Bruce Fink

Against Understanding

Volume 2

Cases and Commentary in a Lacanian Key

ROUTLEDGE

AGAINST UNDERSTANDING, VOLUME 2

Against Understanding, Volume 2 casts a spotlight on the status of case studies in psychoanalysis, which are commonly used to illustrate clinicians' expertise and mastery rather than patients' actual itineraries. When a case is presented, the complex, unwieldy, and often self-contradictory material of a therapeutic trajectory tends to be vastly oversimplified in view of producing a linear narrative that seems to perfectly fit the parameters of a practitioner's preferred theoretical framework.

Bruce Fink attempts to eschew the appearance of "mastery" in assembling clinical material and in discussing his approach to practice and theory in the myriad case histories and vignettes included in both Volumes 1 and 2 of *Against Understanding*. To counterbalance the kind of paring down of material usually carried out to make cases conform to a particular paradigm, the case write-ups presented here include much of the "raw data" so often omitted: verbatim quotes from patients about their lives, backgrounds, dreams, and fantasies; and details about the many obscure, vacillating, and unruly phases of treatment. Fink hopes thereby to allow readers to form their own opinions about the well-foundedness or unsoundness of his formulations, interpretations, and interventions.

This second part of a two-volume collection of papers, interviews, and case studies provides the reader with hundreds of illustrations of Lacanian theory in practice, and will be essential for psychoanalysts, psychotherapists, psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, and counselors.

Bruce Fink is a practicing Lacanian psychoanalyst and analytic supervisor in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He trained as a psychoanalyst in France for seven years with—and is now a member of—the psychoanalytic institute Lacan created shortly before his death, the École de la Cause Freudienne in Paris. He is also an affiliated member of the Pittsburgh Psychoanalytic Society and Institute.

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TO HÉLOÏSE

The space occupied by not understanding is the space occupied by desire. It is to the extent that this is not perceived that an analysis ends prematurely and is, quite frankly, botched.

—Lacan, 2001a, p. 250

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PREFACE

> Because they understand a lot of things, analysts on the whole imagine that to understand is an end in itself, and that it can only be "a happy end." The example of physics may show them, however, that the most impressive successes do not require that one know where one is going.
>
> —Lacan, 2006a, p. 615

Lacanian psychoanalysis is usually presented as little more than a theory by most authors in the English-speaking world. Clinical work based on Lacanian principles is rarely presented in our contemporary literature,[1] much less compared with clinical work based on other principles.

Almost half of the material included in the present two-volume collection is clinical in nature, some of it brief clinical vignettes, but much of it somewhat in-depth case studies (see, for example, chapters 11–14 in this volume, and chapters 9–13 in Volume 1). A number of comments on case presentations thus seem to me to be in order here.

What Is a Case Study?

> [Freud] would rather give up the entire stability of his theory than misrecognize the tiniest particularities of a case that might call his theory into question.
>
> —Lacan, 2006a, pp. 385–86

What could be more reductionistic and, indeed, scandalous, than a case study? Perhaps nowhere in the practitioner's work world is the temptation so great to squeeze mountains of unwieldy clinical material into a theoretical frame, and to use a patient's complex and circuitous pathway through an analysis to "demonstrate" the value of some particular technique or concept. In *The Two Analyses of Mr. Z*, the eminent psychoanalyst Heinz Kohut (1994) had the unmitigated gall to *invent* lock, stock, and barrel an analysis he never conducted to promote his own way of supposedly practicing: he presented the "traditional Freudian" analysis he himself had undergone as part of his training as though it were someone else's, and then invented a second self-psychology informed analysis for this same man as though Kohut had been the man's analyst. Talk about solipsism!

It seems to me that case presentations are, almost by their very nature, destined to oversimplification and exaggeration, and to be skewed, corralled, and even shanghaied into serving the writer's own purposes, for most of them are written up and published largely for reasons of self-promotion. Authors of case histories are very often seeking to publicize their own availability, assert their own clinical and/or theoretical prowess, and at times even convince the public of their superiority over all other available practitioners. Rare is the clinician who admits in print to having been in a serious muddle about what was going on for his patient, to having made obvious mistakes in the course of the treatment, and/or to not having had a clue as to his patient's diagnosis—unless, of course, this is admitted to as having been the case at an early stage of the treatment, but as having given way to a "complete understanding" of the situation later on.

In a word, *case studies are generally written up and published in order to demonstrate the clinician's*

mastery: mastery of a theory, mastery of a particular approach to practice, and, in short, mastery of everything potential patients and supervisees could possibly be looking for! Case presentations are designed to celebrate the master practitioner.

Given this almost structural motivation in our psychotherapeutic world today, is it any surprise that published case studies are often so unhelpful and unsatisfying? In the best of cases, we can hope that authors have either let certain details of the case slip through the framework (i.e., blinders or censorship) they imposed upon it because they failed to notice that these details did not fit their theory, or included enough raw material—more or less unfiltered accounts of what transpired and copious verbatim quotes from the patient's speech—for us to see beyond the formulation they themselves arrived at, perhaps seeing something altogether different. An example of the latter that I have often assigned in graduate courses is Winnicott's (1978) *The Piggle*, which provides a blow-by-blow account of Winnicott's play and talk with a little girl over the course of three years; it includes quite a lot of "raw data" and very little in the way of theoretical musings (mostly relegated to comments printed in the margins).

Can there be such a thing as a somewhat honest case *formulation*, that is, a case study that does not merely report the "facts"—as pre-filtered as they already inevitably are by the author's own background, training, and theoretical assumptions—but that attempts to explain what happened in the course of the patient's life as well as in the patient's work with the analyst? One might think that in smaller working groups, clinicians could overcome the temptation to simply flaunt their expertise and could ask each other for genuine help with difficult cases. Due, however, to the general structure of psychoanalytic training institutes (see Fink, 2013), in the English-speaking world at least, this appears rarely to be the case; established analysts seek instead to lure trainees into their camp, if not onto their couches, and trainees seek to win the favor of senior analysts within the institute—by presenting things in such a way that it seems they are doing a fabulous job—in view of graduating, receiving referrals and publishing opportunities, and the like. This perhaps at least partially explains the popularity among early-career clinicians of peer supervision, for the latter seems to provide a forum in which cases can be presented without any pretense at mastery, since one has little, if anything, to gain by way of status or power from one's peers.

I suspect, based on my almost two decades of providing individual and group supervision, that the most honest case presentations and case formulations occur in the privacy of the supervisor/supervisee relationship when there is no institutional connection of any kind, whether academic or professional, between supervisor and supervisee. It seems that brutal honesty is perhaps only possible when there is no longer anything at stake for the supervisee that might be related to grades, status within a graduate academic or professional licensing program, or graduation, and where the only thing any longer at stake is trying to find one's way in the incredibly obscure thicket of clinical work, with all its dead ends, upsets, outbursts, stuckness, reversals, and trying experiences. It is a highly regrettable component of training in virtually all institutional settings—the reasons for which are fairly obvious, insofar as each institution believes that it is somehow the guarantor of its trainees' competence and must therefore constantly assess that competence—that makes it such that genuinely open discussion of one's clinical work often cannot really occur until *after* graduation. (The exception here again is peer supervision, which can be quite helpful, although often one's peers are no further advanced than one is oneself, having followed much the same curriculum as oneself.) This means that the most confusing aspects of cases and the facets of them that do not fit the trainee's formulation—which may be motivated in a particular class by the trainee's wish to seem attuned to the teacher's worldview or to that promulgated by the trainee's program or institute—often go unmentioned and therefore unexamined prior to graduation.

Moreover, few of the genuinely open discussions of clinical work that occur *after* graduation between

supervisor and supervisee find their way into print, as if there were no room for such things in the literature, which ultimately gives practitioners-in-training a false idea of what clinical practice is all about! This conundrum led me to often privilege patients' accounts of their own experience in therapy as required reading in my courses for therapists-in-training, accounts by people such as Marie Cardinal (1983), Donna Williams (1998), and Dan Gunn (2002), even though first-hand accounts are also written for their authors' own personal reasons, some of which are not entirely unrelated to the seeking of fame and fortune.

It is perhaps primarily through clinicians' post-graduate supervision that they come to realize that many other people encounter the same kinds of difficulties as they do, and that they can finally feel admitted into a kind of "inner circle" of those in the know, of those who are aware of what really goes on behind closed doors.

For the better part of 20 years I taught a doctoral-level seminar entitled "Case Formulation" (early on, it was called "Advanced Practicum") in which I attempted to counter the tendency on the part of clinicians-in-training to present professors their easiest cases, or at least the ones in which they felt they were doing the best job. I asked them instead to formulate for the class (which luckily never had more than seven students in it at a time) their most difficult cases, the ones with which they were having the most trouble and had little if any idea what was going on. I tried to promote a system of grading based on how well they formulated the case, with all its attendant difficulties, uncertainties, and even mistakes, not on how well *I* thought they were doing as clinicians. I encouraged them, for example, to attempt to eschew mastery when it came to diagnosis and simply discuss at the end of their hour-long case presentations and in 15 to 20 page write-ups how they were thinking about diagnosis—for instance, such and such features of the case inclined them to think of psychosis, whereas others inclined them to think of obsession (for an example, see Chapter 14 in the present volume).

Similarly, I requested that the students in that class mention everything they felt they had done wrong and articulate what the effects on the therapy had been, hoping to create an atmosphere in which our difficult practice could be openly and non-punitively discussed. Naturally, it does not suffice to state such goals to actually achieve them, and I myself undoubtedly got in the way of achieving them in certain instances; but my sense was that in many cases I managed to encourage individual students, and sometimes whole classes of students, to engage in very positive self-reflection about their clinical work (in class and on paper), mostly free from the concern about their gain or loss of status in the program owing to difficulties they were encountering with patients. My job was no doubt rendered easier because I was never at any point their Clinic Director or Director of Clinical Training—that is, one of those responsible for writing possibly career-damaging reports on their clinical "performance" that would be sent to potential intern sites and employers.

My Approach to Case Studies Here

> In order for the analyst to have what the analysand lacks, he must possess nescience qua nescience. [...] He must be but one short step away from being as ignorant as his analysand.
>
> —Lacan, 2001a, pp. 279–80

Can there be such a thing as a publishable case history that makes no pretense at mastery of the clinical material, approach to practice, or theory employed? Perhaps there are certain contexts in which this would be possible. (Even then, one might have to watch out for a tendency to present oneself as a master at non-mastery, like that found in certain spiritual practices, and akin to the tendency to promote oneself

as the most humble of the humble in certain religious groups.) Would I claim that the case studies included in the two volumes of the present collection make no pretense at such mastery? Hardly.

Most of the case histories included here were written up for particular conferences with a specific theme selected by someone other than myself. When I was presented with the theme—whether it was addiction, trauma, anxiety, hysteria, fantasy, semblance, or what have you—I would consider which of my cases might possibly be used to address the topic of the conference, and organize the material to be presented (usually in a mere 30 to 45 minutes) in such a way as to address the theme. This often meant reading through hundreds of pages of notes I had taken on a case in the course of years of analysis, and selecting a tiny percentage of the material that seemed relevant to the theme.[2] Each of the histories included in this collection could have been presented in myriad different manners and far more voluminously (Freud's major case studies are all much longer than the ones included here, and discuss analyses that were generally shorter than those discussed here), none of my write-ups here providing anything like a complete clinical picture of a case, even at the particular point in time at which it was presented. The material was always subjected to a tremendous winnowing down, a particular frame—based on the conference theme—was always applied, and (for better or for worse) I generally felt the need to arrive at some kind of conclusion—whether related to technique or a theoretical point—within a short space of time.

Moreover, like so many others, I too was often seeking to convince my audiences of the well-foundedness of my approach to both theory and practice, and very often pushed into parentheses or footnotes (which I naturally did not read aloud at conferences) facets of cases that did not neatly fit the formulations I was presenting. In the supposed interests of coherence and clarity, I would often find myself skipping facets of the case that I found baffling, especially when I had written up more material than I could feasibly discuss in the time allotted and faced the choice of cutting something I thought I understood versus what I thought I did not. When it came to redacting the cases for publication, whether in specific journals or even for the present collection, a concern for cogency and readability often took precedence in my writing practice over the preservation of all those details that did not fit. Although I believe it is useful to go back through a case write-up a few weeks after setting pen to paper, in order to reexamine all the things that were suppressed in the initial draft and to restore all that contradicts or seems to somehow fall outside of the formulation arrived at to its rightful place—or at least preserve it in parentheses or footnotes (see Fink, 2007, pp. 163–65)—I cannot say that I have always systematically done so here, especially when it came to those histories that were prepared many years ago.

I hope, nevertheless, that I have included enough of the "raw data"—including the patient's life history, background, parapraxes, and verbatim quotes (including slips of the tongue, accounts of dreams, etc.)—and enough of the confusing, unwieldy, and contradictory clinical details so that readers can form their own opinions about the cases and about the well-foundedness or lack thereof of my formulations, interpretations, and interventions. I have striven to thwart my own tendency to set aside one-off statements by the analysand that contradict my thesis—and such statements abound in virtually every case, due to the very nature of the unconscious and the dialectical process of analysis. As Charcot famously said (as reported by Freud, 1962a, p. 13), in response to a student who protested that some clinical fact was impossible because it contradicted the Young-Helmholtz theory, "theories are all fine and good, but they don't stop things from being what they are" (*la théorie, c'est bon mais ça n'empêche pas d'exister*).

In several instances, I hoped to receive helpful comments and supervision from the colleagues to whom I presented these cases, as I myself thought them perplexing and believed that the very process of writing up the case would help me better see the forest for the trees of the day-to-day clinical material. I

find that it is often only in the course of taking notes and putting things together that I notice that several people in the analysand's life have the same names, that certain events occurred around the same time, and so on. I have been fortunate enough to receive very helpful feedback from colleagues on certain occasions.

My very first college-level studies of psychology taught me that theories can be self-confirming: Rosenhan's (1973) study, "On being sane in insane places," had just been published, showing how easy it was for psychologists, psychiatrists, and hospital staff to interpret a potential patient's state based on their expectations, and all of his or her subsequent behavior based on an initial (erroneous) diagnosis. Kuhn's (1962) work further drove home the same point for me, cautioning us, as it does, not to grant too much credence to any particular theory we adopt, and to reexamine and seriously consider jettisoning theoretical formulations before waiting for overwhelming clinical evidence to accumulate against them.

Certain students of mine over the years have argued that the best way to ensure that therapists are not barking up the wrong tree in their formulations is to share the latter with their patients, asking patients whether they agree with them. I believe this has occasionally been done by practitioners and written up in the literature, but we must, I think, temper enthusiasm for such an approach with the observation that, like therapists, patients are not completely aware of their own motives, thoughts, and feelings, and may thus agree to or espouse viewpoints that are just as partial and skewed as their therapists'. Both patients' and therapists' perspectives can contain important truths without needing to coincide. Different historians may be thought to present contrasting yet equally significant facets of history, one perhaps a more social perspective and another a more economic perspective on the Civil War, for example. Perhaps each perspective captures a different face of the subject, like pictures of something taken from varying angles.

The belief that therapist and patient should ideally agree about what is going on or what went on implicitly relies on a belief in the possibility of some sort of total intersubjectivity. In Lacan's view, no such intersubjectivity is possible because there is always a fundamental hiatus or disjunction—a misunderstanding or missed understanding—between people, because first of all, we tend to misunderstand ourselves (not wanting to know certain things about ourselves), and second, because we misunderstand each other (projecting onto others what we ourselves think, or believe we would feel were we in their shoes, not to mention jumping to conclusions about what they have said [see Fink, 2007, chapter 7]). First-hand patient accounts and therapist accounts of treatment must all be taken with large helpings of salt, and we should perhaps celebrate rather than condone their likely discrepancies.

Do We Need to Know Why Talking Works as Long as It Does?

> We can never understand anything other than what we already have in our heads.
>
> —Lacan, 2006c, p. 105

Talking changes things. Theories are developed to explain how and why, and case histories are most often written up to illustrate those theories. Divergences among theories lead to war between different schools of psychoanalysis and psychotherapy, which argue that talking changes things for reason *x*, not reason *y*.

To keep things in perspective, however, the fact that talking changes things is widely accepted by a broad, indeed vast, swath of the psychotherapeutic community, and the reasons why it changes things might be said to ultimately be of less clinical importance than the fact that it does.[3] Faced with the ever more grandiose claims of psychiatrists and drug companies, to whom all psychological problems and psychosomatic pains are merely symptoms of "chemical imbalances" in the brain, we talk therapists

might do well to regroup strategically behind the most basic tenets of our work. Indeed, in recent years I have found that an increasingly important project for therapists engaged in clinical practice is to simply survive and outlive patients' skepticism regarding the talking cure itself, so many people having swallowed hook, line, and sinker the patently absurd discourse of "chemical imbalances" (convincingly demonstrated to be poppycock by authors like Whitaker, 2010). Surviving patients' skepticism has become a full-fledged project in its own right.

Such skepticism also has to be confronted with those who have at least consciously embraced, in recent years, views of the mind put forward by various meditation practices that recommend simply noticing thoughts, feelings, and desires and letting them go. Endorsers of such views, like those who have been taking medications for many years to little or no avail, often wind up on our doorsteps eventually because nothing has worked for them, and yet they remain utterly and completely unconvinced of the validity of the project of talk therapy itself. All of their desires, in their view, must simply be given up, their goal being a form of sublime detachment from life that strikes me as light years from psychoanalysis' implicit goal of an engaged life including "love and work"[4] of some kind. Indeed, certain forms of meditation (perhaps not all) seem to promote a kind of disengagement that merely perpetuates the kind of isolation that is already all too prevalent in our times, isolation so extreme that the therapist is often now the only person patients really interact with in the course of their daily lives.

Perhaps we would do well, in the current conjuncture, to emphasize *that* talking helps, *that* talking works, rather than waging wars over precisely how it does so.

Notes

In the interest of confidentiality, identifying information and certain circumstances have been changed or omitted in the clinical material presented.

1 With a few notable exceptions, such as Schneiderman, 1977; Gherovici 2003; Rogers, 2006; Miller, 2011; and Swales, 2012.

2 Unlike many presenters I have heard at conferences, who seem to talk about whatever they feel like talking about or already have written up, regardless of the topic announced for the conference, I have always—whether it be considered a virtue or not—made a concerted effort to address conference themes in my remarks.

3 In clinical practice, analysts can often *theorize* about why talking about a particular topic helped an analysand, but analysts rarely know precisely what aspect of the discussion did the trick—nor do they have to. It may help if they know, insofar as it may help them to do so again in the future, but they need not be able to know definitively; furthermore, what helped once may not help again as much or in the same way.

4 The formulation "love and work" was apparently attributed to Freud by Erik Erikson. Freud (1958d) himself said that psychoanalytic treatment strives to allow the analysand a "capacity for work and enjoyment" (p. 119).

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COMMENTARY

On Clinical Practice

1

ANALYSAND AND ANALYST IN THE GLOBAL ECONOMY, OR WHY ANYONE IN THEIR RIGHT MIND WOULD PAY FOR AN ANALYSIS

According to Lacan (2006b), Pascal invented game theory with the notion that the ante staked in a game of chance must be viewed as lost from the moment one agrees to play. Whatever amount one agrees to gamble should be considered a pure loss right from the outset, hence the advice sometimes given to gamblers not to bring more money with them to the casino than they are comfortable losing, given how likely it is that they will lose all of it. This well-meaning advice is obviously quite futile in the age of ATMs and credit cards, as anyone on a losing streak can easily obtain more money to wager.

