that was at once paradoxical and really exemplary, paradigmatic. ... Newton had created a formula which suddenly rooted the enigmatic phenomena in the heavens which had captivated the attention of calculators throughout the centuries ... how can such a body, as it were, such a mass isolated at some point in space, know the distance it is from another body, so that it is linked to it by this relationship? For Newton, there was no doubt

... that this presupposes a subject who maintains the action of the law. Everything which is of the order of physics or appears here to relate to the action and the reaction of bodies following the properties of movement and of rest ... does not appear to him to be able to be supported except by this pure and supreme subject, this sort of acme of the ideal subject that the Newtonian God represents. This is indeed the reason why our contemporaries have quite correctly made Newton equal to this God, for it is the same thing to create this law and to see it articulated in all its rigor. But it is no less true that a too perfect subject, like the subject of knowledge ... leaves us completely indifferent and that belief in God gained no renewal from it. That this subject is nothing, that he is the only one not to know it. And this indeed is precisely the sign that he is nothing. In other words, it is in the ambiguity of the relationship of a subject to knowledge, it is in the subject insofar as he still lacks knowledge, that there resides for us the nerve, the activity of the existence of a subject. This is indeed why it is not as a supposed support of a harmonious group of signifiers in this system that the subject is grounded, but insofar as somewhere there is a lack” (4).

Lacan stresses in Seminar XII the importance of Freud, by saying that he revealed an original relationship in modern subjectivity: the relation of a subject to a not-knowing.⁶ What Freudian psychoanalysis designated was the subsistence of the subject of a not-knowing. Such subjectivity depends on a not-knowing, and psychoanalysis revealed that there is an area which remains outside knowledge, and that is precisely the area of sexuality. Hence our return to knowledge and truth for it was on this basis, as Lacan says at the end of *Science and Truth* that we “formulate our experienced division as subjects as a division between knowledge and truth” (Lacan, 2013 [1965]: 729).

Lacan’s reflections on Descartes in “Science and Truth” take up the essential points of his discussion of the *cogito*. He recalled that he had isolated “a certain moment of the subject that I consider to be an essential correlate of science, a historically defined moment ... the moment Descartes inaugurates that goes by the name of cogito” (730). The cogito is understood as the correlate to the birth of modern science, for science, as he puts in the article, “Position of the Unconscious” (Lacan, 2006 [1960c]): “the cogito marks (...) the break with every assurance conditioned by intuition”

⁶ Freud’s German for the ‘unconscious’ is *das Unbewusste*, which can also be translated as the unknown, or non-known

(726). With his procedure of radical doubt, Descartes went through the *rejection of all knowledge*, with the aim of “anchoring the subject in being” (726). Descartes highlighted the essential nature of the subject of science by arriving at a minimal point of certainty, the *cogito*. Lacan suggested that Descartes’ accentuation of the term ‘ego’ in some of his texts on the cogito obscured the nature of the subjectivity that he had opened:

In the ego that Descartes accentuates by virtue of the superfluousness of its function in certain of his Latin texts (...) one must grasp the point at which it continues to be what it presents itself as: dependent on the God of religion. A curious fallen scrap of ergo, the ego is bound up with this God. Descartes’ approach is, singularly, one of safeguarding the ego from the deceitful God, and thereby safeguarding the ego’s partner—going so far as to endow the latter with the exorbitant privilege of guaranteeing the eternal truths insofar as he is their creator. (726)

By confusing the *I think* of the subject with the activity of an ego, Descartes entered into an imaginary rivalry with a deceitful other. When he suggests that God could make $2 + 2 = 5$ if he wishes, he was “handing back truth into the hands of the Other” (Lacan, 1964b: 36). However, what the cogito really revealed was not the ego, but the subjectivity of which the ego is not aware.

Lacan argued that the true significance of the cogito was not perceived until Freud, who identified the true subject as the subject of the unconscious, the existence and nature of which is only detectable via the mediation of symptoms. As Lacan said in Seminar XI: “Freud’s method is Cartesian—in the sense that he sets out from the basis of the subject of certainty (...) (T)he dissymmetry between Freud and Descartes (...) is not in the initial method of certainty grounded on the subject. It stems from the fact that the subject is ‘at home’ in this field of the unconscious” (Lacan, 1998 [1964b]: 35). Freud’s doubt about his own unconscious in his self-analysis takes the Cartesian doubt to its logical conclusion, subjecting the ego itself to doubt. Lacan suggested that it was Freud’s self-analysis that was first of all comparable with Descartes’ method: “In a precisely similar way, Freud, when he doubts—for they are his dreams, and it is he who, at the outset, doubts—is assured that a thought is there, which is unconscious, which

means that it reveals itself as absent” (36). The analogy was between the straightforward data of the senses and the enigmatic data of the dreams. Freud examined his own hesitations and resistances about the meaning of dreams, and he assumes, on the basis of those resistances, that there was not just something behind his resistance, but it was a subjective entity. Lacan added: “Doubt is the support of (the subject’s) certainties” (35), not only because by the fact that I am doubting, I know that I am thinking, but also, Lacan said, because doubt is a sign that “there is something to preserve. Doubt, then, it is a sign of resistance.” (35) There is subjectivity in doubts, impasses, hesitations, but it is not a subjectivity by which I, as ego, can identify myself.

In “Science and Truth” Lacan distinguished Jung and Freud in relation to a Cartesian legacy. Jung aims to: “reinstat[e] a subject endowed with depths (...), that is, a subject constituted by a relationship—said to be archetypal—to knowledge. Freud remains Cartesian, reducing the relation between subject and knowledge to that exclusively allowed by modern science, the latter being no other than the one I defined last year (...) as punctual and vanishing: that relationship to knowledge which, since its historically inaugural moment, has retained the name *cogito*” (Lacan, 2013 [1965]: 731). Lacan insisted on this point of science: “only one subject is accepted as such in psychoanalysis, the one that can make it scientific” (731). Any attempt to “incarnate the subject,” as for instance, “the subject incarnated in man,” is erroneous. To identify the subject as a man is to preclude any understanding of subjectivity. Lacan insisted that “there is no such thing as a science of man because science’s man does not exist, only its subject does” (732). This insistence on the subject of science extends to that human science that dominated the mid-twentieth century and impacted on Lacan’s own encounter with Freud. Hence Lacan noted: “structuralism was introducing into all the human sciences a particular mode of the subject, which claimed that only topology can adequately formalize: a subject that is in a state of internal exclusion from its object, in the manner of a side of a *Möbius strip*” (733).



Figure 3: Moebius strip

Although structuralism shares with modern science the tendency to map out domains by means of combinatorial analysis, that is, by the mathematics of the signifier, it only does so by suturing the subject as a form of non-knowledge. At this point Lacan reiterated his opening claim that “there is something in the status of the object of science that seems to me to have remained un-elucidated since the birth of science” (738). Lacan postulated that psychoanalysis has the key to the peculiar relation to an object that characterizes the subject of science.

Aristotle’s Account of the Four Types of Cause

In the final part of “Science and Truth,” Lacan distinguished between the subjects of magic, religion and science by assigning them different types of causality: efficient, final and formal. Psychoanalysis took the role of attending to material causality, thus completing the correspondence with Aristotle’s account of the four types of cause (Lacan, 2013 [1965]: 740; Aristotle, 1996 [192b-200b]: 38-42). In order to consider the importance of the notion of responsibility in Lacan’s presentation of the subject of science one just has recall his formulation: “One is always responsible for one’s position as a subject” (Lacan, 2006 [1965]: 729). Thus Lacan mentions that the concept of cause at play in his text is not that of “the cause as logical category, but as causing the whole effect” (738). The Greek for ‘cause’—*aition*—derives from the adjective *aitios*, which means *responsible*.

We then come to schematize Lacan’s comments on the place of truth as cause in Science, Psychoanalysis, Religion and Magic according to the four Aristotelian causes: formal, material, final and efficient. Aristotle summarized the four modes of cause as follows:

‘Cause’ means: (a) in one sense, that as the result of whose presence something comes into being—e.g. the bronze of a statue and the silver of a cup, and the classes which contain these [i.e., the material cause]; (b) in another sense, the form or pattern; that is, the essential formula and the classes which contain it—e.g. the ratio 2:1 and number in general is the cause of the octave—and the parts of the formula [i.e., the formal cause]. (c) The source of the first beginning of change or rest; e.g. the man who plans is a cause, and the father is the cause of the child, and in general that which produces is the cause of that which is produced, and that which changes of that which is changed [i.e., the efficient cause]. (d) The same as “end”; i.e. the final cause; e.g., as the ‘end’ of walking is health. For why does a man walk? ‘To be healthy’, we say, and by saying this we consider that we have supplied the cause [the final cause]. (e) All those means towards the end which arise at the instigation of something else, as, e.g. fat-reducing, purging, drugs and instruments are causes of health; for they all have the end as their object, although they differ from each other as being some instruments, others actions. (Aristotle, S.1013a)

Lacan turned to different fields of knowledge in which the claim to truth was only present as *ignis fatuus*, that is, a distant light seen by travelers at night, but which remains always far away, no matter how much we approach it. By comparing Magic, Science and Religion, Lacan intended to address the following question: “Does or doesn’t what you do [as analysts] imply that the truth of neurotic suffering lies in having the truth as cause?” (Lacan, 2006 [1965]: 739). What follows, is Lacan’s different assessments of each field.

Appealing to Claude Lévi-Strauss’s structural analyses of magical thought (Lévi-Strauss, 1971 [1968], Vol. 1: 167-85), Lacan suggested that the preparations of a shamanising subject were marked by the treatment of his body as a part of nature. The shamanising subject acts within structures and signifiers: “it is in the form of signifiers that what must be mobilized in nature appears: thunder and rain, meteors and miracles” (741). But in magic the idea of the truth as cause only appears in the guise of efficient causality. Lacan pointed out that “The Thing, insofar as it speaks, answers our insistent prayers. (...). It is in the form of signifiers that what must be mobilized in nature appears: thunder and rain, meteors and miracles. Everything is organized here in accordance with the antinomic relationships by which language is structured...” (739-740). In Magic, signifiers are metaphorically mobilized: this metaphoric operation has to do with

assuming that, because truth speaks, it speaks to us. In Magic, knowledge is veiled: this is a condition of magic. Truth as cause operates in Magic in the guise of efficient cause; nature takes the place of the lack of origin of signification. Lacan related this substitution, which is nature in the place of origin, with repression.

Religion is founded on a repression of the truth as cause (742). A religious person leaves responsibility for the cause to God, but bars his own access to truth. Thus the religious person is led to place the cause of his desire in God's hands. His demand is subordinated to his presumed desire for a God who must then be seduced. Truth in religion is relegated to so-called eschatological ends, which is to say that truth appears only as final cause, in the sense that it is deferred to an end of the world judgment day. As for religion, if this is analysed from the perspective of the subject of science, its basis in obsessional mechanisms becomes clear.

Science, by contrast, does not involve repression. What is involved in science is foreclosure. Science does not want to know, it rejects or forecloses, the truth in its status as cause. Thus, for Lacan, the closure intrinsic to science corresponded to the maintenance of a successful paranoia. Lacan noted: "You may recognize therein my formulation of *Verwerfung* or 'foreclosure', which forms a closed series here with *Verdrängung*, 'repression', and *Verneinung*, 'negation', whose function in magic and religion I have indicated in passing". (742)

Insofar as psychoanalysis has a role to play, it must relate this foreclosure back to the rejection of the Name-of-the-Father, the paternal function. However, a deadlock will then emerge, as science in turn will demand to incorporate such alleged psychic structures into forms of scientific knowledge. Psychoanalysis must therefore somehow avoid becoming caught up in the deadlocked attempt to suture the subject: "If one acknowledges that psychoanalysis is essentially what brings the Name-of-the-Father back into scientific examination, one comes upon the same apparent deadlock; but one has the feeling that this very deadlock spurs on progress, and that one can see the chiasmus that seemed to create an obstacle therein becoming undone" (739).

The originality of psychoanalysis in the field of science is its emphasis on the material cause, beyond the formal causality of science. The signifier makes its impact on the child in the imaginary situation by virtue of its materiality: the Name-of-the-Father, the proper name and the name in general are all signifiers; so also is the phallus.⁷ The signifier is defined by psychoanalysis as acting first of all as if it were separate from its signification:

Here we see the literal character trait that specifies the phallus, when—arising outside of the limits of the subject's biological maturation—it is effectively (im)printed; it is unable, however, to be the sign representing sex, the partner's sex—that is the partner's biological sign; recall, in this connection, my formulations differentiating the signifier from the sign. (...) The phallus itself is nothing but the site of lack it indicates in the subject. (739-40)

Psychoanalysis's recognition of this incursion of the signifier into human life separates it out from developmental psychology. Psychoanalysis deals with history rather than development. Lacan noted that history as a science needs to learn that history unfolds only in going against the rhythm of development. He suggested that his conception of the importance of signifiers in the structuring of symbolic space is compatible with the theory of historical materialism. The latter might also benefit from his own theory of the *objet a*, given the importance of this object for determining how truth plays the role of cause.

Psychoanalysis emphasizes truth as cause in its guise as material cause. The material cause is the form of impact of the signifier in its separation from signification. That the signifier is separate from signification is what distinguishes it from the sign. The main consequence of this distinction is that, from thereon, there is nothing which can represent the Other sex. The problem of transmission in psychoanalysis is in the tension between the scientific form of communication and the relation established in psychoanalysis between the subject of science and its material cause.

Lacan concluded "Science and Truth" by stressing his "primary concern" with respect to magic, religion, and science: "[My] primary concern is to remind you that, as subjects of psychoanalytic science, you must resist the temptation of each of these

⁷ See Chapter Four for a discussion of The-Name-of-the-Father.

relations to truth as cause. ... Magic explains nothing, religion preserves a false and hierarchical relation to revealed truth as mythical cause, and science communicates knowledge in a form that sutures the subject” (740). At the end of his subsequent “*Réponse aux étudiants en philosophie sur l’objet de la psychanalyse*” (Lacan, 2001 [1966]), he argued that “psychoanalysis as a science will be structuralist, to the point of recognizing in science a refusal of the subject” (11). In that text he called on psychoanalysis to begin to confront “the first obstacle to its scientific value” (11). This epistemological break is its failure to elaborate its “relation to truth as cause, in its material guises, as situated in that site of lack which is indicated in the subject by the phallus” (Lacan, 2013 [1965]: 743).

Lacan identified a causal function of truth that stands apart from its relation to knowledge. The subject refuses knowledge because he or she is bound to a truth that transcends knowledge. Lacan pointed out that just as the subject does not want to know about sexual difference, science does not want to know about the role that truth plays as a cause. Freud’s “*Wo es war, soll Ich werden*” (Freud, 2001 [1933]: 160), indicates that a task for psychoanalysis is for it to “occupy the place to which knowledge refuses to go” (160).⁸ On this basis Lacan identified another analogy between the Cartesian cogito and the Freudian subject. In the ‘*I think, therefore I am*’, the ‘*I am*’ leans on the cause of the ‘*I think*’. In psychoanalysis, I am called to assume my own causality, which presupposes that I am not yet the cause of myself. Lacan then takes this transcendent causality all the way up to the concept of God. Spinoza’s concept of God as *causa sui* rests on an exclusion: “the Spinozan self-cause is also some-Thing other than the Whole” (Lacan, 2013 [1965]: 739).⁹ If truth has this causal component, is all truth consequently restricted

⁸ One of Freud's most famous sentences is “*Wo Es war, soll Ich werden.*” The German has been translated into English in various ways, among them: “Where Id was, there shall Ego be” and “Where it was, shall I be.”

⁹ Baruch (Benedict de) Spinoza (1632–1677) was recognized alongside Leibniz as a key post-Cartesian rationalist; Spinoza was regarded as one of the major philosophers of the early modern era, responsible for the Radical Enlightenment at the source of philosophical modernity. Born in Amsterdam to descendents of Portuguese Marranos (Jews who had been forced into Catholic conversion), Spinoza’s earliest education was in the Jewish community, although he very quickly established contact with Cartesian circles. The decisive event of his life was his excommunication from the Amsterdam synagogue in 1656, ostensibly for his heretical denial of the immortality of the soul. Spinoza spent the rest of his life in various small towns in Holland, leading an austere existence before dying at the age of 44. The only

by this function? Referring to his 1955 paper, “The Freudian Thing”, (Lacan, 2006 [1955]) which turns on the statement “I, truth, speak” (336), Lacan argued that since “there is no such thing as a meta-language, it is impossible for any particular language or theory to say the truth about truth” (336). There is no such thing as a meta-language: “no language is able to say the truth about truth, since truth is grounded in the fact that truth speaks, and that it has no other means by which to become grounded” (338).

It is precisely the limitation posed by the lack of a meta-language that allows one to situate the unconscious as the only subject capable of speaking, that is, a language telling the truth about truth: “This is precisely why the unconscious, which tells the truth about truth, is structured like a language, and why I, in so teaching, tell the truth about Freud who knew how to let the truth speak” (342). It is, moreover, the ultimate “lack of truth about truth that is the rightful place of *Urverdrängung*, that is, of primal repression” (343). Lacan asked whether this means that one must abandon the idea that in psychoanalysis there might be a body of knowledge that corresponds to truth: “[This] is the breaking point whereby we depend upon the advent of science. We no longer have anything with which to join knowledge and truth together but the subject of science.” (339). Nevertheless, by reintroducing the notion of truth as a cause, psychoanalysis managed to perceive what science was not able to. Science itself “does not want to know anything about the truth as cause” (339). One task of psychoanalysis is to gain insight into the truths that motivate crises in science, and to point out their status as misrecognised causes.

Psychoanalytic Research

Methodologists have developed a number of research strategies for the social and the human sciences under the general rubric of qualitative research. Within this field, different methodological and theoretical approaches co-exist. Qualitative research

other work Spinoza published was the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (1670). This work was remarkable not simply for its advocacy of religious tolerance and democracy as a social form, but also for its engagement with the Bible as a historical, rather than a religious, document. Spinoza deemed his masterpiece, the *Ethics*, too controversial to be published in his lifetime, though it appeared shortly after his death.

starting from a psychoanalytic point of view implies co-operation with methodologies from the social and human sciences. In relation to psychoanalysis the information obtained by this kind of research is data that does not come from the analytic situation. Qualitative research explicitly aims at the development of a theory, and it can be used to expand the reach of existing theories, such as psychoanalysis. Qualitative research explicitly starts from theory-driven decisions. Consequently, ideas valued from a psychoanalytic point of view could be taken into account. This thesis, therefore, will be based on a range of research methods within the umbrella of qualitative methodological approaches: textual analysis as interpretative procedures of key writings in psychoanalysis, principally those of Freud and Lacan but as well historical and recent literature that discusses concepts of sexual difference generally and the different types of *jouissance* in particular. Leonardo Rodriguez suggests, regarding psychoanalytical research that includes theory and clinical practice:

Following Freud's and Lacan's example, we try to make of our study of texts a creative experience, and not simply the assimilation of written theory. By 'creative' I mean open to creative interpretation and linked to our own experience, our own questions and research, the clinical problems and the large amount of mysteries and enigmas that we face every day. We treat these texts that we study and that we so much respect as *living* entities, not as dead letter; and this is only possible if we are able to link these texts – written in other times and places by people who lived and worked in very different contexts – with our own lives, and our own questions and practices. (Rodriguez, 2013, n.p.)

My research methods acknowledge the analytic situation in psychoanalysis, the analyst as *objet a*, and hence the peculiar notion of knowing that comes from the practice of analysis. From my extensive clinical engagement, I activate aspects of epistemic and ontological determinations characterized explicitly by the Lacanian Orientation. I do not use material directly related to my case histories or current clients in my clinical practice but take from case histories in the public domain as well as my general knowledge of psychoanalysis, approaches to empirical investigation peculiar to psychoanalytic procedures. Qualitative research findings are used in order to substantiate the argument.

Hence, research and scholarship in the field of psychoanalysis in general and in the Lacanian Orientation in particular tend to fall into two broad arenas, that of clinical and that of critical research. While Lacan's own practice and research was focused on clinical practice, his theoretical work has been taken up broadly in the fields of philosophy, law, literary theory, architecture and, more broadly, cultural studies. Lacanian theory itself constitutes a particular methodological approach within the broader methodologies of psychoanalysis. It approaches its objects of analysis or study in a refusal of orthodox subject/object binaries and in terms of an epistemological framework that radically questions the grounds or possibility of knowing reality as such. Lacanian approaches to research engage interpretative methods that radically interrogate discourse as a symbolic order in un-concealing the discourse of the unconscious that primordially structures conscious and rational processes. This research, while concerned with an elucidation of the issues of defining sexual difference within the Lacanian Orientation, engages a Lacanian *episteme* as fundamental to its processes.

While I am a practicing clinician and I continued with clinical practice during this research, my research methods do not engage with clinical practice in contexts of bringing participants into the research process, thus no ethics application was required. The thesis engages primarily with a wide body of literature by and on Freud and Lacan and systematically interrogates those works hermeneutically, but crucially from the position of the three Orders of Lacanian analysis embodied in the differentiations of the Imaginary, the Symbolic and the Real. In establishing *epistemological* and *methodological* frameworks for this research, with the following chapter I develop an historical research review that includes Freud and Lacan's main theses concerning sexuality, as well as some contemporary scholars within the field.

Chapter 3

Historical Literature Review

Après-coup

This chapter includes, firstly, the establishment of the rational and significance of a historical literature review in a PhD project within the Freudian Field of Psychoanalysis and the Lacanian Orientation. It then follows an historical pathway of the conceptualization of sexuality, which includes some Freudian references, namely: *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, *Infantile Sexuality*, *Etiology of Neurosis* and *Freudian Myths*. The chapter continues with the presentation and discussion of some of Lacan's clinical and critical references to sexuality: *The Mirror Stage* and some of the late work from Lacan. After establishing those main Freudian and Lacanian references, I engage with texts from key scholars influenced by Lacan's theories on sexuality: Ellie Ragland, Bruce Fink, Luce Irigaray, Slavoj Žižek, Juliet Mitchell, Geneviève Morel, Colette Soler, Renata Salecl, Suzanne Barnard, Judith Butler, Jason Glynos, Cynthia

Dyess and Tim Dean. I conclude the chapter in indicating, from this literature review, important gaps in the literature that justify this research.

Retroactivity of Historical Review

Scholars seem to be in agreement that all pursuit of knowledge is determined by the underlying theories that researchers hold concerning the universe they are observing. Without a theory, we are unable to select data from an overwhelming mixture of impressions. Researching within the Freudian field of psychoanalysis and the Lacanian orientation anchors enquiry to a specific theory. However, it is still desirable to know what the underlying theory is and how has it evolved since its creation. Psychoanalytic literature reflects a close relationship between psychoanalytic theory and practice. However, since psychoanalytic theory has often been elaborated at high levels of abstraction, that unity of theory and practice may not always be as clear as we wish. It seems to be a characteristic of complex fields that large and overarching theories are constructed in an attempt to provide guidance and justification for the researcher in what may otherwise be a disorganized field. Those theories usually include within them an attempt to imagine the original causes: an effort to understand the moment of creation in order to unify all subsequent observations.

For Lacan the production of signification works retroactively: *Après-coup* is the French translation of a Freudian concept, *Nachträglichkeit*, which is a noun or *Nachträglich*, an adjective. Lacan underlined the importance of this concept in his comments on the Wolf Man case (Lacan, 1991 [1953-54]). The concept of *Après-coup* is important for the psychoanalytical conception of temporality, in that it establishes a complex relation between the event and its retroactive signification via signifiers. Lacan noted: “Signifiers which are still in a floating state – whose signification is not yet fixed – follow one another. Then, at a certain point, some signifier fixes retroactively the meaning of the chain, sews the meaning of the signifier, halts the sliding of the meaning” (Lacan, 2006 [1957b: 577]). Lacan called this the “*quilting point*,” which retroactively fixes a meaning to an unstructured chain of floating signifiers. This quilting point is the interaction of the signifier and the signified that are knotted together, fixed and

stabilized. In speech, the continuous unstable sliding of the signifier is separated from that of the signified. Without the quilting point, there would not be a fixed position to situate the dissemination of meanings. On those quilting points, the meaning is distributed, disseminated and stabilized just like upholstery button stitching anchoring a material surface to its substrate: “It’s the point of convergence that enables everything that happens in this discourse to be situated retroactively and prospectively” (Lacan, 1997 [1955-6]: 268).

The crucial point here lies in the time structure implied by Lacan’s matrix of signification, as Slavoj Žižek underlines: “... instead of the linear, immanent, necessary progression according to which meaning unfolds itself from some initial kernel, we have a radically contingent process of retroactive production of meaning” (Žižek, 1989: 102). Lacan’s quilting point indicates that the repressed past is never known as such, it can become known only in the process of its transformation, since the interpretation itself intervenes in its object and changes it.

Freud’s Three Essays

The enquiry into sexuality and the unconscious has been a mainstream focus of attention among academics within the Freudian field of psychoanalysis since the main hypotheses were introduced by Freud in his *Three essays on the theory of sexuality* (Freud, 2001 [1905b]). Since that time, there have been many academics and psychoanalysts who have developed a body of research, both clinical and critical, around sexuality. According to James Strachey, editor of the *Standard Edition*, the *Three Essays* should be considered, after *The Interpretation of Dreams*, to be Freud’s “most momentous and original contributions to human knowledge” (Freud, 2001 [1905b]: 126).¹ The immediate influence of the *Three Essays* for academics, health professionals and a general population was profound, and fostered change in the way

¹ James Beaumont Strachey (1887-1967), was a British psychoanalyst, and with his wife Alix, a translator of Freud into English. He is best known as the general editor of the *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*.

that people thought about sexuality. The *Three Essays* is one of Freud's major works. However, as far as infantile sexuality is concerned, the text represents a key moment on a long path, pursued over the course of two decades.

The mind changing effect of the *Three Essays* was not due to the first essay, which concerned perversions. Havelock Ellis² had already discussed sexual aberrations before the *Three Essays* and Freud acknowledges and cites his work. Richard von Krafft-Ebing³ and others had made every effort thoroughly to create a literature concerned with sexual deviations. The medical context of these publications justified their sexual content and they were received with approbation. The mind-changing effect of the *Three Essays* was not due to the last of the *Three Essays*, "The Transformations of Puberty" either. The controversy was rather due to the second essay, in which Freud discussed specifically sexuality in childhood.

In the first essay, "The Sexual Aberrations," we find Freud engaging with the issue of homosexuality and refuting the common theories that highlighted constitutional degeneracy factors as explanatory for homosexuality. He acknowledged that such factors may be at the root of perversions in some cases, but to those must be added the decisive participation of accidental causes, that is, childhood events that Freud linked to sexuality. Starting from two basic concepts such as drive and object, Freud noted: "it seems probable that the sexual drive is in the first instance independent of its object" (148). He stated that one must distinguish between types of perversion, according to whether the sexual anomaly is related to the object or to the aim, that is, to the activities that lead to sexual gratification.

Freud discussed the issue of homosexuality in this general theoretical context, that is, how from a developmental standpoint, a person would make either a

² Henry Havelock Ellis, (1859-1939), was a British physician and psychologist, writer and social reformer who studied human sexuality. He was co-author, in 1897, of the first medical textbook in English on homosexuality and also published works on a variety of sexual practices and inclinations, including transgender psychology. He is credited with introducing the notions of narcissism and autoeroticism, later adopted by psychoanalysis.

³ Richard Fridolin Joseph Freiherr Krafft von Festsberg auf Frohnberg, genannt von Ebing (1840-1902) was an Austro-German psychiatrist. He was the author of the seminal work *Psychopathia Sexualis*.

homosexual or heterosexual choice of object, and that choice may vary during the person's lifetime. Either path might be taken in consequence of the anatomic-physiologic and psychic bisexuality that characterizes every human being, a hypothesis that Freud explicitly attributed to Wilhelm Fliess.⁴ Freud sustained his argument with the concept of *partial drives*: several independent impulses, each related to an erotogenic zone or somatic source without being integrated with each other. He said that with the concept of partial drive, one can better understand why numerous perversions are characterized by sexual behavior that preferentially involves the oral and the anal erotogenic zones. He postulated that where neurotic subjects repress the desire for the gratification of the partial drive, the differential diagnosis for perversion in adults resides in the fact that their sexual practices are permanently and predominantly based on satisfying those partial drives. From this reasoning emerged Freud's idea that "neuroses are the negative of perversions" (165), an idea which he had previously taken up in a letter to Fliess (Freud, 2001 [1897]). The ideas that he developed in his first essay led him to his second one, which focused on childhood sexuality. Freud indicated that every adult was once a child and should, then, be able to recall childhood in more than a fragmentary way. However, most adults are not able to do so. He added two observations: first, infantile amnesia affects everything concerning sexuality in childhood and, second, the moral condemnation that impacts all manifestations of sexuality leads to repression or gratification through sublimation.

For Freud, the sucking activity observed in the infant should be considered as the prototype for all future sexual gratification. Thumb sucking "consists in the rhythmic repetition of a sucking contact by the mouth. There is no question of the purpose of this procedure being the taking of nourishment" (Freud, 2001 [1905b]: 179-80). Thumb sucking has no other aim but pleasure and is separate from, but attached to or initially dependent upon, the need for nourishment: "To begin with, sexual activity attaches itself to functions serving the purpose of self-preservation and does not become independent of them until later" (182). Thus oral gratification is a prototype for every

⁴ Wilhelm Fliess (1858-1928) was a German Jewish otolaryngologist who practiced in Berlin. On Josef Breuer's suggestion, Fliess attended several conferences with Freud, beginning in 1887 in Vienna, and the two soon formed a strong friendship. Through their extensive correspondence and the series of personal meetings, Fliess came to play an important part in the development of psychoanalysis.

sexual gratification, pleasurable in itself and autoerotic. He wrote that the infant seems to be saying, “It’s a pity I can’t kiss myself” (182). Here we find one of the major sources of discomfort provoked by the second essay. Freud presented a further fundamental idea: the infant may be characterized as possessing a “*polymorphously perverse disposition*” (188), due to the diverse and polyvalent character of *erotogenic zones* as invested by the drives and by the various means of gratification. This is not to say that the child will become perverse as an adult. On the contrary, this *polymorphously perverse disposition* was, for Freud, the foundation of the normal trajectory of psychosexual development.

In the 1905 edition of the third essay, “The Transformations of Puberty,” Freud examined three central themes in psychoanalysis: the libidinal economy of the onset of puberty, male and female sexuality, and object relations. He raised the notion of the integration, “under the primacy of the genital zones” (208), of the partial drives and *erotogenic zones*, which serve as gateways to preliminary gratification preceding sexual intercourse, through coitus and orgasm. Freud’s thesis then encountered a problem. He said that pleasure lowers tension while unpleasure raises it, writing: “I must insist that a feeling of tension necessarily involves unpleasure” (209). But if the activity that seeks to decrease tension is perceived as a pleasure, the problem was how to understand the search for sexual excitement, which characterizes every sexual act, including the foreplay, before culminating in orgasm and relaxation? This problem remained without a solution in the 1905 edition. It would be later, in *The Economic Problem of Masochism* (Freud, 2001 [1924a]) that he returned to it.

