

# Feminine Conditions of Jouissance

Freudian Field Seminar London May 1993

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There are certainly different conditions of *jouissance* for a woman. They are not all identical with that of Proust's homosexual Madame de Vinteuil (1), who could only *jouir* with her partner in front of the portrait of her dead father, scoffing at him in a way which Jones (2) noticed clinically and which Lacan explained as the 'phantasy of the man, invisible witness' (3). Psychoanalysis, which for structural reasons cannot tell us much about the 'supplementary *jouissance*' of women, teaches us more about the ways in which a neurotic woman can *jouir* with a man, something which presupposes in principle the presence of the phallic function and of castration. Of course, each woman may have her own conditions of *jouissance* and hence it would be vain to attempt to establish a classification or to draw up a list, something which would boil down to treating women in the way in which zoology treats a species, as a totality.

This afternoon I will limit my discussion to the figure of the 'castrated lover' or the 'dead man', a figure encountered in many cases in clinical practice and to which Lacan, in the 'Guiding Remarks' (4) paper gives the status of a non-anatomical condition of the *jouissance* which is called, mistakenly, vaginal. I will read the chapter of Lacan's text devoted to 'Frigidity and Subjective Structure' (5) together with Freud's discussion of the same problem, his paper 'The Taboo of Virginity' (6).

## 1. 'Unfinished Sexuality': The Taboo of Virginity

In his essay 'The Taboo of Virginity', Freud investigates the 'primitive' fear of deflowering women. He is resolute on a first point: this fear is not a masculine phantasy, but based on a real danger. This is confirmed by the analysis of 'modern' women. He takes as his point of departure the following paradox: the sexual act - and not just the first one - which ought to link a woman to a man, to arouse feelings of tenderness and recognition, even of sexual subjection, in fact tends to create, on the contrary, a frigidity which is puzzling given the absence of the male partner's impotence.

Yet it is via the discussion of a case which is phenomenologically 'in contradiction' that Freud will be able to offer a solution to the paradox. It is the case of a woman 'who underwent a profound analysis' and in which a hostility which even went as far as insults and blows concluded the 'great satisfaction' which she experienced during the sexual act with her beloved husband.

Thus the frigidity is elucidated by what seems to be its opposite - the greatest *jouissance* - something the Lacan of Encore would not have denied, seeing in frigidity less a problem of 'sensibility' than of epistemology: a woman can experience *jouissance*, in this case, that of the Other, without being aware of it. Freud infers from this the existence of a hostile feminine current which is expressed either in a condensed way linked to *jouissance* via an inhibition which may take the form of frigidity, or in a way disassociated from *jouissance* via the *mise en scène* of phantasies of murder or of castration which preoccupy the woman and which may even become acted out in reality.

What is the cause of this feminine hostility? Let's leave aside for the time being the various psychological and anthropological explanations which Freud deems inadequate. His conclusion is that the responsibility for this paradoxical reaction to satisfaction or frigidity must be attributed to penis envy. As he says, 'the unfinished (*unfertige*) (7) sexuality of the woman is discharged onto the man...' by vindictiveness and bitterness, and especially the former. Hence the obvious advantage of marrying a widow, probably harmless...

## 2. 'Frigidity and Subjective Structure'

In 1958, Lacan takes a rather different perspective, distancing himself from the developmental notions which had hindered Freud's conclusions (8). The stress is now less on envy or feminine hostility although their existence is obviously not denied - but rather on the conditions of possibility for a woman to recognise a man as such and to *jouir* with his penis. The key reference here is the notion of symbolic castration, but the question remains as to how it comes into play in the feminine unconscious and how it effects sexual *jouissance*. It is as if, to Freud's 'a widow would perhaps be harmless' (9), Lacan replies 'Yes, and it's in fact only widows who *jouir* ... your patient does not *jouir* in spite of her phantasies of castration, but rather because of them, except that her melodramatics prove that they are not symbolised well enough' (10). The Freudian opposition between feminine satisfaction and the phantasy of castration is thus transformed into a question of causality.

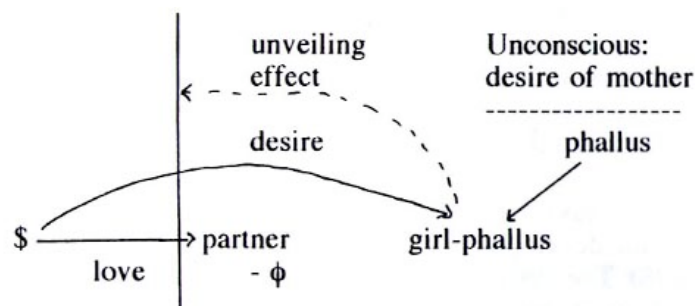
In this chapter in the *Écrits*, which we should read together with the 'The Signification of the Phallus', Lacan details the points he made in this latter paper. Frigidity was defined there as 'the lack of a satisfaction specific to sexual needs' (11) and was supposedly 'relatively well tolerated' (12), due to the convergence of both love and desire onto the same object of the woman. Lacan now takes up three questions:

- 1) How is frigidity 'mobilised'? How is it effected?
- 2) What are the causes of frigidity?
- 3) Under what conditions can a woman experience sexual *jouissance*, or avoid frigidity? (13)

It is in answering this latter question that Lacan will arrive at answers to the first two.