Rather than openly declare buying and selling on the stock market as tantamount to gambling—that is, as an arena in which one should not wager more money than one is comfortable losing—politicians and financial advisors have increasingly dissimulated the gambling aspect of the stock market behind the notion of "investing." They have touted the idea that conservative investing over the long term can bring in a decent, fairly consistent percentage—not as nice as Bernie Madoff's too-good-to-be-true, consistently positive returns,[1] naturally, but better than those achievable virtually anywhere else, whether in a savings account, a certificate of deposit, or government bonds.

As company pensions have been progressively eliminated in the United States and putting away money for retirement has increasingly become an individual endeavor even in France, the speculative nature of the stock market has been downplayed and the notion of conservative long-term investing trumpeted far and wide. Such tactics are necessary if politicians are to make people forget about soon-to-be bankrupt Social Security administrations, where their retirement income was to be doled out by the benevolent state, and rely instead on personal efforts to secure financial solvency beyond their working years. Diversification (a.k.a. asset allocation, based on "modern portfolio theory") has been advertised as the cure-all for stock-market gyrations; and governments, in concert with financial advisers of all ilks, have attempted to convince the public that the market can be mastered through careful, conservative, diversified investments in raw materials, healthcare, technology, and yes, even banks—investments that might well be hedged to offset risk using puts, calls, straddles, strangles, three-way collars, and the like.

According to some, the boom-and-bust business cycles Marx exposed as endemic to capitalism in the nineteenth century have been tamed and contained. *BusinessWeek*, a well-known financial magazine in the United States, spent much of the last decade announcing the advent of what its authors referred to as the "New Economy," by which they meant an economic system immune to serious downturns and

crashes.

All of that has turned to dust in the past few years, but the Pascalian truth that one should begin one's "investing" with the notion that whatever one stakes should be viewed as always already lost has been one-upped or raised to the second (or even higher) power by the widespread use of leverage in financial instruments. Ever more exchange-traded funds (ETFs), available like ordinary stocks on the NYSE Euronext, offer double or even triple the gains made by various asset classes or market indexes, not to mention double- or triple-sized losses. When investors purchase such funds on margin—that is, with borrowed money based on the purported value of their other paper assets, as so many have done over the past 15 years—they can very easily lose *considerably more* than they anted up. Those who dabble in certain kinds of futures and options should obviously be informed of the risk.

This is also true in the real estate market, where, at least in the United States, it was quite possible until recently to buy a home with no money down, only to find the value of the house decline by as much as 40 percent within a year. Mortgage holders often lost far more money in a few short months than they could have hoped to earn in a decade.

Were we to follow Pascal, we would be inclined to replace the ubiquitous formula found at the bottom of virtually every mutual-fund prospectus these days—"Past results are no guarantee of future returns," an understatement if ever there was one—with the Pascalian warning: "Expect to lose as much as you put in. And, if you are buying on margin, expect to lose more."

Life Is a Gamble

Pascal suggests that life itself is a game of chance, a gamble, and that those of us who are alive have always already anted up (*on est déjà engagé*, the game here involving God); or, as Heidegger might have put it, we are *thrown*, cast into the game whether we like it or not.

This is where Pascal intersects psychoanalysis, for analysts postulate that we must reckon from the outset with the existence of an *inevitable, structural loss* of whatever we stake in life.[2] We bend our bodies and minds to the language and conventions of the Other; in conforming to our parents' and other elders' wishes and submitting to their prohibitions, we undergo an irrevocable loss of something early on in life: loss of the primordial object, the mother, as some put it, or more generally speaking loss of jouissance—that is, satisfaction related to close contact with the primary caretaker who looks after so many of our most basic bodily functions and who in the best of cases also provides love and warmth.

Why do we conform and submit more or less willingly? In the hope of gaining something—recognition, acknowledgement, love, care—and/or of staving off something: abandonment or rejection. Most of us, even many of us who undergo an extensive psychoanalysis, keep trying our whole lives long to recover at least a little bit of what we feel we lost and were inadequately compensated for.[3]

We feel we made a colossal sacrifice—we gave up what was most precious to us—and got little or nothing positive in return.

One of the fundamental facets of neurosis is, I would argue, the ever-repeated attempt to get back something that is irretrievable. It is irretrievable in large part because we never really had it in the first place, at least not in the way we think we had it: we never really had an exclusive, fusional *relationship* with our primary caretakers, for example. Nevertheless, looking back on earlier times, we may perhaps believe we did.

The appeal of getting something for nothing—whether in a store, in a sweepstake, or through successful stock-market bets—would seem to be structurally related to the sacrifice we feel we had to make and for which the large majority of us feel we were never adequately rewarded. We believe we gave something up for nothing, that we got nothing in return. To our minds, compensation can never come too late, nor can it ever be too great, knowing no particular measure.

Being so fortunate as to achieve spectacular gains on the stock market would be no reason to exit the game. There is no clear stopping point, since there is a fundamental incommensurability between what we gain, which is calculated within a signifying system of numbers, and the enjoyment or jouissance we lost. What we lost, after all, was priceless! (For everything else, there's you know what …) No specific number can ever correspond to the loss we incurred. No amount of money or goods can ever compensate for the sacrifice we made, for that loss is essentially incalculable and unquantifiable.

Should we have the misfortune to rack up losses instead of gains on the stock market, those losses will ineluctably aggravate the ever-present reminders of the earliest loss. This makes certain investors all the more desperate in their determination to make good their losses and encourages still more speculative behavior.

Others may become so disgusted that they "cut their losses" and invest what little they have been able to salvage in real estate. This happened in both France and the United States, for example, after the stock-market crash in 2000, especially among those who had entered the stock market for the first time in the decade leading up to the new millennium. They left the bourses, their finances in tatters, looking for something solid, bricks and mortar, so-called tangible assets. Few ever completely give up their belief that it is possible to make good the loss, if nothing else by playing the lottery.

One could, I believe, fruitfully characterize a good deal of trading behavior in terms of the

psychoanalytic theory of the lost object (see Fink, 2010a). Hence, perhaps, financial institutions' concern with taking the human element out of the equation and having computers do at least some portion of the trading. Computers presumably are not trying to get back some jouissance that was lost at the outset of their existence—jouissance is not for machines, even in their first bloom of youth when they are initially programmed. But then, they were nevertheless programmed by human beings—to do what? The same things human beings find themselves doing so "irrationally," as people say, failing to note the logic inherent in the ever-renewed attempt to make good the losses humans feel they have incurred.

Letting Go of the Loss

One simple way of stating the goal of psychoanalysis is: to let go of the loss, to stop desperately trying to recover something that is irrecoverable. In a word, to lose a loss; or, to use a business metaphor, to stop throwing good money after bad.

Why anyone in their right mind would pay for an analysis, why anyone would pay to lose something, is a fair question, it seems to me; but I would cite Freud (1958b) when he says that "nothing in life is so expensive as illness," neurotic illness in particular. Indeed, you can spend an awful lot more trying to get back what you think you lost than it would cost you to stop worrying about and dwelling on that loss by doing an analysis!

Now, just as few financial advisers tell prospective investors that they could easily lose everything and should even be prepared to do so—those advisers that do probably do not stay in business for very long—few psychoanalysts tell prospective analysands that they are going to have to give up what is currently the source of their greatest jouissance in life and find something else. For although they may experience their loss as anything but enjoyable, their attachment to it or fixation on it constitutes a symptom, a symptom that secretly seeks to make good that loss. All too simplistically stated, symptoms are ways of deriving satisfaction from misery related to loss, and it is this satisfaction in misery or self-pity that must be given up in the course of an analysis.

This particular form of satisfaction—this jouissance in suffering—must be relinquished, sacrificed, or "castrated," as we analysts put it in our crude lingo. Losing a loss means giving up the misery, letting go of the jouissance-laden fixation on loss that leads us to nourish grudges and forever enumerate to ourselves and others our grievances against all those who we feel have deprived, blocked, ignored, belittled, or otherwise harmed us (including, in certain cases, the whole of creation).

Few analysts are so bold or foolhardy as to announce at the outset of the work with a potential analysand that in the course of the coming work, the analysand will undergo castration. Those who are will likely find that their waiting rooms quickly empty out. Well, they might, of course, end up exclusively with a clientele of so-called masochistic patients.

Three Clinical Vignettes

With these general notions in mind, let me now present three clinical vignettes that illustrate how symptoms are related to loss and how money affects analytic work with symptoms. The names and other identifying information about the analysands discussed here have naturally been changed, and myriad details have been left out in the interest of focusing on these specific facets of the cases.

Making the Other Pay

The first vignette concerns a young man who is paralyzed, in a sense, by his own wealth. I shall refer to him here with the pseudonym Jeffrey. Although Jeffrey had aspired for many years to be a rock musician, nothing came of his practicing and composing once his father reluctantly agreed to let him try to make it as a musician. As long as his father opposed his career path, Jeffrey pursued it ardently; as soon as his father gave in, Jeffrey lost traction. Instead, he resigned himself to working in a semi-professional capacity at a fairly low-paying job. This changed abruptly when his father died some years ago, leaving Jeffrey a couple of million dollars.

Jeffrey managed to spend some of the money almost immediately by buying an apartment, but he has felt unable to travel—something he did quite a bit before that—or use much of the money in any other way. Jeffrey refuses to spend any time learning how his money is invested, his father having set up a trust for him prior to his death, and he avoids learning anything about investing in general, feeling that the money is not really his to do with as he pleases.

At the same time, having the money in his name has made Jeffrey unable to accomplish any kind of work—whether musical or other. On the one hand, he feels he *deserved* to receive the money since his father, in his view, treated him badly during the father's lifetime; on the other hand, he realizes in some way that he himself had been unkind and unjust to his father for decades.

Jeffrey's greatest satisfaction in life came from provoking his father by doing the exact opposite of what his father wanted. His father owned a company and wanted Jeffrey to study business and work with him there, but Jeffrey selected a field that seemed to be of absolutely no interest to his father: rock music. Everything he did seemed designed to thumb his nose at his father, and to be sure that he was really and truly thumbing his nose in just the right way, he needed to ensure that his actions truly annoyed his father (not to mention other men who came to represent his father for him as time went on).

Jeffrey's complaint upon coming to analysis was that everyone had wronged him: his father had wrongfully taken him away from his mother not long after his parents divorced, and his mother had wrongfully allowed Jeffrey to go live with his father. Jeffrey had done nothing to land himself in his current predicament, paralyzed and "depressed"—depression often resulting, in my experience, from the fact that one hates everyone, oneself included, and cannot face or come to grips with the hatred that inhabits one.

Jeffrey's most general concern for many years could be characterized as attempting to make his parents pay for what they did to him. Indeed, this is an incredibly widespread facet of neurosis: making everyone pay for what happened to us, as well as for our current predicament. One of the ways this manifested itself in Jeffrey's analysis was that, for a considerable period of time, Jeffrey would go to bed so late at night that he slept through our sessions, no matter what time they were scheduled the next day. His goal was to get his father to pay—after all, the money he gave me came from his father—to get his father to pay for nothing at all (for I ensured he paid for sessions he missed). "Throwing money away" was, he told me, "a mortal sin" to his father. The point was not simply to get his father to pay for the therapy he felt he needed because of his father's mistreatment of him, but for zilch: therein lay the sweetest revenge!

To have his father pay for a genuine service would be too good for him. Better to force his father to throw money out the window.

For Jeffrey there was an additional benefit to missing sessions. He could tell that little by little he was coming around to the idea that he had often goaded his father into mistreating him, there having been a subtle dance of provocation between them, and that it was something of an exaggeration to place the

blame for all his problems in life on his father. Nevertheless, since blaming his parents for what they took from him—which was what he described as a blissful, exclusive relationship with his mother in early childhood—was what gave him the most enjoyment in life, he was reluctant to abandon even the most minute quantum of that enjoyment. The more he began to see his own role in what had transpired between himself and his father during a session, the more likely it was that he would miss the next session.

The closer he came to giving up a certain jouissance tied to how he saw himself in relation to his parents—in relation to the Other with a capital *O*, as Lacan terms it—the more he retreated from analysis. He would rather pay than talk, pay than give up this paralyzing pleasure, pay than give up any of his symptomatic enjoyment and move on in life. To borrow the former slogan of a brand of cigarettes, he "would rather fight than switch," fight the transforming, castrating work of the analysis rather than discover some other way of enjoying himself, some other form of satisfaction in life. The goal of an analysis is not to deprive analysands of *all* enjoyment, but to dissipate the enjoyment they derive from their symptoms, an enjoyment they are generally conflicted about (or to transform their way of experiencing that enjoyment so that they are no longer conflicted about it).

It should be plain that, in such a case, to encourage the analysand to shift positions, it is not enough to simply raise one's fee, for the analysand was quite willing to punish his father by paying more for his sessions. Such a solution might have been preferred by clinicians whose goal is simply to transfer assets from patients' accounts to their own.[4] But, in my view at least, most analysts want more than just money—they want blood too, in a sense, since they exact the pound of flesh (or "bad jouissance," as one analysand put it). Those of us with a sliding scale demand more or less money depending on the analysand's financial situation and earning power, but we *always exact the same pound of flesh*, we always attempt to bring them to lose their attachment to the same loss.

I Can't because They …

One of my female analysands—whom I shall refer to with the pseudonym Sarah—finds herself in a rather similar predicament to Jeffrey's. Sarah inherited quite a lot of money decades ago, and has rarely worked to make a living since then. Having alighted upon writing fiction as a vocation, but having no pressing need to publish something for which she might receive money in exchange, she has never tried to overcome a major problem she encounters in each and every one of her longer writing projects: they are weak on structure, and she seems only to begin to think about the overall plotline *after* writing a complete draft.

At the end of the draft, she herself is unsatisfied with the manuscript, and her readers all comment on the need for greater attention to plot and structure. But adding structure and plotline after the fact drives her crazy. She hates reworking her writing and believes she is no good at that kind of remedial work. Yet when she eventually gives up on the old project and turns to a new one, she persists in doing something that she refers to as "experimental," once again eschewing attention to structure and plotline.

She feels she is a parasite on society, insofar as she contributes nothing cultural or intellectual to it, and yet she refuses to knuckle down to the conventions of her chosen trade. She admires the work of numerous experimental writers, even as she repeatedly tells me she does not have the genius required to succeed as they did by ignoring the conventions of her craft.

Nevertheless, the closer we get to pinpointing her own role in her repeated failure—that is, her obstinate refusal to do what virtually every other novelist on the planet does—she professes that, just as she is not smart enough to write, she is not intelligent enough to do an analysis. Her problems in life, she

protests, are due to the fact that she was kept ignorant of too many things for too long by her family, and that she simply is not smart enough.

She was not, she avers, given the necessary knowledge or tools at the outset, and consequently is not recognized now despite her desperate desire for recognition. She herself has played no part in getting herself into this predicament. Sarah is happy to talk to me about her dreams, but does little associative work on them and rarely if ever tries to see anything in them. Should I prod her to tell me if she sees anything in a dream we have discussed, she protests that she is not bright enough to interpret dreams. Unlike Jeffrey, she has never missed a session, but she rarely has anything she *wants* to talk about when a session begins.

Like Jeffrey, she would rather pay than give up what is more precious than money, the jouissance—that is, the uneasy satisfaction—she obtains from her symptom. She seems to derive a kind of painful satisfaction from not having a voice in the world at large, just as she feels she did not have a voice as a child growing up at home. There seems to be something both incredibly frustrating to her and yet familiar and comfortable in feeling that she is continuing to be silenced.

Unlike Jeffrey, she has never depicted her early childhood as idyllic, as a paradise from which she was forcibly chased. Instead, she views her parents as having deprived her of the very things—knowledge, intelligence, and structure—that she most needs to live and to be accepted in the literary world from which she craves acceptance. She cannot imagine that, at her age, in the prime of life, she could learn what she needs to know to succeed there. It is too late for her.

Should she admit, on rare occasions, that things can be learned and that there are workshops and writing programs that can help with plotline and structure, she hastens to add that structure bores her and that she is not good at it. Here one might be reminded of the defense, cited by Freud (1958a, p. 120), that was put forward by a man whom a neighbor accused of having returned a kettle in damaged condition: I gave it back undamaged, it had a hole in it when I borrowed it, and I never borrowed your kettle in the first place. But Sarah's reasoning is perfectly logical, in a sense: were she to make a concerted effort to improve her novelistic skills, she could no longer blame her parents for having deprived her of a voice—which is what she currently gets the most mileage out of, in spite of herself, the most miserable satisfaction. The less she succeeds, the more they are at fault, the more she has been wronged, and the more she feels vindicated—albeit not consciously.

I am obviously not going into the complexities of each case here; I am merely touching on a few ways in which money affects the organization of work both inside and outside of an analysis. Patients' problems are determined at multiple levels, there virtually always being numerous factors holding any one symptom in place. Thus what I am providing here is considerably simplified and one-dimensional.

Tucking Some Away

Let me briefly mention a third case, that of a young man who wholeheartedly embraced Marxism at an intellectual level, having hated his extended family's relationship to money since he was a teenager. I shall refer to him by the pseudonym George.

One of George's relatives was looked up to and revered in his family as a successful businessman and authority figure. Virtually everyone in the extended family tried to remain on good terms with this relative and do his bidding, in order, naturally, to be included in his will. The relative passed away a couple of years ago, and George, whose entire intellectual project has been devoted to critiquing everything his relatives stand for, inherited what for him was a large sum of money.

Before this well-to-do relative died, he told George not to spend the money but instead to invest it, and let it grow until he was ready to start a business. George, however, despises business and hopes to one day write a devastating, irrefutable critique of capitalism. As one might imagine, he has found himself almost totally paralyzed in his intellectual endeavors since the day he inherited the money. As Freud said and Lacan reiterated, the dead father is far more formidable than the live one.[5]

Not surprisingly, George is conflicted about the trust fund he now has: on the one hand, he is happy to have it, and on the other hand he has managed to find a way to have a sizable portion of it taken from him as a penalty for paralysis in his academic program. Were he to be able to move forward in his studies, it would prove to his family that they had not been so bad—and *this* he is unwilling to do.

He is, it seems, more than happy to pay for his analysis with this relative's money, and unlike the two previously mentioned analysands, works very hard at his analysis, being more inclined to blame himself for everything than to blame others—in diagnostic terms, being far more obsessive than hysteric. In other words, he is quite willing to admit that he has played a role in bringing about his own misery, but this does not mean he wants to see precisely what that role is or what it does for him.

Consciously working hard at something in analysis does not mean you necessarily achieve results. Obsessives work hard so they can feel they are putting in their time and getting their money's worth, but this often impedes the kind of non-goal-directed associative work psychoanalysis requires. Just as time is decidedly not money in psychoanalysis, work does not automatically bring results.

In George's case, the money that has been passed down to him enables him to seek help and yet represents everything he abhors. It is a compensation for what he feels he did not get from his family—attention, love, and recognition of who he is as opposed to what they wanted him to be. However, it could never be enough to truly compensate for all of that—which, after all, *is* priceless—and the very fact that it purports to makes it tainted.[6]

These cases suggest that the analysand's financial situation always has an impact on the analysis—on its dynamics and course—and enters into the analysand's libidinal economy. The sample of analysands here is hardly representative, however: all three of the analysands I have mentioned here have trust funds and knew they would have such trusts long before they actually received them.