Freud discussed a second theme in the third essay in a section titled “The Differentiation between Men and Women,” in which he asserted: “The sexuality of little girls is of a wholly masculine character (...) it would even be possible to maintain that libido is invariably and necessarily of a masculine nature, whether it occurs in men or in women” (Freud, 2001 [1905b]: 219). He highlighted that the clitoris was the site of masturbatory pleasure for girls and that, in the woman, it could be viewed as the organ of fore pleasure that transmits excitement to the adjacent female parts. His subsequent discussion of these ideas, particularly in *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*

(Freud, 2001 [1933]), would eventually incite considerable controversy regarding the nature of female sexuality.

Another theme in the third essay concerned “The Finding of an Object” during the transformations of puberty. In 1905, Freud still subscribed to the theory that he would later modify in fundamental ways. He opposed object-directed sexuality developed during puberty to infantile sexuality, which he supposed to be essentially autoerotic, stating that the mother's breast as an original object was by then long lost, so that libidinal investment in the sexual partner after puberty was not a discovery but a rediscovery. This was a proposition that facilitated fruitful developments, from this point on. Freud acknowledged the object-relations nature of infantile sexuality. He moved to consider infantile anxiety and the “barrier against incest” (225) that forbids sexual relations between child and parents. He clearly established there what, from 1910 onwards, he would call the *Oedipus complex*.⁵ In a later paper, “The Infantile Genital Organization” (2001 [1923a]), Freud wrote:

Readers of my Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality will be aware that I have never undertaken any thorough remodeling of that work in its later editions, but have retained the original arrangement and have kept abreast of the advances made in our knowledge by means of interpolations and alterations in the text. In doing this, it may often have happened that what was old and what was more recent did not admit of being merged into an entirely uncontradictory whole. (Freud, 2001 [1923a]: 141)⁶.

In an additional section he added to the second essay in 1915, Freud discussed “The Phases of Development of the Sexual Organization” (Freud, 2001 [1905b]: 197). Those texts represented a major departure as Freud introduced the notion of pre-genital organization of oral and anal stages preceding the genital organization. In 1923 he

⁵ The term “*Oedipus Complex*” did not appear in Freud's published work until his paper “A Special Type of Object-Choice Made by Men” (1910, p. 171). At that time, with some reluctance, he borrowed the word *complex* from Carl Jung. Freud's reference to the myth of Oedipus, however, originated much earlier. In a letter dated October 15, 1897, to his friend Fliess, he wrote: “I have found, in my own case too, falling in love with the mother and jealousy of the father, and I now regard it as a universal event of early childhood”.

⁶ The *Standard Edition* indicates all the modifications, suppressions and additions to the text as Freud revised it in 1910, 1915, 1920 and 1924.

added a note to the emendation in which he mentioned that he had advanced in the idea of an intermediary stage, called infantile genital organization:

This phase, which already deserves to be described as genital, presents a sexual object and some degree of convergence of the sexual impulses upon that object; but it is differentiated from the final organization of sexual maturity in one essential respect. For it knows only one kind of genital: the male one. For this reason I have named it the phallic stage of organization. (Freud, 2001 [1905b]: 199-200).

This idea implied that the development of the choice of object arises in two periods separated by latency, from the first stage of infantile genital organization, then after the final genital organization that emerges at puberty.

Infantile Sexuality, Etiology of Neurosis and Freudian Myths

The question of infantile sexuality arose with Freud's theoretical efforts to create an etiology of neurosis, and it could be traced to *Studies on Hysteria* (Freud, 2001 [1895a]). In Freud's early view, hysteria and neuroses, more generally, are pathological conditions triggered by a sexual seduction sustained in childhood. But the question here was: sexual for whom—for the adult seducer? But what could be said regarding the seduced child: was it sexual? Freud wrote to Fliess on October 8, 1895 (letter 29), that he suspected “that hysteria is conditioned by a primary sexual experience accompanied by revulsion and fright; and that obsessional neurosis is conditioned by the same accompanied by pleasure” (Freud, 2001 [1895b]: 126). Then a week later, on October 15, 1895, (letter 30) Freud wrote to Fliess: “Have I revealed the great clinical secret to you, either in writing or by word of mouth? Hysteria is the consequence of a presexual sexual shock. Obsessional neurosis is the consequence of pre-sexual sexual pleasure later transformed into guilt” (Freud, 2001 [1895b]: 127).

We could think Freud's dilemma in terms of: is it pre-sexual sexual? Does infantile sexuality exist? Freud noted, referring to cases of obsessional neurosis: “In the primary experience has been accompanied by pleasure” (Freud, 2001 [1896a]: 149). He then added that hysteria “necessarily presupposes a primary unpleasurable experience

that is, one of a passive kind. The natural sexual passivity of women accounts for their being more inclined to hysteria” (154). Soon thereafter, in *Further Remarks on the Neuro-Psychoses of Defense* (Freud, 2001 [1896b]), he tried what could be read as a compromise, suggesting that pathogenic trauma acts in two stages, that “it is not the experiences themselves which act traumatically but their revival as a memory after the subject has entered on sexual maturity” (Freud, 2001 [1896b]: 164). In other words, the childhood trauma, which is traumatic because the child suffers a frightening assault, the nature of which he or she does not understand, will become sexual only in puberty, which is *a posteriori*.

Freud used the myth of Oedipus, as described in Sophocles’ play, to explain how boys loved their mother and eventually identified with their father, and how girls loved their father and identified with their mother. Darian Leader suggested, regarding Freud’s uses of myths in psychoanalysis: “Freud’s work has been both praised and maligned for its frequent introduction of myths and narratives which attempt to map out the archaeology of the human psyche. These range from classical myth to the invention of new myths, from the use of the Sophoclean Oedipus to the strange story about the origin of society set out in *Totem and Taboo*” (Leader, 2003: 35). Freud created his own myth of *Totem and Taboo* (1913), which he borrowed, in part, from Charles Darwin’s *The Descent of Man* (1871). The myth of *Totem and Taboo* describes the origins of civilization: sexual identity, love, law, morality and religion in an original state in which a mythical father possessed all of the women and killed or expelled all of his challenging sons until his sons finally sat down together and arranged to share out the women after having killed the father.

Lacan’s Clinical and Critical Innovations

Lacan introduced many critical innovations to Freudian psychoanalysis. Among those innovations he articulated two mainstream fields of the twentieth century: psychoanalysis and structuralism. He also re-contextualized them within a version of Hegelianism that emphasized the role of desire, the moment of negation and the violence inherent in human interaction. Further, he completed this re-conceptualization

by synthesizing some of the most influential theoretical and methodological currents of the twentieth century. Lacan was influenced by Freudian concepts and informed by Nietzschean and surrealist ideas that would later become central to the Post-structural view of the subject. He took the perspective that the analysand's unconscious reveals a fragmented subject of uncertain sexual identity.

I will briefly introduce the various periods that marked Lacan's theoretical development and will follow for this task Žižek's *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, (Žižek, 1989: 131-32). With the first period, from the 1930s to the 1950s, Lacan was informed not only by Freud but also by Hegel and phenomenology. This first period culminated in "The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis – the Rome Discourse" (Lacan, 2006 [1953b]). The second period was characterized by Lacan's "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter'," based on the text by Edgar Allan Poe. (Lacan, 2006 [1957a]) This period saw a shift to a more rigorously structural position, with language conceptualized as a synchronic structure: "a senseless autonomous mechanism which produces meaning as its effect" (Lacan, 2006 [1957a]: 131). And the third period, which began to emerge with Lacan's Seminar VII *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, (Lacan 1997 [1959/60]), saw Lacan developing his theory of the Other in connection with his system of the three registers: the Imaginary, the Symbolic and the Real, and the introduction of the *Borromean Knot*.

In his first period, Lacan introduced a notion of dialectic derived from Alexandre Kojève's presentation of Hegel's analysis of the Master–Slave dialectic. Lacan, like many intellectuals of his generation, was profoundly influenced by Kojève's lectures on Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, given at the *Ecole des Hautes Etudes* between 1933 and 1939. Kojève offered "a terroristic conception of history" (Descombes 1980: 14) and his lectures were described as a "kind of serial story reflecting the anxieties of a generation shattered by the rise of the dictators, haunted by the prospect of war, and tempted by the new nihilism" (Roudinesco 1997: 101). Kojève offered a presentation of Hegel's notions of mind, self-awareness, absolute knowledge, recognition and desire, among others. Kojève "showed us the child that Heidegger might have had by Marx, and passed it off as Hegel, in a brilliant intellectual synthesis" (102). This new

perspective made it possible to appreciate the significance of Kojève's lectures for Lacan's analysis of the subject and his dealings with desire, the phallus and sexual identification. Kojève presented a precise notion of desire, in a way that presaged Lacanian formulation on the topic:

The very being of man, the self-conscious being, therefore, implies and presupposes desire ... In contrast to the knowledge that keeps man in a passive quietude, desire dis-quiets him and moves him to action. Born of desire, action tends to satisfy it, and can do so only by the negation, the destruction, or at least the transformation, of the desired object ... The I of desire is an emptiness that receives a real positive content only by negating action that satisfies desire in destroying, transforming, and assimilating the desired non-I ... For there to be Self-Consciousness, desire must be directed toward a non-natural object, toward something that goes beyond the given reality. Now, the only thing that goes beyond the given reality is desire itself. For desire taken as desire – i.e., before its satisfaction – is but a revealed nothingness, an unreal emptiness. Desire is the revelation of an emptiness, the presence of the absence of a reality ... Thus, in the relationship between man and woman, Desire is human only if one desires, not the body, but the Desire of the other. (Kojève 1980: 4-6)

According to Lacan, desire came to be not just a concept of psychoanalysis but to constitute its essence: "The Freudian world isn't a world of things, it isn't a world of being, it is a world of desire as such" (Lacan 2006 [1953b]: 112).

Lacan followed Freud's steps, as early as in his encyclopedia article, "The Family Complex," (Lacan, 2013 [1938]) where he described how the attachment to the mother and rivalry with siblings culminates, in each individual history, in an encounter with the question of the father, through which sexual identity was attained. Freud's initial thesis was supported by Lacan, who states that, thanks to the Oedipus complex, "a boy has his qualifications in the bag" (Lacan, 2006 [1957b]: 579). According to Lacan, the boy would know how to be a man: "The unconscious, through the Oedipus complex, makes a man by giving him the orientation of the phallus" (580). But the Oedipus complex did not seem to make a woman in the same way. The function of castration, as pivot around the Oedipus complex, was essential for the constitution of the subject, particularly with respect to the subject's sexual identity: "It is more than clear that castration is not a

minor factor but is absolutely fundamental not with respect to what establishes, but to what renders sexual bipolarity impossible to say” (Lacan, 1971-72: 78). Lacanian conceptualization of the phallus as a signifier plays a unique role for both sexes; it opens the dialectics between *having* or *being the phallus*.

Lacan’s first theories of sexuality, which emerge in the 1950s and early 1960s, correspond to “The Signification of the Phallus” (Lacan, 2006 [1957b]) and the text “Guiding Remarks for a Convention on Feminine Sexuality” (Lacan, 2006 [1960b]). Despite Kojève’s influence, Lacan’s theory of the phallus and sexual difference developed within a version of psychoanalysis that was influenced by structuralism, as Roudinesco explains:

[F]or Lacan, the unconscious was structured like a language. Indeed, it was through this reading of Saussure, following the research of Roman Jakobson, that Lacan—together with Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, Louis Althusser, and others—was to become the architect of a school of thought that is based on a break with phenomenology and has been called an anti-humanist, structuralist, and scientific conception of psychoanalysis. (Roudinesco 1997: 267)

The Mirror Stage

I have primarily outlined above key influences that contributed to Lacan’s theory of the phallus and his analysis of sexual difference. Now I turn to Lacan’s theory of the “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the *I* as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience” (Lacan, 2006 [1936-49]), a text that underlines Lacan’s theory of the subject, and that is intrinsic to his understanding of sexuality. Regarding the Mirror Stage, Lacan was influenced by the work of Henri Wallon, who described the *mirror test* that animals and young children go through when confronted with their reflections in a mirror.⁷ Wallon’s experiments showed, for example, that a child around ten months finds itself caught in two contradictory modalities of representation. Roudinesco comments on

⁷ Henri Paul Hyacinthe Wallon (1879-1962) was a French philosopher and psychologist, in the field of social psychology and Professor at the Collège de France, who published an article on the child’s development of its bodily sense, in the *Journal de Psychologie* in 1931 and a book, *Origines du Caractère chez L’enfant*, in 1934.

Wallon's postulations: "On the one hand, he encounters sensory images that are not real, and on the other, real images unavailable to sensory apprehension" (Roudinesco 1990: 70). Through the resolution of such situations, the child achieves a sense of its body in contrast with the object and the child also moves towards a unity and at the same time he or she opens the way for a symbolic comprehension of the situation. Roudinesco highlights that Lacan's theory of the Mirror Stage constituted a "synthesis in which Wallonism was reinterpreted from the perspective of a Freudianism which was itself elaborated in terms borrowed from Kojève" (143).

Lacan's paper on the Mirror Stage was not fully appreciated in its initial presentation at the Marienbad conference of the International Psychoanalytical Society in 1936 and it was in 1949 that he made a definitive version. In this version, the role of Kojève in Lacan's development faded and Lacan began his presentation with the immature development of the infant and, in particular, its lack of motor co-ordination, high levels of dependency and a sense of fragmentation. Lacan indicated the significance in such circumstances of the child's encounter with its specular image, with which the child could identify and confirm his or her existence as a differentiated being. This event highlights, according to Lacan: "the symbolic matrix in which the I is precipitated in a primordial form, before it is objectified in the dialectic of identification with the other, and before language restores to it, in the universal, its function as subject" (Lacan, 2006 [1936-49]: 2).

Consequently, the *I* was apprehended by the child as both self and an Other, embedding an irreducible duality in the most primordial of all social recognitions and dialectics. Consequently, for Lacan: "the mirror stage is a drama whose internal thrust culminates in the assumption of the armour of an alienating identity, which will mark with its rigid structure the subject's entire mental development" (4). On the one hand, the Mirror Stage represents a visual, corporal unity with which the infant identifies and, on the other hand, that unity is constituted in reference to a radical Otherness. It is this view of the primordial constitution of the subject that Lacan took into his theory of the phallus and its role in sexual difference.

Phallic Function

I need to emphasize some aspects of the Freudian model outlined earlier in order to understand Lacan's use of Freud's concepts. Firstly, there is a different role that the castration complex plays for male and female children and consequently there are different effects of its resolution. Secondly, the power of the phallus lies in what it symbolizes: the promise of presence and wholeness and, by its absence, the threat of castration. Lacan emphasized: "the phallus is the signifier of lack" (Lacan, 2006 [1957b]: 578). Third, this Symbolic Order requires the distinction between penis and phallus. As Rycroft points out in connection with the role of these terms in Freudian theory, while penis is an anatomical term, phallus is "an anthropological and theological term referring to the idea or image of the male generative organ ... the phallus is an idea venerated in various religions as a symbol of the power of nature" (Rycroft, 1995: 127). The term phallus was specifically chosen by Freud to emphasize its status in organizing the sexual economy, within which Freud says, for example, that in the phallic phase boys "are not only pre-occupied with their penis but also with the idea of potency, virility, manliness, and strength and power generally" (Freud, 2001 [1905b]: 59).

I have already stated that Lacan's approach to sexuality was fundamentally informed by his interpretation of Freud, and his achievement was to bring his interpretation of Freud together with Hegelian and structural themes to produce a theoretical synthesis. Thus in his paper "The Signification of the Phallus" (Lacan, 2006 [1957b]), Lacan located the phallus within the Symbolic Order, as a signifier in the structural sense of the term, and he argued that the relationship of *signifier/signified* was central to psychoanalysis. The phallus was a signifier with effective power and not a fantasy with only an imaginary effect. Nor is it an object-representation of an assumed underlying reality and neither is it any particular organ—penis, clitoris—that it merely symbolizes. The phallus has a central organizing function. Sexual difference is not to be understood as biologically determined; its particular configuration is not a fact of nature. Rather, it is a product of the Symbolic Order, one in which the phallus dominates and defines the reality and psychological signification of castration, male and female, desire and radical Otherness.

The phallic order communicates not only specific values, for instance phallocentrism, patriarchal meanings and significations, but it also transmits the rules of organization and exchange that apply within its sexual economy, to which every child is required to submit as he or she assumes sexual identity. Consequently, within the Lacanian reformulation: "... the Oedipal crisis does not occur because a child wants to possess its mother sexually, but when the child comprehends its society's sexual rules; the crisis is resolved when the rules are acceded to and accepted" (Ragland-Sullivan 1987: 268). The centrality of the phallus as the key signifier in the Symbolic Order constituting the sexual economy has implications broader than just the determination of the subject as a sexed entity. Within this sexual economy the signification of castration according to Lacanian theory is quite vast:

Castration leaves the infant feeling incomplete, broken, a *hommelette*.⁸ No incest wish is being punished here by fear of organ loss; instead, the fear is of loss of being or of disintegration ... so potent is this drama that it inaugurates human anxiety. The phallic signifier imposes culture or order on nature, therefore, creating a permanent awareness of Otherness in the subject. (270)

The role of the phallus and castration or the lack that it signifies is profound: "[T]he phallus is ... the signifier or creator of the lack that establishes substitutive Desire as a permanent ontological state." (271). And as Fink says:

[C]astration can thus be associated with other processes in other domains: in the economic register, capitalism requires the extraction or subtraction from the worker of a certain quantum of value, surplus value circulates in an alien world of abstract market forces". ... our advent as speaking-beings creates a loss, and that loss is at the center of civilization and culture. (Fink, 1995: 100)

Given the centrality of the phallus in Lacan's model of sexual difference, it is not surprising that Lacan, like Freud and much of the psychoanalytic tradition, has been accused of phallocentrism, or that they has been accused of making the alterity of woman, with far-reaching consequences.

⁸ The term '*hommelette*' is one of Lacan's created neologisms to articulate the understanding of libido and lamella. It situates the phallic subject and the primordial, prephallic Life-Substance on a plane of equivalence.

Scholars Influenced by Lacan's Theories on Sexuality

I would like to start by referring to Luce Irigaray on the opening pages of *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* (Irigaray, 1984). There she follows Lacan in understanding sexual difference as a difference that is established in language. While Irigaray is critical of Lacan, she is influenced by his interpretation of Freud's theory of the subject. Irigaray discussed the linguistic character of sexual difference in a manner similar to Lacan, particularly in *This Sex Which Is Not One*, (Irigaray, 1985). She is concerned with how culture and language understand sexual difference and subjectivity. However, she distances herself from Lacan in her understanding of the phallus. Irigaray argues that the phallus is not a purely symbolic category, but is ultimately an extension and a reinforcement of Freud's description of the world according to a one-sex model. She emphasizes the crucial import concerning the question of sexual difference:

[I]s one of the major philosophical issues, if not the issue of our age, and indeed it could be our salvation if we thought it through (...) nevertheless, the psychoanalytic tradition does not provide an acceptable answer. In it, sexual difference is a deviation from the issues of sameness; it is, now and forever, determined within the project, the projection, the sphere of representation, of the same. The differentiation into two sexes derives from the a priori assumption of the same. (Irigaray 1985: 27).

With *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* (Irigaray, 1993), the alternative was to recognize the primacy of alterity:

To arrive at the constitution of an ethics of sexual difference, we must at least return to what is for Descartes the first passion: wonder. This passion has no opposite or contradiction and exists always as though for the first time. Thus man and woman, woman and man are always meeting as though for the first time because they cannot be substituted one for the other. Whatever identifications are possible, one will never exactly occupy the place of the other – they are irreducible one to the other. (Irigaray, 1993: 12)

Ellie Ragland-Sullivan, instead, postulated that:

Irigaray misrepresents Lacan by equating Lacan's phallic signifier with patriarchy. She substantivises the concept biologically, so that Phallus = penis = male (...) by failing to accept the structural effect and symbolic

nature of the Lacanian phallic signifier – neutral in its own right – Irigaray’s assessment of Lacan as a phallocrat is wrong. (Ragland-Sullivan 1987: 273)

This defense is not fully convincing for many feminist critics because this phallic neutrality must ultimately still be doubtful for them, in spite of the underlying Lacanian idea that the phallus is a master signifier within the Symbolic Order that organizes male and female positions. Elisabeth Grosz argued, for example, that Lacan’s phallocentrism entails:

[T]he use of one model of subjectivity, the male, by which all others are positively or negatively defined, with other subjectivities constructed as variations of this singular type of subject. They are thus reduced to or defined only by terms chosen by and appropriate for masculinity. (Grosz, 1989: 105).

Another defense of the Lacanian approach builds on the asymmetry of sexual difference, where men and women are differentially subjected within the phallic order. For example, Žižek argued that Lacan was “the first to outline the contours of a non-imaginary, non-naturalised theory of sexual difference – of a theory that radically breaks with anthropomorphic sexualisation” (Žižek, 1994: 154). Žižek’s argument was informed by the changed position on feminine sexuality that Lacan took in Seminar XX (Lacan, 1999 [1972-73]). Žižek emphasized that, for Lacan, the feminine is constituted precisely by the extent to which it lies outside the phallic economy, radicalizing Freud’s insights into the differential roles and effects of castration and the Oedipus complex for male and female children in establishing the phallic order. Žižek also argued: “It is as far as it is possible to be from the notion of sexual difference as the relationship of two opposite poles which supplement each other and together form the whole of man” (Žižek, 1994: 159). He emphasized that far from being supplementary aspects of a single whole, “each of them is already in itself a failed Whole” (160). As Fink writes: “there is only a non-relationship, an absence of any conceivable direct relationship between the sexes” (Fink, 1995: 105). Consequently, sexuality is “a bricolage, a montage of two heterogeneous elements. Herein resides Lacan’s deconstruction of sexuality” (Žižek 1994: 155). Man and woman and masculine and feminine are not predicates of some prior, essential, and otherwise unsexed subject, nor are they counter-posed instantiations of an underlying

essence. Rather, they are “two modes of the subject’s failure to achieve the full identity” (159). Žižek argues that *man* and *woman* are best seen as different modalities of the relationship between cause and effect. Associated with *man* is a “linear succession of causes and effects” (160), while with *woman* the association is with “a kind of convoluted interaction where the cause functions as an effect of its own effects” (160). This translates into “the domain of sexual pleasure proper” (160) in the following way:

[M]asculine economy tends to be teleological, centered on phallic orgasm qua pleasure par excellence, whereas feminine economy involves a dispersed network of particular pleasures that are not organized around some teleological central principle (...) Consequently, masculine and feminine are not two positive substantial entities but two different modalities of one and the same entity. (160).

Žižek does re-assert the irreducibly relational dimension of sexuality and sexual difference, while revealing the potential of Lacan’s later work in the area.

In *Reading Seminar XX, Lacan’s major work on love, knowledge and feminine sexuality* (Barnard & Fink, 2002), particularly the chapter “Knowledge and Jouissance,” Fink states that Lacan’s fundamental task in Seminar XX was to “demolish fantasies of wholeness, i.e., notions dealing with a motif Lacan calls the One” (Fink, 2002: 20). Fink shows how Lacan tries to rid psychoanalysis of the fantasies of complete and closed wholeness. For Lacanian psychoanalysis, human subjectivity was condemned to being perturbed by a series of constitutive antagonisms. The desiring subject strives to obtain an absolute *jouissance* that doesn’t exist, and yet keep striving: “It is the idea of a jouissance that never fails and that never fails to diminish still further the little jouissance we already have” (21). Hence, through Fink’s contribution, we could discern that Lacan sets up psychoanalysis to combat all the various denials, within both the conceptual framework of the theory and with clinical work, of the non-sexual-relationship. Fink notes: “Lacan’s goal is to eliminate all such fantasies from psychoanalytic theory and practice” (36).

Juliet Mitchell, in her discussion on the implications of psychoanalysis for the notion of sexual identity, comments: “To be human is to be subjected to a law which

de-centers and divides: sexuality is created in a division, the subject is split; but an ideological world conceals this from the conscious subject who is supposed to feel whole and certain of a sexual identity” (Mitchell 1985: 26). According to Mitchell, the consequent task for psychoanalysis was straightforward: “psychoanalysis should aim at a destruction of this concealment and at a reconstruction of the subject’s construction in all its splits” (26). Geneviève Morel, a French Lacanian analyst, in her *Feminine Conditions of Jouissance* (Morel, 1993), focuses her attention on the problem of frigidity in women, and she uses this issue as a means for highlighting some of the preconditions for women achieving a satisfying sexual life. One reason why Lacan proclaimed the non-existence of the sexual relationship is that he perceives the partners as relating not so much to each other but, instead, to their own fantasies and partial object fixations, this being part of what Lacan stated in Seminar XX (Lacan, 1999 [1972-3]), regarding the *objet a* as a mediating barrier between sexual partners, as well as what was conveyed by his earlier formulation in Seminar XI (Lacan, 1998 [1964b]) that, “I love something in you more than you” (Lacan, 1998 [1964b]: 263). Unconscious fantasies and the various incarnations of *objet a* are necessary conditions for both men and women to enter into the sexual field. Physical attraction to another is, to a certain degree, catalyzed by the subject’s specific fantasies. According to Morel, women are in an uncomfortable position: they must do the accoutrements of certain roles for their different partners, and if they overdo them, by for instance identifying with their partners’ fantasies or falling into excessive doubt about their position regarding their partners’ desires, then symptoms could develop, up to and including frigidity. Morel says: “[A] woman must engage in the masquerade, which is phallic by its very nature, in order to be desired by a man, yet, if she alienates herself excessively in it, wanting too much to be a ‘phallus-girl’ she risks losing all of her sexual satisfaction” (Morel, 1993: 83).

Soler, in *What Does the Unconscious Know about Women?* (Soler, 2002), postulates: “The feminine libidinal economy, in heterosexual cases at least, is oriented in a passive reactionary fashion around masculinity and the phallus” (Soler, 2002: 53). She notes that as a necessary precondition for lovemaking, women must attempt to occupy the proper fantasy position within their masculine partner’s, that is, women must try to

be the right thing that triggers the appropriate response in their partners. However, despite this emphasis on the topic of feminine sexuality, Soler says that, for Lacan, both sexes are caught in the game of semblances, that the manipulation of semblances in the displays of sexual identity is part of the human condition, although Soler also contends that the techniques of manipulation and the relation to the various masks of gender roles are not the same and they are not symmetrical for both sexes.

Renata Salecl, in *Love Anxieties* (Salecl, 2002), following Lacan, portrays male/female relationships as instances of the proverbial two ships passing in the night: “The major problem of male and female subjects is that they do not relate to what their partners relate to in them” (Salecl, 2002: 46)). That is to say, sexual non-relationships are based on the interweaving of two-way misunderstandings. Salecl argues that men and women have a tendency to split their love objects, presenting examples of what she describes as a masculine libidinal strategy of polarizing women into two opposed and otherwise well know categories: women are either pure virgins or dirty whores, and certain men often find themselves in a split-state between desexualized Platonic love with the former and/or carnal lust for the latter. Those men usually remain trapped in that position, unable to unify those two poles in the form of a single woman for whom they have both romantic affection and physical attraction. Salecl claims that men partition love and lust to avoid being consumed by objects of desire that horrify them, usually for obsessional neurotic reasons, whereas women multiply their actual and/or fantasized partners in an effort to discern exactly what they are as objects of desire for their significant Others, usually for hysterical reasons.

Suzanne Barnard, with *Tongues of Angels: Feminine Structure and Other Jouissance* (Barnard, 2002), examines the consequences of Lacan’s shift, starting with Seminar XI (Lacan, 1998 [1964b]), from the Symbolic domain of desire to the Real of the drive. Whereas Soler and Morel discuss the relevance of Lacan’s Seminar XX (1999 [1972-73]) to the topic of feminine sexuality, Barnard instead explores the status of masculine libidinal economy in light of later Lacanian notions: “Within the masculine structure, the drive remains haunted by the image of phallic presence, despite the fact that the masculine subject’s place in the symbolic is fixed by its exclusion (...) he must

remain at a certain distance from the object of his desire in order to maintain his sexual position” (Barnard, 2002: 117).

Juxtaposing Morel, Barnard’s and Salecl’s texts, one gains insight into a Lacanian conception of the psychoanalytic difference between the sexes: regarding Morel, the sexual life of the feminine subject is jeopardized by becoming a too perfect object of desire for the masculine other, whereas for Barnard the sexual life of the masculine subject is jeopardized by becoming too able to obtain the supposedly ideal object of desire. Given this pathological mutually assured destruction resulting from too perfect a fit between partners, it becomes clear why Lacan insists upon the non-existence of sexual relationships.

Attempts to Overcome Binary Views on Sexual Identity

Judith Butler, in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (Butler, 1990), presented theoretical models that could overcome binary views on gender. She argued that feminism had made a mistake in trying to assert that women are a group with common characteristics and interests. That approach, Butler said, performed “an unwitting regulation and reification of gender relations” (25) reinforcing a binary view of gender in which human beings were divided into two well defined groups, men and women. Butler noted that feminists rejected the idea that biology is destiny, but instead they developed an account which assumed that masculine and feminine genders would inevitably be built, by culture, upon male and female bodies, “making the same destiny just as unavoidable” (25). She argued that the sexes, male/female, are seen to cause gender masculine/feminine that, in turn, is seen to cause desire towards the other gender. Her approach, influenced in part by Foucault’s *History of Sexuality* (Foucault, 1984), aimed to cut the supposed links between desire and gender, so that gender and desire are “free-floating” (25) and not caused by other stable factors. This idea of identity as free-floating is not connected to an essence but instead, for Butler, to performance. Seen in this way, our identities do not express some authentic inner core self but are the effect, rather than the cause of our performativity. Butler understood gendered subjectivity as a “...history of identifications, parts of which

can be brought into play in given contexts and which, precisely because they encode the contingencies of personal history, do not always point back to an internal coherence of any kind” (29). Gender, for Butler, as identification with one sex or one object, such as the mother, is a fantasy or a set of internalized images, and not a set of properties governed by a body. Rather, gender is a set of signs internalized, psychically imposed on the body and on one's psychic sense of identity. Gender, Butler concludes, is thus not a primary category, but an attribute, “a set of secondary narrative effects” (30).