### The 'fetishistic form' of love for the man

In order to establish a contrast with the erotomanic form of love for the woman, Lacan first argues that the masculine form of love is fetishistic, which we may symbolise with the following schema:



The male subject loves his partner 'to the extent that the signifier of the phallus

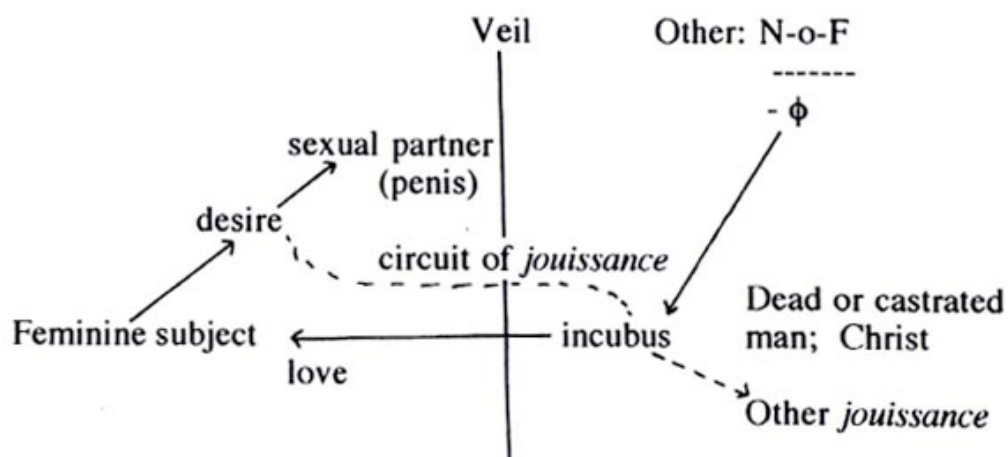
constitutes her as giving in love what she hasn't got' (14). Yet he will desire 'beyond' his partner, on a 'Venusberg' peopled with 'girl-phalluses' (15). The phallus which makes them desirable is a function, in the subject's unconscious, of the desire of the mother which has taken on the phallic signification due to the paternal metaphor. The subject thus desires them *quod matrem*. And hence the divergence, a real one in relation to the object of both love and desire, which Freud characterised as debasement in the field of love. To speak of the 'fetishistic form' of love for the man indicates that the phallic attraction of this 'beyond' to the loved partner becomes focused on her, like a phallic veil which masks the unbearable fact of castration. This is what allows the subject to desire her and to *jouir* from her. At this period of his teaching, Lacan has not yet situated the object *a* as cause of desire in the dialectic. This splitting of love and desire for the man produces the 'centrifugal tendency of the genital drive in his love life' (16).

### The 'Erotomantic Form' of Love for the Woman

For the woman, there is, on the contrary, an apparent convergence of love and desire in relation to the object. It seems that she finds the signifier of her desire in her partner's organ which, once it is invested with this signifying function, 'takes on the value of a fetish' (17).

It is this same man that she will choose as the 'Other of Love', 'deprived of what he gives'. However, already in 'The Signification of the Phallus', Lacan points out that it is precisely this Other that 'is not clearly seen'. In the section on frigidity, he specifies the structure at play, 'what is hidden behind the veil', and explains how this apparent convergence in fact masks a real 'duplicity of the subject', a duplicity which is in no way reducible to the maintenance of the oedipal link to the father. Indeed, we remember that Freud believed that the girl could 'take refuge in the oedipal situation like a harbour' (18) and never leave her father.

The next schema will serve as a guide to our reading of Lacan's construction of the sort of phantasy which links, in a circuit, the feminine subject (we can take the liberty of using this phrase due to the title of the section, 'Frigidity and Subjective Structure') to the Other, that of the unconscious.



First, the outward circuit: to accede to the Other, a woman needs a male partner as a sort of 'relay'. We could read this together with the passage in Encore: ... 'it is only

from here that she is *toute* (all/whole - tr.), that is, from where she is seen by the man, it is only from here that the dear woman can have an unconscious' (19). But as a subject, it is thanks to her defence, the masquerade, that she can maintain a veil between herself as subject and the Other. This Other is thus the Other of the unconscious, the place of the law and the place where 'symbolic castration is set into play' (20).

Lacan bases his argument here on the axiom 'there is no virility which is not consecrated by castration' (21), a formula which anticipates the sexualisation formulae for the man: no 'all men' ( $\forall x\Phi x$ ) without the law of castration made possible by the status of the father as exception ( $\exists x\bar{\Phi}x$ ) (22). According to this axiom, a woman can only recognise the virility of her partner in marking it with symbolic castration. But, contrary to Freud's view that this is seen in the phantasy of castration, dramatised by the subject, Lacan localises it rather in the feminine unconscious and links it to love.