In analysis, we are accustomed to requiring analysands to pay for sessions out of their own earnings, yet we generally make exceptions for children, adolescents, spouses who are not wage-earners, retirees, and sometimes even the indigent. Those with trust funds often do not work within the wage system to pay for analysis, and may be seen, in certain instances at least, as protesting against it. To make it a requirement that they enter or reenter that system prior to beginning analysis leads certain adult analysands to run the other way; to make it a requirement that they enter or reenter that system after a specified period of time can lead to aborted or almost aborted analyses.

In one case, I agreed to begin working with a man in his forties whose father was supporting him, on condition that he start paying for his sessions himself within a year. I reminded him of this condition a month before the year was over and he told me he thought I was not serious, that "it was a joke!" When the fateful date approached and he saw I remained in earnest, he broke off the analysis. Three days later, he resumed having sessions and set about working part-time. Yet, in another similar case, the analysand broke off the analytic work, never to return.

People have different reasons for refusing to work, conventionally speaking. In many cases at least, people feel they have been gypped or deprived by the Other and insist upon making the Other pay and continue to pay, whether that Other take the form of the parents, other relatives, or the State. To become "productive members of society" would, for them, be tantamount to admitting to the world that the world had not treated them so badly after all.

The Analyst as Capitalist?

In the early decades of psychoanalysis, psychoanalysts operated through a sort of medieval guild system, having a virtual monopoly on psychotherapy in much of the West. Psychiatry was not yet very well developed in its current drug-dispensing form, and psychoanalysis was the only real talk therapy on the market. When speaking with your local priest or rabbi did not do the trick, and the physicians you saw threw up their hands in exasperation, you had little choice but to go see a psychoanalyst. Analysts effectively cornered the market.

Analysts were virtually in a position to dictate terms—several sessions per week and elevated per-session fees—and patients could take it or leave it. Just as medieval guilds generally had exclusive royal patents or permits to practice their trade, which no one else could horn in on, psychoanalysts had a monopoly. Their only competition came from other analysts, and since they themselves oversaw the training and accreditation of new analysts, they had some ability to limit their own numbers.

Much the same is still true today of American physicians, the number of medical schools and students remaining limited for a whole variety of reasons, one of the most important of which is to maintain high fees for medical services. Insurance companies have been hampering physicians in recent years, but the guild facet of their work remains at least somewhat intact in the United States.

Not so for American psychoanalysts. They kept their prices so high for so long—no doubt to recoup what they felt *they themselves had lost* by choosing psychoanalysis over a lucrative medical specialty, the IPA requiring them to see but one patient an hour—that the majority of their market was cannibalized by

newcomers, psychologists and psychotherapists of every ilk, who also trained in one form or another of the talking cure. Another significant segment of their market was penetrated, as the economists put it, by psychiatrists. The upshot has been that the vast majority of psychoanalysts practicing in the United States today find themselves in direct competition with counselors of every persuasion, who have effectively turned psychotherapy into an exchangeable, interchangeable service, one therapist being viewed as just as good as any other—if not from the patient's point of view, at least from the insurance company's.[7]

This has catapulted or rather dragged psychoanalysts, kicking and screaming, out of their guild culture and into the competitive market of psychotherapy services. Were I to look into my crystal ball and make a prediction, I would suggest that within a few decades it will no longer be English-speaking people from India and Indonesia who are calling Western therapists and analysts from afar for psychotherapy services. Enterprising insurance companies will begin to outsource psychotherapy services to English-speaking people in the Third World who will charge far less for their services on an hourly basis.[8]

Psychoanalysts will then be fully integrated into the global marketplace, competing with licensed, accredited therapists the world over. The only way to distinguish themselves will be as specialists working in niche markets, or with a particular reputation for something or other. It is not pretty, but the writing seems to be on the wall.

This will likely accentuate the curious relationship between psychoanalysis and work. Insurance companies would like to view all psychotherapists as "service providers," workers who provide a more or less similar service and who can all be paid about the same amount for their time. By introducing the variable-length session, Lacan shook things up when it came to time—calling into question, in particular, the equation generally made, even in many schools of psychoanalysis, between money and time. He did this, at least in part, in recognition of the workings and temporality of the unconscious where, as I mentioned earlier, a certain number of hours of effort does not automatically lead to productive results, and where unconscious wishes are timeless, while epiphanies and change sometimes occur in a split second. The variable-length session emphasizes the work accomplished in a session, *not* its duration.

In comparison with most forms of psychotherapy, in which the therapist works by providing knowledge and advice, psychoanalysis emphasizes the work involved on the analysand's part. The analyst's work is mentioned too, at times, but markedly less so. Psychoanalysts require analysands to work, but instead of paying them for their work, we make *them* pay for the privilege of working. (Personal trainers do much the same: people pay such trainers to make them sweat.) Not only is their labor unpaid, but they are obliged to pay someone who often seems to them not to be working nearly as hard as they are. I recall once taxing my own analyst with getting his "money for nothing"—and, as it was the 1980s, I added, continuing to quote Dire Straits, and his "chicks for free."

If we think in terms of use value, the work done by analysands is of use primarily to themselves—although it is also of use to the analyst, who, as Winnicott reminded us, is trained thanks to analysands' work and who may find their discoveries of use in other cases too.[9] The work analysands accomplish is often considered useless if not harmful by their entourage, who liked them better and found them easier to deal with before their analysis. Their work cannot easily be monetized, or given an exchange value—few, all too few, write accounts of their analytic trajectory to sell to a wider public. Neither analysand nor analyst can resell the analytic work they performed together to someone else to generate surplus value or profit (insurance companies have, however, found a way to make a living off their labor).

Whereas the analyst's work *does* enter into a clear system of exchange values—other analysts could presumably provide more or less similar services like listening and interpretation—the analysand's work does not.[10]

What exactly is the analyst's work? In other words, what does the analysand pay the analyst for? In virtually every other realm, we pay to receive something positive: a product or service. In certain realms, we pay to be spoken to: we pay for advice from experts, accountants, financial advisors, lawyers, coaches, or guides; we pay for television programs or movies by which we are instructed or entertained, and some of us even call certain phone numbers (in the United States they are called 900 numbers) so that other people will talk to *us*, in particular, talk dirty to us.

In psychoanalysis, however, we pay to talk, we pay for the opportunity to talk and talk and talk. To talk dirty at times, perhaps, but more importantly, to talk however we feel like talking (which sometimes means not letting the other get a word in edgewise or talk about him- or herself). In most other realms, our interlocutors protest when we talk to them however we feel like talking. They refuse to assume the position we put them in when we talk: to be abused, talked down to, insulted, suspected of this or that, and/or treated as though they were someone whom they feel they are not. Our interlocutors want to be seen for themselves, loved or hated for who they feel they are, not for some role they feel thrust into by us.

"Stop treating me like I was your mother, for God's sake!" they protest. "Can't you see I'm trying to help?" They refuse our projections, interpellations, and transferences.[11]

Analysts do not. Analysts willingly play a part, or rather many parts, as many as we thrust upon them. They do not—or at least most of them know they should not—say, "Stop projecting, I'm not the kind of person you're acting as though I am. I'm not your mother." They agree to stand in for the mother provisionally so that something about our relationships with our mothers can be worked through.

They accept the projections and try not to take them personally, which is not always easy. They get paid to be actors, to play all the roles in our daytime and night-time dramas. We pay so that we can assign the analyst to whatever role we want, knowing that the analyst will accept to serve as a placeholder. The analyst comes to occupy the place of the cause of our desire, Lacan says, and we use and abuse this cause as it seduces us or drives us to distraction. (This cause is the lever that can move and remove symptoms.)

The money we give analysts means that they are not playing this role as a favor for which we must be eternally grateful, as we often feel we must be to our parents whom we can never adequately thank for having brought us into this world. Payment means analysts are not doing it out of charity, because they love us, or because they think we are good-looking or charming or might turn out to be useful to them in some way. Payment means they are doing it because it is their job to do so, however strange a job it may be.

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Notes

1 Madoff's name should have tipped people off, breaking down, as it does, into *made off* (with their money), not to mention including *mad*.

2 All of us except psychotics, that is, for psychotics refuse to give up a certain kind of enjoyment in order to win love and acceptance from the world of others around them: in a sense, they refuse to play the game of life, they take their ball and go home.

3 Among the obvious sacrifices we make are those of the breast (for children who are breastfed and subsequently weaned, always too soon, they feel), of the immediate pleasure attached to urinating and defecating whenever the spirit moves us as opposed to in specific places and at designated times, and of touching and playing with our own bodies however and wherever we please.

4 Verdiglioni comes to mind here.

5 No longer occasionally present, he is omnipresent; no longer occasionally seeing, he is all-seeing.

6 For a more detailed discussion of George's predicament in a different context, see Chapter 12 in the present volume.

7 Certain studies even purport to show that virtually all forms of therapy have the same success rates if, at the end, the patient can describe the relationship with the therapist as having been a good one. The researchers who have undertaken such studies conclude that the so-called therapeutic alliance is the only relevant variable.

8 Analysis by teleconferencing will be provided by the very nations to which the writing of the teleconferencing software is currently being outsourced.

9 Even in their own cases, according to Lacan (2006a). See my discussion of this point in Chapter 5 of Volume 1 of the present collection.

10 One could, however, point out, as Anna Freud did, that analysands generally have greater success in their careers thanks to their analysis.

11 There are, of course, exceptions, especially early on in a relationship, where one partner is often temporarily willing to put up with the other partner's projections in order to gain instantaneous love, sex, and/or care.

2

WHAT'S SO DIFFERENT ABOUT LACAN'S APPROACH TO PSYCHOANALYSIS?

In 1995, a publisher of psychoanalytic books who was interested in a manuscript I had written (see Fink, 1997) to introduce Lacan's work to an English-speaking audience asked me to compare and contrast Lacan's approach to psychoanalysis in my manuscript with that of other analysts better known to his audience. I had to admit to him that I was absolutely unequipped to do so, having devoted more than a decade at that point to grappling with Lacan's writings and seminars, and knowing precious little about other approaches to psychoanalysis. I did, however, and still today believe that it is a worthwhile project and thus I have endeavored to sketch out a few comparisons and contrasts here.

Naturally, there is no *single* Lacanian perspective, just as there is no single relational perspective. Nancy Chodorow's views differ in many significant ways from Jessica Benjamin's, Thomas Ogden's, and Owen Renik's, to cite just a few theorists. Lacan's work is open to myriad interpretations, owing to its deliberately polyvalent resonances and challenging phraseology. Moreover, Lacan's thinking evolved considerably from the 1930s to the 1970s, and interpreters of his work are free to emphasize different periods and conceptual frameworks. I will thus be attempting here to contrast my own particular Lacanian perspective with what I have grasped of literature by authors associated with the ego psychology, object relations, Kleinian, relational, interpersonal, and intersubjective perspectives. My knowledge of these traditions is bound to be found lacking, overly simplistic, and reductionistic by specialists, with whom I can but agree in advance, since I am far from an expert in these traditions. As Mitchell and Black (1995, p. 207) once put it,

> at present it is very difficult to find any psychoanalyst who is really deeply conversant with more than one approach (e.g., Kleinian, Lacanian, ego psychology, self psychology). The literature of each school is extensive and each clinical sensibility finely honed, presenting a challenging prospect to any single analyst attempting to digest it all.

I will nevertheless hazard a few juxtapositions here which, although they may seem theoretical at the outset, lead to what I believe to be important differences at the level of psychoanalytic technique.

Lacan's Ode to Mediation

As I read some of the relational and intersubjective literature on the topic of transference and countertransference, I was struck by the debate between the so-called one-body or one-person psychology (focusing on a monad-like individual whose intrapsychic agencies are at war with each other) and what is referred to by some as the "two-body" or "two-person" psychology (emphasizing intersubjective processes and exchanges across fluid boundaries). I was no doubt struck by this because my sense is that Lacan adopts neither of these, nor does he adopt what both Robert S. Wallerstein and Nancy Chodorow refer to as "a both/and" approach, which at times emphasizes the agentic aspects of the one-person approach and at other times the interpersonal aspects of life and analysis.

If I were to characterize what Lacan does, by numbering the parties to the analysis, I would say that, at least in his early work in the 1950s, he proposes an absolutely crucial *third* term: language. Language is not situated in the analyst or in the analysand per se, but rather between them as a *third* party, so to speak. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that language encompasses both analyst and analysand, being bigger than both, neither one of them nor both together in any way knowing or mastering the whole of the language they speak to each other.

When this language is their mother tongue for both of them (the situation is rather more complicated when it is not), they have both been thoroughly immersed in it since the beginning of subjective time: their mothers and others around them have been speaking it to them ever since they were born ("man is born [immersed] in a bath of signifiers"; Lacan, 2006b, p. 214). Lacan refers to language as the Other with a capital *O*, thereby indicating that language is not a person like the analyst is *in certain respects* to the analysand and like the analysand is *in certain respects* to the analyst; Lacan designates persons as "others" with a lowercase *o*, analyst and analysand being in these respects others to each other just like any two people in the world (e.g., siblings or friends) can be. Language as the Other with a capital *O* is something qualitatively different, a third party that is radically different from the two bodies or persons who find themselves in each other's presence.[1]

It is language that allows the analysand to express the lion's share of his or her experiences, feelings, and thoughts to the analyst, and it is language that allows the analyst to try to follow what it is the analysand is conveying. One of the parties may use certain words and expressions in ways that the other does not initially understand, and they may each have to refer to dictionary or other definitions or usages of the words and expressions so that the other can grasp their meaning, referring in this way to *something outside of both of them*, whether movies, TV shows, slang idiomatic expressions, blogs, or Webster's dictionary—something in the broader culture, that is, something in the Other with a capital *O*. The Other includes all of the ways a word or expression has ever been used in songs, films, books, comics, and so on.

One party may feel that the other party uses certain words and expressions incorrectly, as defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary*, for example, and yet, having discerned how he or she uses those words and expressions, may agree to use them in the same way or at least understand them in the way intended by the other party. Nevertheless, for one party to begin to try to comprehend the other party, *some appeal must be made to this Other that exists outside of both of them*; indeed, it is relied upon constantly by both of them as they speak. It is this same Other that allows analysts to have at least a fighting chance of being intelligible to each other when they discuss their cases.

It is our familiarity, as analysts, with the analysand's mother tongue that allows us to hear more in what the analysand said than he intended. To give a simple example, one of my analysands had been highly ambivalent about pursuing his artwork for several decades. There were occasional spurts of artistic activity followed by long stretches of inactivity, during which he merely fantasized about being the greatest painter since Picasso. In a dream the analysand had, a former artist friend of his looked at his

paintings and told him that, although there was some good work there, he did not have enough high-quality pieces for a showing in a gallery. The analysand associated at some length to the different elements of the dream, the nature of his relationship with the former artist friend, his feelings about galleries, and so on, and eventually opined, regarding his artwork, "It's the last thing I need to let go of."

He consciously meant to say that, like so many other ideals and dreams he felt he had had to let go of in the course of his life, he thought he needed to give up any remaining faith he had in his own artistic abilities, get over his grandiose wish to be the most famous artist since Picasso, and move on. But, as most native speakers of English know, and this analysand was clearly a native speaker, one can also mean something quite different in saying "it's the last thing I need to let go of"—that is, "I can let go of anything but that" or "that's the one thing I really need!"

It was a simple matter for me to rely on the existence in the English spoken by both of us of an idiomatic expression like "that's the last thing I need to do" (akin to the expression, "I need that like I need a hole in my head") to get the analysand to realize that he perhaps thinks *both* that he needs to give up his grandiose wish to revolutionize art *and* that he cannot live without his artwork.

His grammar allowed me to highlight a statement that the analysand himself immediately recognized to be polyvalent. I did not in any way claim that I saw the *reality* of his artistic talents more clearly than he did, as some might.[2] I simply heard quite distinctly, and he heard it too as soon as I highlighted it, that he had said two very different things at the same time: "I need to give it up" and "I need it to live." It was up to *him* to decide how to reconcile the two, and find a way, if he could, to *enjoy* the process of artistic creation without constantly thinking about whether what he does is revolutionary or not. But if he was to do so, he first had to reckon with the fact that he was inhabited by both felt needs.

In this simple example, spoken English is the Other with a capital *O* that immediately allowed both of us to recognize something with a potentially unconscious meaning.[3] Semantic ambiguity or polyvalence was there in what he said, and most speakers of American English can easily hear it. We might go so far as to say that *there is something incontrovertible or even objective about it*. The reader can grasp the ambiguity or polyvalence just as easily as I did and as he did, even though we said these things far from the reader, some years ago, and in a context that no reader is privy to, knowing nothing about the history of the analysand or of the analysis.

There is something about the polyvalence of a completed speech act, something about the multiple meanings of formulations as they were enunciated in the course of a session, that can be shown to other people as evidence of split or multiple intentionality, as evidence of the split between conscious and unconscious. (Tone of voice and irony or sarcasm obviously complicate matters and must, of course, be taken into account. Consider the expression "You should talk!" which can be an injunction or an accusation. Mishearings are, of course, also possible, but in a case like the present one, there was no disagreement between speaker and listener as to what was said.) I would go so far as to say that *this is the only kind of objectivity that is available to us in psychoanalysis*. According to Lacan (1968), we analysts do not see reality any more clearly or objectively than our analysands do—all of us see so-called reality through the lenses of our own history, education, culture, experience, and fantasies, even after an extensive analysis. What is incontrovertible is what the analysand actually said, which is not saying much, but it is not saying nothing either! There are, of course, times when what the analysand says is garbled, mumbled, or slurred and it is not clear to either analyst or analysand what was said. But when the analyst is listening not just for meaning but for the *letter* of the analysand's discourse, much of what the analysand says is indisputable in the sense that there is no disagreement between the two parties to the speech situation as to what was said. Nor is there disagreement about the fact that it is polyvalent. (As for what it means, that is another story.) In another example, a female analysand, who was talking about a

great guy she knew, inadvertently said "contention" instead of "contentment" when she intended to say that between them "there's a familiarity, a contentment."

Contention would appear to be something quite different from contentment, at least for many people, and although we do not know in advance what the slip means, we are quite justified in treating it as a slip and in seeking another level of meaning in it (assuming, of course, that the analysand is neurotic and not psychotic). If a colleague asked me how I can be so sure that this analysand has some aggression that is under wraps or that she enjoys conflict at some level, I can point to the slip. To my way of thinking, this is the most we can hope for by way of objectivity in psychoanalysis, as opposed to some objectively known external reality or some sort of "objective countertransference" (Winnicott, 1949, p. 70). It is not the ultimate *meaning* of any particular bit of speech that is objective—what is objective is what was said and the semantic *ambiguity* of what was said.

When Lacan (2006a, pp. 16 and 379) says that the unconscious is the Other's discourse, he means quite a large number of things, but one of them is simply that the unconscious can be detected in ambiguities that every natural language allows for and even abounds in. Another is that the unconscious consists of all kinds of things that we have heard other people say, whether intended for our ears or not. The unconscious is overflowing with things we have heard our parents, siblings, friends, teachers, and even actors on television say. One of my analysands hated grocery shopping for some 20 years because her biology teacher once characterized the placenta as the neonatal infant's grocery store. She did not stop hating grocery shopping until the day she told me in analysis about her biology teacher's formulation. She also hated doing housework her whole life at least in part because her grandmother once used a highly derogatory term in her mother tongue for housekeepers.

When Lacan (1998a, p. 15) says that "the unconscious is structured like a language"—adding later that "the unconscious is fundamentally language" (Lacan, 1973–74, class given November 20, 1973)—part of what he means is that it is structured by the words enunciated by those around us. Those bits of other people's discourse flow into us through our ears, and stick with us and affect us, often for decades. When Lacan says that "man's desire is the Other's desire" (see, for example, 2006a, p. 628), part of what he means is that we hear and overhear other people expressing their desires in words, and their desires too flow into us through our ears, and stick with us and affect us.