Jason Glynos, in *Sexual identity, identification and difference: A psychoanalytic contribution to discourse theory* (Glynos, 2000), focused his attention on an issue arising from within an anti-essentialist perspective on sexual identity: “How is it possible to explain the political impetus inhering in a category such as woman without having recourse to a set of positive properties that would somehow fix her identity in advance?” (Glynos, 2000: 85). Glynos examined how social post-modernism attempted to address the issue of sexual identity and argued: “social postmodernism generates its own impasse [which he call social foundationalism] an impasse which is structurally similar to biological foundationalism” (85). Glynos uses the concepts of ‘master signifier’ and ‘symbolic identification’ in order to suggest how Lacanian psychoanalysis permits us to theorize sexual difference in a way that avoids both “biological and social foundationalism” (107).

Cynthia Dyess and Tim Dean, in *Gender: The Impossibility of Meaning* (Dyess & Dean, 2000), also discuss theoretical models that could overcome the binary views on gender, and offer an anti-essentialist account of gender by arguing against Butler's deconstructive critique of gender essentialism. They develop an alternative to Butler's conception of gender as performance by focusing on those aspects of gender that resist meaning and representation. Dyess and Dean's research goes along the path of exploring Lacan's concept of the *real* as something impossible to be symbolized. They explore the impossibility of meaning, and argue that any viable theory of gender must account for the limit conditions of cultural discourses that constitute subjectivity and sociality. Once gender was understood not in terms of proliferating possibilities for meaning, but as a certain impossibility of meaning, then gender's bearing on human

relationality required re-conceptualizing, claiming that various cultural narratives about gender, including traditional psychoanalytic narratives, should be recognized as symptomatic attempts to come to terms with a fundamental impossibility at the heart of sexual difference. They concluded by suggesting ways in which “psychoanalysis may productively illuminate the failures of meaning that structure human relationality” (Dyess & Dean, 2000: 756).

Dean, in *Beyond Sexuality* (Dean, 2000), declares: “psychoanalysis is a queer theory” (Dean, 2000: 215), meaning, in part, that Lacanian psychoanalysis has “antinormative potential” (217). One of the principal stakes for Dean’s project is “to think sexuality outside the terms of gender” (183). He considers the debate between essentialism and constructivism, or what he calls foundationalism and rhetoricalism, a false alternative, and takes a view on sexuality that he describes as “both immoderately antifoundationalist and antirhetoricalist” (178). In this way, he took exception to Butler’s account of sexuality as outlined in *Bodies That Matter* (Butler, 1993), arguing that Butler’s is a rhetoricalist approach. According to Dean, “rhetoricalist theories of sexuality effectively evacuate the category of desire from their accounts” (178) by failing to take account of “what in rhetoric or discourse exceeds language” (178). Desire will prove essential to Dean’s own account of sexuality. In his project to de-heterosexualize desire, Dean uses the Lacanian notion of *objet a* to theorize sexuality “outside the terms of gender and identity” (222). He postulates that a Lacanian theory of desire is “determined not by the gender of object-choice, but by the *objet a*, which remains largely independent of gender” (216). By this move, Dean, via Lacan, goes further than Freud did in his account of constitutive bisexuality. Dean reminds readers of Freud’s claim that “we’ve all made a homosexual object-choice” (219). However, as Dean says, such a pronouncement presupposes that an object be gendered in the first place by relying on human bisexuality. Freud left intact the possibility that objects may be “somehow identifiable as masculine or feminine” (219). *Objet a*, on the other hand, is not so easily assimilated to either hetero- or homo-sexual frames.

According to Dean, the limitation of situating the phallus at the center of a theoretical account of desire is not only that the phallus has such a problematic history

but that it is a single term. *Objet a*, on the other hand, “implies multiple, heterogeneous possibilities for desire” (250). Dean wishes to figure desire within “terms of multiplicity” (249) rather than principally according to an “ideology of lack” (247). He cites Lacan’s assertion that “desire is a relation of being to lack” (Dean, 2000: 247) but he emphasizes “the question of conceptualizing desire in terms of lack remains a stubborn problem for a variety of queer- and feminist-minded projects” (248), identifying the latter resistance as having to do with the way that the ideology of lack intersects with the concept of castration in psychoanalytic theory (248). He turns, instead, to polymorphous perversion as a site of multiplicity, contending that theorizing desire from the point of excess instead of from the point of lack “makes desire essentially pluralistic, with all the inclusive implications of pluralism” (249).

One of the advantages of theorizing desire from the starting point of polymorphous perversion arises from Freud’s understanding of polymorphous perversion as preceding normative—that is, genital—sexuality. In this way, perversion comes to represent a sort of “*paradise lost*” (235) that normal sexuality will try, but never completely manage, to supplant. In rehearsing Freud’s decision to classify perversion in terms not of content but rather of “exclusiveness and fixation” (236), Dean goes so far as to suggest that “the process of normalization itself is what’s pathological, since normalization ‘fixes’ desire and generates the exclusiveness of sexual orientation as its symptom” (237). Then, for Dean, polymorphous perversion figures as a model for desire to which he would have subjects return, both foundational and desirable insofar as it predates normalization. This move serves to shift focus from a scene of desire dependent on castration, “one that threatens to return us to the binary categories of complementarity and homogeneity so inhospitable to non-normative sexualities” (249), to one dependent on a multiplicity of objects. Primary perversion also figures loss insofar as it is a lost stage, replaced as it is, by processes of normalization such as the formation of a sexual identity.

While Dean is clear that he is not interested in gender, he also specifies that sexual difference cannot be so summarily discounted: “Let me make clear that I’m not claiming that sexual difference is inconsequential to this account of sexuality, just that it

is secondary. Desire emerges before sexual difference” (267). He explains, that “[a]ll desire entails the presence of the symbolic Other, but since this Other has no gender—there is no ‘Other sex’—desire involves a relation to otherness independent of sexual difference” (137).

An Original Contribution of this Thesis

In engaging in the preceding discussion with historical developments and the logic of psychoanalytic theories about sexuality, it seems that psychoanalysis presents man and woman in their singularity and not men and women as general categories, and it also reveals that sexuation is a process and not a starting point. The description of the sexes in terms of symbolic constructs, as in gender studies, is clearly and paradoxically anchored in the imaginary unconscious, which is in the imaginary power of language to distinguish between the anatomical sexes. After engaging in this historic literature review, I have noticed that there are issues unveiled in the late Lacan that still remain only partially addressed. Lacanian psychoanalysis calls *man* to the being that is wholly determined by phallic *jouissance*, regardless of its biological/genetic makeup, while it designates *woman* to the being that is not wholly determined by phallic *jouissance*. In this fashion, by definition, “man is the wholly determined teleologically-directed sexual subject, while woman is the one whose capacity for ateleological polymorphous pleasure – the beyond of the phallic order – escapes such limitations” (Fink 1995: 106–07).

Lacan’s analysis of the phallus and sexual difference possesses significant importance, which is not vulnerable to charges of phallocentrism once its evolution and logic are understood. This importance arises from Lacan’s tendency to draw together some of the most powerful streams of modern thought, streams which are in themselves subversive of the taken-for-granted nature of the contemporary world, and integrates them with several fundamental ideas of his own that tend generally to blend with the ideas he derives from others in a masterwork of intellectual synthesis. In Seminar XX, (Lacan, 1999 [1972,73]: 74) Lacan introduces the concept of *lalangue*. He suggests:

Lalangue serves purposes that are altogether different from that of communication. That is what the experience of the unconscious has shown us, insofar as it is made of lalangue(...) If communication approaches what is effectively at work in the jouissance of lalangue, it is because communication implies a reply, in other words, dialogue. But does lalangue serve, first and foremost, to dialogue? As I have said before, nothing is less certain. (76)

Later on, in “*L’Troisième*” he writes:

The unconscious is a knowledge that is articulated from lalangue, the body that speaks there being knotted only by the real from which it gets off on itself. Yet the body is to be understood in its natural state as unknotted from this Real, which, even if it exists on the basis of having its jouissance, does not remain less opaque. It is the less noted abyss of what lalangue is, the lalangue that civilizes this jouissance, if I dare to say so. By this, I mean that it carries it to its developed effect. (Lacan, 1974a: 32).

In this way, Lacan opens the door for further research, intimating a relationship between *lalangue* and *jouissance*, and the import of its consequences in the domain of sexuality. This is precisely the direction that my research follows. I engage with the different types of *jouissance*, particularly with *jouissance* other than *phallic jouissance*, and its effects, mediated by language and by *lalangue*, regarding the sexual reality of the unconscious, as we perceive it in our clinical work. I articulate along with *jouissance*, *language* and *lalangue*, the late Lacanian thesis of the two unconscious, that is, the *imaginary unconscious*, the unconscious that is deciphered in analysis, the one that implies fantasy and desire as supports of the subject’s being, the unconscious related to language and a body of drives and the *real unconscious*, linked to the *speaking-being* and *lalangue*. Crucially, I explore the split in the formula “the reality of the unconscious is sexual reality—an untenable truth” (Lacan, 1998 [1964b]: 150), between the sexual reality of the Imaginary unconscious based on the materiality of the signifying chain and the sexual reality of the Real unconscious based on the self-referential knowledge of *lalangue*.

Having highlighted my contribution to the knowledge in the topic of the sexual reality of the (two) unconscious, and the direction of my developments in this thesis, I will, in the next chapter, interrogate the function of the father and I introduce one of the

main concepts is psychoanalysis, that is, the *Name-of-the-Father*, useful in interrogating the father function and its relation with the sexual reality of the unconscious.

Chapter 4

The Father's Function

Metaphor of the Name

In this chapter I explore the psychoanalytic concepts associated with the Oedipus complex and critically discuss the *prohibition of incest*, the *three stages of the Oedipus complex* and Lacan's thesis that *the Oedipus complex is a Freudian dream*. These developments guide me to address the concept of the *Name-of-the-Father*, the Symbolic, Imaginary and Real father and the differences between the *father* and the *Name-of-the-father*. I explore an anthropological reference to societies without a father and also engage in discussions concerning Hegel's dialectics, the Cartesian Cogito and ontological arguments challenged by the *Name-of-the-Father*. I conclude with some remarks about the relation between the concept of father, *jouissance* and *the sexual reality of the unconscious*

'Tis but thy name that is my enemy;
Thou art thyself, though not a Montague.
What's Montague? it is nor hand, nor foot,
Nor arm, nor face, nor any other part
Belonging to a man. O, be some other name!
What's in a name? that which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet;
So Romeo would, were he not Romeo call'd,
Retain that dear perfection which he owes
Without that title. Romeo, doff thy name,
And for that name which is no part of thee
Take all myself.

Romeo and Juliet
Act II, Scene II
William Shakespeare

Lacan's Conception of the Oedipus Complex

Lacan, from very early on in his work, put great importance on the symbolic function of the father, following Freudian ground-breaking ideas. In his article, "The Family Complexes" (Lacan, 2013 [1938]), Lacan attributed the importance of the Oedipus complex to the fact that it combines in the figure of the father two conflicting functions—the protective and the prohibitive ones. He also distinguished between the father as a person, an individual in the family context, and the father as the symbolic function that he incarnates as a signifier. Lacan emphasized the importance of the father in psychoanalysis, an affirmation that may be understood as a reaction against the tendency of *Kleinian* psychoanalysis and *Object Relations* theory to place the mother-child relation at the heart of psychoanalytic theory. In opposition to this, Lacan stressed the role of the father as a third term who intervenes in the dual relations of mother and child.

In "The Family Complexes" (Lacan, 2013 [1938]), Lacan defined *complex* as a whole constellation of interacting *imagos* or the earliest internalizations of the subject's social structures, including parents, grandparents, and significant Others in the life of the child, even before the child's arrival to the world. He noted: "Those multiple identifications provide a script in which the subject is led to play out the drama of

conflicts among the members of the family” (14). The Oedipus complex was, for Lacan, a paradigmatic triangular structure, opposed to a dual mother-child structure, with the introduction of a third term between the mother and child, namely, the father function. In this process, the subject is confronted with the problem of sexual difference. Further, the Oedipus complex has important consequences for the formation of the symptoms and its relation to sexuality. Lacan thought that without the Oedipus complex psychoanalysis could not be sustained. However, he made several changes to the original version of the myth as it was interpreted by Freud. Firstly, he disassociated the complex from the primal scene and all the specificities of family relationships. That is, he re-elaborated this complex as a structural moment that occurs at the level of discourse.

Lacan studied the myths described by Freud in *Totem and Taboo* (Freud, 2001 [1913]) and took great interest in the regulation of culture and the transformation of the law of nature to the law of culture. He took note of the structural anthropologist, Claude Lévi-Strauss, who pursued this topic in field-studies carried out in Australia and South America on the rules governing various social practices, primarily those concerning the exchange of women, words and goods, the institution of marriage and the establishment of family relationships.¹ In his book, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* (Lévi-Strauss, 1971 [1949]), Lévi-Strauss described how in society there are laws that govern familial structures, and that those laws are organized in ways that are analogous to the structure of language. He defined a structure of kinship as a system in which all the members who are related in a family fall into two categories: the possible marriages and the forbidden ones. Through his analysis of the changes allowed or prohibited in a social system, Lévi-Strauss established that the prohibition of incest constitutes the foundation of the human symbolic system, separating animals from humans, and it marks the division between nature and culture: “A man or a woman separated from his/her biological family in order to be united with a member of another clan assures the perpetuation of the species” (56). What is so original about Lévi-Strauss’s work is not the discovery of the law, but the fact that individuals who operate within the law are

¹ Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908-2009) was a French anthropologist and ethnologist, and has been called, along with James George Frazer and Franz Boas, the father of modern anthropology.

unaware of it, that is, unaware of the necessary conditions for mating. It is a law which operates unconsciously. Individuals know the rules of marriage without becoming conscious of the principle of prohibition imposed on blood marriages.

On the basis of Levi Strauss's findings, Lacan re-formulated the theory of the prohibition of incest within a psychoanalytic framework. Contrary to Freud's statements that this prohibition is transmitted phylo-genetically, Lacan stated that this prohibition is cultural: "the child's fantasies actually defy the law of the prohibition of incest that is imposed on the subject by culture. This is not a natural event; rather it is a cultural/symbolic one that raises the child out of the realm of biology into the matrix of language, culture and law" (Lacan, 2006 [1957b]: 579). Further, Lacan implied that prohibition is a necessary condition for the existence of desire. While it could be debated whether the objects of incest are completely trans-cultural, the imposition of some sexual prohibition is universal. An imposition of Occidental culture is that the symbolic father is the one responsible for cutting the bond with the mother.

In Seminar V, (Lacan, 2013 [1957-8]), Lacan identified three stages of Oedipus that follow a logical, as opposed to chronological order. A first stage of the Oedipus complex occurs in the context of the imaginary level of existence where the radical Other is the mother, and the child is initially involved in a dual relationship with her in which the child comes to self-recognition somewhere else beyond him- or her-self, for example, in the mother's gaze. This position is one of total dependence and leads the child to believe that satisfaction is tied to the place the child occupies for its mother. The child wants to be everything for her, to be that which she desires. However, any attitude of the mother that will favour her possession of the child would alienate the child from its subjectivity. Although it appears that in this first phase, there is a dyad functioning between mother and child, there is already a triangle between the mother, the child, and that which the mother lacks. It is this lack which Lacan called the phallus. The child, in identifying with the phallus, is trying to satisfy the mother's desire, and to try to become the phallus for her, with extensive implications in the field of the child's sexual identity. Lacan regarded the presence of the phallus at this stage as the imaginary phallus, the third term in this stage of the Oedipus complex, indicating that even here

the imaginary father is already functioning, representing that object which the mother desires beyond the child. In this stage, we have the prohibition of the father already operating over both mother and child. Freud referred to the concept of phallus as the fantasy of having or not having it. In Lacan's writings, the concept of the imaginary phallus in the first stage of Oedipus differs from Freud's conceptualization, inasmuch as, according to Lacan, both the mother and the child are marked by a lack, namely, the imaginary phallus. For the mother, the lack is that which she desires beyond the child, and for the child, the lack is the place in filling the mother's desire that the child wants to, but cannot, occupy.

In the second stage of Oedipus there is an intervention by what Lacan referred to as the symbolic father. If the father is to be recognized by the child, the mother, who acts as a gatekeeper to the child, must first recognize the father's discourse. It is the discourse that gives a privileged function to the father, and not the recognition of his role in procreation. The father's discourse denies the mother access to the child as phallic object and forbids the child complete access to the mother. This intervention, called castration, has the implication of privation. However, while the father initiates this privation, it could only operate via the mediation of the mother. The mother's acknowledgment of the father's presence enables the father to occupy the third position in the Oedipal triangle in which the child sees the father as a rival for the mother's desire.

The third stage of Oedipus is marked by the real intervention of the father who signals to the child what can and cannot be possessed. For Lacan, the father, in introducing to the child the law of the Symbolic Order, relieves the child of anxiety associated with occupying the place of the phallus for the mother. The child is able to identify with the father and transcend the aggressivity inherent in his imaginary identifications. This could be read as the normative function of the Oedipus complex, as it introduces a law establishing difference between child and parents as well as the norms of generational and sexual difference. If the child does not accept this law, or if the mother does not recognize the position and discourse of the father, the subject will remain identified with the phallus and continue to be subject to the mother's desire. The

child, in accepting this law, identifies with the father who in the child's mind possesses the phallus. In this way, the father reinstates the phallus as the object of the mother's desire but the child is no longer identified with it. Thus for Lacan castration was understood in both a negative and positive sense. The negative aspect enforces the prohibition of incest and the positive aspect assures the child's inscription in the generational order of a family and society. Castration is the symbolic operation that cuts the bond between mother and child, and grants the child the ability to symbolize this loss in speech. This law is not proper to the father; it is inscribed in a language that was already present before any of the participants in the Oedipal triangle were born.

Regarding the mother-child bond, it is not just imaginary; it is also Symbolic and even Real, in relation to *lalangue*.² Lacan introduced the term *lalangue* in the 1970s to address what there is of the Real in language. *Lalangue* evokes language, in part introduced by the mother, issued before language is syntactically structured. When Lacan read Freud's *Project for a Scientific Psychology* (Freud, 2001 [1895]), he observed that, for Freud, the mother as first Other to the baby, is not a mirror image even if she prompts it. Lacan said that the *Thing* falls from this Other when the Name-of-the-Father inscribes itself in the Other, and the *Thing* that is the lost object, is not imaginary. It could always be imagined, but it is not reduced to the imaginary.

The Father and the Case of Little Hans

When Lacan discussed the father, he generally referred to the one who implements the paternal function. Freud's case of *Little Hans* (Freud, 2001 [1909]) provides an important illustration of the Oedipal vicissitudes as they were interpreted by Lacan, and the consequent development of a phobia related to those vicissitudes. In Lacan's revision of Hans's story, he accepted Freud's view that Hans was a normal three-year-old with a healthy interest in "widdlers," and that the central moment in the foundation of his infantile phobia came with the threat of castration spoken by his

² The concept of *lalange* will be discussed in detail in Chapter Five.

mother: "If you do that, I shall send for Dr. A to cut off your widdler. And then what will you widdle with?" (Freud 2001 [1909]: 7-8).

Freud declared that this was the moment in Hans's development when he acquired a castration complex, although its actual effect was deferred until later. But Lacan saw the situation slightly differently. For him, Hans had come face to face with a potentially traumatic question: what does mother want from me? It is a question, for Lacan, which leads to the shattering of the illusory symbiosis of the early mother-child relationship. This early mother-child bond was often seen as a dual relationship. But in Lacan's account of this earliest stage of life there is already the triangular structure of the first stage of Oedipus, where the third term is the imaginary phallus standing for what the mother really desires, a role that the infant child is only too happy to fulfill. Insofar as the infant can be the phallus for the mother, both infant and mother can remain in this "game of imaginary lure."³

For Hans, however, there were two crises that were to shatter this imaginary illusion, the birth of his sister and the discovery of what Lacan called "the penis as real" (Lacan 1994 [1956-7]: 119). With the first of these, as Freud recognized, Hans is suddenly cast out from the illusory dual relationship with his mother, his role in the game of imaginary lure seemingly taken by another. As for the latter, his phallic masturbation leads his mother to tell-him-off, a telling-off that he takes as a rejection of his penis *per se*. This is a situation that makes him "fundamentally other than what is desired (. . .) rejected outside of the imaginary field" (119). The world as he had known it has come to an end, for it appears that he may keep his position only by losing a significant part of him. Hans's question—what does mother want?—becomes a source of great anxiety, confronting him with the enigma of parental sexuality and his place within it. Lacan described this fundamental disappointment, explaining that Hans must come to recognize not only "that he is not the unique object of the mother, but also that the mother's interest, more or less accentuated depending on the case, is the phallus. After

³ Freud had written about this in "On Narcissism" (2001 [1914a]), when he described the lost narcissism of the mother finding completion in the baby-as-penis.

this recognition he also realizes that the mother is deprived, that she herself lacks precisely this object" (125).

With the disruption of the dual relationship with the mother, the imaginary lure becomes a game in which the child is aware not only that the mother lacks the phallus and that the child cannot satisfy this lack, but also that this lack is a menace marking the mother's enigmatic desire. Only by the intervention of the real father, who lays claim to possession of the phallus on the basis of a symbolic law, a symbolic castration take place, one that gives a dual message of prohibition for the child and for the mother. This introduction of the paternal metaphor marks the impossibility of the child trying to be the phallus for the mother, so freeing the child to identify with the father at the symbolic level and allowing the child to become a desiring subject. But this transition does not always take place successfully. As Lacan noted, castration is always tied up with the impact and the intervention of the real father. It may equally be deeply marked by the absence of the real father: "When this atypical situation occurs, the substitution of something else for the real father is required, which creates severe forms of neurosis" (126).

In Little Hans's case, Lacan suggested, this is exactly what has happened. Picking up on hints in Freud's case study about the father's failure to step in between Hans and his mother and to clarify the father's role in making babies, Lacan suggested that in Hans's case the father did not successfully play the role of the mediator of the mother's desire, thus leaving his son facing an unbearable anxiety. What was threatening to Hans was not the father, as Freud had assumed, but a desire of the mother that appears to Hans as unsatisfied and not subjected to law. As such, it assumes terrifying imaginary figurations, dominated by oral cannibalism, that is, the fantasy of the devouring mother that lies behind the symptom: fear of horses biting. The horse that Hans fears, we might say, is not a symbol of the father, as Freud had suggested, but rather the child's attempt to create a *substitute* for the missing, symbolic father. The phobia, then, is a way of binding anxiety, as Freud had already suggested in 1926. It serves a defensive function in that it turns uncontained anxiety into a specific fear by focusing it on a particular object. But what, for Lacan, is the nature of the original anxiety that needs to be bound

in this way? This is neither the anxiety that comes from libido transformed (Freud 2001 [1909]), nor the anxiety that signals the danger of castration (Freud 2001 [1926]). For Lacan, the anxiety that Hans experiences is a response to being poised between the imaginary Oedipal triangle mother–child–phallus—and the symbolic one: mother–child–symbolic father. It is the point, as Lacan put it, where “the subject is suspended between a moment where he no longer knows where he is and a future where he will never again be able to re-find himself” (Lacan 1994 [1956-7]: 131). Finally Lacan developed in Seminar XVI, the idea of the *turntable*, that from a phobia, the diagnosis could lead to hysteria or obsessional neurosis:

In phobia that we can see not at all something that is a clinical entity but that is in a way a sort of turntable. It is by elucidating its relationships with what it most commonly veers towards, namely, the two great orders of neurosis, hysteria and obsessional neurosis, but also by the junction that it realizes with the structure of perversion, that this phobia enlightens us about what is involved in all sorts of consequences that have no need to be limited to a particular subject to be perfectly perceptible. (Lacan, 2013 [1969]: 269)

The Oedipus Complex is a Freudian Dream

In Seminar XVII *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis* (Lacan, 2007 [1969-70]), Lacan separated Oedipus from the function of the father and progressively distanced himself from the myth of Oedipus altogether, initially because of the fact that many psychoanalysts took for granted that deciphering the unconscious as related to the Oedipal theme was the last and only truth of the psychoanalytic procedure. Lacan proclaimed that “the Oedipus complex is a Freudian dream” (x12). The Oedipus complex is a compromise formation that shows and veils simultaneously the fundamental truth of desire, namely castration as an effect of language. Later in his teaching, and specifically in Seminar XXII *RSI* (2013 [1974-75]), Lacan noted: “What one must manage to clearly conceive of is that this prohibition consists in the hole of the Symbolic. There must be something of the Symbolic for there to appear individualised in the knot this something that I, I do not so much call the Oedipus complex, it is not so complex as all that. I call that the Name-of-the-Father. Which means nothing but the

Father as Name, which means nothing at the start, not simply the father as name, but the father as naming” (164). Lacan goes on in Seminar XXIII *Joyce and the Sinthome* (Lacan, 2013 [1976]): “The Oedipus complex, as such, is a symptom. It is in as much as the Name-of-the-Father is also the Father of the name that everything is maintained, which does not make the symptom any less necessary” (15).

In this way Lacan separated the problem of castration from reference to the murder of the father and from the Freudian Oedipus complex. He showed that the tragedy of Oedipus did not revolve around desire for the mother but a desire to know and the impossibility of this knowledge ever coinciding with truth. In this way the figure of the castrated master, that Oedipus incarnates, replaces the figure of the murdered father. This was Lacan’s attempt to subtract the analytic discourse from any possible identification of knowledge and its fixation in the place of truth. We encountered the non-relation of knowledge and truth in our discussion of Lacan’s text, “Science and Truth” (2006 [1965]), discussed in Chapter Two. In the analytic discourse, this means retaining the gap between knowledge, in the position of truth, and the signifiers produced in the analytic treatment, signifiers that fix the subject’s *jouissance*. In other words, truth is not the final answer. Oedipus, as presented by Freud, is a myth, which was, following Lacan, Freud’s dream. Knowledge which pretends to be true is an impossible knowledge, and the truth as an aim of the analytic treatment is castration itself. In other words, there is no truth in castration. It is not possible to join the master signifier and knowledge or, as Lacan suggested, *the father knows nothing about the truth*. The analytic treatment deals with semblance, and this is the only way it can produce some effects in the Real that go beyond what the father is supposed to represent as a symbolic agent. Neither the Oedipus complex nor the father has any knowledge about the truth of sexual identity.

The fact that Lacan separated the Oedipus complex and the function of the father also allowed him to make use of the other Freudian myth, namely the myth of the primal horde from *Totem and Taboo* (Freud, 2001 [1913]). Lacan finally made a clear distinction between the two myths turning the production of myth towards fantasy production in hysteria and obsessional neurosis. He spoke of the Oedipus myth as an

idealized father of the hysteric where *jouissance* follows the pre-established law, and he regarded the myth of the primal horde as an obsessional neurotic fantasy, where *jouissance* precedes the prohibition on incest. We find this fantasy of the exception and full *jouissance* in Lacan's formulas of sexuation in Seminar XX *Encore* (Lacan, 1999 [1972-73]) as we have discussed already in Chapter One, with the formula for Sexuation.

The Real, Imaginary and Symbolic Father

The father is more than a subject that competes for the mother's love. He is the representative of the social order as such. Father is a multifaceted concept, which makes it important for me to raise the question of what exactly is meant by *father* and what is its role in the determination of sexual identity. The question of the father led Lacan to introduce the three registers of the Real, Imaginary and Symbolic. These registers are, according to Lacan, ancient categories and were presented in his lecture *The Symbolic, the Imaginary, and the Real* (Lacan, 1982 [1953a]). Through the symbolic debt, the subject comes to be bound to the law as a result of the murder of the primal father. As Lacan said: "the symbolic father, insofar as he signifies the law, is truly the dead father." (Lacan, 1982 [1953a]: 112) The symbolic father is also designated as the *Name-of-the-Father*, where Lacan insisted upon the fact that the symbolic father is a pure signifier in the sense that there is no representation correlative to it. Lacan called the Name-of-the-Father *transcendent* in the Kantian sense, as a condition of possibility of any signifying chain. The *Name-of-the-Father* functions as the quilting point. The symbolic father assumes the meaning of father, which refers to a symbolic system of the social structure, but in the place of the symbolic father, there is a signifier. Thus Lacan suggested: "The symbolic father is itself unthinkable" (210). The symbolic father is a symbolic function and hence is synonymous with the paternal function. This function is that of imposing the law and regulating desire in the Oedipus complex, by intervening in the imaginary dual relationship mother-child. The imaginary father is a composite of all the imaginary constructs that the subject builds up around the figure of the father. The imaginary father appears in various guises as what Lacan called figures of the father. These emerge

as a result of the discordance between the real father and its symbolic role of assuring the correct functioning of the *Name-of-the-Father* in the paternal metaphor, that is, the relationship between the Other as a primordial object, namely, the mother, and the subject. Regarding the real father, Lacan's unequivocal formulation is that "the real father is the agent of castration, the one who performs the operation of symbolic castration" (Lacan, 2007 [1969-70]: 128). The real father plays a crucial role in the Oedipus complex. It is he who intervenes in the third stage of Oedipus as the one who castrates the child and, of course, it could be added that the Real father is the external boundary, impossible to reach, of the Symbolic and the Imaginary father.

The Father and the Name-of-the-Father

Lacan introduced the *Name-of-the-Father* within a framework of concerns regarding biological and medical paradigms, which is to say, scientific approaches to procreation. We have previously presented the complexity for Lacan in reading the discourse of science symptomatically for the non-relations of knowledge and truth. We will not repeat this engagement here, though it necessarily needs to be considered in how Lacan reconciled the Name-of-the-Father and the discourses of the natural and human sciences, notwithstanding the genealogical debt of psychoanalysis, both Freudian and Lacanian to each. Regarding biology strictly speaking, the father could be reduced to the function of sire and substance of semen. There is a movement in the sciences and specifically in the natural sciences whose task is to bring into scientific discourse the question of the Name-of-the-Father, introducing the philosophical issue of the relationship between the natural sciences and the sciences of the mind.

Wilhelm Dilthey, in 1894, defined the natural sciences and human sciences as radically different.⁴ Freud does not ignore this distinction. Proof of this can be seen in his journal *Imago*, subtitled *Journal of Applied Psychoanalysis, Natur und auf die Geisteswissenschaften*. Specifically, in his autobiographical study (Freud, 2001 [1924b]):

⁴ Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911) was a German historian, psychologist, sociologist and hermeneutic philosopher, who held Hegel's Chair in Philosophy at the University of Berlin. Dilthey's research interests revolved around questions of scientific methodology, historical evidence and history's status as a science.