If feminine desire thus aims at the sexual partner in front of the veil, her love is directed to a point 'behind the veil' in an erotomantic form which supposes that the initiative comes from the Other. And here, it is altogether a different partner who 'claims her adoration', 'a castrated lover or a dead man (or even the two combined)' (23), subsumed under the term 'ideal incubus' (24). The incubus is a demon who visits women in the night, in the middle of a nightmare, which is in fact the literal meaning of the latin *incubare*. This evokes the dimension of a beyond the pleasure principle, of *jouissance*.

We should stress the central place of symbolic castration in Lacan's elegant construction. For beyond this equivocal figure of the incubus, don't we find the Name-of-the-Father, discernible in the reference to 'the place beyond the maternal counterpart from where the menace of a castration which does not concern her in the register of the real was emitted'? (25) And surely the incubus' secret is to be sought on the side of the dead father, guardian of *jouissance* and principle of castration simultaneously (26)? The imaginary representation of the 'dead man' or the 'castrated lover' takes on its full symbolic and real importance here from being emitted from the point of enunciation of the law. The condition for feminine *jouissance* of the virile organ is thus situated in a return of love to desire in a circuit of *jouissance* which starts at this point behind the veil and ends up in the desired organ: 'it is from this ideal incubus that a receptivity of embrace must be transformed into a sensibility of enwrapping the penis' (27). Thus Lacan, who had rejected anatomical theories of so-called vaginal *jouissance* in section 5, succeeds here in avoiding the localisation of *jouissance* in the woman's body, situating it rather in the surrealist trajectory that we have examined, from the incubus to the fetishised penis. The importance given to the point behind the veil alerts us to the proximity for women of *jouissance* and love, a fact which is clinically undeniable, and it also explains women's overestimation of love, which sometimes reaches the dimension of the absolute: this is evoked by the curious qualifier 'ideal' which Lacan links to the term 'incubus'.

This trajectory illustrates the formula that he will later introduce in the seminar on anxiety: 'only love allows *jouissance* to condescend to desire' (28).

## The Woman's 'True' Partner

Let us now turn to some consequences that Lacan deduces from the construction of this point 'behind the veil'. First of all, his reference to Christ, as showing 'an extension wider than the religious allegiance of the subject would imply' (29) is a forerunner of his theory, to be developed, whereby the Other *jouissance*, 'beyond the phallus' in S(A) will be linked by Lacan to the existence of God: 'the side of God, as supported by feminine *jouissance*'. Leon Bloy's novel 'La Femme Pauvre', cited by Lacan in his seminar on transference, shows us this passage from phallic *jouissance* linked to the figure of the dead man-Christ to a *jouissance* of God where The Woman would exist. Indeed, the 'duplicity' of the feminine subject in 1958, between love and desire will be reformulated by Lacan in the 1970s in a 'doubling' (30), in relation to *jouissance*, of The Woman who doesn't exist between S(A) and  $\Phi$ : 'Woman has a relation to S(A) and it is in this that already she is split, that she is not *toute*, since, on the other hand, she can maintain the relation with  $\Phi$ ' (31). If she wishes to have a sexual partner, she will have to accept this relation to the phallic function F, from which she will have an unconscious making of her a divided subject, \$, and a phantasy \$ <> a which will allow her, if she is lucky, to find 'the man who speaks to her according to her own fundamental phantasy' (32). S(A), the signifier of the lack in the Other, is how she makes up for the non-existence of the sexual rapport: it's her relation to the Other, a 'supplementary *jouissance*, which is felt without her being able to say anything about it. The difficulty in the feminine clinic is to situate in relation to each other this 'duplicity' between love and desire, this 'doubling' of *jouissance* between  $\Phi$  and S(A) and this 'division' of the subject of the unconscious, given the fact that they do not all overlap. Thus, for example, if desire is situated on the side of  $\Phi$ , love would seem to be divided between  $\Phi$  and S(A), as the mystics show us.

The argument of 1958 enabled Lacan to explain certain other points. Firstly, the statement that 'the duplicity of the subject is masked for the woman, all the more so, in that the servitude of the partner renders her particularly apt to represent the victim of castration' (33) shows what the danger is for the partner who wants to be everything for a woman, to possess her entirely for himself. The '*maladroit*' (34), the clumsy subject who thus aims to make the Other exist would be irreversibly forced into the place of the dead and castrated man by the person Lacan calls 'his *surmoitié*' (35), his 'upper/super-half', in 'L'Etourdit'. Secondly, we can deduce the 'true reason why the demand for the fidelity of the Other takes on its particular character for the woman'. One might have assumed that this was simply due to the desire to keep for herself the penis of her partner, but what really matters here is to obtain the exclusivity of what reevokes in her the point of adoration 'behind the veil' from where she loves and *jouirs*. This is where her 'true' partner is found. Lacan will reformulate this problem of the 'demand for fidelity' later in his teaching ... 'it is as the unique one, that she wants to be recognised by her partner...' (36) This phrase, 'the unique one' (*la seule*) is also linked to feminine *jouissance* in the sense we find articulated in Ovid's version of the myth of Tiresias where it is a *jouissance* which goes beyond that of the man (37).

Finally, the 'fact that she justifies more easily this demand from the supposed argument of her own fidelity' is a consequence of the subjective structure elaborated by Lacan. In fact, a woman is fundamentally unfaithful to her partner, even if he remains unique, since she deceives him with the ideal incubus which her own unconscious conceals. We see this illustrated, with all its terrible consequences, in

Coppola's recent version of 'Dracula', when the partner is discarded, abandoned for the ideal incubus.