In this sense, everything that we have ever heard, and all of our culture and history enter the analyst's consultation room in the form of the language spoken by the analyst and analysand. There is no sharp distinction between an individual and his or her cultural milieu; indeed, there is no such thing as a speaking being who is not thoroughly imbedded in other people's discourses, desires, and affects. As soon as one is a speaking being, one finds oneself inhabited by desires that one feels are not entirely one's own, and one finds oneself pursuing the same things others pursue even when one consciously does not wish to pursue them. One finds oneself thinking some of the same thoughts as the characters in books one reads and movies one watches, and having some of the same fantasies as those one hears about.

Nevertheless, each of us hears and overhears different things from different people; we do not all read the same books, watch the same movies, recite the same poetry, or learn the same songs. Even if the unconscious is (chock full of) the Other's discourse, the Other whose discourse forms each of our unconsciouses is somewhat different for each of us.

I would go so far as to suggest that Lacan's introduction of the concept of the Other with a capital *O* as language—and his introduction of the concept of *the symbolic order*, which is just a more general way of talking about much the same thing—allows for a kind of radical intersubjectivity: every one of us is a product of the symbolic order.[4] At the same time, however, the concept of the Other as language implies that one person cannot have direct access to someone else's unconscious. Insofar as the unconscious is

made up of language, is structured like a language, and comes to us through other people's discourse, we can catch a glimpse of another person's unconscious only in ways that are *mediated* by language and culture.

Speech is the primary medium in all forms of talk therapy, and yet there are many in the analytic community who believe they can grasp or grok another's meaning in an unmediated way. To Lacan's way of thinking, on the other hand, language is a medium through which we can potentially convey things to each other, but is also a wall—a wall between us—for we never entirely speak each other's language (Lacan, 2006a, p. 233). We have to work very hard to even begin to understand each other. The analysand's speech does not give us immediate access to his thoughts or feelings; his speech has to be interpreted and is virtually always at least partially misinterpreted, all communication being miscommunication. As Lacan (1993, p. 163) puts it, "the very foundation of interhuman discourse is misunderstanding."

Those who believe they learn more from the analysand's so-called body language than from his speech would do well to consult the numerous books available on body language and hand gestures in France, Italy, and other cultures, for they would soon realize that the ways people express thoughts and affects with their bodies and in their bodies differ greatly from culture to culture, language group to language group, and even from one part of a country to another.[5]

This is true even of an affect like anxiety. The French, for example, feel anxiety above all in their throats (they have a plethora of idiomatic expressions that indicate this, including *ça me prend à la gorge, j'ai la gorge nouée, ça m'est resté en travers de la gorge, j'ai une boule dans la gorge*, and *j'ai les boules*), while Americans tend to get a knot in their stomachs, butterflies, or irritable bowel disorder. Whereas an American who has had a big meal but is tense is likely to develop an upset stomach, heartburn, or acid reflux, a French person is likely to have a liver attack (known as a *crise de foie*). The body speaks (in "body language") in ways that are not immediately understood but that, like any other form of expression of beings inhabited by language, must be interpreted. In other words, *body language does not give us immediate access to someone's true feelings*—if it did, we would never be fooled by anyone's body language, the profession of acting could not exist as we know it today, and con artists would never get away with anything.

A very erect body posture may, for example, have different meanings in Asian as opposed to Western cultures, and may have several different meanings even in our own culture: it may imply rigidity, some sort of identification with the phallus (consider the fascination in the United States in recent decades with "hard bodies"), or even "uprightness," suggesting a grafting onto the body of a parent's moral admonitions or ethical stance. *Body language is anything but self-evident.* It has to be interpreted, and such interpretation requires considerable knowledge of the analysand's cultural, linguistic, and religious context.

Everything we do in psychoanalysis involves interpretation: interpretation of the analysand's speech, whether slurred or distinct, interpretation of the analysand's gestures, interpretation of the analysand's actions and emotions, and even interpretation of the analysand's silence (I do not mean to suggest that we must verbally interpret all of these to the analysand: much of this interpretive work goes on silently in us and guides our punctuations and other interventions). None of these factors can be immediately understood by the analyst. All of them must be considered in context—in the social, cultural, and political context, but also in the context of everything that has hitherto transpired in the analysis.

Their meanings are transparently obvious to no one—they must be interpreted in every single instance. Interpretation may occur quite spontaneously for the analyst in certain cases, so spontaneously that he is led to believe that he has access to their meanings in an unmediated way, without any filtering or

interference on the part of his own background, education, religious training, upbringing, or neuroses. However, if he reflects carefully, he is likely to realize that he feels he has the most immediate access to the analysand's experience when there is an especially large degree of overlap between the analysand's Other and his own: when they are both from the same socioeconomic class, and from the same religious and intellectual background—in a word, are both part of the same symbolic order. My English-speaking analysands are more likely to feel I can sometimes read their minds than my French-speaking analysands, and my analysands from the Northeast are more likely to feel that I am closely attuned to their ways of thinking and feeling, than my analysands from the South or Midwest.[6]

The mediation process is different in each of these cases, but in none of them do I have direct access to the analysand's experience. Such access is always mediated by *my interpretation* of the analysand's language, body language, actions, affects, and silence. I may not be aware of how I arrived at a particular interpretation, but that simply means that my interpretive process was implicit, not explicit. What led me to interpret the analysand's discourse in one way or another may have been preconscious, not conscious—indeed, it very often is, and I can only explain why I interpreted something as I did after the fact.

This implicit, preconscious mediating process is confused, in my view, by some analysts who believe they have direct access to another person's experience, a kind of access that short-circuits interpretation. Some refer to it as intuition,[7] while others seem to believe they have an exquisite sensitivity and are able to feel other people's feelings if not all the time, then at least a good part of the time. I would counter that there is a necessary mediating process that is occurring, of which they are simply unaware. When they have supposedly felt the other's feelings, they have rather, I would suggest, simply had experiences similar to the analysand's and thus easily find themselves attuned to the analysand's feelings, or have correctly interpreted the analysand's facial expressions, ticks, and body language. But there is a world of difference between *attunement* and actually feeling (much less being "invaded" or "penetrated" by) someone else's feelings.[8]

Rather than lament that we cannot grok each other directly in some sort of Vulcan mind-meld, like the kind Mr. Spock used on *Star Trek*, which allowed him immediate contact with the pains and wishes of other beings, Lacan would, I think, have us sing the praises of mediation and, indeed, *offer up an ode to mediation*. For it is mediation itself that forces upon us a recognition of difference: a recognition that other people are so fundamentally different from ourselves that it generally requires a great deal of effort on our part to fathom their incredibly complicated split subjectivities. And *there can be no interpretation without mediation*—the Other is always there as a third party, making it such that there is no direct connection between self and other, between analyst and analysand.[9]

Where there is a belief in unmediated or objective ESP-like access to the other's experience, as we find in the work of certain self psychologists such as Doris Brothers (2008, pp. 126–34), there is very likely to be a reduction of the other to the same—other people are viewed as fundamentally like ourselves. Where, on the other hand, there is an appreciation for the necessity of mediation, there is likely to be a recognition that other people are radically different from ourselves, operate according to different principles than our own, fantasize about things we ourselves would never fantasize about, and feel conflicted about things that are not a problem for us.[10] Similarly, there is likely to be a recognition that the situations that generate anxiety or conflict in us may be of negligible importance to other people, and that what we think and feel during sessions cannot plausibly be *put* into us by our analysands in any sort of transparently immediate way.

Desire Is (Still) the Essence of Man

Let me turn now from this Lacanian "ode to mediation" to the place of desire in Lacanian psychoanalysis as opposed to other forms of psychoanalysis.

Spinoza suggests in his *Ethics* that we are essentially desiring beings.[11] The philosopher's viewpoint was heartily endorsed by Freud in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1958a, p. 567), where he says that "nothing but a wish can set our [psyche, that is, our] mental apparatus [to] work." Lacan took up this viewpoint as well, and devoted numerous writings and seminars to the topic of desire. Nevertheless, the possible wishes or desires that lead to slips of the tongue or to the formation of dreams, daydreams, or fantasies seem less and less often explored in contemporary psychoanalytic work—if I may judge on the basis of the many traditionally trained analysts I have supervised and the myriad case presentations I have heard in the United States. Or, when wishes are highlighted by analysts, they are not explored with a view to bringing out something truly new, but simply to confirm the viewpoint or transference interpretation the analyst has already arrived at.

One male analysand who began to work with me after 15 years of analysis with several different clinicians was shocked to hear me say that a dream he had might contain what to him was a counterintuitive wish. In the dream, he called his boyfriend and revealed something very private to him, but the boyfriend put him on speakerphone and broadcast his revelation to the entire office. When I interpreted that he might wish all the world knew his secret, since that was what the dream accomplished, he was dumbfounded. He seemed no further advanced in this regard than the novice who complains that he is upset because he does not like what happens in his dreams. When a dream does or performs the precise opposite of what the analysand thinks he wants, it is, as Freud (1958a) tells us, because he has an unconscious wish that is precisely the opposite of his conscious wish. When we talk about wish-fulfillment, we mean that *the dream does something, enacts something, stages the performance of something*: we mean that, in the working out of the plot or action of the dream, a desire is expressed and fulfilled. Obviously we must not take at face value the fact that the analysand claims, when he tells us the dream, that what happened in it is precisely what he did *not* want to have happen, or that he felt anxious by the end of the dream.

Whatever is brought about in a dream is or was probably wanted in some way by the dreamer.[12] Although it is difficult to say who "orchestrates" what happens in a dream, there being a complex interplay between the unconscious, the censor, and consciousness, we must nevertheless reckon with the fact that dreams are no longer considered by most of us to come from the gods, or to be inserted into our heads from somewhere else or by someone else. As Freud (1958a, pp. 48 and 536) taught us, the "other scene" or "other stage" on which the unconscious unfolds, on which the dream action is played out, is still somehow our own scene, our own stage, and something in us is the puppet master that is pulling the strings.

The desire that is staged in a dream may, of course, be disguised through condensation and displacement, and very often is. But notwithstanding the dreamer's protests, if something "horrible" happens in a dream, something in the dreamer wanted that "horrible thing" to happen. We can take it a rule of thumb: once the analysand's associations have led us to peel back the layers of disguise, whatever happens in a dream is wished for in some way by the dreamer. (There are some exceptions, of course, such as dreams that repetitively present a traumatic event from the past.) We cannot pay attention to wishes *only* when the analysand spontaneously views a dream as wishful, as he or she is likely to do in the case of erotic dreams, or when the wish seems ego-syntonic to the analysand. We must *always* pay attention to wishes, whether in "accidental" forgetting of sessions, payment of the wrong amount for

treatment, slips of the tongue, dreams, daydreams, or fantasies.

This is no more than elementary psychoanalysis, of course, but as Lacan pointed out in his famous "return to Freud" (2006a, p. 221–34), Freud's emphasis on unconscious desire has all too often been ignored or forgotten. Yet, one very simple way to try to begin to get at wishes is simply to ask an analysand who has recounted and associated at some length to a dream if he or she can see any wish in the dream. Often that is enough to get the ball rolling, even if the analysand is likely to begin with something like a conscious wish. When something unpleasant happens in a dream, I find that it very often suffices to ask something along the lines of, "Can you think of any reason why you might possibly want *x* (that unpleasant thing) to happen?"—any reason why, to return to the example I briefly mentioned above, you might want your secret to be broadcast to a whole group of people?

Earlier, I mentioned an analysand who had been ambivalent about pursuing his artwork for several decades and who dreamt that a former artist friend of his looked at his paintings and told him that, although he had done some good work, he did not have enough high-quality pieces for a showing in a gallery. After the analysand had associated to quite a number of the elements in the dream I simply asked him, "Why do you think you had this former friend of yours say that to you in the dream?" A very simple question like that obviously insinuates that the analysand has something to do with creating his own displeasure in dreams, that his displeasure is not foisted upon him by some evil demon who appears out of nowhere. And, if we take it one step further, it insinuates that he has something to do with creating his own displeasure in life as well. The analysand was quite easily able to conclude that he would like to be free of the pressure he felt to become as famous an artist as his friend was, free to drop his whole artistic project by the wayside. As I mentioned earlier, he concluded with the ambiguous formulation, "It's the last thing I need to let go of."

As we can see in this example, the wishes fulfilled in dreams are often counterintuitive: they are often the exact opposite of what we consciously think we want, suggesting the presence in us of unconscious wishes that are precisely the opposite of our conscious wishes.[13] The same kind of conflict between conscious and unconscious wishes can quite easily be brought to light in daydreams, fantasies, slips of the tongue, bungled actions, and so on. Lacanian-oriented work takes seriously Spinoza's dictum that "desire is the essence of man" and *focuses on desires and, in particular, on unconscious desires* in a way that seems rare in many other forms of psychoanalysis today. Like Freud, Lacan (2006a, pp. 522–25) teaches us not to be content with the first desire to suggest itself in the interpretation of a dream, and discusses the dream by "the butcher's wife" (Freud, 1958a, pp. 146–51) extensively to lay out the conscious but also the not-so-easy to flesh out unconscious wishes that can be found in it.[14]

Having discussed the continuing importance of desire in psychoanalysis, I will turn now to Lacan's focus on jouissance as opposed to the more usual contemporary focus on mood, feeling, and affect as a guide to all things analytic.

Interpretation Aims at Transforming the Analysand's Subjective Position

Lacan zeros in on the kinds of jouissance people derive (whether they are aware of it or not) from their dreams, fantasies, and actions, "jouissance" referring to satisfaction that may be experienced by them as enjoyable or distressing, and often as both at the same time. Freud (1955a) provides a nice illustration of what Lacan means by jouissance in the case of the Rat Man; Freud notes there that when his analysand

tells him the story of the infamous rat torture, "his face took on a very strange, composite expression," and continues by saying, "I could only interpret it as one of horror at pleasure of his own of which he himself was unaware" (pp. 166–67). This form of simultaneous satisfaction and horror was articulated and emphasized most forcefully by Lacan in his work in the 1960s and 1970s, and is correlated less with the symbolic order than with the real. His focus on jouissance as real can be usefully contrasted with many contemporary psychoanalysts' focus on affect, which, as Freud (1958a) taught us, is often deceptive as it is so often displaced, exaggerated, or performative.[15] One of my analysands told me he realized that he had gotten all teary-eyed and worked up at one point in the previous session in order to keep the session going, even though he knew he had just said something of capital importance, the kind of thing he knew I was likely to end the session on. The waterworks were thus designed to dissuade me from stopping the session on the important point he had just formulated, and were thus anything but a moment of "true feeling" that could clue us into his jouissance.

We must determine where the analysand's jouissance comes from (rather than obsessively focusing on passing affective states) if the analysand's complaints that he or she disapproves of his or her own ways of enjoying—thinking them morally wrong or disgusting—are to be addressed. What brings the analysand jouissance is related to the broader problematic that Lacan terms his or her "subjective position"—that is, his or her most general stance in life. I will broach this complex concept today through the topic of interpretation.

From a Lacanian perspective, interpretation (as employed with neurotics, as opposed to psychotics) aims *not* at providing meaning—as is the case in many other contemporary forms of psychoanalysis—but rather at making waves, at shaking up analysands' longstanding views of who they are and why they do what they do in the world, leading to the generation of new material. To achieve this aim, Lacanians use language that is deliberately polyvalent and evocative rather than unequivocal and concrete. The goal here is not to make the unconscious conscious—here Lacan (2001b, pp. 139–40) differs from Freud (1963a, pp. 282 and 435)—in the sense that the analysand would come to *understand* what is in his unconscious, but rather to bring the analysand to say what is in the unconscious—that is, what has never before been spoken out loud by him to another person, whether dimly known before or not—and let that saying affect him, without him necessarily knowing what it means (if indeed it *means* anything at all; see Fink, 2010).

In Lacanian work with neurotics, interpretation is not intended to foster the development in the analysand of an observing ego that views the analysand the way the analyst does, but is rather designed to home in on and shake up the analysand's subjective position. It is always best when interpretations come from the analysand himself, but this is especially true when we try to detect the role a subject played in his own history, which he initially claims to have played no role in whatsoever—that is, to have been little more than a pawn in schemes far bigger than himself, and to have gotten nothing himself by way of enjoyment from his position in those schemes.

Recall that in the case of Dora, Dora initially blamed her predicament on her father and Mr. K, claiming to have been forced into an awkward position by their tacit exchange of women in which Dora was given to Mr. K in exchange for Mrs. K being given to Dora's father. Freud concluded from what Dora told him that this exchange was aided and abetted by Dora herself, who frequently took care of the K's children so that Mrs. K would be free to spend time with Dora's father, and steered Mr. K off on walks with her so that he would not interrupt Mrs. K and her father's trysts. Even though Dora herself began to wonder why she did some of the things she did, Freud (1953, p. 95) unfortunately seemed to prefer to interpret them for her. As the subsequent evolution of the case showed, pointing out a subject's own participation in a predicament that she initially feels has been thrust upon her can be experienced by

the analysand as accusatory and must be handled delicately, to say the least.

Rather than focusing explicitly on day-by-day or minute-by-minute feeling states or affects, as is done in many contemporary forms of psychotherapy, Lacanians focus on the kinds of jouissance their analysands complain of, in order to have an impact on their ability to enjoy life and to shake up the fundamental fantasy or subjective position that is making them so miserable.

In one case, an analysand of mine began a session with a discussion of something he had mentioned several times in the past: the fact that, from the time his father had died when he was a small child until he was a teenager, he had slept right next to his mother, and that she would put her hand on his penis and testicles while they slept. He averred that this was a sort of model relationship for him that he kept looking for with other women. Without any transition, he turned to another topic that he had repeatedly complained of in the bitterest of terms: the fact that he was humiliated and beaten up by other boys when he was young.

I knew his history quite well, including the fact that there had been one occasion on which he had very successfully fought back against a boy who was considerably bigger than himself. I thus knew that what generally stopped him from fighting back was an internal inhibition, not some physical inferiority on his part; this internal inhibition appeared in other contexts as well, for example when his mother was battling with an uncle of his who was a violent drunk. The analysand's sister, who was no stronger than him, would try to break up the frequent altercations between the mother and the uncle, but the analysand himself would often cower in a corner or run away.

It was a simple matter for me to make a connection between the two topics that had appeared without any transition in this session: the reason he had usually felt unable to fight back against the other boys was that *he was ashamed of what he was doing with his mother*. Even from a very early age he knew that it was considered "taboo" and "sinful," and that he was in a sense a criminal for having taken his father's place in his mother's bed. This made him feel that *he was doing something wrong and that he deserved to be ridiculed and punished by anybody and everybody*.

The interpretation had a big impact upon him, involving as it did a significant reversal of perspective. The view he had always propounded prior to that time was that he felt inferior to other boys because his father had died when he was young and he consequently had no one to defend him. He had never understood why he would stand idly by while his uncle would verbally and physically attack his mother in a drunken rage, feeling awful all the while, although we had at least explored the possibility that he was angry at his mother for being so harsh and critical with the analysand himself and that he was thus secretly pleased in some way that his uncle was punishing her. Nevertheless, that plausible explanation had never had much enduring impact upon him. This new interpretation, based on the propinquity in the session of two seemingly unrelated topics, brought with it a new perspective: he felt that both he and his mother were criminals due to their incestuous behavior, and that *they both deserved whatever punishment they got*. She deserved to be punished by the boy's uncle and he himself deserved to be punished by any local bully who felt like beating him.