8), Freud said that it was the influence of Darwin (Darwin, 2013 [1871]) and the recitation of Goethe's essay, *The Nature* (Goethe, 1995 [1791]), that led him to undertake medical studies. But his discovery of the unconscious and the question of the father would eventually stop him having a naturalistic approach. Fatherhood appeared to Freud as a leap beyond natural data—fatherhood was an act of faith, “a triumph of the spirit over the senses” (Freud, 1938: 193). Earlier, in *Totem and Taboo* (Freud, 2001 [1913]), Freud thought that he could avoid the difficulty of following Darwin and his theory of the primitive horde. This was Freud's attempt to establish paternity in the context of evolutionary biology, which led him to admit in *Moses and Monotheism* (Freud, 2001 [1939]) the inheritance of phylo-genetic acquired characteristics of the unconscious, which correspond to the animal's instincts. However, it did not solve the problem. Mammals living in hordes do have leaders, usually a dominant male. But this does not make them fathers. Where Freud imagined a father in defining the exclusivity of the sexual use of all women, in biology we find a breeding male, not a father.

Societies Without a Father

There is another side to the question concerning the father. If there is a father in a symbolic system that includes the *Name-of-the-Father*, there might be a symbolic system without a father. This is where recent research in ethnology challenges us with discoveries such as that of the *Na Yunnan* tribe in China, published by the anthropologist, Cai Hua, in *A Society without Fathers or Husbands: The Na of China* (1997). Maurice Godelier, in his book *Metamorphoses of Kinship* (2004), tells us that the Na, an ethnic minority that today lives in China on the border of the Yunnan and Sechuan provinces, is a society where there is no marriage and therefore no relatives by marriage. Since there is no marriage, there is no father, not even a social father. Relationships with blood relatives are limited to those related to woman and therefore solely by a matriarchal descent principle. According to Hua, the Na have no word for father or for husband, and the Na society is made up of matriarchal lines, each of them descending from a common female ancestor. These matriarchal lines are divided into households composed of groups of sisters and brothers living under one roof and

raising the sisters' children together. Apart from the sisters' children there are members of the preceding generations. Each household is under the authority of both a woman, often the eldest, and a man, often her eldest brother. Inside the house any allusion to sexual matters is forbidden. Sexual exchanges must happen between men and women of different households in order for the society to reproduce and to continue to exist. Those exchanges could take three forms: furtive visits, prolonged visits and prolonged cohabitations. Furtive visits constitute the most prevalent form and often coexist with the other two. Furtive visits usually happen at night, with the man leaving his sister's house to call on a woman who has previously agreed to the visit. This man and woman are nominated as *acia*, which means they are each other's lover, though in Na society, each person is free to carry on other *acia* relationships at the same time.

The Na represent the process of procreation in their own way. Sperm is *penis water*, a term that also defines urine. *Penis water* functions like rain, with respect to plants to make them grow. Without rain, plants do not grow. Sperm therefore does not *make* babies, it only makes them grow. The foetus is already in the woman's womb, but requires *watering* in order to start growing, just as a seed planted in the ground comes up after rain. Babies exist prior to sexual intercourse; they were deposited in the woman's womb before she was born, by the godless *Abaogdu*. It is also *Abaogdu* who nourishes the foetus in the woman's womb when she is pregnant. It is therefore solely from the mother and from *Abaogdu* that a child develops, so that at birth a child belongs exclusively to its mothers group, to a matriarchal line. Men are not considered to be their children's progenitors; their sperm is only a nourishing that brings on the birth. A man is neither his child's father, nor the husband of the child's mother. He has no responsibility for the child or for the mother. Providing the semen gives the man no power and is not in any way representative of the law of prohibition of incest. He is not in a position as father, neither as the Name-of-the-Father. The Na society is based on the general circulation of sperm between the matriarchal lines. But this circulation of sperm has nothing to do with paternity. It is, instead, like rain that flows and that is needed to germinate seed. The mother becomes the only progenitor. It should be added that, from time to time, this organization is disturbed by love. Love also here is the great

disturber of the social order as it forms often temporary couples who object to the system.

The example of the Na is important for this research because it is a society without a father, perhaps representing a possible horizon for a modernity characterized by extreme permissiveness in sexual matters. The Na seem to resolve the conflict between sexual freedom and family but at the price of absolutely banishing sexuality within the family. They show us that the taboo of incest is not dependent on patriarchy, contrary to Freud. Thinking about a Name-of-the-Father, the one who holds the symbolic system in place, in this society without a father, involves changing our mental habits inherited from monotheism. There is a Name-of-the-Father in the Na society, but it is a goddess, the goddess Aboagdu, who is responsible for placing seeds in the woman's womb before birth. It becomes clear then, that the concept of Name-of-the-Father is ethnocentric and not universal, which makes its legitimacy questionable. Aboagdu, on the other hand, is the Other of the mother who is assigned to procreation.

Godelier's *Metamorphoses of Kinship* (2004) undermines the patriarchal conceptions of Levi-Strauss, criticizing in particular the thesis of the universality of the exchange of women as the foundation of society. The Na are, indeed, an exception to that universality. Of course Lacan was not aware of the Na, since the work of Hua was published in 1997. Though Lacan's ethnological reference was primarily the structural anthropology of Levi-Strauss, in a text of 1974, *The Spring Awakening*, Lacan arrived at a theory of the Name-of-the-Father that is not patriarchal and compares with the theory of the Na (Lacan, 2013 [1974b]): "But the father has so many, many names that there is not One that suits him, save the Name of the Name of the Name. No Name is his proper-Name except for the Name as ex-sistence" (Lacan, 2013 [1974b]): 561). That is to say, the father is a semblance—a *mask* expresses this rather well. How could one know what he is if he is masked, and how could we know if the actor here carries the mask of a woman? The mask alone would ex-sist in the empty place in which a man or a woman could be placed. How would we know if, as Robert Graves puts it: "... the Father himself, the eternal father of us all, is not one name among others of the White Goddess, the one that according to him gets lost in the night of time, because she is the

Different one, the forever Other in her enjoyment—like those forms of the infinite whose enumeration we only start when we know that she is the one who will suspend us” (Graves, 1996 [1948]: 24). Graves's book, *The White Goddess* (1996 [1948]), defended the thesis of a common archaic mythology in British, Greek and Hebrew religions, centred on a matriarchal white goddess: “The Goddess is a beautiful slender aquiline-nose woman, with deathly pale face, with lips red as orange fruits of mountain ash, with striking blue eyes and long blonde hair. She can turn suddenly into a sow, a mare, a bitch, a fox, a donkey, a weasel, a snake, an owl, a wolf, a tigress, a mermaid or a repulsive witch. Her names and titles are endless. In ghost stories, it is often presented as the White Lady” (26). The goddess Aboagdu as Name-of-the-Father—this is not far from the White Goddess of the poet Robert Graves.

The Paternal Metaphor

Lacan presented the paternal metaphor in Seminar IV *The Object Relation* (1997 [1956-57]). The paternal metaphor introduces a fundamental gap that can only be pursued by means of a signifier. Lacan later noted that phallic *jouissance*, which is regulated by the paternal metaphor, is outside the body and is framed by a fantasy that provides a way to gain satisfaction by means of the object of desire. In “On a Question Preliminary to Any Possible Treatment of Psychosis” (Lacan, 2006 [1957d]), Lacan represents the Oedipus complex as “the metaphor of the Name-of-the-Father, that is, the metaphor that substitutes this Name in the place first symbolized by the operation of the absence of the mother” (477).

In the 1950s Lacan was concerned with defining the difference between neurosis and psychosis. The paternal metaphor was the ground on which he developed his views on the case of *President Schreber* (Schreber, 2000 [1903]; Freud, 2001 [1911]) and the failure of the constitution of reality via the Name-of-the-Father. Lacan considered that in analysis it is via the paternal metaphor that an analyst could lead the analysand to the point where the whole *jouissance* would be re-transcribed into the Symbolic Order. In psychosis, however, the unconscious is in the Real domain and the signifying chain does

not work. Even though a psychotic is subject to certain signifying effects, the psychotic, as a subject, is not in the discourse as such. *Jouissance* is localized in the body and not in the object as cause of desire. If the *Name-of-the-Father* operates, the child is empowered to speak about its own lack, and is further empowered to enter into the world of interpersonal relationships. While, according to Lacan, a psychotic subject may be able to speak, language would not reflect the inscription of the Name-of-the-Father, and therefore the psychotic would not be fully inscribed in the Symbolic Order. As a result, the psychotic will not be able to express loss and lack as a full desiring subject, having direct consequences in the domain of choice of sexual partner.

The symbolic function of the paternal metaphor provides the child with an explanation of his or her origins and pre-history and exposes how the parents' desires were played out, and situates other family members such as grandparents, aunts and uncles, in the child's life. Finally, according to Lacan, the paternal metaphor represents a boundary or limit that allows the child entry into the laws and traditions of culture, and enables an adult identity that permits the establishing of a family. In "The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis – the Rome Discourse" (Lacan, 2006 [1953b]), Lacan did not write the *name-of-the-father* with a capital N or capital F, but rather all were in lowercase italics, emphasizing that the recognition of the *Name-of-the-Father* implies a strong impact on the direction of treatment:

It is in the name of the father that we must recognize the basis of the symbolic function which, since the dawn of historical time, has identified his person with the figure of the law. This conception allows us to clearly distinguish in the analysis of a case, the unconscious effects of this function from the narcissistic relations, or even real relations, that the subject has with the image and actions of the person who embodies this function; this results in a mode of comprehension that has repercussions on the very way in which interventions are made by the analyst. Practice has confirmed the fecundity of this conception to me, as well as to the students whom I have introduced to this method. And, both in supervision and case discussions, I have often had occasion to stress the harmful confusion produced by neglecting it. (Lacan, 2006 [1953b]: 216)

In the paternal metaphor Lacan combined the linguistic procedure with the Oedipus complex, as a symbolic operation of the substitution of two signifiers: the signifier of the mother, and the Name-of-the-Father as a signifier that replaces this initial maternal signifier in the Symbolic. This development related to Freud's *Fort-Da* description of the observation of his grandson (Freud, 2001 [1920: 14-15]), who was playing with a reel of cotton on a thread, pronouncing *Fort* (away) when he threw it into the unseen and *Da* (here) when he pulled it back into the field of the visible. This phonemic pair *Fort-Da* is a minimal symbolic difference, a first signifier that takes place in an attempt to symbolically inscribe the absence of the object, namely the mother. Lacan, in the paternal metaphor, inscribed the cause of this capricious appearance and disappearance of the mother as an x, something unknown for the child or, as he also put it, *the signified to the subject*. And it was precisely this signified-to-the-subject that was an enigma needing to be named by the Name-of-the-Father. In other words, the father, by naming the desire of the mother, names the cause of her desire, as far as this cause makes her appear and disappear without a specific reason.

The *Name-of-the-Father* is not the signifier *father* as such, one amongst all the other signifiers, but the signifier that makes possible the Symbolic Order itself. It is the signifier that separates the child from the capricious desire of the mother and restores a symbolic pact with the father. The phallus in the paternal metaphor is a signified of the totality of the effects of what can be signified. Subsequently, Lacan re-transcribed the phallus in terms of *jouissance*. A result of the paternal metaphor is a re-transcription of *jouissance* into the Symbolic Order, the so-called law of the father. The paternal metaphor could only be read retroactively since Lacan stressed that the primal, paternal signifier as such is a myth. *The signifier and the signified never meet*. The first stage of the metaphor could thus only be read once the metaphor has already taken place. It is logically, not temporally, first. This also means that one could only deal with an already established metaphor.

In the paternal metaphor the *Name-of-the-Father* performs the function of metaphorizing the *Desire-of-the-Mother*, but the Name-of-the-Father is already the

metaphor of the father. We write the Name-of-the-Father as the metaphORIZING agent of the *Desire-of-the-Mother*:

Name-of-the-Father

Desire-of-the-Mother

But this *Name-of-the-Father* is the metaphor of the presence of the father:

Name-of-the-Father

Presence of the Father

The *Name-of-the-Father* works in the absence of the father. The function of the *Name-of-the-Father* makes the father absent because in the *Name-of-the-Father* we deal with the father as spoken by the mother, that is, as a being of language. This means that the *Name-of-the-Father* exists in absence, as something murdered by the signifier, as a subject, a reference of the discourse of the mother, as an empty reference. *The Name-of-the-Father* is the father metaphorized by the discourse of the mother and as such it is dead, killed by discourse. With the proper name we don't inquire into its signification, but are concerned with its reference.

Proper names are words that don't signify. Instead, they refer, falling within Frege's division between *Sinn und Bedeutung* (Frege, 2009 [1892]) that we earlier discussed in Chapter One when discussing the logic of the phallus. In ordinary language we may manage, in the manner of Frege, to distinguish between function and argument. This means opening a gap in the sentence precisely where the proper names are, and the rest could be worked out with a function. The writing of the phallic function, which allows us to say that the element x has the property f , that is, $f(x)$ — x responds to the function f —all this leads to the disappearance of the proper name. The x is not a proper name and it means that several elements can be replaced. X is essentially interchangeable, whereas proper names are irreplaceable. In psychoanalysis we find those irreplaceable elements for the subject, for example, irreplaceable sexual fantasies.

In "The Signification of the Phallus," Lacan said "The subject designates his being only by barring everything it signifies" (Lacan, 2006 [1957b: 578]). He introduced,

then, the problematic of the proper name and in part also the problem of the Names-of-the-Father, which is how to designate its being. In “The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious” (Lacan, 2006 [1960a]), Lacan noted: “the proper name means nothing, that it has no other signification besides its utterance” (679). Then he questioned the Name-of-the-Father in discussing the mystery of Abraham sent to kill his son. Lacan was searching for a definition other than the Name-of-the-Father or the proper name to designate the being-of-the-subject as a living being, since the proper name, the Name-of-the-Father, doesn’t allow the naming for what is alive in the subject: “a being who appears in some way missing from the sea of proper names” (578). The argument of the Names-of-the-Father became an answer to the question: “What am I?” We find it in “The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious,” namely, that “I am in the place of jouissance” (580).

The Cartesian Cogito and Ontological Arguments

The *Name-of-the-Father* is only the name of a function. It could be written as a function: NP (x), introducing in each clinical case the question of what it is that has been functioning for the subject as Name-of-the-Father. Going from the singular to the plural implies proceeding from religion to science. Dealing with the name of God is a religious issue: *thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain*.⁵ Not knowing about the name protects the name itself, which is to say that the name is protected by ciphering it—the name as a silent signifier—a letter that no-one knows or that no-one is allowed to pronounce. Every time Lacan referred to the Name-of-the-Father, he referred to the tradition that the Name-of-the-Father upholds. This connection corroborates that the *Name-of-the-Father* was not invented by psychoanalysis, but is instead a cultural

⁵ *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain* (King James Version, English translation of the Christian Bible by the Church of England 1604-11) is one of the Ten Commandments. It is a prohibition of blasphemy, specifically, the misuse or *taking in vain* of the name of the God of Israel. Exodus 20:7 reads: “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain” (KJV). Based on this commandment, Second Temple Judaism by the Hellenistic period developed a taboo of pronouncing the name of God at all, resulting in the replacement of the Tetragrammaton by “Adonai,” literally “my lords” in pronunciation.

legacy. We also find in religion an issue with the names of God where the attributes of God are sought. Names designate God's essential qualities, and all this revolves around an essential unity. With the pluralisation of the *Names-of-the-Father*, there is only a plurality surrounding a function. Here we find a transition from religion to logic which implies that the *Name-of-the-Father* is a function that could be supported by various elements playing the role of the *Name-of-the-Father*.

Following Jacques-Alain Miller, in his article, "The Non Existing Seminar" (Miller, 2011), we notice Miller emphasising that it was Kierkegaard who inquired into the sacrifice of Abraham, who sets the scene for a God who does not work quietly, as does the God of Descartes. The God of Descartes does all his work, keeps the law of the world or creates the world and then allows it to go. The God of Abraham's sacrifice is a different matter. It is a God with desire. In a similar way, Lacan observed that we are not dealing with the Father as a figure of the law that he has made, not a Father equivalent to the Other, rather quiet, as a place. God tells Abraham: "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about" (Genesis 22: 1-12). In a similar fashion, Lacan praised St. Augustine who, in *De Trinitate*, declared that God is not *causa sui*, that is, God is not Self-caused.⁶ Lacan praised St. Augustine because the category of cause and effect is inapplicable to an infinite Being: "But he who thinks that God is of such power as to have generated Himself, is so much the more in error, because not only does God not so exist, but neither does the spiritual nor the bodily creature; for there is nothing whatever that generates its own existence" (St. Augustine, AC 428 Circa). To say that God is *causa sui* entails that God brings Himself into being through his own concept. *Causa sui* means that from an essence, from the definition of a concept, one could come into existence.

Thus, there is a logical solidarity between the Cartesian cogito and the ontological argument that is being challenged by The *Names-of-the-Father*. They have

⁶ **St. Augustine of Hippo.** *On the Trinity (De Trinitate)* is a Latin book that discusses the Trinity in context of the logos. It is placed by him in his *Retractations* among the works written in AD 400's. The *Retractations*, are usually dated not later than AD 428. The letter to Bishop Aurelius also states that the work was many years in progress, and was begun in St. Augustine's early manhood, and finished in his old age.

the same logical structure because they consider it possible to move from concept to existence. The Cartesian cogito finds it reasonable to move from thought to existence, which in fact is the very structure of the ontological argument. In “The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious,” Lacan said: “the proofs of the existence of God have killed Him” (Lacan, 2006 [1960a]: 680). God finds Himself reduced to a logical consequence.

The ontological argument keeps saying that for every thing that exists, one could always think that there is something bigger, and yet one may find something for which nothing is bigger, for which nothing bigger could be thought. About God there is something that could be thought and of which nothing bigger could be thought. The question resides in whether this is thinkable or not. There can be no finality to this question: if it is thinkable, then we start from a concept. If it is an impossibility, then the description given by Anselm poses only the impossibility of thinking. Lacan's solution was: it doesn't matter if it is unthinkable, it can be written, and the writing of the *objet a* stands for something—no matter how unthinkable—since it can be written. Thus, Lacan said that God is not *causa sui*. To say that God is *causa sui* means that it is possible to go from the concept to existence without the *objet a* as a cause. *Causa sui*, as the ontological argument, functions as a reduction of the *objet a*. Every time Lacan commented on the Cartesian cogito or the *causa sui*, he re-established the *objet a*. In “Science and Truth” (2006 [1965]), as previously discussed, Lacan set up the *objet a* in the Cartesian cogito and pondered as well the *causa sui*. There he criticized this initial conception of the paternal metaphor and stressed the impossibility of the signifier that would stand in this specific place in the Symbolic Order. This implied a lack in the Symbolic, the fact that the transmission from the father to the son cannot pass entirely through the signifier. But it does not mean that the father does not function. The father stands in the impossible symbolic place. Lacan was opposed to the Augustinian translation of the imposing sentence that the God of Israel utters to Moses: *Ehyeh Ascher Ehyeh*, which Augustine translates as *Ego sum qui sum*, “I am who I am.” He emphasised that it must be translated “I am what I am,” as God appears as a real

without concept, a tautological position, as a gap referring to itself.⁷ This is how Lacan read the religious aspect of the fact that a speaking-being necessarily believes in a sense which is produced by enunciation, but which at the same time derives from the gap which produces signifiers. The concept of God is not the Other of the concept, is not the Other of the signifier. The God in question is *objet a*. It has the status of a Real without concept, and around that revolves the *Names-of-the-Father*, which seek to conceptualize it.

The Father and Jouissance

I may then sum up by stating that what is said with the Names-of-the-Father is that in analysis the subject is looking for his name of *jouissance*. Soler tells us: "When we attempt a diagnosis, we try to classify the subject in the light of a clinical structure, for instance, an obsessional neurotic, a hysteric, a psychotic. Those are not proper names. When the proper name shows up in the clinic, it is more like the Ratman or the Wolfman, the subject's name of *jouissance*." (Soler, 2009: 115). Accordingly, if there is *objet a*, we must conclude that there is no Name-of-the-Father. There are *Names-of-the-Father*.

With "The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious," Lacan emphasised: "But what is not a myth, although Freud formulated it as early on as he formulated the Oedipus myth, is the castration complex" (Lacan, 1960a: 680). This seems to make evident that after having made a conjunction between the Oedipus complex, the castration complex and *Totem and Taboo* via the paternal metaphor, Lacan proceeded from the disjunction of the Oedipus complex and

⁷ "I Am that I Am" אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה, 'ehyeh 'asher 'ehyeh is a common English translation of the response God used in one of the most famous verses in the Torah, when Moses asked for his name (Exodus 3:14). Hayah means existed or was in Hebrew; ehyeh is the first person singular imperfect form and is usually translated in English Bibles as "I will be" (or "I shall be"). For example, at Exodus 3:12. *Ehyeh asher ehyeh* literally translates as "I Will Be What I Will Be." However, in most English Bibles, this phrase is rendered as *I am that I am*. *Ehyeh-Asher-Ehyeh* is one of the Seven Names of God in the Jewish tradition. The word *Ehyeh* is considered by many rabbinical scholars to be a first-person derivation of the Tetragrammaton. The term tetragrammaton (four letters) refers to the Hebrew theonym (יהוה) transliterated to the Latin letters YHWH. It is derived from a verb that means "to be", and is considered in Judaism to be a proper name of the God of Israel as indicated in the Torah. The most widely accepted pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton (YHWH) is *Yahweh*, though *Jehovah* is used in many Bibles.

castration. In his paternal metaphor, Lacan manoeuvred the terms offered by Freud, that is, the father, the mother and the child, to position a fourth term, namely castration, the phallus. Lacan thus conceived the Oedipus complex as myth through which Freud attempted to explain how *jouissance* was lost. The myth of Oedipus was, within psychoanalysis, a way to tell why there was something broken in *jouissance* and so it reveals that it was because of a prohibition. Lacan's approach was different. If there is loss of *jouissance* it is not because of that story. The reason lies in that pleasure itself sets limits to *jouissance*. The body's own homeostasis prevents *jouissance* going beyond a certain point. So, if it is pleasure that sets the limits to *jouissance*, what is the story of the Father figure of the law? Lacan, far from raising the law to a dimension where it becomes the final answer in psychoanalysis, made of it a semblance. It is not enough to say that pleasure sets the limits to *jouissance*, but that language as such has the same effect on the body of the speaking-being. The *Names-of-the-Father* are myths that narrate the loss of *jouissance*. They tell about someone in command, who steals *jouissance*. The *Names-of-the-Father* are stories that attempt to explain the displacement, the transfer of *jouissance* towards the Other.

Lacan addressed together the Oedipus complex, castration and *Totem and Taboo* with meta-psychology, explaining how the libido has been evacuated from the body, yet it stays as the *objet a*. So we may say that the *objet a* refers to what resists the universalizing operation of the *Name-of-the-Father* and, in that sense, the *Name-of-the-Father* covers the *objet a*. This doesn't mean that the *Name-of-the-Father* is under a veil. Rather, the *Name-of-the-Father* itself is the veil that covers the loss of *jouissance* and the residue of *jouissance* that resists its universalizing exertion, which says 'no' to the fact of *jouissance* being in one's body. So the *objet a* appears always detached from the Other.

In conclusion, the meta-psychology of the *Name-of-the-Father* is not only a metaphor, is not only expressed through metaphor, through the metaphor of the Other's *jouissance*. Accompanying the metaphor of *jouissance*, recurrent in the paternal metaphor, there is the metonymy of *jouissance*. Metaphor is a substitution and with it we obtain an effect of signification. Metonymy is more suited to *jouissance* because it entails displacement. Freud introduced the libido to explain that *jouissance* is

transferable but it could not be annulled since it moves elsewhere. In “The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious,” Lacan suggested that *jouissance* can only be said between the lines, in the functioning of metonymy. He developed this further in *Radiophonie* (1985 [1970]), where he contrasted metaphor operating on meaning and metonymy functioning on *jouissance*. Lacan conceived the unconscious as an extractive mechanism that takes from *jouissance*, conveying *jouissance* to the unconscious. He then envisaged the work of analysis as transferring *jouissance* to the signifier. Moving further from the concept of the *Name-of-the-Father*, in the next chapter I present the theses of the *two unconscious*, *lalangue* and the *real subject*, which are central issues to the development of my research.

Chapter 5

Thesis of the Two Unconscious

Lalangue & the Trace of Jouissance

After Lacan reformulated the Freudian unconscious as language, he developed the concept of the *real unconscious* made of *lalangue*. In this chapter I engage with the theoretical and practical shifts in Lacan's teaching, also called the Late Lacan Teaching, that took place from the early 1970s and led to a proper *reinvention* of psychoanalysis. With regard to these shifts, I explore a possible new way of thinking the sexual reality of the (Two) unconscious. I initially introduce Lacan's conceptualization of the Symbolic through the conjunction of three metaphors: the metaphor of the symptom, the metaphor of the Father and the metaphor of the subject. Then, from the definition of the Symbolic, the idea of the *quilting point* and using the *Borromean Knot*, I engage

with the concept of the speaking-being, which appears divided between what is assumed as a subject of an absence and its presence, to introduce the ideal of the *real subject*, beyond the supposed one. I subsequently introduce the two main concepts for this chapter, the theses of *Lalangue* and the *Two Unconscious*, articulating them back to the psychoanalytical practice.

The Three Metaphors

Roberto Harari, in *How James Joyce Made his Name: A Reading of the Final Lacan* (Harari, 2002 [1995]), argues for the seminal importance of Joyce in offering a new turn in Lacan's thought:

It is probably the last moment in the whole of Lacan's teaching where a rigorous internal unity is emphasized. What emerges there is a coherent reconceptualization of many themes that relate [...] to the clinical practice of psychoanalysis. Lacan's reference to James Joyce at this time could be understood as an attempt at a *second* return to Freud, and directs Lacan to orientate his teaching in the direction of the *real unconscious*, the unconscious as it manifests itself at the level of *lalangue*, which introduces new modes of relation between the subject and *jouissance*. (Harari, 2002 [1995])¹

Lacan's starting point, in establishing his thesis of the *two unconscious*, was a movement that took him from the *symbol* to the signifier, influenced by Ferdinand de Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics* (Saussure, 1998 [1909-11]). From the beginning of Lacanian psychoanalysis the signifier was defined as homologous to the linguistic signifier, through its differential character and laws of composition. For Lacan, the Symbolic Order was not reduced to the signifier although it supposed the signifier: "to access to a genuine symbolic relationship: all speaking-beings share a language, but not share the symbolic" (Lacan, 2006 [1957e]: 432). Lacan reached a definition of the

¹ In recent years the notion of the real unconscious has been widely discussed by Jacques-Alain Miller, in his seminar *Orientation lacanienne* and by Soler in her book *L'inconscio reinventato* (Soler, 2009).

Symbolic as a specific way of organizing signification that passes through the metaphor, the signifying chain in synchrony.

Soler, in her book *L'inconscio reinventato* (Soler, 2009), guides us to understand Lacan's conceptualization of the Symbolic, suggesting that Lacan defines the Symbolic through the conjunction of three metaphors: the metaphor of the symptom, (Lacan, 2006 [1957e]) the metaphor of the Father, (Lacan, 2006 [1957d]) and the metaphor of the subject, (Lacan, 1997 [1955-56]). Soler also notes, citing Lacan, that the metaphor of the symptom is "the metaphor of a trauma that refers to a first meeting with *jouissance*" (Soler, 2009: 23). The metaphor of the symptom is one of the mechanisms of the unconscious, structured as a signifying chain, structured as a *language*. Freud introduced the concepts of repression and the return of the repressed, leaving open the question of where that repressed element was. The metaphor of the symptom provided Freud with an answer: the signifier remains latent in the signification of the current discourse, and it remains metonymically accessible, decipherable. Regarding Freud, the metaphor of the symptom, as well as the repression-return of the repressed element, proves in the clinical practice of psychoanalysis that the metaphor was an operation only available for neurotic subjects, not for everyone, especially not for psychotic subjects, for whom the signifier returns from the Real, off the signifying chain, as Lacan would say. The metaphor of the symptom is, then, subordinate to the metaphor of the Father, and it is excluded in psychosis. The metaphor of the Father writes the synchronization of a chain of signifiers, and it articulates the social bond between subjects and between generations. It regulates the signifiers of the Oedipus complex, father and mother, love and procreation, beyond the relation to *jouissance*. The metaphor of the subject, as inferred by the chain of the unconscious is to some extent its real signification, irreducible to the signifiers in the chain and to the signification that it generates.

It is very important to note that those three metaphors, working together, provide a quilting point to the metonymic drifting of the discourse, and thus potentially stop all imaginary significations through the induction of the signifier. Those three

metaphors, working together would also give consistency to a possible sexual identification.

The Borromean Knot

With Lacan's introduction of the Borromean Knot, knotting replaced the metaphorical function.² Lacan said in 1973 that his use of topology does not constitute a theory and that his introduction of the *Borromean Knot* was indeed an attempt to consolidate certain aspects of earlier theories. The *Borromean Knot* is a formation of three linked rings such that each ring prevents the other two from drifting apart. Lacan initially presented this formation in Seminar XIX ... *Ou pire* (Lacan, 2013 [1971-72]), as a means by which he tried to extend his definition of the symptom. In this period of his teaching, Lacan developed both an entirely new representation of the clinic and new possibilities for thinking the end of analysis. He moved to a topology of the subject based on the *Borromean knot*:

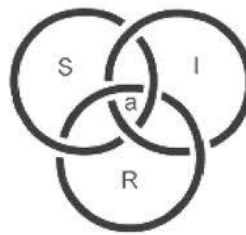


Figure 3: The Borromean Knot

Consequently, in the *Borromean knot*, if any one of the rings is un-knotted the other two rings will fall away. The consistency of the *Borromean knot* arises from the knotting of the three in a manner such that the rings pass over and under one another in a specific way. Lacan equates each of the three rings with one of his three orders, the Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary. Each of the rings overlaps with the others

² The name *Borromean rings* comes from their use in the coat of arms of the Borromeo family in Piemonte, Northern Italy. The link itself is much older and has appeared in Gandhara (Afghan) Buddhist art from around the 2nd century, and in the form of the Valknut Norse image stones dating back to the 7th century.

forming points of intersection with the other rings, like a Venn diagram.³ With the development of the *Borromean knot* Lacan relocated to its structure a series of oppositional structures he had previously developed with *the metaphor of the father function* or its *foreclosure* and its corresponding *signifier of the symptom in the chain* or *signifier in the real outside the chain*. This relocation started with the opposition: *Borromean Knotted or not*. As he noted in 1975: “the Name-of-the-Father is the Borromean knot” (Lacan, 1998 [1975]: 31). In fact, through the addition of the knotting operation, the symptom, according to the Freudian definition, as a *sexual surrogate*, is knotted to two—the Symbolic and the Real, signification and *jouissance*. The symptom attaches itself to the sense of the fantasy, produced between the Imaginary and Symbolic. The fact that we could replace Lacan’s first formulations with the vocabulary of the *Borromean knot* indicates that with the knot we could think the phenomena of neurosis and psychosis and, in addition, the Borromean clinic as a generalized theory. This has interest for the new edges of the Real and those of *jouissance* that it allows us to grasp.