## Frigidity as an Obstacle

We now arrive at the second question elaborated in this chapter of the *Écrits*, frigidity, its nature, causes and forms. It is not seen as a symptom as such, in the sense that the subject does not always bemoan it. According to Lacan in the text 'The Signification of the Phallus', it is in fact 'relatively well tolerated' due to the apparent convergence of love and desire onto the same object. In *Encore*, he even questions the very existence of 'frigidity' (38), focusing instead on the *jouissance* a woman can have with her partner without being aware of it, something in the register of the Other *jouissance*, one which cannot be spoken about. But it is clearly not in this sense of a 'supplementary' *jouissance* that Lacan tackles it in chapter 8 of the Amsterdam paper, where it is rather seen as a lack of satisfaction (39). Even if it does not belong to the 'set of symptoms', it 'supposes the whole unconscious structure which determines neurosis' and represents a 'symbolically motivated defence' (40). The 'nature' of frigidity is thus seen as a defence of the subject against a *jouissance* which emerges, as we have seen, at the limit of adoration and anxiety. The final cause is thus a refusal of feminine *jouissance*, of all that the latter implies of a risk of going beyond and being overwhelmed by what she is experiencing.

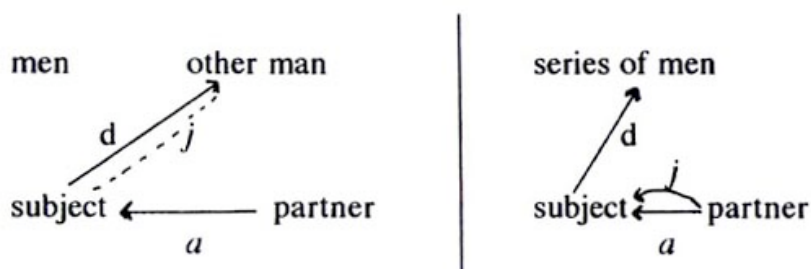
This defence of the subject against *jouissance* is to be situated in 'the dimension of masquerade' (41). Lacan gives a key place to this latter concept in 1958 since it represents the way a woman gives herself over to the desire of man. '...It is to be the phallus, that is, the signifier of the desire of the Other, that woman will reject an essential part of femininity, namely, all her attributes in the masquerade'. This feminine '*paraître*' or '*pas-être*', seeming or not-being, transforms a 'not having' (the phallus) into a 'being' (the phallus) (42). A veil covering over the privation of the feminine subject, the phallic masquerade also provokes a 'veiling effect' as to the feminine unconscious as Other. Once he has elaborated this subtle dialectic of desire, love and *jouissance*, Lacan gives an answer to the question of the obstacle, the material and formal cause of frigidity: 'any imaginary identification of the woman (in her status as object proposed to desire) with the phallic standard which supports the phantasy' (43). And here is the difficulty: the masquerade, which is in essence phallic, is necessary for the woman to be desired by a man, but the more she is alienated in it, the more she becomes the 'girl-phallus', the more she risks witnessing the disappearance of her own sexual satisfaction. Does this mean that in adhering to this phallic semblant, she risks believing in it and saturating in the imaginary the lack which it covers over? Does she thus become deaf to the call for the adoration of the ideal incubus?

## Forms of Frigidity

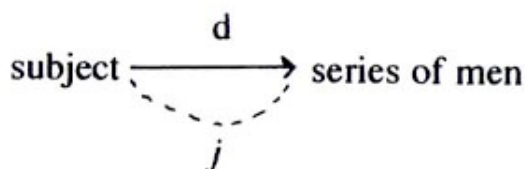
Let us try to deduce from our second schema some of the different forms of the refusal of the dialectic of desire, love and *jouissance*, finding the points at which it can break down.

Frigidity is obviously not a necessary consequence of such points of rupture, since it requires in addition the imaginary identification with the phallus.

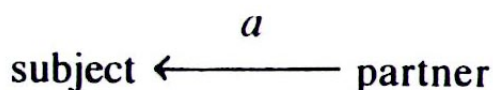
1) The 'Adulterous Woman'. She loves and she desires, but not the same object. Two scenarios are possible here. Firstly, one which seems like the debasement characteristic of the love life of the man: in the field of love, she is faithful to her partner, but frigid. She searches for *jouissance* in affairs with one or several men whom she desires but does not love (cf. first diagram). Then there is the more puzzling model which we nonetheless encounter in our clinical work: she loves her partner and indeed only reaches sexual satisfaction with him and yet she can't prevent herself from desiring other men in a series, men with whom she remains frigid.



2) The 'Collector of Men'. She is desiring, but refuses love, or never experiences it. She searches for *jouissance* via a series of desired men.



3) The 'Disgusted Woman'. She overestimates love, but does not desire or *jouir*. We meet this type of subject often in hysteria, where the penis is rejected in disgust.



A clinical example from the beginning of an analysis will illustrate the 'narcissism' which functions as the obstacle to the 'receptivity of embrace'.