Here the kind of connection involved in interpretation involved establishing a cause-and-effect relationship between two different ideas or facets of the analysand's life. In the case of this particular analysand, he usually allowed himself to be beaten *because* he believed himself to be a criminal; he had the impression that his hands were tied when he was faced with bullies *because* he felt he deserved to be punished for his sins. More broadly speaking, he felt that a great many people in his adult life as well were just looking for an opportunity to bully him, no doubt because he had continued, as an adult, to engage in activities that he associated with his criminal sexual activity with his mother. He felt under continual attack—indeed, his overriding stance in life was that of a criminal who was constantly worried

that his crimes would come to light and that he would be helpless to defend himself from being punished for them. He wished both to go on sinning and to be punished (that is, castrated) for doing so. As far into adulthood as he continued his transgressive behavior (and he was close to retirement age when he began working with me), he was plagued by thoughts that other men were out to expose and attack him. As counterintuitive as it may seem to say so, his primary satisfaction and dissatisfaction in life—that is, his primary jouissance—apparently revolved around: 1) transgression of sexual taboos and mores, and 2) fearing punishment for doing so (which, as Freud tells us, means wishing for it). His subjective position seemed to involve daring the Other to punish him as he feared, and yet believed, he deserved.

Of course, not every interpretation (whether made by the analyst, by the analysand, or the two working in tandem) aims quite so directly at the analysand's fundamental subjective position in life, even if it aims in more or less the same direction. Some of the simplest kinds of interpretations make connections between two topics that are broached in a session, but seem to be unrelated to each other. Just as Freud (1958a, p. 247) tells us that there is a logical connection of some kind between two scenes in a dream that follow each other directly, it being up to us to determine what the connection is since the dreams themselves rarely tell us what it is, two topics that come up one right after the other in a session are very often connected in an obscure manner.

Propinquity—the nearness of two topics in time during a session—is something that must be deciphered. This is part of the paradox of free association: when we encourage the analysand to simply speak his mind, he often says the very next thing that pops into his head. Although it seems unconnected to him, since it was a "free association," nothing could be less free (as Freud tells us). Let me try to illustrate how the interpretation of two seemingly unrelated topics, the one following directly upon the other, allows for an at least partial situating of subjective position.

An analysand with erectile problems was telling me about what he believed to be the first occasion upon which he had had problems getting and maintaining an erection. He went into a long, elaborate story and then made an *incidental remark*, as if changing the subject, which he had never mentioned before about a poster he saw in a girl's dorm room during his freshman year at college. The poster showed a handsome man with a naked torso and bulging muscles, and the caption read: "A hard man is good to find." The analysand commented that he concluded upon seeing the poster that "*that was what women really wanted*."

Several years prior to his freshman year he had been lifting weights in order to have a "hard body." Since seeing the poster, however, he had stopped lifting weights and stopped getting hard with women. In prior sessions we had discussed the possibility that he was in some way determined *not* to give women what they wanted, just as he was determined to frustrate his mother's requests and wishes. He agreed that something of that kind seemed to be going on, but he could not understand how or why, so it remained somewhat abstract to him. In this session we were able to establish with pretty good confidence that he saw this poster shortly before his first problem getting and maintaining an erection that was not alcohol-related. Believing he now knew exactly what women wanted, he knew exactly how not to give it to them! *The proximate cause* of his erectile problems was thus established to be his wish to deprive women of something, to disappoint them, to *not* be what he thought they wanted him to be. Why he wished that was a far more encompassing question, but at least a certain course was set thereby. The *incidental* remark about the poster allowed a connection to be made between his so-called erectile dysfunction and the kick he got out of frustrating and disappointing women, both of which seemed to go to the core of his subjective position in life. He would rather forgo sexual jouissance with the women he dated—reserving that for masturbation to Internet porn—to obtain another kind of jouissance, an unavowable joy in making women unhappy.

Time as Technique

I will turn now to what, for many, is clearly Lacan's most controversial innovation as regards psychoanalytic technique. Unlike any other analyst of his time, Lacan recommended that, rather than continue a session after analysands have said something that seems very significant, and allow them to bury a weighty phrase under things that might be of far less importance, we stop or "scand" the session immediately after the significant formulation (this leads the analyst to hold sessions of variable length). After all, we remember best what we ourselves said last, just as we remember best what the last speaker in a series said or the last portion of a politician's speech.[16] Rather than risk having the analysand forget what seems so significant, Lacan would have us stop the session there. Even if the analysand does not consciously remember where we ended when next we speak, the scansion will nevertheless have done its work, for he will almost always have thought about it somewhat in the interim and it will often have affected his dreams or daydreams, even if he has not wanted to think about it. In other words, it will have impacted him, it will have had an effect on his unconscious, even if he no longer recalls it.

Rather than try to justify here what has proven to be a remarkably decried technique,[17] I will confine myself to simply exemplifying in brief a couple of different types of scansions: ending a session on a particularly striking formulation and ending a session after a significant reversal of perspective has occurred.

An example from my work with a female analysand came after a long discussion of a complicated dream that involved numerous people in the analysand's life and considerable ambiguity as to whether each of the figures in the dream was male or female. I ended the session when the analysand, who even after two years of analysis was quite reluctant to speak about sexual topics, came out with the words, "Maybe I wish [my husband] was a girl." This scansion came after about a 35-minute discussion of the dream, and it led her to comment in the very next session that something had changed in her marriage since the analysis had begun: sex with her husband had become more of a chore and more distasteful to her. This was something she had never paid any attention to before, much less articulated.

The striking formulation after the enunciation of which the analyst ends the session can also be a question. For example, an analysand who suffered for many years from migraine headaches complained at length in a session that she never received recognition from her colleagues, or from her parents for that matter. However, as she was talking she recalled that she had begun to get some recognition from her usually highly critical father for some successes she had in her field right around the time her migraine headaches first began. I ended the session when she wondered aloud if there was any connection "between getting recognition and my headaches?" Perhaps it was a big headache to her to be given responsibility and authority and to be recognized for it. She had never considered that possibility before and the question she herself raised led to several fruitful sessions.

As for an example of ending a session after a reversal of perspective has occurred, consider the following. A man came to me for analysis after twenty-odd years of different kinds of therapy and analysis in which conclusions he had arrived at about his family as a child had never been called into question. Over the course of a year and a half of analysis with me, he had often repeated his claim that his mother was ferocious and out to get him—even though his current relations with her were generally cordial and often even friendly. He was convinced that she had punished him brutally as a child, but could recall nothing worse than her throwing away a toy he had placed in some feces. He would rage at her in sessions and yet none of his dreams or daydreams suggested the existence of spankings or beatings by her or by anyone else in his past. When I would ask if he recalled any examples of punishment, he would say I sounded like I did not believe him; to him it was obvious that he had simply repressed all

traces of them.

Nevertheless, his more overriding complaint seemed to be that his mother never paid enough attention to him. One day he began talking again about how he was convinced his mother wanted to kill him and I commented that one might have to be awfully important to someone for that someone to want to go so far as to kill one. He was obviously ready to hear the implication, for he concluded something like, "So you're saying I want to believe she wants to kill me because that would mean I'm incredibly important to her." This exchange occurred in the early minutes of the session, and the analysand later returned to a theme he had often discussed, which was that he always seemed to want to be involved with muscular girls. His standard explanation for this had been that since he himself had always been weak, in his own view, he needed a strong woman to take care of him, to defend him against the cruel world out there.

Given what we had discussed in the early part of the session, it was a simple matter to turn that formulation around: he actually was trying to maintain his belief that a woman wanted to attack him—for that would mean that he was important to her—and he felt compelled to find muscular women whom he believed could successfully attack him. I stopped the session after we had articulated this reversal of perspective, rather than let it get obscured by some other topic, and this set off a chain reaction. He realized that for him, to be loved meant to be under siege. Although he had up until then firmly believed that women never really loved men, only loving the money men could give them, he suddenly felt that there was hope for him, that love between the sexes might actually be possible someday in his future.

In the weeks that followed he began fantasizing about what he called lovable, girlish women, as opposed to muscular women, and scenes of tenderness began to appear in his dreams, whereas there had never been anything but scenes of violence and power struggles before. It was, in his words, a "very profitable couple of sessions," and the effects of the reversal of perspective and the scansions that accompanied it continued to bear fruit for some time.

Another reversal of perspective occurred with an analysand when he had a dream about being held back by his father on a boat so that he was unable to get to work. We discussed the role of boats in his father's life, but it was especially the verbal phrase "held back" that led to a long chain of associations. The analysand had always portrayed himself as having been held back by everything and everyone, and felt cheated and mistreated in life in general. He recalled that he had been held back in junior high school, and when he began to talk about the actual circumstances involved, he indicated that in fact his headmaster had not *required* him to stay back but had simply *recommended* that he stay back a year. The analysand himself had been happy to do so because his best friend was a year behind him at the same school and he relished the idea of being with that friend rather than continuing on with the students in his own year whom he did not like. He suddenly realized that he himself had participated in being held back, which was a considerable reversal of perspective for him. I scanded the session there and in subsequent sessions he began to talk about how he had often participated in holding himself back and continued to hold himself back even today.

As is no doubt apparent by now, it is impossible to present any one scansion without a good deal of the context in which it occurred. The goal of scansion is, however, very often the same: to keep the analysand focused on what seems to be the most poignant, electrifying, radical, or perplexing. Scansion is obviously one of the means by which we can convey to analysands what we consider to be the most salient, and at the beginning of the next session they very often come back to the precise point where we ended; on other occasions what we ended on turns up in a dream that they recount during the next session. In the interest of free association, we must nevertheless allow them to bring up whatever it is they choose to in the next session, but they often spontaneously begin with the place where we scanded.

Inevitably, some scansions fall flat or only generate new material after a longer or shorter period of time has elapsed, not right away. As with any interpretive technique, one does not always manage to strike gold.

In Lacan's view, numerous analysts have confused Freud's notion of neutrality—whereby the analyst is not openly (or hopefully even secretly) judgmental about the analysand's thoughts, beliefs, wishes, and fantasies—with some kind of *virtue of nonaction*, whereby the analyst, for fear of directing the patient, no longer directs the treatment at all (2006a, p. 490). Yet, it is the analyst's responsibility to direct the treatment by ensuring, as Freud certainly did, that the analysand speaks at length about the things that are hindering him most in life. Encouraging the analysand to speculate about desires in dreams, daydreams, and fantasies, and scanding sessions at what analysts consider to be the most significant, provocative, or even puzzling points, Lacanian analysts seek to keep the work focused (even if it is in that typically unsystematic psychoanalytic way) on the nub or crux of the patient's difficulties in life, rather than allow him to spend the lion's share of a single session—much less of his entire analysis—talking about matters of little psychoanalytic import. Although analysts obviously cannot know in advance what topics will be of most significance, they obviously know that childhood experiences, sexual fantasies, and dreams tend to move therapy forward far more than detailed accounts of day-to-day life, with its little ups and downs, as dramatic as they may at times appear to the analysand.

Analysis does not require that the analysand recount everything that happened to him in the course of the days or week preceding the session; indeed, such discussions are very often distractions from the primary work of the analysis. Analysts do, of course, need to know a good deal about the analysand's daily life, but they do not generally need a blow-by-blow account of it. Scansion allows analysts to keep the focus on the important work of the analysis.

This does not mean that the analysand is required to stay on one topic for an especially long period of time. As most analysts are aware, it is rarely by trying to deal with a particularly problematic symptom, fantasy, or relationship directly that any headway is made. Analysis often proceeds by moving from one topic to another perhaps related topic and back again, circling around and going deeper and deeper each time. It is often only once part of the terrain has been explored in one facet of the analysand's life that another terrain even comes into view, another facet of the analysand's life becoming open for discussion. This is usually anything but a linear process. Rather, it is generally a dialectical process whereby the analysand, having explored a certain period of his life, begins to change in one direction, but after exploring another period of his life, begins to change in a diametrically opposed direction. It is only once he has explored the vast majority of his history that a single overriding direction seems to distill out. It is this change that we aim at, as opposed to the elaboration of a grand narrative of his life or some psychological understanding on his part of the origin and dynamics of his neurosis.

Concluding Remarks

I hope this brief account of some of the differences between a Lacanian approach and other contemporary approaches (more comparing and contrasting regarding such topics as neutrality, transference, countertransference, normalization, and the treatment of psychosis, can be found in Fink, 2007), has made it clear that, for Lacan:

1 analysts can have no immediate access to the analysand's experience: they cannot directly intuit his thoughts or feel his feelings, much less feel what he is not feeling;
2 analysts must not content themselves with the analysand's spontaneous associations to a dream, daydream, or fantasy, but must work hard to elicit associations to all facets of such unconscious formations (as Lacan, 1998b, calls them) and to reconstruct the various conscious and above all counterintuitive unconscious wishes that went into their production;
3 analysts must not allow themselves to lapse into nonaction; even though they can never be absolutely sure what the most important moment in a session is, they can nevertheless do a great deal to encourage the analysand to spend the majority of his sessions talking about topics of genuine psychoanalytic import, rather than letting him skirt difficult and even traumatic subjects, as he is otherwise prone to do.

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Notes

1 Many writers prefer the expression "the big Other" for what I am referring to here as "the Other with a capital *O*" (note that Lacan uses *le grand Autre* and *l'Autre avec un grand A* indifferently). In English, "big Other" ineluctably evokes "Big Brother" of Orwellian fame for me, which strikes me as unfortunate and misleading; hence my preference for "the Other with a capital *O*."

2 I remain agnostic as to his artistic abilities and could not possibly say whether he should pursue art or not—I am no judge in such matters, nor have I ever seen his artwork. Even if I believed I were a decent judge of such matters, are not a great many artists completely misunderstood and misrecognized during their lifetimes? Analysts have, in my view, no business telling analysands that they are good at this and bad at that and so should pursue the former instead of the latter. People who set themselves up as judges of other people's work and abilities more often than not end up looking quite foolish.

Regarding the literary arts, I once read that the famous American author Jack London received 600 rejection slips from publishers before he was able to sell his first story, that Dr. Seuss's first book was rejected by 24 different publishers, that John Grisham's first novel was rejected by 15 publishers and 30 literary agents, that Alex Haley's *Roots* was turned down by 200 different editors—the list goes on and on and should be humbling to anyone who sets out to judge the quality or salability of another person's artistic output.

3 In certain cases, we may end up veering off course when we rely upon spoken English in this way, for the analysand may not know the expression we are referring to; this suggests that there may not have been as much in the analysand's formulation as we heard in it, and that we need to let it go. If *we* ourselves had said such a thing, both meanings might have been intended in some way, but then we were not the ones who said it. Spoken English as we know it and spoken English as the analysand knows it never coincide completely.

Nevertheless, the analysand and the analyst can *both* appeal to all of the mutually accepted meanings, whether figurative or literal, of what the other says that are allowed by English: I could postulate to the aforementioned analysand that although he believed he needed to give up his artistic work altogether, something in him felt that it needed artistic work to live; and he could insist that when I said something like, "Please remind me of your vacation dates as we get closer," I was referring to the closeness of our relationship and not simply to propinquity in time.

4 The "symbolic order" is also referred to at times, somewhat redundantly, as the "symbolic Other."

5 As Lacan (1988a) says in Seminar I, "a human gesture is more closely related to language than it is a manifestation of motor activity" (p. 255, trans. modified). Here is a short list of books that indicate how different human gestures—whether hand, facial, or bodily—are in different cultures:

- *Italian Without Words*, by Don Cangelosi and Joseph Delli Carpini
- *The French Way: Aspects of Behavior, Attitudes, and Customs of the French*, by Ross Steele
- *Body Language in Business: Decoding the Signals*, by Adrian Furnham and Evgeniya Petrova
- *Cultural Intelligence: Living and Working Globally*, by David C. Thomas and Kerr Inkson
- *Understanding Cultural Differences: Germans, French and Americans*, by Edward T. Hall and Mildred Reed Hall
- *Culture Shock! Korea*, by Sonja Vegdahl Hur and Ben Seunghua Hur
- *Cultural Anthropology*, by Conrad Phillip Kottak
- *Gestures: The Do's and Taboos of Body Language Around the World*, by Roger E. Axtell

6 Attunement also grows over time, naturally, as one gets to know each individual analysand better and better.

7 The genial writers of the *Frasier* television series have the radio psychiatrist Frasier Crane boast about his "God-given gift to intuit," only to show him completely mistaken in his so-called intuitions on virtually every occasion (see, in particular, the episode entitled "Can't Buy Me Love").

8 See my detailed critique of "projective identification" (Fink, 2007, pp. 165–88).

9 This could be expressed more technically by saying that there is no direct connection between *a* and *a´*—that is, between the analyst and analysand as egos. In fact, Lacan (2006a, p. 53) offers a four-party model, in which the Other and the analysand's unconscious (together constituting the "symbolic axis") impede any such direct connection. Note how different this is from Ogden's so-called analytic third (Ogden, 1999), which actually resides within the analyst, even if it is supposedly created by the analysis.

10 Winnicott (1965, pp. 50–51) certainly did not believe in a kind of Vulcan mind-meld between analyst and analysand, saying instead,

> It is very important … that the analyst shall *not* know the answers except in so far as the patient gives the clues. The analyst gathers the clues and makes interpretations, and it often happens that patients fail to give the clues, making certain thereby that the analyst can do nothing. This limitation of the analyst's power is important to the patient.

11 See Spinoza (1994, p. 188): "Desire is man's very essence, insofar as it is conceived to be determined, from any given affection of it, to do something."

12 As Lacan (2006b, p. 198) put it,

> What guides us when we interpret a dream is certainly not the question 'What does that mean?' Nor is it 'What does [the analysand] want in saying that?' Rather it is 'What, in speaking, does it [or id] want?' It apparently does not know what it wants.

He also indicated that the analysand's articulation to us of a dream leads to a "reconstituted sentence" (the reconstructed thought that underpinned the formation of the dream) and that we are looking for the gap or fault line in it where we see something fishy, something that does not seem quite right (*qui cloche*)—"that's the desire" in the dream (p. 197).

13 As Freud (1955a, p. 180) writes in the case of the Rat Man,

> According to psycho-analytic theory, I told [the Rat Man], every fear corresponded to a former wish which was now repressed; we were therefore obliged to believe the exact contrary of what he had asserted. This would also fit in with another theoretical requirement, namely, that the unconscious must be the precise contrary of the conscious.

14 Here is another example: A young man came to see a therapist because he found himself being extremely anxious 1) for several days after competitions of his sports team in which he did not perform perfectly and 2) for several days after exams on which he did not perform perfectly (coming in second place out of eight, for example, or getting an A- instead of an A). Note that he did not complain of something more typical—performance anxiety *before* competitions or exams, but only of anxiety *afterward*.

It came out that the young man claimed to have joined this team to please his parents and that he had been striving to get good grades in his academic program to please his mother, who wanted him to follow in her professional footsteps. His ambivalent attitude toward his sport was clear from the fact that the day the team was eliminated by the university to save money, he never once engaged in the sport again; and his ambivalent attitude toward his academic trajectory was clear from the fact that he "forgot" to register to take the standardized test required for admission into the graduate program he had ostensibly been working toward.