In psychoses, in accordance with the topology of the *Borromean Knot*, and the way the Symbolic, Imaginary and Real are not knotted, we can find a functioning fourth knot, or a knotting as a *supplemental* function,⁴ which Lacan called the *sinthome*,⁵ that adds Borromean consistency to the Imaginary, Symbolic and Real.

³ Venn diagrams were introduced in 1880 by John Venn (1834–1923) in a paper concerning different ways to represent propositions by diagrams, entitled “On the Diagrammatic and Mechanical Representation of Propositions and Reasonings,” in the *Philosophical Magazine and Journal of Science*.

⁴ Lacan used the French term *suppléer*, which means both to complete and to substitute.

⁵ Lacan introduced the concept of the *sinthome* in the seminar of the same name (1975-76). It is an ancient way to write the word symptom. I will address the concept of the *sinthome* extensively in chapter six.

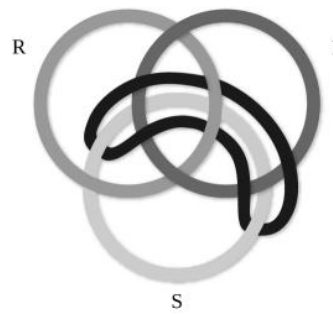


Figure 4: The Fourth Knot: The Sinthome

One of the theoretical consequences of the introduction of the *Borromean knot* was that the definition of the symptom changed. It was no longer a function of metaphor, but a function of the *letter*. Lacan wrote $f(x)$, f is a function of the *jouissance* of any element of the unconscious (x), which from this time he would call *letter*, with an insistent homophonic resonance in French to *l'être*, to an existent's being. This returns us to a variant of the signifier in the Real, off the chain, which Lacan first described as the major phenomenon of psychosis. The new formulations do not abolish symbolic language, but make us think it as an overlapping structure needing an additional condition, added by discourse. In other words, symbolic language was already an effect of discourse. Another consequence concerning the function of the *Name-of-the-Father* is that it is no longer a function of the signifier, or a function of the letter. It is a function of the knotting, which comes from a speaking that could have symbolic effects, but that is itself a function of existence, and not a symbolic function.

The imaginary induced by the metaphor is defined as signification. This signification extends from narcissism to phallic signification. Hence the idea proposed at the time that, without the Other, the subject could not even sustain itself in the position of Narcissus. At the end of his teaching Lacan said that the Imaginary was the body. To understand this I should add: the body without phallic signification, therefore an image, which has a consistency of its own, the consistency of form, which is not colonized by representations conveyed in language.

Real Subjects

The Real, ex-sistence, is a limitation of formalization, an impossible-to-write. That limitation is, in Lacan's words, the *real function* in the Symbolic and not the Real outside the Symbolic. The thesis of the *Subject-Supposed-to-Know*, the *split* and *the lack of being* (Lacan, 1998 [1964b: 232]), was postulated in reference to the logic of the unconscious signifying chain. However, this thesis was unable by itself to give an account of experience in its totality. An important consequence of that thesis is that the speaking-being affected by the unconscious could not be reduced to the barred-subject of the unconscious, which means that the subject is not just *supposed* or *represented by* another signifier, but the subject is also real.

Starting from "The Proposition of 9 October 1967: On the Psychoanalyst of the School" (Lacan, 2013 [1967]), Lacan, returning to the *Subject-Supposed-to-Know* said: "The *Subject Supposed to Know* is for us the pivot on which everything to do with the transference is hinged" (Lacan, 2013 [1967]: 4). He then suggested a way to formalize the operation of the subject supposed to know in a formula known as the algorithm of the transference.

$$\begin{array}{c} S \longrightarrow Sq \\ \hline s (S_1, S_2, \dots S_n) \end{array}$$

Figure 5: Algorithm of the Transference (Lacan, 2013 [1967]: 4)

On the top line there is the signifier *S* of the transference, that is, the signifier of a subject, which supposes only articulation and always in a timely fashion. Under the bar, but limited to the supposing span of the first signifier, the *s* represents the subject who results from this, implying, in brackets, knowledge of signifiers in the unconscious. Lacan told us that psychoanalysis consists in maintaining an agreed-upon situation between two partners, who place themselves as analysand and analyst. It can only unfold by the third constituent, which is the signifier introduced into the discourse: the

supposed subject of knowledge; a formation that is detached from the analysand. We could say that, along with the presence of a signifier, the subject is assumed.

As an example of the supposition of a knowing subject, with discovery of the *Rosetta Stone*, exhibiting hieroglyphics, a subject was supposed as a direct consequence, though this stone was itself a decrypting system of equivalences.⁶ The subject is something supposed in the chain, which is determined as signification but remaining distinct from the signification. The subject supposed is rather a hole in the signification. Lacan said in Seminar XX (Lacan, 1999 [1972-73]): “his being is always somewhere else” (198). This subject could be said to be real in the sense in which this assumption is impossibly reduced to language. This is also true at the level of interpretation: the subject of the text does not suppose anything, but there is a need for someone to make a supposition. Champollion, in front of the hieroglyphs written on the Rosetta Stone, was not a *supposed subject*. Rather, it was Champollion who supposed not so much the subject but the first signifier. He supposed that the drawings on the stone were, in fact, writing.

The Freudian deciphering of the intentional subject involves another subject, the one supposed from the deciphered chain, which Lacan later called the *subject of the unconscious*. This subject is supposed by Freud who treated the analytic word as a text in accordance with the tradition of writing. To treat the unconscious as a text is to assume that the unconscious is knowledge. How should we call the One who assumes

⁶ Soldiers in Napoleon's army discovered the Rosetta Stone in 1799 while digging the foundations of an addition to a fort near the town of el-Rashid (Rosetta). On Napoleon's defeat, the stone became the property of the British under the terms of the Treaty of Alexandria (1801) along with other antiquities that the French had found. The Rosetta Stone has been exhibited in the British Museum since 1802. The decree is inscribed on the stone three times, in hieroglyphic (suitable for a priestly decree), demotic (the native script used for daily purposes), and Greek (the language of the administration). Soon after the end of the fourth century AD, when hieroglyphs had gone out of use, the knowledge of how to read and write them disappeared. In the early years of the nineteenth century, some 1400 years later, scholars were able to use the Greek inscription on this stone as the key to decipher them. Thomas Young, an English physicist, was the first to show that some of the hieroglyphs on the Rosetta Stone wrote the sounds of a royal name, that of Ptolemy. The French scholar Jean-François Champollion then realized that hieroglyphs recorded the sound of the Egyptian language and laid the foundations of our knowledge of ancient Egyptian language and culture. (Source British Museum On Line.)

the signifier, Champollion or Freud, for instance, if we do not call them a subject? The speaking-being is divided between what is assumed as a subject, subject of the absence—whose being is always somewhere else—and what it is as a presence, the presence of the speaking-being. The question is: What determines this subject? From Seminar XX (1999 [1972-73]) Lacan used the term *individual*, presence of the *individual*, and this is extended in his reference to Joyce. He formulates the hypothesis: “this subject and this individual are the same” (Lacan, 2013 [1976]: vii 18).

The Real Unconscious

In working with a process reduced to the word, how do we stop the *supposed subject* slipping in the chain? How do we reference the Thing itself, being this, what any interpretation aims at, and how do we address the sexual identity of this real subject? Those are all matters of analytic practice. From the beginning, psychoanalysts have tried to access that being that could be targeted in the interpretation. Lacan’s developments concerning quilting points, stopping the sliding of the chain, fundamental signification and the fundamental fantasy, were attempts to answer that question. There are names of the real subject nominated by Lacan: *the Thing*, as the core of being, which no signifier represents but which could have a proper name, the *objet a*, as a central cause, and the speaking-being. In Seminar XI *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (Lacan, 1998 [1964b]), Lacan described them through their separation from the signifying chain. However, the presence of the real subject is not separated from the word. The Thing speaks; it speaks the truth, but cannot tell the truth of the Real. From this statement Lacan developed the formula of *L’étourdit* (Lacan, 2013 [1972]), which produces a cut, reversing the previous thesis of the Symbolic: “The saying comes from where the real commands the truth” (97). This thesis replaces the thesis of the Symbolic master with the thesis of a Real master who commands the subject. This re-evaluation shifts the conception of the Real itself. Hence, from this time, the Real splits between the Real of the Symbolic and the Real outside the Symbolic, which only the Borromean Knot could inscribe. Lacan, with the knot, sought a formalization that allows us to speak

about the clinic of the *real subject*, the subject not only as a hole in the chain, but one that has substance of the body, that is, the speaking-being, whatever its clinical structure.

In Seminar XX, Lacan returned to the question of the body as a result of his developments on the Real, and linked it to *jouissance*. He introduced the notion of the body as an enjoying substance, and refers to living as the primary condition of *jouissance*, and to the body as its support. This *jouissance* is the Real located outside the Symbolic; it ex-sists in relation to the Symbolic, is not completely absorbed by it, and constitutes “the mystery of the speaking body” (Lacan, 1972-73: 143). As a consequence, the subject, subject of the unconscious, constituted by the signifier, gives way to the speaking-being, the speaking individual in his particular being of *jouissance*, subject of the enjoying body, which implies the presence of the body as it is affected by *jouissance*.

We read in the fourth session of Seminar XXIII *Joyce and The Sinthome*: “The real is based on the fact that it does not have any sense, that it excludes sense or, more precisely, that it remains as a consequence of being excluded from sense. [...] The form that is most deprived of sense of which is nevertheless imagined is consistency” (Lacan, 2013 [1976]: 132). The Real, which is outside sense but not outside the body, is the consistency of the speaking-being. The body qua enjoying substance, the place of *jouissance* and the place for enjoying, is the support of the speaking-being; it is the condition of the *real unconscious*. Finally the *objet a* is both the effect of language that mortifies *jouissance*, and the rest that affects all of our plus-of-*jouissance*. With this object, Lacan wrote *jouissance* and lack, the lost object of Freud, as what is condensed with the *objet-plus-of-jouissance*.

In *Radiophonie*, (Lacan, 1985 [1970]), Lacan evoked the relationship between truth and the real: “What aims the truth that speaks and gets articulated in analysis? It falls through to suppose that whom the real makes function in the knowledge, that is added” (26). We see there the splitting of the term real: real internal to the Symbolic and the Real excess-of-knowledge. In both cases, it is clear that it is unconscious

knowledge that is said to be Real. At first, unconscious knowledge was thought as the Real that is simply *supposed*. This is the definition of transference: the symptom, which leads to analysis, can be written with what Lacan called the signifier of transference. Its deciphering with its effects allows us to verify at least partially this supposition, but would not allow us to state that the unconscious is real. On the contrary, what is the function of the Real in knowledge is the *negativity* of the structure. This term offers a way to designate that the structure of language makes impossible. These designations are, then, trans-structural and represent limitations to the work of analysis, applying to the Real in the Symbolic. The first *impossible* that Lacan located is the incompatibility between word and desire, which makes desire articulated but un-articulable. The object of the drive that causes it—oral, anal, scopic and invoking—is no less impossible to say. In this sense the object could be said to be real. The articulated truth is powerless to say the Real that commands it. It never concludes, nevertheless it insists. If we remove it, it comes back. If we hide it, it speaks somewhere else. If we ask for the final word, it produces a half-saying. Its repeated insistence opened a gap on the Real because of the unspeakable cause that animates it.

This lack of object produces the plus of *jouissance* from which desire is articulated for *jouissance*. This was still not knowledge of the impossible, but rather *knowledge of a being who escapes*, that is, a limit that could present an unexpected surprise where the transference has nothing to do with knowing. No knowledge of the *objet a* is deduced from what is found in desire.

Lacan sought, in the next step, what is real in the function of knowledge, on the model of logic and the impasse of formalization. He went not to deduction, as with the *objet a*, but to writing, more precisely, to *the impossible to be written*. This announced a pass-through and a conclusion at the end of a logical demonstration of the impossible, which postulates that through analytical discourse, something gets written. It assumes an articulation between the word and the Real, and not only with truth. Through speaking, truth captures something of the Real. The speaking discourse of analysis leaves written traces. Lacan reformulated the classical definition of the modalities of logic—the

possible, the contingent, the necessary and the impossible—to include time. This is time that does not cease for the contingent and the possible and time that ceases for the necessary and the impossible: “What does not cease to be written” (Lacan, 1999 [1972-73]: 59), this is the definition of contingency. The term emphasizes that analysis does not just explore something already there, but produces something new that eventually writes. What “does not cease to not be written” (59) in psychoanalysis, is the impossible that masks the Real.

Language, because of its structure, does not write the One. Language is always half-said in what does not cease not to be written in the way to truth. It is the One, in all of its forms: the One that enciphers the unconscious, the One of phallic *jouissance*, falling under the blows of castration, “the One that does function as a subject” (Lacan, 1999 [1972-73]: 139) and the One of the saying of the One, from which the famous “there is the One” (139). This insistent contingency of the One that *does not cease being written*, indirectly demonstrates the Real proper to decipher the unconscious, impossibility to write the Two of the sexual relationship, the Two that are not there, that “does not cease to not be written” (59), that is so inaccessible: no relationship between *jouissance* of One and the Other. The fantasy with its object appears as an imaginary substitute of the Real. This verification is done in psychoanalytic practice, case-by-case, through the articulation of love life. This *One* is repeated as a demonstration of the impossible *Two*.

Lalangue

Lacan moved, in Seminar XX (Lacan, 1999 [1972-73]), from an emphasis on the structure of language, its logic and its topology, to an emphasis placed on the effects of *lalangue*, with the thesis of the unconscious as “lucubration of knowledge” (140). This is a move from an understanding of the unconscious located in its decipherment via the work of free association in transference, whereby Lacan argued that the unconscious is *structured like a language* and carried beyond this conception of the unconscious his

analysis of the structure of language. The unconscious is knowledge because it is deciphered, and it is without a subject due to the structure of language: the signifier, that we write S1, may be the subject only to others, S2, knowledge. Where Lacan had written the knotting in the chain of signifiers, $S1 \rightarrow S2$, he highlighted an impossible: the impossible relationship of the representation of a subject with knowledge. This impossible is due to the differential structure of the signifier, which is isolated as One through its difference with others. Jakobson opened the way with phonology. At the phonic level, the signifier is a-semantic. From here, we have the structure of representation of the subject as a recurring one: whatever the signifier representing the subject, it leaves S1 separated from significant Others. Rejecting his early formulation, Lacan suggested that the signifiers of the unconscious do not make a chain with those of the subject.

In *Television* (1999 [1973a]), Lacan situated unconscious knowledge without a subject in relation to discourse. The unconscious only ex-sists in the analytic discourse, and doubtless on two accounts: on the one hand, to be in a position to evaluate it as knowledge, and on the other hand, to come to circumscribe that which, concerning real knowledge, can only by definition ex-sist for discourse. This unconscious could be called *off the subject*, since its signifiers are those extracted from the symptom to be deciphered. If those signifiers, before being deciphered, do not represent the subject, at least they have an impact on the subject's *jouissance* as an event of the body. This was the Lacanian hypothesis in *Television* (142-144), but it seems to be related to the notion of *knowledge without a subject*, which Lacan formulated some years before. It states that the signifier is at the same level of *jouissance*, that it is "the apparatus of jouissance" (55) that the living being is its "insertion point" as Lacan said in Seminar XVII *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis* (Lacan, 2007 [1969-70]). In other words, we have *knowledge without a subject*.

Those Master Signifiers (S1) that are not the representatives of the subject "whose being is always elsewhere" (143) come from anywhere that speech gives the force constitutive of its differential structure, but without making language. The

“knowledge without a subject” requires an emphasis on *lalangue*, the place from which differentiated signifiers can pass to become language. For that we need that the signifier One, not just any signifier, unpacks and differs from each other the differentiations of *lalangue*.

Lacan wrote *lalangue* as one word, firstly for its homophony with babbling, which comes from the Latin *lallare*, meaning the action of singing la, la. The term also refers to the babbling of an infant who does not speak yet, but already produces sounds. This babbling is separated from the sense of the sound, but not normally separated from the state of fulfillment of the infant. *Lalangue* evokes language issued before language syntactically structured. On the other hand, *lalangue* is one’s mother language, the first to be understood, contemporaneous with the earliest care of the infant’s body. We find *lalangue* as a trans-linguistic function. What distinguishes *lalangue* from language is that we don’t find in *lalangue* a semblance of meaning. Lacan in *Radiophonia* (1985 [1970]) formulated it by saying: “language gives only the cipher of sense; in fact each of its elements can take any sense” (14), and suggesting: “*lalangue* has nothing to do with the dictionary” (16). To say that *lalangue* has nothing to do with the dictionary is to say that in *lalangue* there is no such thing as couplings between words and meanings. There is no order in *lalangue*; it is not a structure, nor language, nor a discourse. With regard to language, the ordered pair of the subject inscribes it: $S1 \rightarrow S2$. This is the basis of transference as a link to the *Subject-Supposed-to-Know*, and structures both free association and all its effects of signification. Each discourse is therefore an order, though this is not the case with *lalangue*, which is the un-structured level of a verbal apparatus. Soler suggests that *lalangue* is “the whole of the possible misunderstandings” (Soler, 2009: 143), which nevertheless does not make a whole.

Lacan asked how it was possible to move from one of those pure differences to the signifier One, or to the $S1$, which could be formed, as a new Master Signifier inscribed in the field of *jouissance*. Where do we find the element of unity? Jakobson pointed out that the *phoneme* is a differential unit that makes no signification (Jakobson,

2013 [1941]), not even the word, as Lacan noted.⁷ Any word comes from speech and it could thus take any direction. It is the One that accomplishes *lalangue*, which are signifiers at a basic level of pure difference. The One incarnated in *lalangue*, that which coalesces with *jouissance* and *not* One among others, *this* One for Lacan “is something that remains undecided between the phoneme, the word, the sentence, and the whole thought” (Lacan, 2013 [1972]: 45). This presents the issue of the uncertainty of deciphering. The *unconscious-lalangue*, that is the *real unconscious*, has effects at the level of *jouissance*, but it remains essentially unknown though it is linked to discourse. Lacan suggested in *La Troisième*, that *lalangue* “is the deposit, the sediment, the petrification that remains as a trace of the use by a group of their own unconscious experience” (Lacan, 1974a: 23). Unconscious experience involves the effect of the word and discourse on the substance of the body and what discourse conveys and orders of *jouissance* in a given social bond is always historical and deposited in language.

Language is impregnated with *jouissance* that orders the word and its significations. New signs are allowed, signs that could be defined as ex-corporeal, from the experiences of life. These new words, phrases, misunderstandings, don’t wait for any dictionary in order to activate *jouissance*. Other signs, however, could fall into disuse. They are eliminated because they are not adapted to the actuality of *jouissance*; therefore they fall out of order. Language is dead, but it comes from life, and the problem is then to know how a dead language can operate traumatically on a living being.

⁷ Roman Jakobson developed a theory of the universal characteristics of all phonemic systems. For Jakobson, phonology is the study of the sound systems of a language where as phonetics is the study of the characteristics of human sound making, especially those sounds used in speech, and provides methods for their description, classification and transcription. One of the major contributions of the Prague Circle of Linguistics, and a contribution of Jakobson in particular, was the identification of a phoneme by a bundle of features organized in a grid of binary relations. After studying all the sounds and their corresponding features, we will notice that not all the features are imperative to distinguish a particular sound because a minimum number will be sufficient while others will prove to be dispensable or redundant.

Effects and Affects

Lalangue is an elusive knowledge, but not without effects, and Lacan postulates that the effects of *lalangue* are affects. Poets evidence the *jouissance* of *lalangue*. Perhaps, literature in general also does this, but also psychosis, and Joyce is a proof of this. Soler, in *L'inconscio Reinventato* (Soler, 2009), notes that *lalangue*, in its difference from language, affect the *jouissance* of the speaking-being. When, for example, we produce a translation from one language to another, we reduce the translation to its basic function of communication, paying the cost of a linguistic impoverishment in comparison to the original language. This impoverishment, according to Soler, indicates that the *function* of communication is neither primary nor essential, and that language evolves in collecting words at an existential level. One of those effects is chatter—satisfaction linked to something said and not said, and no one knows why. This effect is neither an instrument for deciphering nor for interpretation. This thesis is Freudian, and it is linked to his conception of repression: the affection is not reliable, since it is moved. And *not reliable* means: that it does not guarantee unconscious knowledge. It is a paradox, because the subject in question is nothing more meaningful than what he or she feels, and that confuses it with this subject's truth. Lacan reformulated the thesis, saying that metonymy is the rule for affection. But here a very different aspect is highlighted: affection is enigmatic. It does not ensure a certainty of knowledge, but is a sign that knowledge is not known. Lacan extended the affects of chatter, called *other satisfaction*. The symptom, in Freud's *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* (Freud, 2001 [1926]) is conceived as satisfying the drive. It's the other satisfaction developed by Lacan in Seminar XX. The symptom satisfies instead of the expected love-object. From then on, Lacan presented the symptom as a necessity and no longer as a contingency, since there is no drive without a symptom. We recognize anxiety as an affect of an exception, the only one that has an epistemic value, which indicates a presence in the experience of the *objet a*. The experience of anxiety happens on those occasions when, compared to the enigma of the Other, the subject is about to be reduced to this object so

threatened by the imminence of what Soler calls a “wild subjective destitution” (Soler, 2009: 38).

We find another key discussion concerning the effects of *lalangue* in Lacan’s *Geneva Lecture on the Symptom* (Lacan, 1998 [1975]), where he suggested that we could move the *jouissance* of the symptom through speech, this being the first step of the analytic experience. This allows us to assume that it is in the encounter of words with a body that something is written. There is an assumed coherence between the method that operates on the symptom and the moment in which this is constituted. That is, on the one hand, it is in early childhood that symptoms crystallize and, on the other hand, that we do not analyze without associations of the subject. This method is what Freud invented and transmits in the series of texts that includes, among others, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, (Freud, 1900-01), *Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, (Freud, 1901) and *Jokes and its Relation to the Unconscious* (Freud, 1905c). The method passes not through symbols or archetypes of speech, as Jung had postulated, but through the subject’s own associations, always singular and is the discourse of the subject that supports interpretation. As for Freud, reading the paragraphs about the sense of the symptoms in his *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-analysis* (Freud, 1933), this sense of the symptom is interpreted in relation to the effects on symptom reduction, in terms of the first meetings with sexual reality. That verbalization and sexual reality are the two springs of an effective interpretation leads to the conclusion that there is probably *coalescence* between these two fundamental phenomena. This is why Lacan added the trauma of *lalangue* to the trauma of sex, which is Freudian. Freud defined the reality of the unconscious as autoerotic, but Lacan contested that statement by establishing “the sexual reality of the unconscious” (Lacan, 1964: 150). It is an encounter with a manifestation of that reality. *Encounter* means that it is not autoerotic, instead *hetero*.

Lacan emphasized the fact that the infant primarily receives speech not as learning but as an impregnation. Before the infant is able to articulate sentences, the infant could respond correctly to complex expressions that it literally does not

understand and does not know how to use. Concerning this receptivity to the otherness of *lalangue*, what Lacan called the *water of language*, there remains *some debris*. The “water of the language” connotes the fluidity, the sound continuum of what is understood as a-structure. The debris comprises all those terms which designate discrete elements, which refer to a use on this side of quilting points: fragment of the Real, outside-of-sense, in the form of the One sound received from what was intended. Babbling, melody, the murmur of sound’s lack of meaning—but not of presence—happen prior to any engaging with language.

The *Unconscious structured like a language* was thought of as consisting of signifiers, but the signifiers were not necessarily words. Lacan insisted on this idea, forged on the model of linguistic structure, wherein every discrete and combinable element functioned as a signifier. *Lalangue* may collect certain images from discourse, but its knowledge is reduced to the One of its materiality, and the unconscious is thought of as the direct effect of the elements, one by one, word for word, presenting as the sentences of the baby. This is very similar to the classical thesis that desire, including that of the parents, circulates in the word. But with the concept of the *materiality of lalangue*, we are beyond the distinction signifier/signified, because the sounds are distinguished from each other prior to any sense of what is understood, just as the One precedes the Twos of the chain. Therefore, the enigmatic One floating on the chain of what is understood has a direct effect, joining with the enigma of sex. There is no pre-vocal in the speaking-being but there is pre-language, in the sense of syntax. The sound of the parents is not the message of the Other, and it exceeds as the *unconscious-lalangue*, the *unconscious-language*. On the other hand, it is for this reason that we need to recognise the relation: the speech of the Other versus the understanding of the infant. Often the analysand questions what they cannot get rid of; it is not because it is different from the irreducible contingency. There is also a *tyche* (Lacan, 1964a: 126) at the limits of parents’ responsibility toward their children.

We know from Seminar XI (Lacan, 1999 [1964a]) that *tyche* is not just an encounter, but one structurally missed. We also know that it is an impossible

intersection. We can introduce at this point considerations on transmission in psychoanalysis. Objection to any mastery of transmission lies in mastery being the ideal educator as well as the drama and helplessness of parents, an objection that Lacan first addressed through unconscious desire, that should be accounted for, more fundamentally, with the original antecedence of *lalangue*.

Concerning the discourse of the Other, the signifier is ‘over-the-line’ and what is said between the lines in the range of significations is interpreted as desire and fantasy, always anchored in the sexual. Soler uses the term “*song of the Other*” (Soler, 2009: 46). We need to remember that the One is undecided in *lalangue*. It comes from sound but it is not reduced to sound, because it could arrive as a unity of the phrase functioning as One. Otherwise it could be said that the *holophrase* precedes the phrase. The *holophrase* is defined as a welding of the phrase between S1 and S2, which suppresses the gap and makes it function immediately as One. This *holophrase*, is referenced by Lacan in Seminar XI (Lacan, 1964b) and clinically related to psychoses, but we can infer that it received a more fundamental function from these developments around 1975, concerning *lalangue*. The primitive word functions sometimes as a word of *jouissance*, as different from its message. Receiving the message and receiving *lalangue* are related but different things, because of their respective effects.

The analysand may well complain about the discourse of the parents as significant Others. In contrast, the subject rarely complains about language, and positively the subject rarely complains about *lalangue*. Lacan did not deny the impact of the Other, specifically in the form of the parents, but he switches the emphasis from the significance of the discourse of the Other, articulated in language, to the insistence of *lalangue* of the Other. This is a passage from the Symbolic to the Real. *Lalangue* is not Symbolic, it is Real because it is made up of many *Ones*, outside the chain and therefore outside signification. The signifier becomes real when it is outside the chain, but the *Ones* are in an enigmatic coalescence with *jouissance*. On the one hand, *lalangue* operates on the Real of the body’s *jouissance*. Yet, on the other hand, collecting the signs left by the experiences of *jouissance* becomes itself an object of

jouissance. This is one of the main theses of Seminar XX (Lacan, 1972-73), talking is itself *jouissance*. *Lalangue*, coming to the subject from the Other, bears the trace of *jouissance* of this Other. Hence the claim of the obscenity of *lalangue*, that brands the subject of enigmatic enjoy-signs. From the beginning, language implies that each *speaking-being* is bound to the Other, via a bond that would not be inter-subjectivity, that one would hesitate even to describe as a social bond, which then escapes as a symptom or dream. It is this bond that Lacan evoked as a sexual relationship between generations that is not reducible to an incestuous act.

Lacan marked the transition from *lalangue* to the symptom via coalescence with *jouissance* primarily in childhood. However, in analysis, starting with the symptom, there is a non-sense in the guise of a formation of the unconscious that defies our understanding. The analytical work of free association consists in connecting these units outside sense with other associated signifiers that would give them meaning. It passes, then, from the erratic One, that emerged surprisingly, to the chain of language. Lacan suggested that analysis delivers to the analysand the meaning of the symptoms, a meaning particularly hostile to common shared sense. The problem is that elucidating this sense does not solve the symptom, or even sometimes this sense or meaning enhances the symptom. The resistance of the symptom to the elaboration of its sense, and specifically the Oedipal sense, was recorded very early in the analytical movement. Freud said that when something resisted, the unconscious had closed again. The psychoanalytic movement noted this and moved to the analysis of resistances, which did not produce any results. Lacan came to the conclusion that analysis was not concerned with the elucidation of the meaning of symptoms, which is a movement from the One that leads to the fixation of the symptom to the One leading toward its reduction. If the core of the symptom comes from the Real of *lalangue*, outside sense, it cannot be resolved through this same Real. The symptom comes, in fact, from the Real, and from the Real of the substance of *jouissance* and the Real of *lalangue*. Here we could see how Lacan arrived at a redefinition of the unconscious as the Real outside sense. It is the unconscious spoken knowledge of *lalangue*, a knowing found at the level of

jouissance. There is unconscious lucubration, which if it is deciphered allows the subject to appropriate some of the *letters* of the symptom—to know a bit, but only at bit. The signifier, at the place of the Other, from where it comes to the infant, is written on the body as the difference of *jouissance*, thus as anxiety. Fantasy’s answer will only represent here an arresting or fixing of meaning.

We can say that for a sexual relationship the difference is not inscribable, and that any attempt to do that can only repeat it. Speech, coming from the Other, introduces and marks on the body the difference, the Real. In its turn, this difference becomes speech and question: “From one generation to the following, the question reproduces itself, and speech is transmitted. Who started? And in order to say what? Mystery of a life which reproduces itself only via misunderstanding...” (Lacan, 1972-73: 109). The body is affected by *lalangue*, and so it is a speaking-body. Yet, this body is a speaking-body and thus it affects another body. Hence, as a speaking-body, the body may wish to hold on to another body and reckon with it in order to be accountable for its ex-sistence. Can’t one find here “that which invisibly holds bodies” (93), as bodies of the speaking-being, bodies unhindered by awareness of visible anatomical difference and bodies that are not hindered either by the formula of fantasy which would allow the calculation of the distance between them? These are bodies caught in “the points of dead ends, of impasses” (93), that the writing of *lalangue* marks out on their surface, points which “show the real acceding to the symbolic” (93). All speaking-beings thus constitute the Other, via an affected body, as partner.