### The Bottle of Perfume

A young woman requests analysis due to professional difficulties. Working in film, she feels 'naked', 'undressed' in her relations with others, something which is unbearable to her. Contingently, in relation to a symptom which had taken on the form of an 'idée fixe', she complains of frigidity. For some time she had been woken at night due to the noisy lovemaking of her neighbours. At work, she started to become very sensitive to noises, to interpret them, against this backdrop of her

sleepless nights. This had an inhibiting effect on her work: she works, in fact, as a 'sound editor' and her work consists in 'cutting sounds'. She gave a name to her obsession: 'the cries of a woman who *jouit*'. At this moment in the analysis, she informed me of her refusal of all sexual relations with her partner, someone she loved nonetheless and who was beginning to run out of patience. She responded to this with the remark: 'tenderness, but nothing else'. Certain infantile elements allowed her to trace the factors which determined her professional 'vocation'. Kept in the care of her maternal grandparents until the age of five, she lived directly opposite her parent's house. Every night, she would wait for the visit of her mother, signalled by the noise of her car which did not in fact always stop. Once the mother had either left or passed without stopping by, she would watch the bedroom window of her parents which would become illuminated and then dark. The curtains were drawn, then reopened, and so on. The sound cuts and the image cuts are thus linked via the phrase 'the cries of a woman who *jouirs*', articulated in relation to the obsessional idea, to the 'noise of the mother' coming and going, perhaps to join the father in the bedroom. It is thus a question of a primal scene, or even a dramatisation of the paternal metaphor itself.

Moreover, her disgust in relation to the penis is associated by her with her disgust of meat, indicating the desexualisation of the organ when it is not clothed in the phallic signifier. Her disgust evoked for her what she felt for her father, fatally ill during her puberty and who made no secret of the sufferings 'of his flesh', something which horrified her. She left her mother to care for him. Here is a sequence of dreams, emerging at the moment of her discovery in analysis of her frigidity. In the first dream, a man cuts another man up in front of her and her mother. The dreamer jumps onto him and castrates him. In a second dream, the mother is next to the dead father when the dreamer enters the room where she hears noises. The two dreams demonstrate the theme of the castrated man and his link with the figure of the dead father: they stress the ambiguous and evil role of the mother.

After having 'attempted' a sexual relation which proved unsatisfying once again, she dreamt that her legs became meat and that her mother cut off her ears. This evoked for her her sick and impotent father. The dream shows the fragmented body of the mirror phase, turning into rotten matter after being cut up, in opposition to any phallic signification. The mother is castrating and prohibiting.

But another sequence of dreams was to indicate her 'imaginary identification with the phallus'. Her partner offers her a bottle of perfume and instead of being pleased, she is haunted by the idea of shattering it and losing the precious liquid. This reminded her of another dream where her mother also broke a bottle of perfume. In a fury, she picked up a bottle belonging to her mother and dashed it onto the ground. But the perfume in this latter bottle turned out to be her own, coming from the first bottle. The mother had decanted it from the first bottle into the second before breaking it. Thus the vengeance against the mother was to return against herself: it was ultimately her own fault that she lost the precious perfume. It seems that in this vignette the important thing for her is not simply the bottle itself (we remember *Dora's* jewel box) but rather what it contains: the phallic agalma represented by the precious perfume. Thus, the dreams show that the register of phallic appearances must be guarded but that the idea of the interior takes on an even greater value. The patient in fact had phantasies of closed bodies which could only be opened via forced entry. In addition to the masquerade and the register of phallic appearances, her being itself was identified with the phallus. Even in the field of love, she could not accept herself as lacking. To the lack of desire which would imply that she clothe her partner's penis in



the phallic signifier, she preferred to keep this signifier for herself, making her invulnerable, even if her dreams show that she had a little Achilles heel. The metaphors of her dreams evoke for us Lacan's description of 'feminine sexuality... as the effort of a *jouissance* wrapped in its own contiguity' (44) and the obsession with the desire for a 'symbolic rupture' which would deliver her from her precious, but overpowering phallic ego.

### The 'Treatment' of Frigidity: 'An Unveiling of the Other'

The case material can serve as an introduction to Lacan's response to the third question: how can frigidity be 'mobilised'? Mobilised, of course, in an analytic context, since all somatic treatments are ruled out given that the problem has nothing to do with anatomy. Any hopes for a cure by love, reducing frigidity to the level of frustration, are just as vain: we remember Lacan's phrase, 'the standard failure of the worthy effort of the most wished for partner' (45). It is thus a question of analysis, and more precisely, of 'a transference... which puts symbolic castration into play'. The aim is to effect an 'unveiling of the Other involved in the transference (which) can alter a symbolically motivated defence' (46). Now, isn't this 'Other involved in the transference' the Other of love, which sustains the subject-supposed-to-know? Via the transference, the analyst will try to make the subject alert to this point 'behind the veil' that her excessive masquerade hides from her: the ideal incubus which causes love, but not without entailing an anxiety, linked to the Name-of-the-Father and the origin of the law in the unconscious.

This also shows us that there is a certain analogy between the feminine position and that of the analyst. In fact, if the 'unveiling of the most hidden signifier, that of the Mysteries, was reserved for women' (47), it is the analyst's task here to unveil for the frigid subject the Other which conceals feminine *jouissance*.