It seems that, at some level, he did not really want to win races or do well in exams: he unconsciously wished to displease his parents instead of pleasing them. Having come in second or gotten an A-, he was pleased with himself, but that did not fit his image of himself as a good boy trying to please his parents and thus could not be experienced by him as satisfaction. In other words, satisfaction would not have been "ego-syntonic." The satisfaction was thus forced to take a different form: that of anxiety. This corroborated Freud's dictum that anxiety is the universal currency of affect, or more specifically stated, "the universally current coinage for which *any* affective impulse is or can be exchanged if the ideational content attached to it is subjected to repression" (1963a, pp. 403–404). The ideational content subjected to repression here appears to have been the thought: "I want to displease my mother" or, more colloquially put, "God forbid I should please my mother, God forbid I should give her such satisfaction!"

As Freud (1963a, p. 409) says, "the most immediate vicissitude of [an] affect [that is tied to an idea that undergoes repression] is to be transformed into anxiety"; in other words, when we encounter anxiety we can generally assume that some thought (a wishful

thought) has been repressed and the affect associated with it, regardless of its original tenor, has been set adrift and become unrecognizable. The conversion of pleasure into post-competition anxiety had the curious added bonus of giving the young man the opportunity to complain to his parents about—and get them to pay for therapy because of—the very thing that gave him pleasure: anxiety that arose due to thumbing his nose at his parents. A fine form of "secondary gain," it might be thought!

15 "[The] affects [of neurotics] are always appropriate, at least in their *quality*, though we must allow for their intensity being increased owing to displacement…. Psychoanalysis can put them upon the right path by recognizing the affect as being … justified and by seeking out the idea which belongs to it but has been repressed and replaced by a substitute" (Freud, 1958a, p. 461).

16 Similarly, an unfinished task often occupies the mind far more than a finished one (this is known in psychology as "the Zeigarnik effect").

17 I discuss the rationale for the variable-length session in detail in Fink (2007, Chapter 4).

3

FANTASIES AND THE FUNDAMENTAL FANTASY

An Introduction

A fantasy is, in effect, quite bothersome, since we do not know where to situate it due to the fact that it just sits there, complete in its nature as a fantasy, whose only reality is that of discourse and which expects nothing of your powers, asking you, rather, to square accounts with your own desires.

—Lacan, 2006a, p. 779

Historical Backdrop and Terminology

Lacan uses the term "fundamental fantasies" as early as Seminar I, *Freud's Papers on Technique* (1953–54), where it seems quite clearly to be based on or borrowed from Melanie Klein (Lacan, 1988a, p. 17). However, in my view, it does not come into its own until he constructs the formula or matheme ($\$ \lozenge a$), which first appears some four years later in Seminar V, *Les formations de l'inconscient* ["Unconscious Formations"] (1957–58).[1] The fundamental fantasy is elaborated on extensively in Seminar VI, *Le désir et son interprétation* ["Desire and Its Interpretation"] (1958–59), and in later seminars as well. We find Lacan's first written discussions of it in his 1958 paper "Direction of the Treatment" (Lacan, 2006a, pp. 614 and 637).

In the weeks leading up to the introduction of the matheme for fantasy in Seminar V, Lacan (1998b, p. 303) discusses Melanie Klein, whose concept of phantasy (with a ph) he mentions without ever endorsing it. In order to clarify Lacan's position regarding the notion of phantasy (with a ph), a notion that is adopted by certain other French analysts, I'll provide my own translation here of a few passages from this seminar:

> In Klein's view, […] the subject's entire apprenticeship, so to speak, of reality is primordially prepared for and underpinned by the essentially hallucinatory and fantasmatic constitution of the first objects—classified into good and bad objects—insofar as they establish a first primordial relationship that will determine the subject's principal ways of relating to reality for the rest of his life. She arrives in this way at the notion that the subject's world is constituted by a fundamentally unreal relationship between himself and objects that are but the reflection of his fundamental drives.
>
> This world of phantasy* [Lacan uses Klein's English term here], in the way in which this concept is used in the Kleinian school, is, for example, organized around the subject's fundamental aggressiveness, in a series of projections of the subject's needs. A series of more or less fortunate experiences occur at the surface of this world, and it is desirable that they be fortunate enough. Little by little, the world of experience consequently allows for a certain reasonable mapping of what is, as they say, objectively definable in these objects, as corresponding to a certain reality, the framework [*trame*] of unreality remaining absolutely fundamental.
>
> We have here what we can truly call a psychotic construction of the subject. In this perspective, a normal subject is, in short, a psychosis that turned out well, a psychosis that fortunately harmonized with experience. What I am telling you here is not a reconstruction. The author who I am going to discuss now, Winnicott, expresses this exact point in a text that he wrote regarding the use of regression in analytic therapy. Psychosis and a normal relationship to the world are clearly claimed in his text to be fundamentally homogeneous.
>
> Very great difficulties arise from this perspective …
>
> (Lacan, 1998b, pp. 215–16)

Now, as the next paragraph in the seminar indicates, the translation into French that Lacan proposes for Klein's term "phantasy" is *fantaisie*, which in French means something more like fancy, whim, fanciful imagining, or fanciful notion.

Lacan goes on to critique Klein's notion of phantasy as purely imaginary, as involving nothing but the imaginary axis on which the mother is encountered only as either satisfying or frustrating—that is, as a

good object or a bad object. Lacan agrees that the mother is encountered in two different registers, but they are not good versus bad; they are rather the mother versus her desire—her desire as a desire for something else, that is, her desire as structured by language. In this sense, his implicit critique is that the notion of phantasy in Klein's work refers only to the imaginary axis, whereas the mother's desire obviously introduces the symbolic dimension as well.

The French term that Lacan prefers to *fantaisie* is *fantasme*. It corresponds, in my view, in English to fantasy with an f, and involves both imaginary and symbolic axes: for in fantasy, as Lacan understands it, the imaginary has already been transformed, structured, or overwritten by the symbolic. As Lacan (1998b) says later in Seminar V, "I will define fantasy [...] as the imaginary caught up in a certain signifying use [*usage de signifiant*]" (p. 409).[2]

According to Lacan, the symbolic component of fantasy comes into the picture very early on in a child's life because its mother (or other primary caretaker) has been a speaking being for many years before the child is born, and her relationship to her child and the objects the child calls out for is structured in terms of the language that structures her world, cutting it up into discrete, isolable objects (note that even such elementary body-related notions signified in English by words like "nipple," "lap," "loins," and "wrist" often have no clear correspondent in other languages). The child encounters this structure from day one, if not *in utero* (as the mother talks to her child)—in any case, long before it can understand any part of it, assent to it, assimilate it, or reproduce it in speech. In other words, a reality beyond the mother and her strictly physical relation to the child is introduced immediately by the fact that the mother herself is a speaking being. Language, as that which lies beyond both of the human beings who are present in the mother–child encounter, is introduced as soon as the mother talks to her child. There are thus three parties present from the outset: mother, child, and the Other (as language).[3]

Lacan's critique of Klein here is that she not only privileges the imaginary over the symbolic, but in effect ignores the symbolic dimension altogether in the child's early relations with its mother. Kleinians might not agree with his interpretation of her work, but the point I wish to stress here is that, apart from Lacan's texts from the 1940s in which a somewhat Kleinian notion of phantasy is at work (phantasy with a ph), *fantasy with an f in Lacan's work cannot be understood without the inclusion of both imaginary and symbolic dimensions*. Indeed, Jacques-Alain Miller (1982–83) has suggested that all three dimensions can be found in Lacan's notion of fantasy: the imaginary is found in the image-like nature of the fantasy, including the image of the other's body (*a*); the symbolic is found in the fact that a fantasy often takes the form of a sentence constructed with subject, verb, and object; and the real is found in the axiomatic nature of fantasy, as we shall see a little further on. (This is merely an extension of the fact that Lacan considers transference to include all three dimensions; Lacan, 1988a, pp. 112–13.)

It should be kept in mind that when Lacan first introduces his matheme for fantasy, he has not yet developed the concept of object *a* as the real cause of desire, for object *a* only migrates from the imaginary to the real in his conceptual framework starting in Seminar VII, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis (1959–1960)*, and Seminar VIII, *Transference (1960–1961)*. When the matheme for fantasy is introduced in Seminar V (1998b, p. 311), fantasy is described as a relationship between the subject and the little other (which is also written *petit a*, for *autre*) or semblable. Note too that when the lozenge (◊) between the subject and object is first introduced, Lacan (1998b) says that the lozenge "simply implies [...] that everything that is at stake here is commanded by the quadratic relation [...] which states that there is no conceivable barred subject [...] that is not sustained by the ternary relation A *a′ a″* (p. 316). In other words, the lozenge (*poinçon*) stands for the fact that each subject is characterized by the whole of the L Schema (see Figure 3.1), by all four vertices of it involving imaginary and symbolic axes (but not *a* as real).

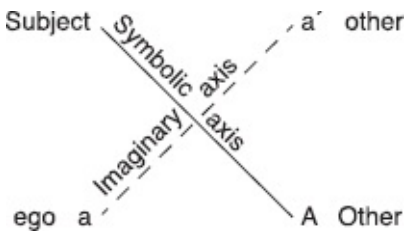

Figure 3.1 L Schema (simplified)

This is obviously but an early sketch, for just a few months later Lacan (2006a, p. 634) writes, in a footnote to "Direction of the Treatment," that "The sign ◊ registers the relations envelopment-development-conjunction-disjunction." However, the L Schema is still centrally involved in Lacan's diagrams of Sadean fantasy in "Kant with Sade," written in 1962 (Lacan, 2006a, pp. 774 and 778). Nevertheless, in Seminar XI, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (1964), he indicates that the lozenge can be understood as referring to the operations of union and intersection in set theory and the psychoanalytic operations of alienation and separation.[4]

Let me add one more preliminary note regarding terminology: Lacan spends a great deal of time elaborating the notion of the fundamental fantasy and situating it on the Graph of Desire (Lacan, 2006a, p. 817) in the years between 1958 and 1960, but he very quickly shortens the term from "fundamental fantasy" to simply "fantasy." The term we most often find thereafter is simply "*le fantasme*," which includes the definite article, and this is, in my view, nothing more than shorthand for "the fundamental fantasy." Indeed, Lacan very rarely talks about any other kind of fantasy. Discussions of daydreams and masturbation fantasies are quite rare in his work, unless he is commenting on some other analyst's work.[5]

Theoretical Backdrop of the Fundamental Fantasy

Implicit in the notion that each person has a fundamental fantasy is the idea that despite the plethora of particular fantasies an individual may have—including, of course, daydreams and masturbation fantasies, but also other kinds of scenarios that flash through someone's mind that may be characterized by an individual in many different ways, as intrusive thoughts, vignettes, sketches, dialogues, scenarios, or sentences that present themselves or unfold in a very short space of time (each of these can be understood as fantasies or as involving fantasy elements at some level)—virtually all of these particular instantiations stem from one and the same structure, a fundamental fantasy that defines the subject's most basic relation to the Other, the subject's most basic stance with respect to the Other.

The plethora of intrusive thoughts, scenarios, daydreams, and masturbation fantasies any one subject has are thus viewed by Lacan as essentially permutations of the fundamental fantasy, usually presenting one facet of that fundamental fantasy. To put it differently, the countless intrusive thoughts, scenarios, daydreams, and masturbation fantasies are theorized to boil down or cook down to a "single" fundamental fantasy.

The supposed singularity of the fundamental fantasy is, however, called somewhat into question by Freud's (1955d) formulation in his 1919 paper entitled "A Child Is Being Beaten"—which, by the way, Lacan (1998b) considers to be "totally sublime," suggesting that "everything that was said afterwards [by other analysts] was but chump change (or small potatoes)" (p. 230). In Freud's paper, it is not clear exactly what we should consider to be the most fundamental part of the beating fantasy that he outlines for us as involving three stages:

The Male Fantasy (according to Freud)
Phase one: I am loved by my father.
Phase two: I am being beaten by my father.
Phase three: I am being beaten by my mother.

In his paper, Freud suggests that, while it is the third formulation that presents itself to the patient's mind—in the form of an intrusive thought or fantasy—it is the second, almost never remembered phase, that is the most "momentous." Even though Freud claims that this second formulation is but "a construction of analysis" (1955d, p. 185), he seems to consider the second as the most crucial in that it is most subject to repression. In what he refers to as the "male fantasy"—which is not nearly as well known as the three phases of the "female fantasy" he discusses earlier in the essay (Lacan focuses almost exclusively on the female version of the fantasy in his discussion in Seminar V)—being beaten stands for being loved. This is one very typical kind of displacement or disguise that the unconscious (as seen in what Freud calls "the dream-work," for example) abounds in: the reversal of something into its opposite.

The third phase of the male fantasy may be conscious at times and is thus not considered by Freud (1955d, p. 198) to be "primary." The analyst who is presented by an analysand with the fantasy of being beaten by his mother must conceptually work backward from the third phase to the second, which is obtained by a change in the sex of the parent serving as agent (from mother to father, phase three, "I am being beaten by my mother," becoming phase two, "I am being beaten by my father") and almost always remains unconscious. Continuing to work backward conceptually, what Freud calls "the original form of the unconscious male fantasy," phase one, is obtained by the inversion of beating into loving (phase two, "I am being beaten by my father," becomes phase one, "I am loved by my father" or, more idiomatically, "My father loves me"). Phase one has presumably become disguised as phase two because the love wished for from the father included a close sensual and/or erotic bond and this wish was considered (by the child's superego or conscience) to be reprehensible or incompatible with the child's relationship with its mother and/or other family members, which is why it was repressed.

The question that arises here is which phase (if any) should be characterized as the fundamental fantasy. Is it what Freud calls "the original form of the unconscious male fantasy," in other words, phase one: "I am loved by my father"? Or is it what he refers to as the most "momentous" phase of the fantasy, in other words, phase two: "I am being beaten by my father"? Phase one is, after all, something that the analysand can, although perhaps not immediately, come to recognize as a wish, a wish to be loved by his father, according to Freud.

Before attempting to answer this question, let me suggest that phase one of *another* typical male beating fantasy is, as I have seen it in my own clinical practice, the wish to be loved by one's *mother*.[6] This wish may obviously take the form of a wish to be seduced by one's mother or to seduce her, a wish to be enticed by her into a close love or erotic relationship or to entice her into one. The second phase (see below) can, in this case, be understood as not simply a disguise for such an unacceptable or reprehensible wish but also as *proof of having succeeded in seducing or being seduced by one's mother*—the idea being that *the father beats his son because of the son's illicit relationship with his mother*. There are probably far more sons with such a fantasy of having seduced or been seduced by their mothers than there are mothers who effectively seduce or who allow themselves to be seduced by their sons (this naturally depends on how we define "seduction"), and therefore this wish on the son's part generally goes unsatisfied in real life.

The Male Fantasy (modified)

Phase one: I am being seduced by my mother or I successfully seduce my mother (my father witnesses this).
Phase two: I am being beaten by my father (because of the seduction).
Phase three: A child is being beaten (usually by a male figure).

The wish in phase one then continues in the second phase, for the father's will to beat his child *proves* that the mother wanted to entice the child or succumb to his charms, and either did so—the son being blamed by the father for this—or failed to do so owing only to the father's intervention. *The punishment meted out by the father thus serves the son as proof of his mother's love for him.*

This reconstruction of the beating fantasy as I have seen it in my clinical experience points, in particular, to the degree to which we can sometimes find the entire Oedipal scenario in the fundamental fantasy, such a fantasy including both the mother as "the Other of the demand for love" (that is, as the Other to whom one's demand for love is addressed and who addresses her demand for love to the child) and the father as "the Other of desire"—in other words, as the Other who lays down the law of the prohibition of incest, thereby bringing desire into being (for one only begins to *desire* something, strictly speaking, when access to it has been restricted, if not out and out forbidden). Indeed, phase one here might be understood as corresponding to a kind of fantasized *primal scene*, in which the child imagines seducing or being seduced by the mother under the father's very nose (perhaps imagining himself in the place of the father in an actually overheard or witnessed scene), and as illustrating Lacan's comments about obsessive neurosis in several texts from *Écrits*, including "Function and Field" and "Direction of the Treatment" (as well as in Seminar IV). There he outlines the way in which the obsessive puts on a show or "arrang[es] circus games" (Lacan, 2006a, p. 630) between himself as ego and his mother as little other, or *a´*, for a spectator, a spectator who is the Other (the father in this case), a spectator with whom the obsessive identifies at the unconscious level. We can situate this on the L Schema as in Figure 3.2.

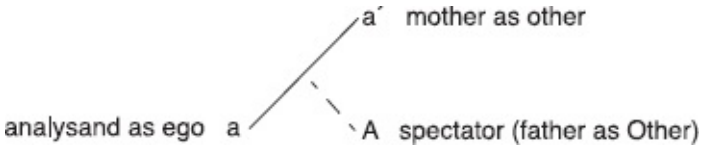

Figure 3.2 L Schema for obsessives

According to Lacan, the obsessive presents the entire L Schema minus the place of the subject. The symbolic axis is truncated here, deprived of its continuation toward the position of the subject, the subject position being collapsed into the Other position. The subject's unconscious desire is removed from the game and retracted into the position of the spectator. The analyst must, according to Lacan (2006a, p. 304), get himself recognized "in the spectator, who is invisible from the stage"—in this case, in the spectator who will, after seeing this particular show of seduction, seek to punish the subject.

As Lacan (1994) says in Seminar IV, "The point is to demonstrate what the subject has articulated for this Other spectator that he is unbeknown to himself" (pp. 27–28). In other words, the subject here has to be brought to recognize that, in getting his father and father substitutes to punish him, he is trying to prove something *to himself*.

I shall say something about what he is trying to prove to himself in the next section, but let me indicate first that this does not seem to solve the problem of where to locate the fundamental fantasy itself here: is it in phase one or phase two?

To complicate matters still further, we should note that it is the third phase of the fantasy that

generally disgusts the patient, that provides the patient with the kind of distasteful jouissance we expect a fundamental fantasy to provide. This third phase is obtained from the second, in Freud's model, by a further disguise, or metonymic displacement from one parent to the other, from the father to the mother; in the cases I have worked with, it is obtained, rather, by leaving the agent vague (though it is usually a male figure) and displacing the object of the beating, the new object usually being a child the subject identifies with, at some level.[7]

Hence, we find ourselves in a situation where phase one is the most "original" and presents what seems to be the earliest wish, so to speak, the primal wish; phase two has succumbed to the most repression; and phase three is the one that is most disturbing to the subject when it presents itself in a dream, intrusive thought, or scenario that goes through his mind. All three thus seem to have a claim to the title of fundamental fantasy and should perhaps be viewed more as a unit than as three separate fantasies.

Trying to Prove Something to Oneself

Nevertheless, what seemed to underlie the construction of the entire unit in the analysands I have worked with was the fundamental complaint that the subjects felt unloved or insufficiently loved by their mothers; they were unsure of their mother's love for them. We could hypothesize that in Freud's cases, the male subjects felt unloved or inadequately loved by their fathers. In other words, we might say that what is more basic still than phase one, two, or three is the sense of having been *a victim of neglect* at one of the parent's hands.

This is, indeed, an important facet of the fundamental fantasy in the first place: it props up or sustains the subject's desire in a kind of denial or displacement of this sense of victimization. The fantasy allows him to feel that he was not, in fact, a victim of his mother's neglect; he was very much loved by her, so much that he became a victim at his father's hands (and, by extension, at the hands of other authority figures like his father). What he was trying to prove *to himself*, by getting father figures to punish him, was that his mother really and truly loved him.

If, in a sense, we can say that it is a belief in neglect or a sense of victimization that underlies or subtends the construction of the fantasy, as a kind of zero stage of the fantasy, then we can see that the victimization is displaced from phase zero to phase two where beating enters the picture.