The Two Unconscious

If the subject, insofar as he or she speaks, is part of the genealogy of discourse, the symptom that divide him or her as a *body event* has no genealogy, even if it has the imprint of *lalangue*. With the event of the body, we are not at the level of logic. Nor are we at the level of language, or even that of fantasy, but at the level of an accidental meeting between vocalization and *jouissance*, produced following the contingencies of

the first years of existence. The symptom, as a surrogate to the sexual, being written in letters of the *unconscious-lalangue*, is always itself ignorant of the writing. It is written without spelling and without syntax. The letter precedes the materialization of language as does the learning of spelling. Therefore, the symptom is always a-semantic, by definition. When the signifier, the One of a symptom, no longer has any sense, only then are we sure to be in the unconscious, the *real unconscious*, which is the *unconscious of jouissance*. The *real unconscious* is to be opposed to the *supposed transference unconscious*, in the diachrony of analysis. It is in the place of the end of transference. Lacan did not stop trying to conceptualize that which could put an end to the flow of the chatter under transference, as well as a deciphering *ad infinitum* that could always tolerate one more cipher. The notion of unconscious knowledge was divided. Lacan used the term “*lucubration*” in order to account for this division:

... what I pointed out just now, of a lucubration which is that of the Unconscious. And you can indeed, you have certainly noticed that I had to, I had to lower the symptom by a notch, to consider that it was homogenous to the lucubration of the Unconscious. I mean that it, that it is depicted as knotted to it. What I supposed earlier, is the following; the fact is that I reduced the sinthome which is here to something which corresponds not to the lucubration of the Unconscious, but to the reality of the Unconscious. (Lacan, 2013 [1976]: 175)

That is to say that the unconscious deciphered in terms of knowledge always remains *limited*. It only knows one portion and hypothetically, compared to the knowledge deposited to *lalangue*, which is inexpugnable. Regarding the fact of knowing, *lalangue* “articulates things that go far beyond what the speaking-being supports as enunciated knowledge” (139). This disparity established between these two knowledge—*knowledge of lalangue* and *knowledge deciphered in language*—would not be conceivable without the differential structure of the signifier.

The act of deciphering extracts a signifier or a series of signifying materials from analyzing the symptom. Lacan made this explicit through the deciphering of an unknown signifier of knowledge that does not represent the subject, but regulates this

subject's *jouissance* in the symptom, an S2, that we could call a sign or letter—otherwise known as a signifier cause. A signifier of *jouissance* becomes S1, signifier recognized as Master of its own *jouissance*. There is a change in the status of the Master Signifier. This signifier *incarnated*, S1, is distinguished from the S1 borrowed from the Other's discourse. They are distinguished from other signifiers of *lalangue*, since the structure of the representation of this new S1, new with respect to knowledge, is not reduced by its deciphering, but it insists. Therefore, *lalangue* appears as the great reservoir from which deciphering extracts new fragments. We must remember what is crucial concerning identification with the symptom: the *unconscious-lalangue* remains an elusive knowledge. Having established the thesis of the two unconscious, the *transference unconscious* and the *real unconscious*, in the next chapter I engage with the thesis of sexual partners as symptoms for each other.

Chapter 6

Sexual Partners

Truth of the Real's Command

In this chapter I firstly address the Drives in that Freud's discovery of the unconscious and its sexual reality was intrinsically linked in his conception of the drives. I then address Lacan's enigmatic statement that the drive is produced by the operation of language, going on to explore the sexual signification of the symptoms, along with the thesis of the *fundamental symptom*, which analysis could possibly transform, but never eliminate, in a similar fashion to how analysis deals with the fundamental fantasy. I then engage with the topic of sexual partners as an impossible encounter, to subsequently address the possible sexual relationship in the context of Lacan's thesis: *There is no Sexual Relationship, there is the Symptom. There is the One*. To conclude this chapter, I explore the role of the two unconscious and the determination of symptoms as surrogate of the sexual non-relationship.

The *Drives*

Freud's discovery of the unconscious and its sexual reality was intrinsically linked to his conception of the drives (Freud, 2001 [1915]). Lacan indicated that the drive is produced by the operation of language and he referred, as a starting point of this process, to the child's dependency on an Other who has what is needed to satisfy the child's needs. That Other appears as separated from an Other on whose love the subject depends. Lacan thus distinguished two different types of demand: when the subject addresses the other/Other, the subject will produce a demand at the level of the need and another demand at the level of love. The baseline of natural needs remains enigmatic. In psychoanalysis, the need is only known through a demand to the Other who has what is needed to satisfy those needs. Beyond the demand to the Other who has what is needed to satisfy a need, we find the demand to the Other who does not have what is needed to satisfy needs. This second demand is the demand of love, in the way Freud defined it, since there is nothing that can guarantee love. Between these two demands, Lacan inscribed desire. Then, at a higher level of demand, Lacan presented the drive, as a constant impulse, always satisfied. The drive is experienced as something that passes through all previous levels.

Demand is speech aimed to the Other, everything said by the subject in analysis and it alludes to interpretation. However, there is a particular demand in analysis, a paradoxical demand that doesn't speak, a demand Freud called *silent*. The drive is indeed that paradoxical demand that doesn't speak, despite being structured like a language. In the vector of the demand we find the part that can be interpreted—desire—and the part that cannot be interpreted—the drive. The concept of drive in Freud is always in opposition to desire in the sense that desire always implies dissatisfaction, while we always discuss the satisfaction of the drive. We use the concept of desire to name a state of fundamental dissatisfaction in a subject. The hysteric's desire is, in that way, dissatisfied desire. Desire in obsessive neurosis appears as impossible, and in phobias as prevented. In cases where Freud discussed defense against the drive, for example with ethics, he said that in reality the drive always reaches its aim of

satisfaction, even if through a substitutive satisfaction. In his presentation *Television* (1999 [1973a]), Lacan noted: “the subject is always happy” (Lacan, 1999 [1973a]: 22). This was a provocation, when we consider the unhappiness of the subject’s desire. However, the sentence acquires a different meaning if we think of it at the level of the drive. The notion of the aim of the drive allows us to understand unhappiness, failure, as precisely where the drive is satisfied at a fundamental level. We recognize this in psychoanalytic experience at the level of repetition. If a subject repeats what produces displeasure, we suppose that the subject searches and finds it in dissatisfaction. Once we have the concept of drive, we try to find out why the subject becomes entangled in a relationship with the Other, in the demand of love which may or may not be satisfied.

The human being, insofar as it speaks, loses the instinctual regulations of animality and becomes a speaking-being. To use the vocabulary of Lacan’s Seminar VII *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* (Lacan, 1997 [1959-60]), one might say that language is the cause of *the Thing* (*das Ding*), something like a hole in the Real that creates a will to *jouissance*, a constant pressing towards satisfaction. But language is not only the cause of human de-naturalization. It is also the way to obtain, at least partially, what *the Thing* demands. Freud distinguished between two types of satisfaction of the drive. On the one hand, there is the symptom, which implies repression, and on the other hand, sublimation, which does not suppose repression. In both cases we can say that language shows the way. In the first case, there is a fixation of *jouissance* produced by the first encounter with sexuality that returns metonymically or, in Freud’s terms, through displacement. The second case seems to be different. Concerning sublimation, we can say that where the void of *the Thing* was, something is produced, invented, an object providing a partial satisfaction. It seems that the late Lacan teaching collapsed the Freudian distinction between symptom and sublimation. At the beginning, Lacan approached Freud’s terms through the distinction between signifier and object. But when he began to consider more explicitly the *jouissance* contained in the symptom, he recognized that any signifier by itself could be an object. In the void of *the Thing* we could put anything that would function as associate of *jouissance*, but it will always be an invention of the unconscious.

Perhaps the most useful thing that can be said about the drive is in reference to Lacan's extensive commentary on *Instincts and their Vicissitudes* (Freud, 2001 [1914b]), a text which is usually seen as making some straightforward and outdated remarks about the four concepts associated with the drive, that is: source, pressure, aim and object. Lacan treated it as one of Freud's finest accounts of the nature of human love and the way in which it is related to the partial drives. The point that Lacan highlighted regarding the constancy of the drive came from Freud and is what led him to argue that only a topology can explain the paradox that human drives have no day or night, no summer or winter. They do not abate when they are satisfied but instead exercise a constant pressure that runs against the usual conception of instinct. Topology, emphasizing the importance of the edge of a surface, is also invoked to explain why it is precisely the oral, anal, visual and auditory orifices that are privileged by Freud as sources of the drive. The return action refers to the reversal of aim and object that Freud saw as one of the vicissitudes to which drives may be subjected, that is to look or be looked at, to hurt or to be hurt and so on. In Seminar XI *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, (1999 [1964b]) Lacan suggests:

Similarly, the scopic drive, which served me as a paradigm, was developed in a special way, demonstrating the antinomy in it between vision and the look with the aim of attaining the register of the lost object, so fundamental in Freud's thinking. I formulated this object as the cause of this position of the subject, which is subordinated to fantasy. (Lacan, 1964b: 176)

Sexual Signification of the Symptom

Freud's discovery of the drive poses the question of the libido that was pertinent to sustain the sexual bond, and this is what cropped up in Lacan's formula: "There is no such a thing as a sexual relationship" (Lacan, 1999 [1972-73]: 35). How could the satisfaction of the drive, which is, in itself, self-centered *jouissance*, be reconciled with desire and love for another body, necessary for the constitution of the sexual partner? To answer this question, Freud offered his elaboration of the Oedipus complex, with the various identifications resulting from it. With the Oedipus complex, Freud tried to explain the norm of heterosexual desire and what differs from it, and the concept of a

natural constitution was his last resort when he admitted that the Oedipus complex was not enough to address sexuality. After locating the link between symptom and sexuality, Freud turned the symptom into an anomaly of the sexual, more precisely, a substitute of so-called normal sexual satisfaction. Hence, for Freud, the symptom could only be conceived within the sphere of an individual pathology of *jouissance*. This is evidenced by the clinical experience of hearing the complaints leading a subject to pursue psychoanalysis. Symptoms are presented to the analyst as those things that never stop imposing themselves on the subject. Symptoms are experienced as anomaly, deviation, and also as constraint. The love partner, in the sexual sense of the term, is also part of the deciphering.

Freud's initial thesis about the sexual signification of the symptoms concerned their deciphering. This way of addressing the signification of the symptom presented itself in terms of partial drives: oral, anal, and so on, whose partial and multiple character are identifiable in the infantile *polymorphous perversion*. With his *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (Freud, 2001 [1905b]), Freud showed the link between the unconscious and the characteristics of the drives, what Lacan would later call *jouissance*, implied in the term *drive*. Freud stressed that the drive was unaware of the rhythms of biological life. He emphasized its partial character, its insertion into the subject's body via the erogenous zones and its indifference to the object (Freud, 2001 [1915]: 122). The symptom is therefore a sexual substitute, in other words, a *jouissance* that is paradoxically unpleasant. In the adult who speaks through his symptoms, Freud highlighted the voice of the "*polymorphous perverse*" child who enjoys his body autoerotically, without a partner (Freud, 2001 [1905b]). This is the first model for what Soler called *autistic symptoms* (Soler, 2009: 137), to designate a *jouissance* of the body that does not pass through a partner, a *jouissance* referent to the erogenous zones. In fact, the drives make a clear reference to *jouissance*. However, the drives ignore the difference between the sexes. The difference between the sexes is introduced in the unconscious, according to Freud, only through the phallic phase, which is not so much linked to the discovery of anatomical difference, but to the masturbatory *jouissance* of

the organ, and a deprivation of the organ for the mother “which concentrates all the most intimate self-eroticism” (Freud, 2001 1905: 204).

Returning to the notion of *generalized perversion*, it concerns every speaking-being and is integral to the famous Lacanian assertion: “There is no sexual relationship” (Lacan 1999 [1972-73]: 35). For Lacan, the *no sexual relationship* was “a Freudian saying” (196). In Freudian terms, the unconscious constitutes for sex only two components, the partial drives and phallic *jouissance*. The symptom is a way to *jouissance* that locates whatever is left of the child’s original polymorphous perversion. The *jouissance* of the symptoms, whether it is phobia, hysteria, obsession, or perversion as a clinical structure, is nothing but *jouissance* considered perverse, that same *jouissance* that Freud discovered in the fantasy deciphered in each symptom, which says nothing concerning the genitals.

The Fundamental Symptom

Lacan revealed the Freudian intuition about the symptom in “The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis – the Rome Discourse” (Lacan, 1982 [1953b]). The Symptom is a message addressed to the Other, an enigma searching to be deciphered, a hieroglyph seeking a subject capable of understanding and interpreting. The messenger ignores the existence of the author, as well as the person to whom the message is addressed. The Symptom “moves towards recognition of desire, but it is illegible [...] it moves towards the recognition of desire, but the desire is excluded, repressed” (Lacan, 2013 [1957-58]; 16). Keeping in mind the Borromean Knot, Lacan added in Seminar XXII *RSI* (2013, [1975]) a new dimension to the Symptom: its relationship with the Real. In that Seminar, he situated the symptom in the Real out of the field of the Imaginary and the Symbolic. He said, “... [I]t is in the symptom that we identify what is produced in the field of the Real. If the Real manifests itself in analysis and not only in analysis, ... so as to make it the sign of something which is what is not working out in the Real, if in other words, we are capable of operating on the symptom, it is insofar as the symptom is the effect of the Symbolic in the Real”

(Lacan, 2013, [1975]: 20). If one considers the symptom as coming from the Real into the Symbolic, one must agree that it has little relevance in the Imaginary and the universe of significations. To say that the symptom is the effect of the Symbolic in the Real is to state that the symptom is beyond the reach of the Imaginary and thus, out of reach of significations. This implies that the truth of the subject ciphered in the symptom is a truth that has nothing to do with signification, that the message to be deciphered is non-sense and that the appeal that the symptom carries is constituted by signifiers of no real meaning. One can see that in such conditions interpretation can no longer be what it was at the beginning of the psychoanalytic experience: a simple revelation of hidden significations. Moreover, the cure cannot simply consist of eradicating the symptom. This eradication of the symptom becomes even more impossible as Lacan began to consider the symptom more and more as a manifestation of structure: an effect of the impossibility of sexual rapport.

The fundamental symptom, in a similar fashion to how we speak of the fundamental fantasy, is the singular symptom that establishes a link where there is no established social link, at the level of love. Lacan said in *Television* (1999 [1973a]): “love affairs are cut off from any social link” (13). The fundamental symptom is the symptom that compensates for this fundamental lack; it determines a singular mode of relating to a sexual partner, in an always-enigmatic modality, produced by the unconscious as an operation on the Real. The fundamental symptom is no longer the problem, but it is the solution to the non-sexual relationship, which is a solution proper to everyone, that is, the response for the non-rapport imposed on every neurotic subject, the universal illness of beings affected by the unconscious. *There is no sexual relationship* means that every partner is a symptomatic one. This symptomatic solution responds to the lack that is at the core of language, a lack related to the impossibility of inscribing the other *jouissance* not connected with the unconscious. One of the main consequences is that there is no subject without a symptom, since the symptom signals an individual manner of confronting sexuality. It is through the symptom that everyone has access to his or her own *jouissance*. I use the singular for symptom and, though there are many symptoms, we could qualify a symptom as the fundamental one in the same way that there are, of

course, many sexual fantasies. However, only one qualifies as the fundamental fantasy. An analysis that starts with the symptom will also end with the symptom, possibly transformed, but never eliminated.

The Lacanian hypothesis defined the function of speech and language in the field of *jouissance*. This hypothesis did not correspond exactly to what Lacan demonstrated regarding the Freudian field, namely that it is structured like a language, since it asserts fundamentally that the unconscious and its effects on speaking-beings are consequences of language. To recognize an effect of language in the drive already means assuming that language, far from being reduced to its function of communication, is an operator capable of transforming the Real.

Sexual Partners: an Impossible Encounter

If we follow Lacan and his engagement with the thesis of *no sexual relationship*, we find that there is no aim or desire or love, but the body-to-body of the act and the *jouissance* that is in the orgasm. That is, it is only the emergence of *jouissance*, leaving aside the symptom, which enters the space of the subject. Freud understood that there was nothing self-evident concerning the existence of the sexual couple. With the discovery of the drives, the very possibility of the couple became a theoretical problem to solve. Notes added by Freud to the *Three Essays on Sexuality* (Freud, 2001 [1905b]) are clear testimony of this. The solution was to be found in reference to Oedipus, to the parental figures that induced certain models of identification and the separation effects of the threat of castration. Lacan did not deny it, this being evident from the text of 1960, “Position of the Unconscious” (Lacan, 2006 [1960c]). This text suggests that sexuality, in its relation to the unconscious, is divided in two, the side of the speaking-being and the side of the Other (712). The side of the Other was a reference to Freud’s Oedipus complex, its significant ideals and the identifications which it established. These are the signifiers of “the order and the norm” (712), in other words, the semblances of men and women, the phallic signifier and Father. The side of the speaking-being is the side of the body-to-body of the act and the *jouissance* that it

implies. The question remained—where to place castration—to which Freud gave so much weight, and how, then, to conceive of it. It was on the issue of castration that Lacan differed from Freud, for whom the castration complex falls from the side of the Oedipus complex, castration caused by the father. For Lacan, at least from Seminar X *Anxiety* (Lacan 2013 [1962-63]) onwards, whatever the significance of the imaginary castrating father, castration is produced without a father. The father takes on another role. The real castration starts from the side of the living being marked by *lalangue*, and the castration of *jouissance*. This real castration concerns the Lacanian myth of the *lamella*. In Lacan's "Position of the Unconscious" (Lacan, 2006 [1960c]) this myth replaces both of Freud's myths, those from *Totem and Taboo* and Oedipus. With a long citation, I introduce Lacan's myth of the lamella:

Whenever the membranes of the egg in which the foetus emerges on its way to becoming a new-born are broken, imagine for a moment that something flies off, and that one can do it with an egg as easily as with a man, namely the *hommelette*, or the lamella. The lamella is something extra-flat, which moves like the amoeba. It is just a little more complicated. But it goes everywhere. And as it is something—I will tell you shortly why—that is related to what the sexed being loses in sexuality, it is, like the amoeba in relation to sexed beings, immortal—because it survives any division, and scissiparous intervention. And it can turn around. Well! This is not very reassuring. But suppose it comes and envelopes your face while you are quietly asleep (...) I can't see how we would not join battle with a being capable of these properties. But it would not be a very convenient battle. This lamella, this organ, whose characteristic is not to exist, but which is nevertheless an organ—I can give you more details as to its zoological place—is the libido. It is the libido, qua pure life instinct, that is to say, immortal life, irrepressible life, life that has need of no organ, simplified, indestructible life. It is precisely what is subtracted from the living being by virtue of the fact that it is subject to the cycle of sexed reproduction. And it is of this that all the forms of the *objet a* that can be enumerated are the representatives, the equivalents. (Lacan, 2006 [1960c]: 716)

The lamella is a myth not only without a father, but as well without the Other of language. It makes a myth of the enigma of life, as life is reproduced by way of sex, at the price of a loss of life that individual mortality shows, and that starts the vector of libido. This accomplishes a step in relation to the pure dialectic of lack of the phallus, through which Lacan questioned the notion of the couple. It concerns the libido as a

search for a complement of *jouissance* by the partial drives, as conclusions about the sexual act itself: “there is no access to the Other of the opposite sex except by the way of the so-called partial drives, in which the subject searches for an object that replaces the loss of life that is his being-sexed” (Lacan, 1960c: 716). This locates a homology between the *jouissance* of the symptom and *jouissance* of sexual orgasm. With regard to genitality, Freud was interested in its symptomatic failures: frigidity, impotence, disjunction between love and *jouissance*. But, concerning its *successes*, there is almost nothing to be found in his work, no theory on the coupling of bodies. I emphasize a theory that evokes the *jouissance* of the act as the sum of *jouissances*, a theory indicative that Freud distinguished this type of *jouissance* from the “shortness of autoerotic *jouissance*” (Lacan, 2013 [1966-67]: 183), although both pass through the same organ. There we found in Freud his question of whether the partial drives may or may not be integrated with the fore-pleasure of the act. And finally, concerning Freud’s notes on the obstacle posed by respect for women, we find in Freud nothing systematic and even less consistency in his notes on the conditions of the orgasm or its function.

In contrast, Lacan focused on the sexual act, and beyond. He does not identify the lack of a sexual relationship and the symptomatic act but, on the contrary, the success of the act. He notes in *Television* (1999 [1973a]): “that failure is the success of the act” (25). The *jouissance* of the speaking-being is found distorted by the language that restricts it, fragments it and blocks it. This “*primary castration*” (205), as Lacan calls it in Seminar X *Anxiety* (2013 [1962-63]), reduces our *jouissance* to be neither more nor less than permitted, but not impossible to write. Language only writes phallic *jouissance*, writes the *jouissance* that is One and *jouissance* of the One, as well as the plus-of-*jouissance* of the objects related to the drives to which it is fixed, but writes nothing of the Other *jouissance*. It is as much as saying that “the unconscious does not know anything about women” (Lacan, 1999 [1972-73]: 175). As for the sexual act, its social bond, clinically recognized with the affect of exception that is anxiety, is a sign that allows us to recognize the place where there is a join of *jouissance* and castration in the same orgasmic experience that is not Imaginary but Real. This is the thesis on anxiety: orgasm is *jouissance* for both sexes.

We are able to locate what is coupled: at the level of desire, there is coupling in the fantasy ($\$ \leq a$), at the level of love. If we follow Seminar XX (Lacan, 1999 [1972-73]), we recognize the pair one-subject-to-another-subject ($\$ \rightarrow \$$), at the level of *jouissance*. However, there is no couple. *Jouissance* is not binding by itself. It does not oversee the social bond. But, then, why qualify this *jouissance* as perverse? We have the origins of the concept of the term *perversion* at the beginning of the last century with the work of Krafft Ebing. As I have earlier noted, perversion is defined in relation to a normative standard that was supposed natural, and it was all *jouissance* of the body that does not pass through the heterosexual act. Freud defined it in terms of anomalies with respect to the arena and the object. The term *general perversion* includes the sexual act, but extends over the entire field of speech and it is now more so in the open, no longer concealed as it once was by the semblance of tradition. There now seem to be few exceptions, therefore, to *general perversion*, except perhaps the *other jouissance* of Woman barred from speech, that does not pass through the *objet a*. It is precisely this that we return to in our concluding chapter.

There is no Sexual Relationship: the Symptom & the One

How are we to explain, in the context of this thesis, experience of the sexual relationship, an experience that is diffuse and rather general? How can we further explain that *satisfaction* is linked to orgasm in the sexual relationship and is usually clearly distinguished from a *satisfaction* accompanying masturbation? I use here the term *satisfaction* rather than *jouissance*, precisely because the position of the subject in relation to this specific *jouissance* is implicated. The question becomes, more generally: how is it that different types of *jouissance* seem to have an influence on diverse subject-effects? Freud, via his notion of a psychoneurosis-of-defense, thought he could correlate the difficulties of sex to repression, that is, speech that makes use of the signifier to limit *jouissance*. But there is also a reverse order of determination. I would use, following Soler, the expression *the commandments of jouissance* (Soler, 2009: 128) to say that *jouissance*, in its various modes, produces subjective effects.

Satisfaction of the sexual act may well not be as generalized as we think, if we consider various movements towards sexual abstinence. There is, however, a subjective function of orgasm in that it depends on the issue of sexual identity, and on the double pressure of the partial drives. Lacan said that there is no sexual act, “that is enough to affirm in the subject the certainty that he has a sex” (Lacan, 2013 [1966-67]: 16). Success of the act is, on the one hand, the experience for each one, although in a differentiated manner, of being-for-the-other, at least for a moment, a *thing unattainable*. On the other hand, the moment of satisfaction itself is the restoration of the separation, where those Two do not make One. Classical psychoanalytic theory establishes that fantasy was at play in the erotic link with the other, the object of the fantasy supporting the so-called *relationship of object*. It is still not clear that a relationship based upon desire does *not* guarantee the response of *jouissance*.

The symptom, as emergence of the *real unconscious*, is *an event of the body*. The term event connotes the trait of the non-planned related to a manifestation of *jouissance* that is imposed on the person who experiences it. This is illustrated, at the level of the couple, by the orgasm, and to say that the partner is a symptom is to say that this partner is the cause of the event of *jouissance*: “a woman is a body that makes the *jouissance* of another body” (Lacan, 2013 [1976]: 565-66). Two questions emerge here, the first concerning the existent: to what extent does this symptom of the *real unconscious* determine the subject? Secondly, we ask about this existent’s freedom and determination: between the law of the effects of language on the speaking-being and the contingency of the encounter that makes the body event, what is the margin for any freedom? Between what does not stop being written of the effects of castration *and* the randomness of the event, does there remain a place for choice, or does the subject only appear as a marionette of the unconscious?

The term *sexuation* connotes a process that already indicates a difference. Between the side of the Man and the side of the Woman, the subject has a choice. Lacan noted: “subjects are forced to authorize themselves as sexual beings according to the directives of an unconscious that speaks” (Lacan, 2013 [1973-74]: v15). He aimed to maximize the disconnection between sex and anatomy. Now anatomy involves much

more than the shape of the image because it is integral to the living being as sexuated. In the 1960s, between Seminar X *Anxiety* (Lacan, 2013 [1962-63]) and the text “Position of the Unconscious” (2006 [1960c]), Lacan gave great prominence to the Real of the sexual reproduction of life, its association with death and the links between castration and the operating characteristics of the male organ. The term *choice* should not make us think that Lacan’s thesis is grounded in an essential humanism of freedom that commits one to accentuate the idea of a free choice of pleasure as a principle of experience of sex: an attempt to disconnect the question of identity from that of sex. This constitutes a way to deny that there is something like sexual identity, and to deny that there is anything compelling in the arena of sexuality. This attempt is, as well, distinguished from theories of gender that make from sex a social product.

Soler, (2003) links two Lacanian formulations, to establish a third one: “If there is no such a thing as a sexual relationship, there is the symptom or there is a substitute formation generated by the unconscious; that would lead to a third one which remains implicit: There is One” (89). This formula refers to the *One* of the signifier One as opposed to the signifier *Two*, or the *One* of the *jouissance* of the body. This formula underlines the primacy of a flow of *jouissance* in the subject related to his or her sexual partner’s own *jouissance*. Soler emphasizes:

The symptom achieves a union between the discrete elements of the unconscious and jouissance. Given the lack of an appropriate partner for jouissance, symptoms are placed instead as a substitute. It contradicts the “there is no such thing . . .” of the impossible sexual relationship by erecting a there is ... there is something, an element grasped from the unconscious that fixes the jouissance in the subject. Hence the symptom is no longer the problem but the solution.” (90)

Soler highlights that when Lacan defines the unconscious not just as discourse but as a language, the symptom became a signifier structured like a metaphorical chain concealing the signifier of the trauma. The signifier was then conceived not just as verbal. Hence, any discrete element of reality could be raised to the status of signifier. This first stage emphasized the linguistic implications of the technique of deciphering.

A second stage, according to Soler, coincides with the definition of the unconscious as the “[T]reasure of the drives” (Soler, 2003: 86), which implies a fusion between signifiers and the speaking-being. This corresponds to the symptom as *jouissance*. Through his later years of teaching, Lacan never ceased to re-elaborate this thesis of symptom as *jouissance*. This second stage emphasized that the language of the symptom was embodied. The language of the symptom organizes and regulates *jouissance*. Hence, Lacan’s formula in Seminar XX: “The real, I will say, is the mystery of the speaking body, the mystery of the unconscious” (Lacan, 1972-73: 143). This stage refers us to the Real, whereas the symptom as message or as signifier sent us to the junction between the Imaginary and the Symbolic. Lacan came to the point where he recaptured the first and the last of Freud’s theses on the symptom: the symptom is a mode of satisfaction. It can be deciphered as a message, but it is not only a way of speaking. It is, above all, a form of *jouissance*, as a satisfaction of partial drives. This is also why Soler calls Lacan’s second stage his “second return to Freud” (Soler, 2009: 176).

The idea that the *real unconscious* is the core of the speaking-being is currently widely shared by psychoanalysts but only in analysis is it revealed whether or not it knots the *transference unconscious*. The status of the *jouissance* that the sexual relationship does not write changes the function of what is called the symptom. The symptom is not just any decipherable formation of the unconscious, like dreams or slips of the tongue, which are punctuated by repetitions. The symptom, because of its consistency and its fixity, is at the same time that One of *jouissance* and suffering that comes in addition to ephemeral emergence. The symptom emerges from the encrypting of the unconscious or from the metonymic drift of the word. Unlike these formations of the unconscious, where language produces a shift in the series of signs, the symptom fixes this series.

Lacan wrote in *RSI* (Lacan, 2013 [1974-75]) the structure of this symptomatic exception as a function of the letter: $f(x)$, where f is the function of *jouissance*, and x is any item of the unconscious which becomes a *jouissance-letter*, a letter which, contrary to the signifier, is characterized by self-identity. This led Lacan to suggest: “Except for

the fact that the symptom cannot be defined otherwise than by the way in which each one enjoys the unconscious in so far as the unconscious determines it” (98). The general perversion of *jouissance* therefore calls into question a clinic of the different versions of the symptom, depending on whether *jouissance* is or is not knotted to the other two dimensions, a dependence therefore that includes or does not include the truth of fantasy.

In the next chapter I will further explore the notion of the sexual partner in its topological engagement with the Borromean knot. By doing so I lead my research to the concept of the *sinthôme*, as a fourth knot keeping the Real, Imaginary and Symbolic registers knotted in the absence of the paternal metaphor. I will engage with the different modalities of that fourth knotting.

Chapter 7

Partner/Symptom/Sinthome

Autistic Jouissance of the Pure Letter

In this chapter, following from Lacan's thesis that sexual partners are symptoms for each other, I explore, using the topology of the Borromean knot, the concept of the Sinthome, as a fourth knot keeping the Real, Imaginary and Symbolic registers knotted in the absence of the paternal metaphor. I engage with the different modalities of this fourth knotting, including the literary works of Joyce and Fernando Pessoa.

The Autistic or Socializing Solution

Lacan's thesis that sexual partners are symptoms for each other, as we established in the previous chapter, has an internal limit in the clinical structure of the subject that we are referring to when we talk about the partner. While we can reference a symptomatic solution for the neurotic subject, we need to refer to a solution beyond the symptomatic one in the case of the psychotic subject. That solution leads us to the

concept of the sinthome. The distinction between symptom and sinthome that Lacan defined in various places, in discussing the Borromean knot, refers to the Freudian distinction between auto- and hetero-eroticism that happens before the distinction between the sexes at the level of the drive. They are what Soler calls autistic symptoms, to be written between the Real and the Symbolic, as a direct effect of *lalangue* on *jouissance*. Though they do exclude the social bond, they are folded onto an *auto-erotic jouissance*.