### 3. Hysteria and Femininity

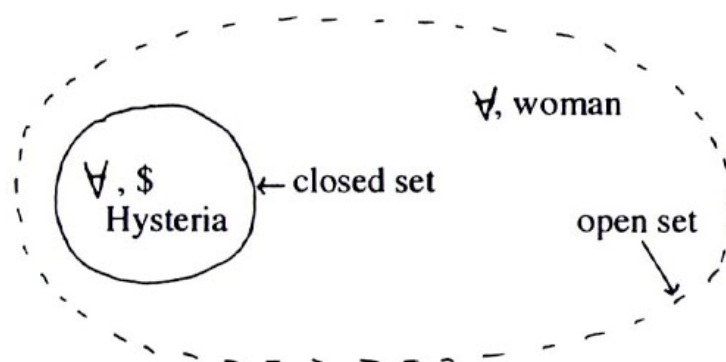
In the two texts we have studied, Freud's and Lacan's, frigidity is thus referred to the castration complex, but differently in each case. For Freud, what is at stake is '*Penisneid*', that is to say, the very modality of desire as lack, while for Lacan, it is rather the imaginary identification with the phallus as the stopper of desire, creating an obstacle in the circuit of *jouissance*.

Neither of the two speaks of hysteria in these passages. One could, nonetheless, reconcile their two conceptions of frigidity, in noting that the virile phase of the Freudian frigid woman sends us back to the 'playing the man' of the hysteric, while the 'last identification with the signifier of desire' (48) (the phallus) specifies this same neurosis for Lacan in the 1960s. This brings us to the differentiation between hysteria and femininity.

It would be tempting to position the dividing line between the man to be cut down and the man who is already dead: that is, to put hysteria on the side of the phantasy of castration of the Freudian neurotic, and femininity on the side of she who accepts the dead or castrated lover. Why not? But on condition that one does not deduce from this that on the one side you have women and on the other, hysterics; rather one should admit that while hysteria and femininity are conceptually opposed, there is a considerable area of intersection between these concepts.

Indeed, in part 2, on the subject of women, we highlighted the duplicity between desire and love, the doubling of the *pastoute* (not-all/whole - ed.), with regard to her *jouissance* between  $\Phi$  and  $S(A)$ , and the division of the subject of the unconscious,  $\$$ . Let us take as our point of departure a speaking being who has inscribed herself 'on the side of woman' in the formulae of sexualisation. It is, says Lacan, 'on this basis that is founded the being *pastout*, the placing of oneself within the phallic function'. (49) If, however, the said woman wants to 'conjoin herself with that which makes man...' (50), it is recommended that she use the 'shoe-horn' (51) of the phallic function; thus she will have a rapport, albeit contingent, depending on who she meets, to this function  $\Phi$ . From then on, she too will be subject to the unconscious, divided by the signifier, in relation to the object a cause of desire according to her own phantasy. She will have symptoms. She will thus be neurotic, obsessional or hysterical, though obsession, according to Freud, presupposes a core of hysteria.

If on the other hand we consider that there is an incompatibility between 'being a woman' and 'being a hysteric', well - where are the women? Should we reduce them to a few exceptional figures of mythology or literature? Should we say that they are there where the analyst does not encounter them? That they are mad or psychotic? The analyst, then, would see only men, a lot of whom would have feminine anatomy! This rarity seems untenable from the clinical point of view, and in contradiction to what Lacan says: 'How is it possible to conceive that the Other could be that something in relation to which one-half (...) of speaking beings refers itself?' (52) We will therefore take the position of affirming that hysteria and femininity can coexist in the same real woman, who is said to have a hysterical structure; furthermore, that hysteria is always partial, and that a woman exceeds her hysteria. Let us schematise this simply on the basis of the representation of a woman *pastoute*, as an open set which excludes its own limit, as Lacan suggests in chapter 1 of Encore (53). Hysteria can thus be represented as a closed 'whole', in other words containing its own limit, situated at the interior of the preceding open one: the whole of 'playing the man', which does not coincide with 'being a man'.



You can let hysteria grow as big as you like in the *pastoute*, you will always have an infinite remainder between the two, between the limit of hysteria and the absent limit of femininity. Between the two you will thus have yet another *pastoute*. This shows that a *pastoute* cannot be saturated by any all/whole, nor even by several 'alls/wholes'. The concept of *pastout*, in this sense, which defines The woman as an indeterminate existence (54), delivers us from the metaphor of the hole and the

stopper, which is too easily brought forward on the subject of women.

Nonetheless, from the analyst's point of view, he first encounters the hysteric in the closed set, and only has 'sporadic' (55) and contingent access to the radical relation of The woman to the Other, in the open and 'infinite' set which contains the closed one. He should not forget, however, that as far as the *jouissance* of a woman *pastoute* is concerned, she has this relation to the Other which, at any moment, can provoke manifestations which are as unpredictable as they are unexpected.