The Male Fantasy (second modification)
Phase zero: My mother does not love me enough: I am a victim of her neglect.
Phase one: I am being seduced by my mother (father witnesses this).
Phase two: I am being beaten—that is, victimized—by my father (because of the seduction).
Phase three: A child is being beaten (usually by a male figure).

This makes sense in terms of Lacan's claim in "Science and Truth" that if the subject has a fundamental fantasy, "it is in the most rigorous sense of the institution of a real that covers (over) the truth" (Lacan, 2006a, p. 873). The child's sense that it is unloved, that it is a victim of neglect, might then be seen here as the truth that is covered over by the elaboration of the fantasy. Fantasy always covers over a fundamental truth, which is not to say that it is a truth found "out there" in "reality"—in other words, none of the child's friends or relatives would necessarily agree that he was neglected or insufficiently loved by his mother (indeed, the child's siblings might even feel he was excessively doted on as their

mother's favorite), nor would supposed objective outside observers. But that would not stop him from feeling that he was! The truth covered over by the fundamental fantasy is a foundational truth constituted by the child's own particular interpretation of the Other's desire, by the child's subjective interpretation of its parents' desires. As such, *it is constitutive of the child's psychical reality*.

The Fundamental Fantasy as an Axiom

How does this mesh with Lacan's thesis in Seminar XIV, *La logique du fantasme* [The Logic of Fantasy] (1966–67), that a fundamental fantasy is an axiom? Note that an axiom, in geometry or set theory, for example, is not something to be proven or demonstrated per se; nevertheless, in conjunction with other axioms and definitions, it generates all of the allowable statements within a certain field. In the Freudian field, an axiom would seem to be something that informs all of the subject's actions and his whole way of seeing the world.

The axiomatic nature of the fundamental fantasy is one of the few conclusions that Lacan draws about the fundamental fantasy in Seminar XIV, which is one of those sneaky seminars in which Lacan talks about myriad ideas and only gets to the topic listed in the seminar's title on the last few pages. According to Lacan there, a fantasy like "A child is being beaten," although it has certain analyzable meanings, functions as an axiom in the analysand's way of seeing the world around him. He sees the world through the lens of this fundamental fantasy.

What this amounts to in the cases I have worked with is that the subject repeatedly comes to see himself as the victim of certain older male figures around him, as always already "in trouble" vis-à-vis these figures, as always already having done something wrong for which he is about to be punished, even if he cannot say what it is that he has done wrong.[8] This tends to color his whole world.

However, we should not be misled into thinking that just because a particular fundamental fantasy functions for a subject as an axiom prior to analysis that it has to continue to function as an axiom as the analysis proceeds. Psychoanalysis has an effect not only upon the patient's everyday fantasies, but also upon the patient's axioms. It seems to me that we have to be careful not to conclude about any particular fantasy that it is a fantasy for all time; indeed, I would be tempted to suggest that by the time an analysand has brought out most of the elements of a fundamental fantasy, it has already begun to change and give way to something else. This is a regular feature of psychoanalytic work, whereby the analysand is far more able to articulate something that no longer has the same hold upon him anymore than to articulate something that he is still thoroughly in the grips of.

To forge an analogy between one's psychical framework and other fields, we may recall that there are multiple geometries possible: there is Euclidean geometry and there are non-Euclidean geometries, and their axioms are different. The same is true in set theory: there is not one set theory, but rather multiple set theories; and there has been tremendous debate since the origin of set theory regarding which axioms should be accepted into the theory and which should not. We might say, in a facile manner, that the traversing or reconfiguration of fantasy is like a changing of axioms: it requires the subject to leave behind his Euclidean geometry in favor of a form of non-Euclidean geometry (or vice versa). The traversing of fantasy thus requires a shift in systems, a shift in the premises that underpin or subtend one's way of seeing and acting or failing to act in the world. In the cases I have been discussing, it requires a change in the interpretation one made as a child of the Other's desire.

Fantasy is the Other's Desire

> Once we posit [fantasy as the Other's desire], we find fantasy's two terms split apart, as it were: the first, in the case of the obsessive, inasmuch as he negates the Other's desire, forming his fantasy in such a way as to accentuate the impossibility of the subject vanishing, the second, in the case of the hysteric, inasmuch as desire is sustained in fantasy only by the lack of satisfaction the hysteric brings desire by slipping away as its object.
>
> These features are confirmed by the obsessive's fundamental need to be the Other's guarantor, and by the Faithlessness of hysterical intrigue.
>
> —Lacan, 2006a, p. 824

To back up in time to one of Lacan's earlier statements about the fundamental fantasy, let me recall to mind that in 1960, in "Subversion of the Subject," Lacan (2006a, p. 824) claims that fantasy is the Other's desire. How can we understand that claim in this context? Clearly, insofar as the Other's desire is expressed (between the lines) in speech, it has no exact referent or signification and must be interpreted.

We may at times get the impression that, according to psychoanalytic theory, when a child is neglected or insufficiently attended to by its mother, it *immediately concludes* that this is because of the mother's interest in the father and ultimately because of her interest in the phallus associated with the father, the phallus being something that the child feels he himself cannot provide her.

Here I think we can see that this is not necessarily the first interpretation the child makes and certainly not the only possible one. Another conclusion is possible that forestalls the quest to fathom what the father has that the child does not have that attracts the mother so, forestalling thereby full instatement of the phallus as the signifier of the mother's desire. In other words, I need not conclude that my mother prefers my father to me because he has something that I do not have; I can interpret her desire as truly for me but as thwarted in its true aim because of my father's intervention.

Phase one (in the male fantasy, second modification) then provides a wishful interpretation of my *mother's* desire that is flattering to me, and phase two provides an interpretation of my *father's* desire that is flattering to me, and doubly so, in that it confirms phase one—that is, it confirms that my mother's desire is for me—and suggests that my father recognizes me as a serious rival for my mother's affections.

This fantasy construction can then be seen as an interpretation of the Other's desire, elaborated in such a way as to put a very favorable spin on it. Perhaps not unsurprisingly, patients with such beating fantasies sometimes come to analysis in the belief that the analysis will help them remember some traumatic childhood event that explains those child beating fantasies, some primal scene witnessed or some real seduction that involved them directly. Instead we see here how beating fantasies can arise, not as the direct result of some traumatic event(s), but as a particular kind of interpretation of the Other's desire.

This might be understood to corroborate Lacan's claim in "Subversion of the Subject" that the obsessive needs "to be the Other's guarantor" (Lacan, 2006a, p. 824), for he himself gives consistency here to the Other's desire, tying both parents' variable and at times contradictory desires into a nice neat package. This construction also corroborates Lacan's claim that the fundamental fantasy, as an algorithm, constitutes an "absolute signification" (p. 816), for it grounds the subject's entire way of seeing the world around him: he sees women he is interested in as not available to him because of some other man's intervention and sees older men as wanting to punish him for his primal crime of having seduced or having been seduced by his mother. This signification is found repeatedly in virtually all circumstances and situations.

Not surprisingly, such subjects generally avoid putting the mother's desire to the test. Any woman who comes to take on the importance of the mother as an object of the subject's desire has to be kept at a certain distance; for the obsessive's desire is for impossibility, as Lacan (2006a, p. 632) puts it in

"Direction of the Treatment"—that is, for a situation in which a woman remains inaccessible. Should she become accessible, he would have to deal with what is unfathomable in her desire, which goes far beyond what he has made of her desire through his wishful interpretation. In other words, one of the symptomatic consequences of this fundamental fantasy may be an inability to realize when a woman is interested in him and to act on it; or if he can, an unwillingness to put her love to the test and a compulsion to leave her before she could possibly leave him.

Is this for fear of re-encountering the truth—the foundational sense of being neglected or insufficiently loved by a woman—that has been covered over by the fantasy?

The Fundamental Fantasy as ($\$ \lozenge a$)

How do these myriad statements about fantasy fit with Lacan's formula for fantasy, ($\$ \lozenge a$), and the various avatars of object *a* he enumerates: the gaze, the voice, the breast, the imaginary phallus, the turd, the urinary flow, the phoneme, and the nothing (Lacan, 2006a, p. 817)? With this matheme, Lacan suggests that the fundamental fantasy presents the subject in some kind of relationship to the object that causes his or her desire. Such fantasies are sometimes fairly easy to extract from writers' accounts of their own analyses, and I will briefly discuss two examples from texts that I occasionally teach.

In Dan Gunn's *Wool-Gathering* (2002), a recent account of the last month of an analysis, we see the author particularly captivated by the way in which a woman "turns," as he says. It seems clear from the various contexts in which he mentions this turning that what especially grabs him is the way in which a woman turns her gaze away from him to look at something or someone else. This suggests that it is a woman's gaze that functions for him as object *a*, particularly when that gaze shifts from looking at him to looking at someone else, when it shifts from making him fade as a subject to indicating the Other's desire as a desire for something or someone else. When her gaze is directed at him, it is a manifestation of the Other's desire and is threatening to him—"What does she want, what does she want from me?" he wonders anxiously. As an obsessive, he is inclined to imagine the worst, and he fades in the presence of that gaze. When her gaze is directed elsewhere, he is relieved because he can conclude: she wants that other thing or person.

This fantasy can easily be understood to include much of the Oedipal problematic: the analysand's father died at an early age, leaving him quite alone with his mother. He makes it clear that he felt smothered in many ways by his mother and was ever on the lookout for manifestations of her desire for something other than him, for another man, for example. Only that would allow him to avoid feeling he was nothing but an object of her enjoyment or jouissance. This fantasy, then, is closely tied to his own possibility of coming into being as a subject separate from the Other's jouissance.

Although Lacan's formula for the fundamental fantasy often seems to better characterize obsessives than hysterics, the next example, from Marie Cardinal's *Les mots pour le dire* (1975), published in English as *The Words To Say It* (1983), seems to illustrate its usefulness in hysteria as well. In this slightly fictionalized, autobiographical account of a long-term psychoanalysis, we see the author captivated in numerous dreams by a man who is in close proximity to her but does not look at her. In some cases she is dancing the tango with him, and he is looking away from her, as one often does in the tango, a dance that seems to be perfectly designed to demonstrate that desire is fundamentally and inescapably for something else. In other cases, a knight in shining armor is riding around her on horseback, and she knows that he is very interested in her and yet he looks away.

Marie tells us that she could not stand it when she was alone with her father and he lavished all of his

attention on her: it was too much for her. This was perhaps overwhelming to her because of her mother's comments about what a licentious playboy he was. Rather than see his desire for her as an explicitly sexual desire that he might want to satisfy with her, she was no doubt more comfortable in situations in which she saw him with other women, situations in which she could imagine that his desire for her was for something other than what he wanted from the "sluts" or "loose women," as her mother called them, that he spent time with. His looking elsewhere, even as he was in her presence, seems to come to serve as the cause of her own desire.

Marie's father, who was a thorn in her mother's side, and an important figure in her mother's discourse despite his rare physical presence in her life, served as a slight barrier between her mother and herself, but his desire had to point the way for Marie's own desire rather than appear to find satisfaction in her. It seems fairly clear that she pursued academics at his bidding and excelled in the study of mathematics due to identification with her father's background in engineering (this material, included in the 1975 French edition, is curiously omitted from the English translation). In this sense, she identified at the level of desire with the man who served as a constant thorn in her mother's side, who seemed to serve to make her mother miserable.

I am not trying to suggest that these particular fantasies are necessarily the truly fundamental fantasies in such cases; rather, these strike me as possible fundamental fantasies, and certainly as fundamental fantasies that we find in other cases. Nor am I trying to suggest that we can always and reliably discern fundamental fantasies in fictionalized accounts of analysis, although it strikes me that the authors of such accounts often misrecognize their own fundamental fantasies and do not even think of trying to disguise these particular aspects of their psychic life.

Nor, furthermore, am I trying to suggest that there is always a fundamental fantasy that can be distilled in each and every person. The very notion of the fundamental fantasy corresponds to a particular moment or era in Lacan's work—a moment that lasted longer than certain others, but that is not necessarily Lacan's last word on subjective structure.

This paper was given at the APW conference held at Duquesne University on May 16–18, 2003, on the theme "Fundamental Fantasies: *Écrits* and After." An earlier version of the paper appeared in Turkish in the huge special issue on Lacan (Lacan Özel Sayisi) published in Turkish in *MonoKL, 6–7*(2009), 388–98.

Notes

1 One might think that some of Lacan's formulas for little Hans's phobia in Seminar IV, *La relation d'objet* ["The Relation to the Object"] *(1956–1957)*, lead up to the matheme $\$ \lozenge a$, such as I(σp°), where I stands for the signifier around which Hans's horse phobia is organized, σ designates something that is symbolized, and p° stands for that which is symbolized—in this case, the absence of the father (Lacan, 1994, p. 346). Yet a number of the mathemes that Lacan provides in Seminar IV are based on his formula for metaphor in "The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious" (Lacan, 2006a, p. 515) and are actually variations on the paternal metaphor (p. 557). One could say that the mathemes in Seminar IV are designed to write or characterize the phobic symptom itself, and not a fantasy per se. Symptom and fantasy begin as separate notions and remain separate notions throughout Lacan's work.

2 Lacan's critique of Klein's notion of phantasy precisely parallels his critique in Seminar IV (Lacan, 1994) of the notion of transference in much of Kleinian theory and object relations theory: "There is, in fact, an imaginary element and a symbolic element in the transference, and there is thus a choice to be made" (p. 135) in how we take it up. In this context, Lacan means that we could choose to focus exclusively on the imaginary dimension of the transference—rivalry and aggression versus identification, for example—but it is, in his view, more productive for analytic treatment to focus on the symbolic dimension of the transference. Note that in Seminar I he asserts that transference "involves several registers: the symbolic, the imaginary, and the real" (Lacan, 1988a, pp. 112–13).

3 Cf. the discussion of one-body or two-body versus three-term conceptualizations of the transference situation (and of the psychoanalytic setting in general) in Chapter 2 of the present volume.

4 See my extensive discussions of alienation and separation in Fink (1990, 1995a, and 1997). Note that, throughout his translation of Lacan's (1978a) Seminar XI, Alan Sheridan mistakenly translates Lacan's set-theoretical term *réunion* (union) as "joining."

5 For an exception, see Lacan (2005, pp. 23–25).

6 For but one of many possible examples, see the case of "The Freud Man" in Chapter 13 of the present collection.

7 In the modified male fantasy, the second phase is obtained from the first by changing the sex of the agent and inverting loving into beating. Perhaps more intermediary steps could be introduced if we wanted there to be only one inversion each time; for example, phase 1.1 could be either "I am being seduced by my father" or "I am being beaten by my mother."

8 And should the need to feel he is in trouble find too few props in his everyday life, the subject is usually quite adept at finding ways—if only through acts of omission—to get into trouble. In certain cases, the analysand "forgets" to pay bills (telephone, mortgage, car insurance, condo fees, etc.), to have his car inspected, to prepare and file tax returns, and so on, leading "the Man" to come looking for him.

4

THE ETHICS OF PSYCHOANALYSIS

One of the most popular terms in psychology today is the adjective "inappropriate." In every clinic, at every case conference, we hear that "the client presented with inappropriate affect," "the client was inappropriate," and so on. If I am not mistaken, this usage is relatively recent and warrants reflection. What is appropriate affect? What makes someone's affective state appropriate or inappropriate? And what is it that that person's affect is appropriate to or for?

"Appropriate" is presumably not meant in some Platonic sense as a universal, immutable quality or characteristic of an emotion: most psychologists who use this term would not claim, I suspect, that they are saying that manifesting a certain affect is inappropriate in every circumstance, in every single place on earth, in every culture, and in every historical era. Yet, they are claiming that, in their specific historical time and place on earth, certain affects are always inappropriate in certain circumstances—for example, in clinics or hospitals, or in the therapeutic setting. If a patient becomes verbally aggressive during a therapy session, many therapists are quick to tax him or her with inappropriate behavior. But isn't it often simply an ordinary transference response, reflecting the way the patient tended to deal with one or both parents, or a negative reaction by the patient to a certain approach to therapy being adopted by the therapist? How can anything that occurs in the therapy setting be considered inappropriate? If the patient throws a vase out the therapist's window, isn't that telling? Isn't it, in fact, telling of what the therapist has not allowed or not brought the patient to express in some other way?

The patient's behavior here could be understood as "acting out"—*not* in the thoroughly degraded sense the term has taken on in contemporary practice, where it means no more than "acting badly," but rather in the psychoanalytic sense in which it is not construed as "the patient's fault." For "acting out" has to do with things the patient finds it impossible or unpleasant to say, or with what the therapist is not enabling the patient to say or come to grips with through speech. Alternatively, the patient's behavior here could be understood as resistance, which, as Lacan (2006a, p. 595) says, is ultimately the analyst's resistance to doing or saying something to keep the analysand talking, and talking about what counts (as he puts it, "there is no other resistance to analysis than that of the analyst himself"). I would be tempted to say that there are no inappropriate affects in therapy; there are only inappropriate ways of practicing therapy. This is not to deny the existence of people who, regardless of the technique employed, are neither ready nor willing to engage in genuinely therapeutic work. But for those who are ready and willing, there's no such thing as an inappropriate affect—affects simply are.

To my mind, terms like "appropriate" and "inappropriate" are signs that a good deal of contemporary psychology has enlisted itself in the service of conventional morality and norms, devoting itself to molding patients' behavior so that it will be appropriate to modern-day working conditions and

prevailing values. The patient who displays "appropriate affect" in therapy is thought to be likely to go on to display "appropriate behavior" at home, in the work place, and in society at large. Psychology reveals, in its ever-greater use of such terms, that it is quite thoroughly engaged in the task of making individuals conform to widespread social, cultural, political, and economic norms. As Lacan (2006a, p. 859) says in his usual no-holds-barred way, "psychology [...] has discovered a way to outlive itself by providing services to the technocracy." And as he says in his 1959–60 Seminar, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* (Lacan, 1992), psychology, like a number of the other emerging "human sciences"—such as sociology, anthropology, and so on—has enrolled in the service of goods, has become "a branch of the service of goods" (p. 324), working in the service of a society in which the commodity is king.

In so doing, much of psychotherapeutic practice—not all, of course, for there are notable exceptions—has simply adopted the moral and cultural values of the "society at large," if indeed there is such a thing. Lacan was critical of the fact that the analysts who came to America before or during World War II often adapted psychoanalytic practice in such a way as to conform to values then prevalent in American culture. Indeed, Lacan even criticizes Anna Freud, who did not emigrate to America, for referring to such criteria as "the achievement of a higher income" to suggest that an analysis she had conducted had been successful (Lacan, 2006a, p. 604). Psychoanalysts themselves began to promise patients social and economic success, and to adapt their practice in such a way as to attempt to foster such goals in analysis.

In other words, not just much of psychology, but even much of psychoanalysis seems to have adopted the goal of helping the patient perform better in the society of goods, in our present form of consumer capitalism (some call it "post-capitalism"). The patient must be helped to overcome obstacles standing in the way of his improved concentration in the work arena, in the way of getting along with his superiors, subordinates, and colleagues, and thus in the way of his getting a bigger piece of the pie *for himself* (for those close to him as well, of course).

A survey was recently conducted at Cornell University regarding the correlation between salary and neuroticism among corporate managers (reported on in *BusinessWeek*, July 27, 1998). Managers perceived to be slightly more neurotic than the mean by their coworkers were on average paid $15,756 less per year—confirming Freud's (1958b) claim that "nothing in life is so expensive as illness" (except, perhaps, getting involved with a White House intern and then lying about it before a Grand Jury—I am not saying it happened, just that it would be costly; anyway, such activities could well fall under the heading of neurosis). Nevertheless, I do not think one could plausibly argue that Freud's main concern in treatment was strictly pragmatic, devoted to helping the patient earn a bigger piece of the pie. His technique seems to have been largely dedicated to the revelation of desire—the uncovering of those wishes the patient had been keeping out of sight and out of mind.