These autistic symptoms are different from those that are called socializing symptoms, in which *jouissance* facilitates a bond due to the knotting of the Imaginary and the Symbolic of the partner. Those symptoms are the ones that could be called Borromean symptoms. Lacan moved from the generalization of *jouissance* equivalent to the non-sexual relationship, to an affirmation of the partner-symptom, which makes up for the foreclosure of the relation. *There is no sexual relationship*, but there is for each subject the fundamental symptom that makes up for the non-sexual relationship. The thesis is explicit for the heterosexual couple. In a lecture in January 1975, Lacan noted:

For the one encumbered with a phallus, what is a woman? It is a symptom. It is clear that if there is no enjoyment of the Other as such, namely, if there is no guarantee that can be met in the enjoyment of the body of the Other which ensures that to enjoy the Other as such exists, here is the most manifest example of the hole... To make this woman a symptom is all the same to situate her in this articulation to the point where phallic enjoyment as such is moreover her affair. Contrary to what is said, the woman has to undergo castration neither more nor less than the man. She is, with regard to what is involved in her function of symptom all together at the same point as her man. (Lacan, 2013 [1974-75]: 52)

In other words, Woman is a body with which to have *jouissance*. And to say “*body to have jouissance with*” is to say more than object cause of desire. As the unconscious that analysis does not reduce, the symptom is found in the analysis transformed, as a therapeutic effect, but as something that does not cease to be written as effect of the *jouissance* that castration leaves.

The Sinthome

Lacan situated the sinthome at the point of a fourth ring giving stability to the unknotting of the other three rings. The writings of Joyce have, for Lacan, a sinthomatic value re-knotting the Real, the Imaginary, and the Symbolic, as well as fulfilling the role of prosthesis. This sinthomatic activity of the writer allows him a substitute ego by which, in addition, the writer makes a name for himself. I must insist here that this sinthome is not without rapport to the Name-of-the-Father. Lacan elaborated on this theory of the sinthome using an example of psychosis. In this same Seminar on the Sinthome, Lacan generalized its structural function as the fourth ring and noted the structure of the speaking-being from this new Borromean knot composed of four rings: the Real, the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Sinthome.¹

Lacan oscillated in his response to the question of whether one should consider the Sinthome to be a component structurally necessary for the neurotic structure. He asked firstly, is the fourth ring of the sinthome present in neurotic and psychotic structures? Secondly, if in the affirmative, is this knot of four rings Borromean or not? Regardless of Lacan's hesitation to give a response, a general tendency began to appear in his teachings—the fourth ring of the Sinthome is necessary; it is part of the Borromean Knot: “[W]ithout this fourth ring there is no tie between the imaginary, the real, and the symbolic” (Lacan, 2013, [1975]: 12). When speaking on the completion of the cure and referring to the original repression that could never be cancelled, Lacan noted: “There is no radical reduction of the fourth term” (Lacan, 2013, [1975]: 26). If the sinthome is an integral part of the structure, what does it have to do with that structure during the cure and what does it become upon completion of the cure? It appears that Lacan differentiated those symptoms that one has a right to expect to disappear in the course of an analysis and the sinthome of each individual, which holds together the Real, the Imaginary, and the Symbolic.

In Seminar XXIII *The Sinthome* (Lacan, 2013 [1976]), Lacan stressed the side of the symptom which was no longer related to the dimension of truth: the dimension of

¹ Refer to Figure 4: The Fourth Knot: The Sinthome on page 121 of this thesis.

interpretation of the symptom which could lead to the production of new unconscious material and which is driven by the production of meaning. The other side of the symptom would be the one where the symptom is no longer a formation of the unconscious, is no longer included in the production of meaning, but rather functions as the emerging point of different figures of *jouissance*. The sinthome is what is left after going through the enigma of the formation of the unconscious and its repetitive and never-ending productions of meaning. The symptom always relies on the supposition of meaning: the analysand interrogates its meaning, addressing it to the *Subject-Supposed-to-Know*. The symptom has something to say; there is communication taking place on the level of the symptom. This presupposition could be understood as one of the moments that trigger the demand for analysis. In this sense, the symptom is a phenomenon of transference, that is, the symptom lives in the domain of the *transference unconscious*, whereas the sinthome is a consistency detached from the production of meaning. On the level of the sinthome, the demand for meaning no longer relies on a *Subject-Supposed-to-Know*, but on a certain consistency of *jouissance*.

Lacan claimed that Joyce managed to unsubscribe himself from the domain of the Freudian unconscious, the *transference unconscious* related to the *Subject-Supposed-to-Know*, by inventing a particular type of writing.² This detachment of the symptom from transference did not place Joyce outside the unconscious. It rather revealed a different dimension of the Freudian concept, the Real dimension. In *The Sinthome* (Lacan, 2013 [1976]), Lacan claimed that Joyce's sinthome "does not concern you at all, given that there is no possibility that it will attach something of your own unconscious" (xii 15). This sinthome is unsubscribed to the unconscious in the sense that it rejects any analytical interpretation based on the production of meaning. Even if transference is not operative in Joyce, that does not prevent his *jouissance* and therefore his ability to do something with his sinthome.

The passage from the symptom to the *sinthome*, homologous to the passage from language to *lalangue*, is the passage from the symptom as opened to the possibility

² Lacan developed the notion of the analyst as the *Subject-Supposed-to-Know*, arising through transference (i.e., supposed to know the meaning of the patient's symptoms)

of analytical interpretation to the *sinthome* as a certain consistency of *jouissance* which could nevertheless be subjected to the effects of psychoanalysis. It constitutes the passage from psychoanalysis as related to an engagement with truth, interpretation and meaning to psychoanalysis as *pragmatic*, engaged with the irreducible singularity of *jouissance*. While the figure of the symptom is articulated from one signifier to another, or the relation between knowledge and truth, in the singular dimension of *sinthome* we have the consistency of *jouissance*. Lacan's final teaching could be seen not only as an internal subversion of his previous, structural orientation, but also as a redefinition of his return to Freud which was undertaken under the domain of Joycean literature. This second return to Freud can be traced back to Lacan's Seminar XX (Lacan, 1999 [1972-73]), where Joyce was introduced in a very specific context regarding the relation between the signifier and the signified:

I can agree that Joyce's work is not readable—it is not certainly translatable into Chinese. What happens in Joyce's work? The signifier stuffs the signified. It is because the signifiers fit together, combine, and concertina—read *Finnegans wake*—that something is produced as signified that may seem enigmatic, but is clearly what is closest to what we analysts, thanks to analytic discourse, have to read—slips of the tongue. It is as slips that they signify something, in other words, that they can be read in an infinite number of different ways. But it is precisely for that reason that they are difficult to read, are read awry, or not read at all. But doesn't this dimension of 'being read' suffice to show that we are in the register of analytic discourse? (37)

Lacan did not say that the enigmatic effect is produced through meaning, but through detachment of the signifier from any production of meaning. The signifier produces an *effect* of the signified by *stuffing* it, that is, by abolishing the Saussurean reference of the signifier-signified. The signifier intervenes in the signified, thus repeating itself on the other side of the barrier that separates the two fields. Hence, the signified becomes an effect of the signifier, which is itself detached from the signifying chain referring to the metonymy of meaning or desire. The Joycean signifier does not communicate, but rather enjoys, and it is precisely in this sense that this detached signifier reveals a dimension of the unconscious. What this passage communicates is a beyond structuralism, and what is at the core of this beyond is the shift from the *impotence* of

linguistics to the *impossibility* of psychoanalysis, a shift in the status of the unconscious in its relation to the Real.

Psychoanalysis is interested in the encounters between language and living bodies. It investigates the consequences of these encounters, which manifest themselves in the form of symptoms. And it is this encounter of language with the living body that Lacan called, in his late teaching, *jouissance*. *Jouissance* is always experienced on the level of the speaking-body, which emphasizes the dimension of *jouissance* in language. Lacan said as much when he introduced the notions of the Other *jouissance* and *jouissance* of the barred Other. Both terms designate *jouissance* of language manifesting itself in particular living bodies as *jouissance* beyond castration. In this sense, *jouissance* could simply be defined as the *real* effect of language *in* the living body. Linguistics created a barrier between the signifier and the signified. This enabled scientific discourse to normalize the living situation of language, isolating structure as the system of signifying differences, determining the *relation* between the signifier and the signified as arbitrary and linking meaning to its metonymical dimension. But what Lacan claimed in his reference to Joyce was that Joyce revealed the formalization of *lalangue*. He claimed that Joyce revealed the fact that the signifier *stuffs* the signified. This means that the hypothesis of the relation between the signifier and the signified and the barrier between the two was abandoned. The signifier repeats itself on the other side of the barrier, producing an enigmatic effect of the signified, which is in fact a linguistic construction. Instead of signification and meaning we are dealing with *jouissance* which functions outside the signifying chain. Joyce dissolved the signifying link, substituting it with *jouissance* of and in writing, where the signifier becomes the *cause of jouissance* and not the carrier of meaning.

Lacan emphasized this shift from the signifier as a support of relations to the signifier as non-relation in the first session of Seminar XX (Lacan, 1999 [1972-73]), by claiming that the signifier should be defined in topological terms, as something that has the *effect of the signified*. The signifier is something that was invented in order to introduce relations between the Imaginary and the Real, but instead it causes *jouissance* in the speaking-body and produces an *illusion* of signification. The signifier does not

function in a linguistic way, and this not-functioning constitutes its core. When interacting with a living body, the signifier produces something that was not there before, *jouissance* as a *real* effect. And this causality of the signifier denaturalizes the anatomical body. It produces the libidinal body, the speaking-body, which is in non-relation with anatomy. The limit of linguistics is therefore placed in the signifier itself—in the signifier as far as it is not just supporting the fantasy relation to the signified—but is also capable of producing effects of *jouissance* in the living body. Lacan abandoned his equivalence of the symptom with the linguistic metaphor and defined it as the “*knot of signifiers*” (Lacan, 1973a: 23). There, the symptom was no longer the carrier of sense, but rather codification of *joui-sens*, enjoyed-meaning. And it was Joyce, his art of writing, which *embodied* this modification of the symptom. The symptom re-defined as the *knot of signifiers* evokes the reference to the Borromean knot. Thus the second return to Freud subverted the psychoanalytic reference to linguistics. It also subverted Lacan’s theory of the subject. As we introduced earlier in this thesis, Lacan referred to the subject as *parlêtre*, a neologism translated into English as the *speaking-being* evoking both speech and being, though not as a conjunction of two functions but rather as an existing entity. But it also evokes babbling, senseless speech detached from meaning and communication and invested with *jouissance*. It evokes, therefore, the dissolution of the subjective link with the Other, which was Joyce’s dissolution, if we follow Lacan in *The Sinthome*. Speaking-being is a concept that goes hand-in-hand with the function of *lalangue* and its articulation with *jouissance*, as related to the *real unconscious*. Speaking-being not only introduces the dimension of language as detached from the discourse of the Other, it also introduces the bodily dimension of subjectivity. While the barred-subject is constituted without a body, pure difference, metonymically shifting along the signifying chain, speaking-being is inseparable from its body. It *is* a speaking-body, the subject of the effects of language on the living body.

Partner-Letter

In the “Seminar on ‘The Purloined Letter’” (2006 [1957a]), Lacan dealt with language as disconnected from any meaning linked with the Imaginary. The

psychoanalyst, the “*man of letters*” (42), often appears to be on-the-way-to-meaning. This Seminar demonstrated that the *letter* is not only a message but also an object. It cannot be reduced to its content. In Edgar Allan Poe’s tale, the letter operates without ever being opened, thus without the intervention of its message. Lacan’s commentary on Poe’s tale is comparable to his other commentaries on literature: a series of symbols, once put in motion, always entails constraints that produce an ordering law independent of any meaning. With “The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious” (Lacan, 2006 [1955]), Lacan defined the symptom as a metaphor, that is, as a function of the signifier as a chain, and not the agency of the *signifier* in the unconscious. This text defined the letter “as the localized structure of the signifier” (335). The Freudian notion of fixation keeps all its relevance without being able to compete with the notion of the letter, which more accurately designates what is at stake, and which Lacan clarified over the years. On the one hand, we can say that the letter is something like the mooring of *jouissance*, something which fixes a memory of *jouissance*. On the other hand, the letter is enjoyed in and for itself. It becomes an object of *jouissance*. It is not so much that *jouissance* is the referent of the letter. It is rather that the letter is an element of language that is enjoyed. Hence, Lacan’s frequent recourse to writers and to literature concerning which, and in differing from Freud, he did not so much seek to recapture the message of the unconscious, but rather its very materiality, that is, its letter. The letter does not represent *jouissance*; it is *jouissance*.

Lacan found in *Finnegans Wake* (Joyce, 1999 [1939]) the display of what Freud had perceived about schizophrenics: their tendency to treat words as things, outside meaning.³ The letter has no referent; it is real. It is One, outside the chain and outside discourse. The letter cancels the referential function of language, imposing itself within language as an exception to the chain. The general definition of the symptom, as a function of the letter in Seminar XXII *R.S.I.* (Lacan, 2013 [1974-75]), unified the different aspects of symptom previously distinguished by Lacan, writing it, as we have

³ *Finnegans Wake* is a work of comic prose by Irish author James Joyce, significant for its experimental style and resulting reputation as one of the most difficult works of fiction in the English language. Written in Paris over a period of seventeen years, and published in 1939, two years before the author's death, *Finnegans Wake* was Joyce's final work. The entire book is written in a largely idiosyncratic language, consisting of a mixture of Standard English lexical items and neologistic multilingual puns and portmanteau words, which many critics believe attempts to recreate the experience of sleep and dreams.

already indicated, as $f(x)$, with “f” representing the *jouissance* function and “x” as any element of the unconscious raised to the status of the letter. The formula states that the symptom is the way every subject may find *jouissance* in his or her unconscious. Not only is there no subject without a symptom, there are no other partners than symptomatic partners invented by the unconscious. When we speak about the *symptom-partner* we stress the idea that every partner, in so far as he or she is an object of *jouissance*, is determined by the unconscious, by an element of unconscious language. Thus Lacan could define the symptom both as the woman and the literary use of letters. It is not that there is a genre of literature that is ‘symptomatic’, but that literature itself is a partner of *jouissance*.

The symptom designates whatever participates in *jouissance*. We have to distinguish, along with the *jouissance* of the pure letter that is something Symbolic transformed into something Real, the *jouissance* of meaning which is a mixture between Symbolic and Imaginary elements, that which is neither of the letter nor of meaning. A *jouissance* that remains alien to any form of symbolization, that in no way reaches the unconscious but may haunt the imaginary form of the body, is what we may *call* the Real.

There are thus three modes of *jouissance*, suggesting the question: are they linked or not? In Lacan’s later Seminars, we can see his methodical effort, using the knot as an operator, to think differently about clinical issues previously formulated in terms of language and discourse. The Borromean clinic not only involves a reformulation of traditional clinical issues, it also introduces new categories of the symptom. Lacan, like Freud, remained close to classical diagnoses, borrowing paranoia from Kraepelin, schizophrenia from Bleuler, and perversion from Krafft-Ebing. When Lacan innovated, he did so by following the rhythm of his elaborations on structures, and the peculiar structure of the Borromean knot led him to produce new diagnoses. These diagnoses relied not only on the three categories of the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real that he already had at his disposal, but also crucially depended on the three modes of *jouissance*: *jouissance* of the letter as One, *jouissance* in the chain of

meaning, and the *jouissance* which could be said to be real because it exists as a subtraction from the two preceding ones.

In light of these distinctions, it is not enough to say that the symptom is a mode of *jouissance*. We need to define which mode, and thus produce a new grammar of symptoms according to the *jouissance* that gives them consistency. Then we could speak of Borromean symptoms in the cases where the three consistencies and the three *jouissances* are bound, for neurosis and perversion, and of symptoms that are not Borromean for psychosis. Then there are others symptoms that simply repair a flaw in the knot. When Lacan called Joyce the *sinthome*, he produced a new diagnosis. In *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce illustrated the autistic *jouissance* of the pure letter, which is cut off from the Imaginary, from exterior meaning, and thus from any social link.

James Joyce, the Sinthome

Lacan's thesis about poetry placed the poet alongside the prophet, stating that poetry belongs to the dimension of pure saying. Poetry, as well as prophecy, manages to say something new, using old and worn-out signifiers. Poetry produces new meanings, and with these new meanings, new perspectives on reality. With Joyce, we have an example of unreadable letters. But what does 'unreadable' mean? As Lacan suggested, one cannot become mad by just deciding on it. In the same way, we cannot make ourselves unreadable just because we want to be unreadable. There is a true and false to the un-readable. Soler amplifies this: "Lacan, for example, has been called unreadable, because he was difficult to understand. But it was a false un-readability due to the fact that he was introducing a complete change in the vocabulary and theory of psychoanalysis" (Soler, 2003: 97).

Joyce managed to fascinate, especially with *Finnegans Wake*. But in what sense could a psychoanalyst say that Joyce is unreadable? Most often, literature is a composite of the *jouissance* of the letter, the *jouissance* of meaning, and the *jouissance* of signification. Lacan's diagnosis of *Finnegans Wake* evokes a special multiplication of equivocation, reducing the signified to an enigma, short-circuiting usual meaning.

Joyce's puns, wordplays and linguistic transformations have an affinity with unconscious mechanisms. They look like slips of tongue or jokes, but this is just an appearance. Jokes themselves play with language but they stop when the meaning necessary to make us laugh is produced. Even the slip of the tongue, a mistake in the signifier, can be readable because its meaning is a limited one, linked with the unconscious of the subject. Joyce went methodically beyond limited meaning to a point when the play with signifying materials was no longer submitted to the message. It is in that sense that *Finnegans Wake* awakens us, and puts an end to the dream of meaning cultivated for centuries by literature. We can see the difference with psychoanalysis. To read, in the psychoanalytic experience, means to interpret a subject listening to his or her speech as a spoken text. Thus to read and to interpret the subject's unconscious desire are equivalent. In *Finnegans Wake*, the letter does not represent a subject; the letter is outside meaning, but not outside *jouissance*.

The signifier is readable when it supposes a subject, that is, the meaning of a desire, and a *jouissance* in the text. In that case, we say that there is a meaning, a readable meaning. Freud said that the whole set of dreams and free associations of an analysand have only one meaning, the meaning that he called unconscious desire. Psychoanalysts claim that *Finnegans Wake* is a work beyond meaning, even if literary critics see meaning in every word. The friction between psychoanalysts and critics is understandable; both are right, but in a different way. The meaning that interests psychoanalysts is the meaning limited and ordered by the *jouissance* of the subject, so that it allows us to interpret. When the letter becomes a signifier in the Real, outside the chain, as it happens in psychotic phenomena, the meaning flashes from everywhere, every word, and every syllable. In that sense, *Finnegans Wake* is so *crumbly* that it is the reader who decides about meaning. This is why every interpretation of *Finnegans Wake* looks like a projective text saying more about the interpreter, including the reader's sexual fantasies, but nothing about the author.

The literary symptom of un-readability is something completely exceptional. To use language without saying anything is a performance. More commonly with language, we say more than we want, more than we know. In others words, our speech is the

vehicle, the medium of a saying which can be interpreted. In that sense, with the unconscious, everyone is not a poet, but poetry. Through un-readability, the mother tongue is made an object and the Symbolic is converted into the Real without the mediation of the Imaginary, which is short-circuited. In *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce appears neither as a novelist nor as a poet. He does not subscribe to the unconscious; he produces strange objects made up of words. Sometimes we can explain how he did it, the words he used, the homophones, the epiphanies, and so on. But we cannot read it, because he doesn't say anything. He is beyond the novel and even beyond poetry.

Soler, in *L'inconscio Reinventato* (Soler, 2009), engages with the question of what Nora, Joyce's wife, George and Lucia, their children, mean for Joyce. She remarks that they were not part of Joyce's social bond and, furthermore, having a wife and children does not in itself speak, in the case of psychosis—which is to say in Joyce's case—about his heterosexuality, nor about his paternal position. Lacan produced his thesis about a woman being a symptom for a man, to be understood as a body implicated in *jouissance* for another body, as he specified in his second conference about Joyce. However, Lacan commented that Nora doesn't fit Joyce's phallic *jouissance*. Rather, Joyce's *sinthome* is related to his writing: to enjoy his writing, Joyce doesn't need Nora's body. Lacan indicated that it is enough that Nora accompanies him:

The central symptom in which, of course, what is at stake is the symptom constituted by the deficiency proper to the sexual relationship, but this deficiency does not take on just any old form. This deficiency must indeed take a form. And this form is the one that knots him to his wife, to the aforesaid Nora, (...) there could be no better term to express non relationship. (...) Non relationship is indeed the following, is that there is truly a reason why he should hold One woman among others to be his woman, that One woman among others is moreover one who has a relationship with any other man whatsoever. (Lacan, 2013 [1976] IV 12)

Lacan continued, referring to Joyce's texts *Exiles*:

Exiles is truly the approach of something which is, for him, in short, the symptom. The central symptom in which, of course, what is at stake is the symptom constituted by the deficiency proper to the sexual relationship. But this deficiency must indeed take a form. And this form is the one that knots

him to his wife... (IV 12) I centered the matter around the name, the proper name. And I thought that—make what you wish of this thought—that it was by wanting a name for himself that Joyce compensated for the paternal lack. (V 7)

The more enigmatic aspect of the *sinthome* is its relationship with sexual difference. Joyce had a close relationship with Nora, and Lacan, when talking about what Nora means for Joyce, said that Nora fitted Joyce like a glove, inside-out, wearing it on the other hand. Nora was the other-side of Joyce; she was part of his *sinthome*. Since Freud's article *On Narcissism*, we know of the narcissistic and anaclitic relation to the partner (Freud, 2001 [1914]). However, nothing seems to point to a narcissistic relationship between Joyce and Nora. Nora was not chosen because of an intellectual affinity. Nor was she chosen because of an anaclitic relationship; she was not a mother figure, and she did not take care of Joyce's body. Lacan noted that there were erotic letters from Joyce; however, the letter does not imply the body-to-body, but rather the separation, the gap between them.

Fernando Pessoa, Mentality and joui-sens

The diagnostic of *mentality* is another conceptual innovation generated from the Borromean Knot. It designates an emancipation of the Imaginary un-release of the Real. Lacan introduced this path on the occasion of a clinical presentation dealing with a young woman whose discourse could have been confused with the discourse of the hysteric. However, her discourse highlighted that nothing, no object, not even her child was of any importance or consequence. She was not delirious but her discourse showed that the social link with the other had no consistency. Lacan explained that even if all neurotic subjects experience the phenomena of mentality, that is, that with words, representations come into being insofar as language gives existence to what does not exist outside our thoughts, mentality rising to the status of *illness* is another thing. It is free *joui-sense* without a body, linked neither with the *jouissance* of the living body or with the fixity of the letter. In this sense, mentality opposes the letter and its *jouissance* anchored in the One. This is why in the Borromean knot Lacan inscribed the symptom as a letter outside the two circles of the Symbolic and the Imaginary. Concerning Joyce,

we cannot say that he suffered from mentality, but rather that he abstracted himself from it.

Lacan asserted that the ‘*pulverulent*’ discourse (Lacan, 1984 [1967-68])—a discourse without direction—is generally impossible. For a subject integrated in a social link, in a discourse, “it is impossible to just say whatever comes randomly” (22). Conversely, in psychosis there is access to the pulverulence of discourse, since psychosis is less subject to the constraints of discursive order. But this pulverulence has several aspects. *Finnegans Wake* illustrates the object-letter, while the disease of unanchored mentality illustrates the pulverulence of meaning. We may contrast the literary productions of Fernando Pessoa to those of Joyce.⁴ Pessoa is far from having canceled his link to the unconscious. Pessoa, the greatest Portuguese poet of the twentieth century, and studied by a number of psychoanalysts, exemplifies a creative function of written discourse.

For the psychotic writer, writing production has the added benefit of providing the fourth ring that links the other three. But this does not mean that every piece of writing by a psychotic is capable of operating as a *sinthome* or a supplement, or prosthetic device that may compensate for the foreclosed signifier and the production of psychotic phenomena. With each psychotic patient we can try to find a way of assisting him or her in the creation of a non-delusional, less persecutory world, where ensuing creations may be of use to others, and thus perhaps establish a social bond. In that regard, Pessoa was not a poet, he was a plurality of poets; he was also a critic, a philosopher, and a humorist. We could say that Pessoa is not an author, but a multiplicity of authors. Four of them are well known, *Alberto Caeiro*, *Alvaro de Campos*, *Ricardo Reis*, and *Bernardo Soares*. When he died, a total of seventy-five other authors were discovered in his unpublished papers. The case of Pessoa is like a Russellian paradox, a catalogue of all catalogues that lists itself among the catalogues. In his work, when he signed *Fernando Pessoa*, he was only one among many others

⁴ Fernando António Nogueira de Seabra Pessoa (1888-1935) was a Portuguese poet, writer, literary critic, translator, publisher and philosopher, described as one of the most significant literary figures of the twentieth century, and one of the greatest poets in the Portuguese language.

authors and he was at the same time the one who wrote the complete set of works. In commenting on this, Soler notes: “The classical sentence asserts that ‘style is the man himself’. With Pessoa, we have the paradox of a man who has a plurality of styles. Lacan introduced another statement: ‘style is the object’, meaning that only the remaining object explains the singularity and the unity of writing. The object is a principle of consistency, and here we guess that there may be a defect, a failure at this level, a strange lack of unity” (Soler, 2003: 99). We could ask: what is the name of Pessoa, if we consider that the name gives away the true identity of a man, which is always the identity of *jouissance*? As we have seen, Lacan called Joyce *the sinthome*. Pessoa’s patronymic means *no one* in Portuguese and he could speak about himself as “*the man who never was*” (99). Pessoa said that his creations were produced by what he called depersonalization. In this depersonalization, we could see the equivalent of the failure of the ego in Joyce. But, if the artist as unique is a substitute for the lacking ego in Joyce, what can we say about this plurality of artists for Pessoa? In his fictions, without the anchoring of a consistent ego, his free imaginary and, by consequence, without the weight of flesh, the Word, capitalized, was not made flesh but *image*, an image in only two dimensions without the weight of the object. All of this could allow us to name him *Pessoa, the mentality*.

I have evoked the lack of the One, the One of unity, but I highlighted that nevertheless there is a One, which always asserts the same things: the suffering, the despair of being alive. In Pessoa’s work, the apocalyptic feeling of life, the weight of what he called the real and impossible world, the presence of nonsense and the void, and the oppression of facticity are repetitively stressed. Soler notes that “we have a Pessoa so immersed in the real that we might call him: Pessoa, the unnamable” (100). It was from this primary and melancholic experience that the literary work was produced as a solution, not via the letter in the Real, but via Imaginary worlds that are so many possible solutions to an unnamable and unbearable existence. The Joycean writing of *Finnegans Wake* ties a knot between the Real and the Symbolic as a mother tongue. The solution elected by Pessoa was just a knot between the Real and inconsistent resemblances. Perhaps this is why he was not far from delusion.

In the next and final chapter of this thesis I sum up my arguments, offering my concluding remarks. To do so I address the question: is psychoanalysis able to offer a new model of engagement with the partner beyond the *symptomatic/sinthomatic* solution?

Chapter 8

Conclusions

Love Transference & the Real Unconscious

In this final chapter, I sum up my arguments and produce my concluding remarks. To do so I address the question of whether psychoanalysis could offer a new model of engagement with the partner beyond the *symptomatic/sinthomatic* solution.

Beyond the Symptomatic/Sinthomatic Solution

In introducing these final remarks, I want to quote from Lacan's Seminar on the Sinthome at length:

I allowed myself to say that the sinthome is very precisely the sex to which I do not belong, namely, a woman. A woman is a sinthome for every man. It is quite clear that there is a need to find another name for what is involved

in the case of a man for a woman; since precisely the *sinthome* is characterised by non-equivalence. One may say that man is for a woman anything you please, namely an affliction, worse than a *sinthome*, you may well articulate it as you please, a devastation even, but, if there is no equivalence, you are forced to specify what is involved in the *sinthome*. There is no equivalence, it is the only thing, it is the only *redoute* where there is supported what is called in the speaking being, in the human being, the sexual relationship. The relationship is linked (*se lie*), make no mistake, I-e this time, this relationship is linked to something about which I could not put forward, and indeed is what results, good God, from everything that I hear on another bed, on the famous couch where I am told things at length. The fact is that the link, the close link of the *sinthome*, is this something that it is the matter of situating in terms of what it has to do with the real of the unconscious, if it is indeed the case that the unconscious is real. How to know whether the unconscious is real or imaginary? This indeed is the question. It shares in an equivocation between the two, but from something in which, thanks to Freud, we are henceforth engaged, and engaged under the title of *sinthome*. I mean that henceforth, it is with the *sinthome* that we have to deal in the relationship itself, held by Freud to be natural, which means nothing, the sexual relationship. (Lacan, 2013 [1976]: VII, 13-14)

In this passage we see the marking of the difference between the two unconscious, between the unconscious of the signifying chain or the *transference unconscious*—Lacan also called it the imaginary unconscious—and the *real unconscious*, the unconscious of the substance of *jouissance*, linked to the speaking-being and *lalangue*. The *transference unconscious*, on the other hand, is the unconscious that is deciphered in analysis, the one that implies fantasy and desire as supports of the subject's being. This is the unconscious of language and a body of drives. The *real unconscious* is the unconscious that is encountered, revealed, enabled at the end of analysis, or in circumstances such as art or psychosis. This *real unconscious* is designated thus by a self-referred knowledge, different from the *lucubrations* of the cure. This knowledge is without a subject and marks the proper body as that which is being enjoyed, as real Other which is affected by the signifier, the One, outside of the chain of signifiers.

As we have previously mentioned, we can locate the two unconscious on the *Borromean* knot, as the knot between the Imaginary and the Symbolic rings,

designating the *transference unconscious*, and as a knot between the Real and the Symbolic rings, relating to the *real unconscious*. It is the Symbolic, language and *lalangue* at the same time, which carries on the designation of the unconscious. And it is the intersection of the ring of the Symbolic with the rings of the Imaginary and the Real respectively that usually designates the unconscious. This helps to define the distinction between the two unconscious.

In turning to the unconscious, the *real* and the *transference* ones, in *The Sinthome* (Lacan, 2013 [1976]), we are able to elucidate something concerning *jouissance* and the sexual reality of the (two) unconscious: “the unconscious can be reduced to a knowledge” (vii 25) to “a lucubration of knowledge” (vii 32); then “the unconscious is the copulation of language with the body which results in meaning, as unconscious meaning” (vii 15). The unconscious has phallic power to conjoin speech and phallic *jouissance*, described by Lacan as being “parasitical to the individual, exterior to the body, because of speech itself which acts as a civilizing factor for the rather rebel *jouissance* of the living” (iv 12). The unconscious is anchored in the Symbolic and through its formations, dreams, slips of the tongue, and symptoms, it delivers a meaning that Lacan called Imaginary. This meaning is situated at the intersection between the Symbolic and the Imaginary on the Borromean knot. The unconscious is situated between language as chain and play between signifiers, and the body, which is marked by signifiers and by the repetition inherent to symptomatic *jouissance*. As meaning and *jouissance* that feed themselves indefinitely through the symptom, and having the Other always on the horizon, the unconscious depends on the signifier, linked to other signifiers, and delivers the signified in search of a lost meaning and for a lost object.