Lacan's teaching enables us to differentiate between hysteria and femininity and articulate them in various ways. Where *jouissance* is concerned, we can distinguish on the one hand the *jouissance* of the hysterical symptom, notably of conversion, the meaning of which is to incarnate the castration of the master (56), within a discourse which creates the social bond, and on the other hand the sexual *jouissance* of a woman with a man, which, even with phallic mediation, cannot be inscribed within any discourse. If the symptom is necessary, and rests upon the fundamental phantasy of the subject, then sexual *jouissance* itself is contingent upon and linked to one or several feminine conditions of *jouissance*, of which we have studied one modality, that of the man who is dead or castrated.

### Three *jouissances*

By way of support, let us look at one of the clinical fragments that have underpinned this study. In it we can discern the places of three *jouissances*: that of the hysterical symptom, that of sexual *jouissance* supported in this case by the figure of the dead man, and finally the place of the Other *jouissance*.

Mme A came to see me because of a series of symptoms which were triggered by her husband's heart attack, which he survived. She saw him fall. Since then, she had been falling, twisting her limbs, breaking down, suffering spasms. In classic fashion, she defied the doctors who begged her to see an analyst. During the interviews, she rapidly came up with a 'trauma' which occurred when she was nine: her father had a serious motor-cycle accident in front of the house. She could still hear the awful sound of the father falling. It happened at a crucial moment for her; because she could not stand her parents, especially her mother, she had just obtained their permission to go to boarding school to continue her studies. Her father's fall, his physical and mental decline, prevented this much-desired separation. She went into a mild depression, and fell off her bicycle.

Mme A was the fourth child in the family. The two older children had died young; the first had been a girl who was said to be blonde and pretty, like her mother, and the second was a boy who was supposed to have been the victim of poisoning by the mother's milk. After the death of the two eldest, a third child, a girl, was born - the living picture of her dead sister - who was adulated by the mother in the place of the first. Last of all came Mme A, dowdy, 'swarthy' like her father, 'the anti top-model', in her own words. The 'top-model' was her sister, who to some extent acted as a screen between her and her mother, absorbing the anxiety-ridden attentions of the latter. 'Very early on', said Mme A, 'I decided to escape from the mortifying surveillance of my mother, I put myself on the side of the living, like my father.' When the symptoms appeared, she also developed an obsession: that her husband, her child, someone else close to her, was going to die. During the sessions, she elaborated on her sad thoughts, which alternated with her narrations and phantasies

of childbirth. One day, wanting her to feel the weight of the phantasy which was revealing itself through her remarks and her symptoms, and which I entitled 'the living one who falls', I said to her, 'But this is terrible, you spend all your time imagining the death of your nearest and dearest.' 'Oh no, not all my time,' she replied, 'but nearly all the time, except when I'm in ecstasy.'

I asked her what she meant by 'ecstasy'. That happened when she was alone in her garden, it was empty of images and thoughts. Although she was a believer, it was not linked to God. All she could say about it was that what she felt at such times was something strange, not like sexual *jouissance*. I could find out nothing more about it, even though she seemed to want to talk about it.

Sexual *jouissance* had always been intense with her husband, whom she loved and to whom she had as a rule been faithful. She was very upset at the recent cessation of their relations, as a result of the heart attack as well as her own hysterical ills. In the background, she immediately evoked the distant figure of a lover she had had before her marriage, who died tragically, and whose memory still haunted her. Eventually she associated this lover with the older brother who had died before she was born, saying to me, 'He was the only man my mother ever loved'.

Thus, not wanting to be her mother's dead boy, she had chosen to be 'the living one who falls', identifying with her father. But in her relations with her husband, it was the dead man, whom she had not been, but whom she would possess for ever, who made her *jouir*. Behind the figure of the dead lover, could be discerned the ineffable point, the dead son, the martyr, whence came to her the commandment, 'you shall not be the dead boy, the fetishised object of your mother', that is to say that which names and prohibits maternal *jouissance*, the Name-of-the-Father.

This case allows us to distinguish the *jouissance* of the hysterical symptom, supported by the phantasy of 'the living one who falls', the precise place of the Other *jouissance*, outlined in the 'ecstasies', and finally, that of sexual *jouissance*, with the husband, but not without the dead man, to which hysteria creates an obstacle without covering it over.

That a woman exceeds her hysteria, and that sexual *jouissance* is to be situated there where she is *pastoute*, but not with relation to the unconscious, as denoted by Lacan's way of writing ( $\text{La} \rightarrow \Phi$ ) (57), is further proved by some ends of analyses. One finds women, duly analysed, whose hysteria and relation to castration have been decisively modified. Among them, there are those who continue to *jouir* on the basis of representations such as those of the dead or castrated lover, which remains untouched, but which have been made conscious for a time in the course of analysis. Is this a defect of analysis, a left-over of hysteria? No, because we have seen that it is not a question of imaginary phantasies reducible to the fundamental phantasy of the hysterical subject, but rather of a direct emanation from the origin of the law in a woman *pastoute*, a condition of her recognition and of her *jouissance* of a man.