The *real unconscious* presents itself as being stuck in a letter, at the level of *lalangue*, detached from meaning in the signifying chain and, at the same time, it is freed from the chain of signifiers. As we discussed in the previous chapter, it is autistic and self-referential, with no determinations attached to it. Lacan’s conclusion was that: “[What] Freud was trying all the time to renew, under the guise of the unconscious, as lucubration of knowledge, does in no way necessarily suppose the *real unconscious* and

lalangue” (vii 24). Lacan argues that the *sinthome*, as “*equivalent of the real*” (vii 24) as well as a function in naming the individual by way of *lalangue*, does not correspond to the lucubrations of the unconscious around the Name-of-the-Father, but to the sexual reality of the unconscious. We perceive here a split in the formula “the reality of the unconscious is sexual reality—an untenable truth” (Lacan, 1964b: 150). This is a split between the sexual reality of the *transference unconscious* based on the materiality of the signifying chain and the sexual reality of the *real unconscious* based on the autistic and self-referential knowledge of *lalangue*.

The Imaginary is first the ring that represents the body for itself as an image having its own consistency. It is also the *imaginary* which gives to the Borromean knot its consistency, its incarnation. Since in analysis we deal not simply with a subject, but with the individual, Lacan used the term *individual* in discussing Joyce, in order to denote the fact that the individual does not have an identity, not even a being, but a body and nothing else. That is why this individual is designated in Seminar XXIII (Lacan, 2013 [1976]) by the *real unconscious* and by the *sinthome*. This individual is the speaking-being whose spoken knowledge comes from the deposit of *jouissance* in *lalangue*. The Imaginary is linked with what Lacan called the debility of the human being, which is a being affected by language: “This debility relies on the fact that what we call mentality is also senti-mentality” (Lacan, 2013 [1976]: ii 6). Senti-mentality indicates that in spite of the infinite possibility of the signifying combinatory, human imagination is limited when it comes to producing new significations and new knowledge. This is because, by way of mentality, humans cannot indicate, except in art, what lies beyond the field of meaning. Mentality, close to the verb *mentir* in French, is thus connected to the telling of lies, because it speak of false facts *and* admits to doing it. It is, therefore, synonymous with self-love. Lacan suggested that this love is love for the body as a mental consistency. It is a senti-mental love, since obviously in fact the body, as real, is drifting away all the time. When we think about the *transference unconscious*, we have to take into account the relation between the articulation of the signifier and the consistency of the body. Their relationship is not only an artifice, but a statement about the impossibility of keeping the body unified without the affectation of the body by

language. This is what further explains the senti-mentality of the body, the fact that it lies, and that its anatomy is deceiving when presented as a proof of its supposed identity, as sexual identity. Even the sexual act serves only as an imaginary proof of the existence of the sexual relationship.

The Real is represented by the third ring of the Borromean knot, the one that designates the material support of the individual and is not simply the living body. There is also the signifier, as signifier One, that makes it impossible for the individual to reduce him- or her-self to anatomy. This Real is therefore life itself, outside of representation, and it is also *jouissance*, in its tie to the signifier One, since both phallic and Other *jouissance* are connected to the Real. This new Real is the nomination, as in the *sinthome*, where *jouissance* is named differently from the way it is named in the symptom. This Real is outside of meaning, since it is deposited in *lalangue* as *jouissance* of the letter. In fact, “the real is what forecloses meaning” (vii 13). Moreover, this “real can be found in the entanglements of the true” (vi 12). The Real relegates truth to the play of the signifier, while being itself out of play. The Real is also that which verifies the “*false hole*” (vii 10), the one situated between the Real and the Symbolic, which is the phallic power of the signifier, an imaginary power of senti-mentality. The Real “is not only what animates the body, as demand, desire or *jouissance* of the Other, but also what is closer to the lowest limit of animated life, namely death, or death drive” (vii 16). The Real ex-sists not only as an impossible-to-say or impossible-to-write, but also as something unthinkable, improper for the chain of repressed thoughts that make up the *transference unconscious*. Finally, Lacan showed that the Real is also the Borromean knot itself: “The real consists in calling one of these three elements real” (vii 20). This real is outside of all order of existence, outside of all law, physical or mental, and its place is where the Other of the Other is absent, is in-ex-istent. In this sense, the Real is a *sinthome*, which in its turn is the limit of the symptom, that is the limit of the Other.

The sexual relationship in humans is guided either by the knot of the Symbolic as language with the body, as the *transference unconscious*, or “by the knot of the symbolic as *lalangue* with the real of *jouissance*” (vii 29). Referring again to Soler, she indicates that, for Lacan, there are two ways of conceiving of the category of the Real.

One is to link the Real to the Symbolic, to the unconscious as that which is impossible for it to take into account. The other way situates the Real outside of the Symbolic, and it is only the Borromean knot that can inscribe this Real. (Soler, 2009: 16) This first Real is a function of the Symbolic, or the Real within the Symbolic, and it indicates the impossible-to-say—that is, desire—as well as the impossible-to-write—its logic. It is this Real that is correlated to the *transference unconscious*, that of the lucubration of knowledge and of decipherment. As distinct from the Real as function of the Symbolic, of language, Soler distinguishes the Real that is disconnected from language, from the Symbolic. It is the Real of knowledge without a subject, a knowledge inscribed in the body that is being enjoyed, a knowledge that is left in *lalangue*, the materiality of its elements. This Real is that of unconscious *lalangue*, distinct from unconscious *language*. Unconscious *lalangue* is marked by an indefinable knowledge whose effects surpass us: “The part of knowledge which is assured by the analytical work is deficient compared to the knowledge of *lalangue*, and besides it can be suspected of being only imaginary” (60). Linked to the Imaginary, the unconscious is always anchored in the Symbolic and is the play of meaning and fantasy. It has, nonetheless, nothing to do with the Real as defined by Lacan in the Borromean Knot.

Seminar XXIII (Lacan, 2013 [1976]) refers to the different types of functions of *jouissance*, as well as the subjectivation of *jouissance*, where Lacan presented the consequences of the fact that “there is no Other of the Symbolic Other,” which means that as the Symbolic other is not legitimised by any Other external guarantor, because the Symbolic is non-all, Real otherness with respect to the Symbolic is no longer possible. In other words, there is no primordial One originally killed by the Symbolic. There is no primordial Real beyond the dimension of the Real in the Symbolic, that is, of the leftover of the Real that reaches the Symbolic in conjunction with the Imaginary. For Lacan, the primordial One is ‘not-One’ as it cannot be counted as One, and it should correspond to a zero. In a passage from Seminar XXIII, Lacan indicated: “the real must be sought on the side of the absolute zero” (ix 2). We can think this zero only retroactively from the standpoint of the semblance of the Symbolic/Imaginary One or we can retrospectively think this zero as if it were a One only from the standpoint of the

semblance One. Zero is nothing per se but it is something from the perspective of the semblance One: “the Thing-in-itself is in-itself no-thing ... it is *l’achose*” (Lacan, 1969-70: 187).¹ Zero equates with the always-already lost mythical *jouissance* of the Real. The semblance One needs the semblance of *jouissance* of the *objet a* in order to make One, to suture the hole in the Symbolic, and retrospectively to create the illusion of an absolute *jouissance* which was originally lost.

In his last Seminars, but particularly in Seminar XXIII, Lacan talked of at least four different variants of the notion of *jouissance* which should all be linked, directly or indirectly, to the *objet a*. The first variant concerns the *phallic jouissance* of the *objet a* in the fundamental fantasy. Lacan uses the algebraic sign $J\phi$ to express it. This is the *jouissance* that allows the subject to make One as individuated speaking-being. It is only on the basis of a *jouis-sens* that the barred-subject is able to hear the sense of the Symbolic Order. Lacan’s neologism, *jouis-sens*, responds to the absence of the right word in established discourse to designate realities that the psychoanalytic experience brought to light. *Jouis-sens* is a neologism that condenses *jouissance* plus *sens*, is a new word that says *more* than ‘the *jouissance* of sense’. It designate a specific form of *jouissance* of the *subjective* experience, in the form of *sense-in-non-sense*, as Freud calls it, the sense of the joke and of the formations of the unconscious in general, a sense that is charged with a surplus-*jouissance* of a verbal kind.

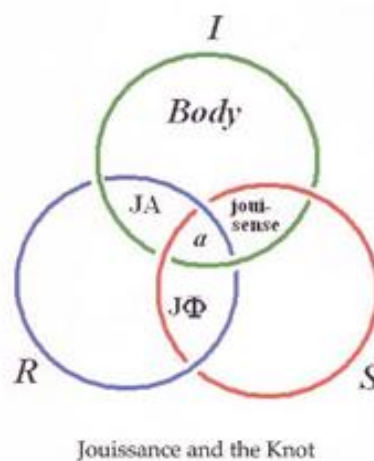


Figure 7: Jouissance and the Borromean Knot.

¹ Here Lacan identifies “*l’achose*” with what he names “*l’insubstance*” and said that these two notions “change completely the meaning of our materialism.”

We could render *jouis-sens* as *I enjoy, therefore I can make sense*. The second variant relates to the *jouissance of the Other* under the hegemony of which we make One and make sense. This is therefore the ideological *jouis-sens* that sutures the holed symbolic structure. As Lacan observed as early as Seminar X, “*jouis* is nothing but the answer the subject gives to the commandment *Jouis!* (Enjoy!)” (Lacan, 2013 [1962-63]: 96). The *jouissance* of the Other is equivalent to phallic *jouissance* which is also related to ideologies. It corresponds to the phallic *jouissance* considered from the standpoint of structure and not from that of the subject who is addressed by a given ideology. The third variant refers to what Lacan names *Other jouissance*, which he denotes with the algebraic sign JA in the early 1970s. Other *jouissance* is associated with feminine *jouissance*. Other *jouissance* should not be confused with the *jouissance* of the Other. In Seminar XX, (Lacan, 1999 [1972-73]), Other *jouissance* seems to indicate the pure *jouissance* of the Real beyond any Symbolic contamination, as it is located “*beyond the phallus*” (74). The first versions of the Borromean knot show us that: JA (Other, feminine *jouissance*) lies outside the ring of the Symbolic, but it is not outside all of the rings. In other words, without the ring of the Symbolic it would not be possible to have the Borromean knot and consequently not even JA. Therefore it could be said that feminine *jouissance* remains indirectly related to the Symbolic. The feminine not-all is ultimately both different from and dependent on the phallic symbolic, precisely as it stands as the not-all of the Symbolic, its constitutive point of exception. Consequently, JA cannot stand for the *jouissance* of the Real or, in other words, there is no Other *jouissance* given that there is no Other of the Other.²

Lacan seemed to become aware of this deadlock in Seminar XXIII, in which the *Jouissance of the Barred Other*, a fourth variant of *jouissance*, takes the place of JA in the Borromean knot (Lacan, 2013 [1976]: iii13): “JA Barred concerns jouissance, but not Other jouissance [...] there is no Other jouissance inasmuch as there is no Other of the Other” (iii13). The passage from the notion of Other *jouissance* (JA) to that of the *jouissance* of the Barred Other (Barred JA) highlights the fundamental distance that

² I refer the reader to Figure 3: The Borromean Knot (108) and Figure 4: The Fourth Knot (109).

separates the image of Saint Theresa's holy ecstasy from Joyce, the sinthome. In this seminar, JA (of Woman and of God) becomes impossible. However, feminine *jouissance* could be re-defined in terms of Barred JA. In this way, it would be easy to think of Joycean *jouissance* as a re-elaboration of the *jouissance* of the mystics, which Seminar XX had already paired up with feminine *jouissance*. Barred JA is therefore a form of *jouissance* of the impossibility of JA. The *jouissance* of the Barred Other differs from phallic *jouissance* without being beyond the phallus. The elaboration of the notion of Barred JA also has a significant repercussion for the late Lacan's thesis according to which "There's such a thing as One" (Lacan, 1999 [1972-73]: 5). In Seminar XX, Lacan seemed to identify this One with JA, with the idea of a pure Real conceived of in the guise of pure difference, although in Seminar XXIII he declared that JA is meant to designate the fact that there is a Universe. He nevertheless specified that it is quite improbable that the Universe is, as such, a Uni-verse, that the Universe is a One (of pure, Other *jouissance*): "I would say that nature presents itself as not being one" (Lacan, 2013 [1976]: ii 25). That is to say, a pure, mythical Real must be presupposed retroactively, but it cannot be counted as a self-enjoying, divine One, not even as the supposedly One of pure difference.

How does the *jouissance* of the impossibility of Other *jouissance*, the *jouissance* of the Barred Other, distinguish itself from phallic *jouissance*? After all, phallic *jouissance* is also, in its own way, a form of Barred *jouissance*. Lacan's answer was that phallic *jouissance* makes One, whereas Barred JA makes the individual. If phallic *jouissance* makes the Symbolic One, increasingly pretending to obliterate the lack, on the other hand, Barred JA makes the individual who, as it were, develops his own symbolic from that lack. Joyce was the individual for Lacan insofar as he succeeded in subjectivising himself by individualising the *objet a*, the lack in the Symbolic. The individual is not the ideological One but stands for another modality of the One, another way of inhabiting the Symbolic, starting from its real lack. For Lacan, Joyce was "Joyce-le-sinthome" (vi 9). On the one hand, it is true that Joyce "*abolishes the symbol*" (15), but on the other, it is equally the case that the identification with the sinthome, as naming of one's individuation, advocated by the final Lacan as the aim of

psychoanalysis, could never amount to a permanent subjective destitution, a psychotic non-functioning of the symbolic.

The Non-Success of the Unconscious is Love

What is the other of love? This difficult question is provoked by Lacan when he said: “If speech is founded in the existence of the Other, the true one, language has so made us to return to the objectified other, to the other whom we can make what we want of, including thinking that he is an object, that is to say that he doesn’t know what he is saying” (Lacan, 1991 [1954-55]: 244). Freud’s point of departure was the subject’s original dependency on the Other, since the subject experiences helplessness and dependency, these being the operative factors in the anxiety of the loss of love. Helplessness, dependency and anxiety at the loss of love define the subject’s original subjective position in relationship with the Other. In *On Narcissism* (Freud, 2001 [1914]), Freud distinguished narcissistic love from anaclitic love, the latter being love for the person on whom one depends. From this Freudian distinction, we realize that the imaginary, narcissistic definition of love was not enough. Freud, in *On Narcissism*, opposed love for the same, narcissistic love, to love for the Other. We have then, the imaginary, narcissistic other, and the Other with its two faces: helplessness and dependency.

From the side of need and helplessness there is an Other who has what is needed to satisfy these needs. There is an Other who is perceived as complete. Conversely, on the side of love and dependency, the Other is perceived as incomplete. This, properly speaking, is love. Love is about the incomplete Other, the Other who should provide what he or she does not have. We can define love from both points of view, or from just one, as the relationship with the Other who doesn’t have everything, the incomplete one. If we understand the Other as the reference of love, we can deduce that it appears natural for a man to love a woman because as she is imaginarily castrated, she can incarnate the Other. But, for a woman to love a man, she has to imaginarily castrate him. In the love from a woman to a man, a love that seems to be

directed to an Other who does have everything, there is always, at least secretly, a split that makes the complete, potent man, a castrated one. Where there is love, there is always imaginary castration. In Freud, the theory of love seems to show that love is a repetition. The Freudian Oedipus means that love is a repetition. In *The Psychology of Loving Life*, Freud said that when we love, we don't do anything but repeat.³ Finding the object is always to re-find it, and love objects are a substitution for another fundamental object before the barrier to stop incest had been erected.

From the beginning, Freud postulated that the bonds of passion and love, that seem so incomprehensible, do not escape either reason or logic. He was able to demonstrate the effect of repetition in that each love repeats a previous one. In other words, the object has the traits, the signs of the object—the first one is therefore always the second. In terms of Lacan, the object carries the marks of the first Other involved in the first demand of love, what Freud called the Oedipal objects. We are at the level of family stories. These are always, according to Freud, stories of despair. At an erotic level, the object inherits something else, not the signs of the Other, but parts where they are inscribed with the first engagement with *jouissance*, something seen or heard or felt, and always traumatic, as Freud said. And here we are at the level of a history of the body, more precisely at the level of what Lacan called “events of the body” (Lacan, 2013 [1976]: 15). Thus, for Freud, trauma and despair—condensed by the term ‘castration’—are two sources of repetition. From this we can understand that love, though it could be called a way to reparation, fails to avoid the repetitions that ruin love life. Added to this is that, for Freud, transference was also repetition, which then repeats the worst of the past with no possibility of pleasure. Transference likely arrives at the ground of a highly repetitive experience of castration: lack of love, knowledge and sexual satisfaction.

Freud stated that transference love is an artificially produced love in the context of the analytical situation. It is, therefore, a semblance of love—although every love

³ “Contributions to the Psychology of Love” is the title given collectively to three articles by Freud: “A Special Type of Choice of Object Made by Men,” published in 1910; “On the Universal Tendency to Debasement in the Sphere of Love,” published in 1912; and “The Taboo of Virginity,” published in 1918. Freud believing they formed a whole, decided to publish them under a single title.

could be defined in relation to semblance—and as a support and affect of the analytic work. Freud claimed that in analysis a particular neurosis is replaced by transference neurosis, which includes the person of the analyst. And, for Freud, it was a surprising discovery of an unexpected love. This love is, according to Lacan, a new love, no less illusory though. Unlike any other, and I quote: “it is directed to knowledge” (Lacan, 2013 [1973b]: 14), to unconscious knowledge. Transference, then, is a denial of the *real unconscious*. From transference to the unconscious there is divergence for the supposition. Lacan had already said: “The oversight of the subject supposed to know” (Lacan, 2013 [1966-67]: 26). His position regarding every love is that transference love does not differ from subjective love and, in this sense, he made no distinction between transference love and love outside analysis. This is where Lacan introduced a shift in the Freudian conception of love. While Freud insists on the narcissistic character of love, Lacan demonstrated that love presupposes the existence of the Other and that even narcissistic love cannot be fully reduced to the Imaginary. There is always a reference, a Symbolic dimension of love that resists its reduction to narcissism.

Lacan adopted the Freudian idea of narcissistic love when he linked his analysis of love to the question of the One. Freud and Lacan shared the same reference, Plato’s *Symposium* that we introduced at the beginning of this thesis when discussing the classical myth of Aristophanes concerning the formation of sexual difference. Freud defined *Eros* as the tendency towards the One, which strives to appropriate the object that would fill the subjective lack. Lacan followed this line of thought when he claimed that love operates on the level of impotence and that it is defined by a fundamental ignorance. Love may aim at being and hence at the Other, but inasmuch as it represents an articulation of the subjective lack, it ignores the fact that it is essentially a tendency towards “*being One*” (Lacan 1972-73: 12). The impotence of love is linked to its incapacity to reach the Other, without bringing it back to the question of the One. Freud and Lacan both recall Aristophanes’s speech, where love was presented as a search for the lost half, and therefore precisely as a tendency to reduce the Other to the object, which is supposed to fill the subjective lack.⁴ In this sense, love is an articulation

⁴ Regarding Aristophanes’ speech, see Chapter One.

of a subjective lack in the Other, whereby the Other is split from itself, symbolized by the Other as synonymous with the Symbolic Order, and the *objet a*, the object cause, which is exposed and detached from the Other. This reduction also demonstrates that love in fact aims at the semblance, and that it is never univocal: affirmation of the Other always implies its reduction to the object.

Lacan emphasized that an aim of psychoanalytic discourse is to produce the passage from impotence to impossibility, thus from semblance to the Real, from love to *jouissance*. From the perspective of transference love, this passage appears as dissolution of love, a stepping out of the field of love. After we step out of transference love, is there a dimension of love that would be the effect of this passage? In short, is there a “new love” (16)? The experience of transference love is not only something that stands at the beginning of every analysis, or which inaugurates and supports the analytic experience, but also something that triggers the very invention of psychoanalysis. In this regard, every analytical situation repeats the invention of psychoanalysis. Every analyst is required, as Lacan claimed towards the end of his teaching, to reinvent psychoanalysis. In this sense, psychoanalysis does not have any *a priori* guarantees and Lacan’s statement on the reinvention of psychoanalysis as an analytical imperative in fact radicalizes the implications of the statement that the analyst is authorized by nothing other than him- or her-self. This self-authorization implies that the analyst is not authorized by any pre-existing or pre-supposed knowledge. The invention of psychoanalysis and the discovery of the unconscious coincided with Freud’s clinical encounter of transference. In his correspondence with Breuer regarding the case study of Emmy von N. (Freud, 1895a), Freud described the difficulties that the patient caused him in his attempts to hypnotize her, that is, in his attempts to produce an artificial transference relation. In the end, the patient sabotaged the idea of artificiality and communicated an important lesson in love. Love was already a semblance, and there was no need for hypnosis. The turning point in Freud’s treatment of that case took place when the patient unexpectedly wanted to hug him. This explicit expression of love woke Freud from the discourse of hypnotism, which could be understood as the discourse of the Master. While hypnotism conceptualized the unconscious as Other

consciousness, the recognition of love revealed the unconscious as knowledge that does not know itself, and thus enabled the invention of the *transference unconscious*. Only when the unconscious was invented in relation to transference love was the concept of the unconscious detached from its previous context.

Regarding the possible articulation between love and hatred, Lacan said: “hatred is not related to the level at which the hold of the unconscious is articulated ... a true hatred aims at being” (Lacan, 1999 [1972-73]: 145), which means that hatred has nothing to do with unconscious knowledge, which is very different from love, love instead approaches the being, but misses it, love always fail. In Seminar XXIV (Lacan, 2013 [1976-77]), Lacan said that there is the One and nothing more, which indicates that there is not the Two of what could have been the sexual relationship, no such thing as the Two that would be able to cure the fundamental loneliness of the speaking-being.

Love is unable to recognise the being of the other; it aims to a union and ignores the disparity. On the contrary, hatred doesn’t aim at a relationship, it aims at the disappearance of the hated one. So when Lacan said that love gives way to hatred, it does not mean that hatred is the other side of love. It means, instead, that hatred is the successor of love. Love and hatred are two affects that correspond to two different aspects of the structure. Love is an encounter between two subjective lonelinesses produced by the structure of language that prevents the sexual relationship, and love establishes a substitutive relationship between two subjects. Love is illusory, denies the lack, but love has a relationship with knowledge; love is an affect that has an epistemic function, which reveals the presence of the unconscious, as we see it in transference love.

Psychoanalytic discourse assumes a double position toward the question of love. Firstly, love plays the role of a certain orientation in thinking. To develop this orientation in thinking means to produce a logical articulation of psychoanalytic discourse on the basis of love, whereby this new orientation produces what Lacan called *half-saying*, a new modality of enunciation. At the same time, love exposes and enacts the non-relation between the position of impotence and the position of impossibility,

presenting it as an impossible encounter between the analysand and the analyst. This setting is repeated in the analytical situation, and it is precisely here that psychoanalysis erases the difference between transference and normal love, the “*There is no sexual relation*” (35) assumes the status of the Real. For speaking-beings love serves as a crutch of the sexual relation. Consequently, Lacan’s central determination of the relation between love and sexuality goes as follows: *love supplements the sexual relation*. This determination is ambiguous. Lacan used the French term *suppléer*, which means both to complete and to substitute. The double meaning of *suppléer* in fact corresponds to two sexuated positions and two logics, which determine the sexual inscription of the speaking-body in the field of language. Love as a *sinthomatic* invention appears as the opposite of transference love. Transference love presupposes, whereas love-invention forces. In this regard, both faces of love correspond to the pair *transference unconscious* and *real unconscious*. The compatibility between transference love and *transference unconscious* is obvious and has accompanied psychoanalysis since its very beginning, whereas linking love-invention with the *real unconscious* seems to oppose the path by which Lacan passed from *transference unconscious* to the *real unconscious*. The *real unconscious* does not offer any support for transference, because it does not support any knowledge. No love corresponds to the *real unconscious*. But as far as love is not just the desire to be One, but also a response to no-sexual-relation, as far as love undergoes the passage from impotence to impossibility, then its second modality can be put in a pair with the *real unconscious*, namely as what, based on the orientation of the Real, forces the passage from the *real unconscious* back to the Other.

In light of the relation between the *real unconscious* and the *transference unconscious*, one can also understand the equivocal title of Seminar XXIV, *L’insu que sait de l’unebévue s’aile à mourre*. The title echoes *L’insuccès de l’Unbewusste, c’est l’amour*, “the non-success of the unconscious is love” (Lacan, 2013 [1976]). The question that arises here is precisely: which unconscious and which love? Non-success is posited as whatever defines both love and the unconscious, but both are also internally doubled in relation to the Real, so that there is a double movement between the unconscious and love. The non-success of the *transference unconscious* is love-invention, as far as it

is not the effect of a lack, but the effect of a hole, which un-subscribes the subject from the *transference unconscious*, as Lacan claimed in the case of Joyce. Love-invention thus communicates the collapse of the transference hypothesis of the unconscious as knowledge. And in this regard it also represents a limit of Freudian psychoanalysis. The non-success of the Freudian unconscious should be linked with the fact that the subversion of love forces the passage from the *transference unconscious* to the *real unconscious*. In this, the emergence of transference love remains a necessary condition and starting point for this movement. At the beginning of analysis there is transference, the hypothesis of the *Subject-Supposed-to-Know* and the reality of the *transference unconscious*. But there is also the opposite movement, which reduces the Real to its transference hypothesis. In this regard, transference love entails the non-success of the *real unconscious*, non-success in forcing the passage from the unconscious to the Real, and non-success in escaping the domination of the *Subject-Supposed-to-Know*.

Lacan went a step further at the moment he highlighted the *real unconscious*: the general foreclosure of the sexual relationship, “Jouissance is not a sign of love” (Lacan 1999 [1972-73]: 193). But as it happens, they get knotted. Lacan said that making love is poetry, because of the sex act and nothing else than the “polymorphous perversity of the male” (195). No sexual relationship then, but a loving relationship is possible that, this time, recognizes the Other. Lacan introduced this towards the end of Seminar XX, as an effect of the *real unconscious*. From the *real unconscious*, he gave a new function to the enigmatic character of the affections and he does the same with love, recognizing a sign as perception of the unconscious and its effects. Love is obscure recognition of “signs always enigmatically dotted” (Lacan 1972-73: 5), the way in which the other is affected by the destiny reserved for him by the unconscious. The mystery of love is not reduced, but is compared to the fundamentals of the unconscious. It is a step beyond Freud, which is more likely to take away the mystery. The term *recognition* says that this love becomes the new function to detect the presence and effects of the unconscious. Love would then be an ethical detector of a subject suffering from loneliness, with a *jouissance* of which he or she is not the Master. Perhaps I should say that it is a recognition that lies between two unconscious-knowledge, two *lalangue*,

which do not necessarily engage the ethics of the subject. In both cases, the enigma of love has always been recognized. It looks like the revealing sign of the perception of a knowledge that is there, not known, but learned, an index, not of an inter-subjectivity but of an inter-recognition between two speaking-beings, made of two *lalangue*.

In this sense, making love implies that the signifier is not the only indicator of knowledge. The reversal of perspective is significant, and we notice the difference with the famous “you are my woman” or “you are my man” (Lacan, 1998 [1964b]: 154). The word is an act instituting the other, the partner. Love—which is recognition—is not properly an act. It is sensitivity registering a kind of affinity—which does not mean identity—between two not-known unconscious, and is therefore immeasurable. Obviously there is a problem: what is recognized cannot be transmitted, and only recognition as such is shown, staged in some way.

Final Remarks

If we take the unconscious as point of reference and we define the elements of the couple imaginary-and-real, which represents here the sexual couple man-woman, we should call these elements, following Lacan, the *Idea* and the *Impossible* or, rather, the *Idea* and the *Sinthome* (Lacan, 1976: vii 12). Man is the bearer of the Idea of the signifier and the Idea of the signifier is supported in *lalangue* by syntax. Whereas, women have created *lalangue*, and with it they have created the possibility of equivocation. Sexual difference is the repartition of the *jouissances* following the intersection of the three rings: phallic *jouissance*—or what we call power—is outside of the body, while Other *jouissance* is outside of the Symbolic. Meaning, meanwhile, is what divides *jouissance*, as *joui-sense*. In this context, the *sinthome* has a close link with the Real. In fact, Lacan even replaced the Real with the *sinthome* when he named the two sexes the Idea and the *Sinthome*. The *sinthome* is, furthermore, woman (101) or, as Soler says, a woman is a formation of the *real unconscious* for a man (Soler, 2009: 144). That is to say, a woman is an element, a letter of *jouissance* that eludes meaning and the Symbolic. This makes a woman a *sinthome*, out of reach of language and law,

uninscribable. If a woman is a *sinthome* for a man, what is a man for a woman? He is not a formation of the unconscious, as something that had been repressed or even foreclosed, but an affliction, a devastation, that is, an affect. The affect is not repressed; we know this from Freud, and therefore it could be rather called imaginary. This is what the Idea of the signifier does to the other sex, it affects it in a devastating manner. This affect can be located within the category of common, conventional, primary affects that are distinct from the affects of analysis: love, hate and so on. These are different from those enigmatic affects that are expected to be produced at the end of analysis, such as a new satisfaction. I should add that man means anyone totally guided by phallic *jouissance*, by senti-mentality, by debility. Moreover, the enigmatic affect is on the side of illiteracy, as Soler puts it, rather than on that of debility (40).

Lacan added: “We must be broken, as I might say, into a new imaginary establishing meaning. This is what I am trying to establish with my language ...” (121). This leads to two questions, firstly, is Lacan trying here to say that this new imaginary is something like a new affect, an enigmatic affect that is supposed to afflict the other sex, always other, without devastating it? This would then be an affect that had first afflicted the *sinthome*, the analyst, a woman, anybody who takes his or her place from the true hole, outside of the Symbolic, but not outside from the analytic *lalangue*. Thus, secondly, could we therefore translate the meaning of castration at the end of analysis not simply as a “rock,” as Freud called it, or as a kind of dead end but, rather, as a rock that proves its efficacy not only during the analytical sessions, but also later, in everyday life? An answer is suggested in that it is *jouissance* that makes a difference, not anatomy, nor the Symbolic. As Soler summarises: “The choice of one’s own sex is a choice of *jouissance* ... it is the *jouissance* that establishes the sexual law” (Soler, 2009: 141). Since the unconscious, Imaginary or Real, has been defined by Freud as being a reality that is sexual, the two unconscious allow for a different approach to the question of the difference of sexes. The description of the sexes in terms of symbolic constructs, as in gender studies is clearly and, paradoxically, anchored in the *transference unconscious*, in the imaginary power of language to distinguish between the anatomical sexes. Whereas the *real unconscious* constitutes, rather, a Real naming of this sexual

differentiation that does not discredit biology, but situates the proper body of the individual as Other with respect to the Symbolic, following thus the logical conclusion that the *jouissance* of the Other does not ex-ist.

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