## ENDNOTES

1. Marcel PROUST, À la recherche du temps perdu, Du cote de chez Swann, 1,II, La Pleiade, p.159.
2. Ernest JONES, 'The precocious development of feminine sexuality', International Journal of Psychoanalysis, VIII, 1927.
3. J. LACAN, 'Propos directifs pour un Congrès sur la sexualité féminine', Écrits, Seuil, Paris, 1966, p.735.
4. Ibid., p.733.
5. Ibid., p.727.
6. S. FREUD, 'Le tabou de la virginité', La vie sexuelle, P.U.F., Paris, 1918, p.66.
7. The translation P.U.F. (p.78) 'incomplete sexuality' is pretty but inexact.
8. J. LACAN, op cit., chap. VIII, Écrits, p.731, 'La frigidity et la structure subjective'. Lacan in fact distanced himself from development, notably in Chapter VI of the same text: 'The imaginary complex and the questions of development'. He constructs the 'sexual metaphor' (p.730), which substitutes a 'want-to-be' for the subject's 'want-to-have', symbolised from then on by the phallus. From that point he can conclude: 'This remark assigns to questions of development their limit, by requiring that they be subordinated to a fundamental synchrony', (p.730). One could denote this as:  
-φ  
.....  
development.
9. S. FREUD, op cit., p.78.
10. J. LACAN, 'La signification de phallus', Écrits, Seuil, Paris, 1966, p.694.
11. J. LACAN, op cit., chap. VIII, 'La frigidity et la structure subjective', Écrits, p.733.
12. J. LACAN, op cit., 'La signification du phallus', Écrits, p.695.
13. J. LACAN, op cit., chap VIII, Écrits, p.733.
14. J. LACAN, op cit., 'La signification du phallus', Écrits, p.695.
15. J. LACAN, op cit., chap. VIII, Écrits, p.733.
16. J. LACAN, op cit., 'La signification du phallus', Écrits, p.694.
17. J. LACAN, op cit., chap VIII, Écrits, pp.733-734.
18. S. FREUD, 'La féminité' in Nouvelles conférences sur la psychanalyse, Gallimard, 1984, p.170.
19. J. LACAN, Encore, Le Séminaire Livre XX, Seuil, 1975, p.90.
20. J. LACAN, op cit., chap. VIII, Écrits, p.732.
21. Idem, p.733.
22. J. LACAN, op cit., Encore, p.73.
23. J. LACAN, op cit., Écrits, chap. VIII, p.733.
24. Idem, p.733.
25. Idem, p.733.
26. J. LACAN, L'envers de la psychanalyse, Le Séminaire Livre XVII, Seuil, 1991, chap. VIII, p. 143.
27. J. LACAN, op cit., chap. VIII, Écrits, p.733.
28. J. LACAN, Séminaire X, L'angoisse (inédit), séance du 10 mars 1963.
29. J. LACAN, op cit., chap. VIII, Écrits, p.733-734.
30. J. LACAN, op cit., Encore, p.71.
31. Idem, p.75.
32. Acte de fondation, et autres textes, E.C.F., 1982, p.36, 'd'Écolage' -11 mars 1980.
33. J. LACAN, op cit., chap VIII, Écrits, p.734.
34. Cf. the talk 'Les solitudes' of Philippe LA SAGNA at the Journées d'automne de l'E.C.F. in 1992, and its commentary by Carmen GALLANO in la Lettre mensuelle de l'E.C.F. no 114, p.5, 'Maladroit!'.

35. J. LACAN, 'L'Étourdit', in Scilicet 4, Seuil, 1973, p.25.
36. Idem, p. 23.
37. OVIDE, Les Métamorphoses, III, Gamier Flammarion, pp.97-98.
38. J. LACAN, op cit., Encore, p. 69: 'la prétendue frigidité'.
39. Cf. J-A. MILLER, conférence inédite à Malaga aux Journées espagnoles de l'E.E.P. en 1993.
40. J. LACAN, op cit., chap. VIII, Écrits, p.732.
41. J. LACAN, op cit., 'La signification du phallus', Écrits, p.694.
42. J. LACAN, op cit., chap. VIII, Écrits, p.732.
43. Idem, p.732.
44. Idem, p.731.
45. Idem, p.732.
46. Idem, p.732.
47. Idem, p.734.
48. J. LACAN, 'La direction de la cure et les principes de son pouvoir', Écrits, p.627.
49. J. LACAN, Encore, p.68.
50. J. LACAN, op cit., 'L'Étourdit', p.23.
51. Idem, p.21.
52. J. LACAN, op cit., Encore, p. 75.
53. Idem, p. 15.
54. J. LACAN, op cit., Encore, p.68, p.93.
55. Idem, p.75.
56. J. LACAN, op cit., L'envers de la psychanalyse, chap. VI, p.99.
57. J. LACAN, op cit., Encore, p.73. Here it is best not to confuse the concept of the '*pastoute*', with that of S(A) which does not have an isomorphic relation to it. Even in her relation to the phallus, a woman is '*pastoute*', as Chapter I of Encore shows, in which Lacan approaches the *pastoute* in her relation to man by means of what he calls the 'hypothesis of compactness' for sexual *jouissance*. He illustrates it with the 'feminine myth' of Don Juan, which concerns the rapport of the *pastoute* with man, rapport which is contaminated by the Other, even though it is a question neither of supplementary *jouissance* nor of a hysterical relation to the other woman.