The first point, then, that I would make about the ethics of psychoanalysis is that it concerns the analysand's desire. This desire obviously affects every facet of the analysand's life, but *analysis' first task is to attend to desire itself.*

Now, *human desire is very unwieldy, unruly, and unmanageable.* First of all, we spend a great deal of time and energy pretending that what we want is not really what we want and keeping our desire out of sight—keeping it from others and from ourselves. If and when it is pointed out to us by others, we vigorously deny its existence.

Second, Lacan teaches us that our desire is such a precious thing to us that when faced with the possibility of its satisfaction, we often run the other way, preferring to remain unsatisfied so as to keep our desire alive—in other words, there is a certain satisfaction in simply going on desiring. Satisfaction of desire has a tendency to make the desire disappear, and we often prefer the tension itself of desire to its satisfaction. Freud refers to this, in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (Freud, 1958a, pp. 148–49), as the wish

for "an unfulfilled wish."

Third, the desires we uncover in ourselves in the course of analytic treatment sometimes seem foreign to us, not really our own. As Lacan puts it, our desires are in fact initially the Other's desire: as infants we want what our little brothers and sisters have, even if we would not know what to do with it; and as we grow up, our desire models itself on our parents' desire and on the desire of others around us. This is why we often find ourselves inhabited by the desires of the previous generation, wanting what our parents seem to have wanted, certain configurations of desire being passed on in this way from generation to generation. As we uncover those desires in dreams and fantasies, we may well feel they are alien, foreign, other—not our own. Unconscious desire is foreign desire; it is desire we do not easily recognize as our own. As Lacan often says, "the unconscious is the Other's discourse" (see, for example, Lacan, 2006a, pp. 16 and 379): it consists of other people's speech about what they wanted. "How did their discourse and their desire get inside of us," we wonder, "and how can we get rid of it?"

Given the fact that desire is, by its very nature, the Other's desire—given that "desire comes from the Other" (Lacan, 2006a, p. 853)—how am I to know what *I* really want? Indeed, who is this "I" whose desire I seek to determine? A good part of the work of analysis involves a sifting of what I myself want from what others around me wanted—their desire may in fact disgust me and yet contain the secret of my own fondest longings. Not that these are absolutely separable, but the hope is that I may make certain of the desires that inhabit me my own.

While psychoanalysis does not, I think, take it as an immediate aim to change the analysand's desire, an inevitable part of the work of analysis consists of sifting through the desires one is inhabited by, and finding one's own way in the terrain laid out in advance by others.

Desire and Guilt

Let me turn now to the relationship between desire and guilt. It would seem to be widely accepted that acting on one's desire often brings on guilt. If, for example, my momentary or longstanding desire is to humiliate someone who has humiliated me, and a situation finally presents itself in which I am able to do so, my moral sense of right and wrong may kick in after I do so and make me feel guilty for having stooped to the morality of "an eye for an eye." Lacan (1992), however, makes a surprising comment about guilt in Seminar VII, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*. He claims conversely that *guilt arises precisely when I do not act on my desire*: when, for example, I let slip by the occasion to express my hostility or swallow my pride instead of lashing out.

We have to distinguish here between guilt and regret. Regret may be what I feel after I humiliate this person and start thinking about what the fallout might be—maybe he will try to strike back, maybe what I did will get back to someone I would not want to know about it, maybe I "shoulda woulda coulda" done things differently. This does not make me feel guilty—at some level I am still happy about what I did. Guilt is not cut of the same fabric as this. "The only thing one can be guilty of," says Lacan, "is giving up on one's desire" (Lacan, 1992, p. 319).

In this same context, Lacan talks about what leads people to give up on their desire, or to give ground when it comes to their desire—in other words, to give precedence to someone else's desire over their own. Sometimes, he suggests, it is done in order to "do good," that is, with some idea of doing what is right. "Doing things in the name of the good," Lacan (1992) says,

> and even more in the name of the good of other people, is something that is far from protecting us not only from guilt but also from all kinds of inner catastrophes. To be precise, it does not protect us from neurosis and its consequences.
>
> (p. 319)

Indeed, as Freud discovered very early on in his work with hysterics, neurosis results precisely from the repeated attempt to squelch one's own desire in order to do good, to do what one believes to be the right thing, to obey the dictates of one's superego. The superego is one of the most paradoxical facets of the human psyche: it plagues those who are most preoccupied with doing the right thing more than those who are not; it is most severe and unrelenting with those whose behavior is the most upright (Freud, 1961a, pp. 125–28). As Lacan says, "Whoever attempts to submit to the moral law sees the demands of his superego grow increasingly fastidious and cruel" (Lacan, 1992, p. 176). In effect, the superego takes pleasure in berating the ego even when the ego is doing as much as possible to keep id impulses under control. A vicious cycle develops in which some of the id's aggressive energy is satisfied by the superego's attacks on the ego.

A person's supposed desire to do good must then be viewed with a certain amount of suspicion: the person is often deriving at least one supplemental satisfaction from so-called "good works." Let me provide an example from my clinical practice. One of my analysands had for several years viewed a certain man in his graduate program as a "pompous ass" and a "jerk," and fantasized about saying it to his face. The occasion presented itself, the analysand thought about doing so, but then backed away. Later, feeling guilty even though he had not said anything, he told me that he backed away because it "wouldn't have accomplished anything," but also that he "felt good that he'd been able to control himself"—in other words, it allowed him the narcissistic satisfaction of feeling superior to the "jerk." He nevertheless went on to say that he would "never forgive" himself for having missed the opportunity—in

other words, he intended to take an ostensibly counterintuitive satisfaction in forever castigating himself for not having said anything. Such personal gains clearly call into question the value of the supposedly "morally superior" solution of backing away; and the guilt the analysand felt over this need not be seen as owing to his having had "evil thoughts" of telling the guy off, but rather to having given up on his own desire, having shied away from a long-awaited confrontation.

If there is an ethical injunction to be distilled here in the psychoanalytic context, it is: "Avoid guilt, for it leads to neurosis!" Do not act in accordance with what you believe to be the good of your fellow man or woman: act in accordance with your own desire. For your guilt disappears, *not* when your therapist hugs you and repeats over and over that "it's not your fault"—this is what Robin Williams does with his "patient" in *Good Will Hunting*. As nice as that might feel momentarily, *guilt only truly disappears through a kind of human action: through a lifelong approach to acting on the basis of your own desire.*

It should be kept in mind that Lacan is not talking here about clinical structures in which guilt does not enter the picture and in which the analysand never feels constrained by any moral strictures whatsoever; this discussion does not apply to psychopaths, for example.

In many respects, Lacan is doing no more here than restating what Freud (1961a) says in Chapter 7 of *Civilization and Its Discontents*. There Freud tells us that when someone gives up on satisfying a certain drive—an aggressive impulse, for example (that is, in fact, the example he provides)—he or she nevertheless feels guilty because the wish to give in to that impulse persists in the mind and the superego takes cognizance of it. He adds that the energy of the unsatisfied drive is then transferred to the superego, which uses it against the ego. This economic principle strikes Freud as so constant that he says, "we should be tempted to defend the paradoxical statement that conscience is the result of instinctual renunciation" (pp. 128–29). Stated a bit more simply, guilt feelings result from giving up on one's drives; a guilty conscience is the result of giving ground when it comes to one's drives.

Lacan's conclusion that "Guilt results when you give up on your desire" is obviously very close to Freud's here. Indeed, Freud's formulation reminds us that Lacan later modifies his conclusion somewhat (Lacan, 2006a, pp. 851–54), essentially saying that guilt results when you do not pursue the satisfaction of your drives. Lacan himself had told us that human desire already tends to *avoid* satisfaction in order to go on desiring, and thus his shift in the early to mid-1960s to a concern with the drives essentially marks a renewed emphasis on *satisfaction* itself. We might say that unlike Freud, Lacan seems to make a prescription out of it: "Don't give up on your desire," or more precisely, "Don't give ground when it comes to your drive satisfaction."

Reality and "The Good"

When Lacan tells us not to "act in accordance with what we believe to be the good of our fellow man or woman," it is similar to the injunction he formulates in Seminar VIII, *Transference* (Lacan, 2001a), regarding the analyst's role; he says that the analyst must not aim at what he or she considers to be the analysand's own good, but rather at the analysand's greater Eros. Eros is obviously a much broader term than desire, including love, pleasure, and the satisfaction of the drives. The general idea is thus that treatment conducted to achieve what the analyst believes to be for the good of the analysand will always be limited by the analyst's own biases, beliefs, prejudices, and personal perspectives (whether political, religious, theoretical, or whatever). Whereas analysands are prone to give ground when it comes to their Eros—that is, the analyst aims at getting them to stop doing so.

It is, after all, elementary prudence for the analyst to conduct treatment in accordance with what he or

she knows something about, and Lacan suggests that, like Socrates, the only thing the analyst can rightfully claim to know something about is Eros—that is, about human desire, or to put it differently, about the three passions: love, hate, and ignorance, the latter including the many ways in which we try to avoid knowing anything about love and hate. It would seem to be sheer prudence for the analyst to direct the treatment for the analysand's greater Eros. (As Lacan says, we are not there for the patient's good, but "in order that he love"; Lacan, 2001a, p. 25.)

For when it comes to the analysand's good, the analyst is no better equipped to know it than the analysand's girlfriend, priest, personal trainer, or ballet instructor. After all, *one's good*—if, in fact, any sort of coherent account of the good can be given—*is always correlated with one's world*, and what the analyst knows is the world of the analysand's discourse, not the specifics of the social-economic world the analysand functions within. At least, the analyst knows them little better than those who live with the analysand day in and day out.

This has not stopped certain analysts from believing they are there to help their poor analysands stop living in a fantasy world, and see reality more clearly—in their terminology, acquire better "reality contact." In many cases, the contemporary therapist's notion of "reality contact" seems no more profound than shaking the client and telling him to "Wake up and smell the coffee! I know how the world works and it doesn't work the way you seem to think it does."

This is a far cry from Freud's subtle and complex distinction between the pleasure principle—which, in its search for instant gratification, is inclined to short-circuit in the form of daydreaming and hallucination—and the reality principle, which, as Lacan shows in Seminar VII, has to do with taking notice of signs of our own internal states. We become aware of what is going on inside of ourselves by hearing ourselves speak, react, cry out, and so on. The reality we come into contact with, according to Freud's texts, is our own psychical reality—in other words, the reality of the way in which perceptions and language mesh in the psyche. I will not go into the details of Freud's description of the reality principle in "Project for a Scientific Psychology" (Freud, 1966) and in Chapter 7 of *The Interpretation of Dreams* (Freud, 1958a), and of Lacan's elaborate discussion of it in Seminar VII, as I feel it would take us too far afield here. One thing that becomes clear upon close examination, however, is that it is not about the testing of external reality in some sort of direct, unmediated way, but rather about getting clues about what is going on within own our psyches by reading the *speech* that comes out of our own mouths and out of other peoples' mouths.

The point here is that Freud never said, to the best of my knowledge, that the analyst, by having gone through her own analysis, sees the external world more clearly or has better reality contact than the analysand—and Lacan says that we all continue, even after analysis, to see reality through the lense of our fantasy, changed as that fantasy may be by the end of analysis. Rather, what the analyst should have acquired, by going through her own analysis, is a better sense of her own psychical reality—that is, of the desires and drives that inhabit her, and how they affect the work she does with her analysands.

Analysis does not enjoin us to "*take our desires for reality*," in the sense of the 1960s graffiti slogan, but rather *to come to grips with the specific reality of desire*. It enjoins us to stop putting our desires aside, stop putting them on hold so as to get on with our projects in the workaday world. The reality we deal with in analysis and explore is that of the unconscious desires that are the mainspring of our actions and moods, unbeknown to ourselves—that is, "the reality that is there at our very core" (Lacan, 1992, p. 26). This does not take the form of an injunction made by the analyst to the analysand, which the analysand might then not live up to and regarding which he could be accused of not trying hard enough. Coming to grips with the specific reality of desire is not a voluntaristic principle that one can execute if one just wants to strongly enough. Instead, there are very real constraints that are usually stopping the analysand

from acting on her desire.

In the course of his work, Lacan moves away from the term "reality," eventually introducing the term "real," which he defines as that which always returns to the same place. In psychical reality, the real is what we keep coming back to over and over, keep acting on again and again, or keep shying away from without knowing why, and without being able to do anything about it. The real is, in other words, our symptomatic behaviors and affects that are always based on the same unconscious desire, love, or hatred, the same unconscious motive or motor force. The latter is the only kind of "reality" the analyst is equipped to bring the analysand into contact with.

This implies an ethics in psychoanalysis of grappling with psychical reality, of coming to terms with unconscious desire with all its ambiguities, ambivalences, and aporias.

The Paradox of Jouissance

Lacan takes this at least one step further when he explores the paradoxical fact that our pleasure is often greater when it involves a transgression or breaking of a law. This it is not simply a pleasure that falls under the pleasure principle, but a pleasure that must overcome an internal obstacle, a pleasure that goes beyond the pleasure principle. In this realm, we may indeed pursue courses that are not at all pleasurable, in the ordinary sense of the term, but that nevertheless provide a kind of satisfaction Lacan terms "jouissance"—a satisfaction taken in doing things we know are supposed to be "bad" for us or for others.

Lacan (1992, p. 193) refers to the deriving of satisfaction from what is believed to be bad for ourselves and/or others as the "paradox of jouissance," reminding us that it is a paradox Socrates tried to get around by suggesting that it is impossible to know the good and not act in accordance with it. In other words, Socrates tried to resolve the paradox by suggesting that such a person's *knowledge* of the good must be deficient. Aristotle tried to resolve the paradox by suggesting that such a person must make an error of judgment, not regarding the universal statement, "it is good to taste what is sweet," but rather regarding the particular statement, "this particular thing is sweet." According to Aristotle, therein must lie the error introduced into the moral syllogism.

Analysts must not believe they can dispense with the paradox of jouissance by simply taxing the subject who operates in this paradoxical way with "perversion," for this modus operandi is at the very crux of a great deal of neurotic behavior—as, for example, in the case of the neurotic who speeds down the road precisely when he has nowhere pressing to go, who shoplifts precisely when she has plenty of money in her pocket, and so on.

This paradox has to do with the intimate relationship between desire and the Law, a relationship Lacan explores at great length in his work. In *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, he cites Saint Paul's *Epistle to the Romans* 7:7, where we see that the relationship between sin and law was already apparent to the early Church fathers: "I can only know sin by means of the Law. Indeed, I would never have thought to covet had the Law not said 'Thou shalt not covet.'" The very idea of sin and the attractiveness of doing what is sinful are themselves created by the Law. There is no desire, strictly speaking, without prohibition, for it is only when my interest in something is thwarted or prohibited that I can truly be said to begin to *desire* it. To call perverted or morally debase patients who are particularly attracted by the very thing they cannot have, by the very thing that is forbidden or illegal, is simply to ignore the very nature of desire.

The Law can, in fact, be understood to bring into being the only thing that might correspond in psychoanalysis to what is called the Sovereign Good in philosophy: the supreme good constituted by the Law that prohibits incest—that is, Mom. Lacan never uses the term "good" in his own conception of psychoanalytic ethics, but says if there is such a thing as the Good in psychoanalysis, it is Mom. She is brought into being as the Sovereign Good precisely when our early bodily access to her is restricted or even denied. Lacan gives her a couple of other nicknames as well: "the Thing" with a capital T (suggesting that she is the most important thing), *das Ding* (a term meaning "the Thing" in German) found in a number of Freud's texts, and even "the Freudian Thing."

Given that we desire precisely what is prohibited, how can psychoanalysis claim to aim at a total reconciliation or harmonization of our desires? If our most deeply rooted desire is for what we cannot have, how can psychoanalysis blithely offer solutions to the dilemma of human desire?

Freud and certain other analysts looked to sublimation as a way to satisfy that strongest of all desires with a different object. Freud provides several different accounts of sublimation, and Lacan suggests that sublimation involves elevating an ordinary object to the status of the Thing. I will not go into the discussion of sublimation here, except to say that it is a theoretically thorny area, but an important one if

we are to avoid falling into the rut of the so-called "solutions" to the paradox of human desire and satisfaction offered by many contemporary psychologists and psychoanalysts. Let me try to say something about that rut now, and take up Lacan's critique of it in his work spanning the 1960s and 1970s.

Harmony Between the Sexes?

Despite Freud's pessimism regarding the perfectibility of human relations, many analysts return again and again to a belief in an achievable, perfect harmony between the sexes. This notion corresponds, in the history of thought, to what might be called a *prescientific* belief, and differs considerably from knowledge in a modern scientific context. Psychoanalysts, Lacan claims, keep slipping into all kinds of prescientific constructs, all kinds of simplistic forms of pseudo-science and age-old philosophical notions.

Antiquity's view of the world was based on a fantasy, Lacan suggests—the fantasy of a pre-existing harmony between mind (*nous*) and the world (Lacan, 1998a, p. 128), between what man thinks and the world he thinks about, between the relations between the words with which he talks about the world and the relations existing in the world itself. Modern science has rather decisively broken with this notion, presuming, if anything, the inadequacy of our preexisting language to deal with nature and the need for new concepts, words, and formulations.

Now the fantasy that characterized Antiquity's view of the world goes quite far, according to Lacan (1998a): it is—and I do not think he was the first to say so—all about copulation (p. 82), all an elaborate metaphor for relations between the sexes. Form penetrates or inseminates matter; form is active and matter passive; there *is* a relationship, a fundamental relationship, between form and matter, active and passive, the male principle and the female principle. All knowledge at that time participated, in Lacan's words, "in the fantasy of an inscription of the sexual link" (p. 82), in the fantasy that there is such a thing as a sexual relationship (Lacan emphatically denies that there is such a thing; for an explanation of what he means by that see Fink, 1995a) and that this link or relationship is verified all around us. The relation between knowledge and the world was understood on the model of copulation.

While it might seem unthinkable that such a fantasy could be at work in psychoanalysis today, my sense is that it is alive and well. A great many analysts and psychotherapists fervently believe that a harmonious relationship between the sexes *must be* possible! This view is based on what is thought to be a teleological perspective in Freud's work that supposedly grows out of the "progression" of libidinal stages known as the oral, anal, and genital stages. Whereas in the oral and anal stages, the child relates to partial objects, not to another person as a whole, in the genital stage, certain post-Freudian analysts have claimed that the child relates to another person as a whole person, not as a collection of partial objects.

I do not think you could find any such claim in Freud's work, but a thick volume entitled *La psychanalyse d'aujourd'hui* ("Contemporary Psychoanalysis" [Nacht, 1956]) was devoted to such notions in France, in which a whole generation of analysts put forward the idea that when one successfully reaches the genital stage, a perfectly harmonious state is reached in which one takes one's sexual partner as a subject, not an object, as a Kantian end-in-himself or herself, not as a means to an end. The crowning achievement of this stage is that one becomes what they call "oblative"—one becomes truly altruistic, that is, capable of doing things for another person without any thought of the advantages it may bring to oneself. (I discussed earlier the dubious moral virtues of doing things for the "good" of another person.)

Had that generation of analysts ever seen anything of the sort? It would be hard to believe. Nevertheless, they did not hesitate to postulate such a perfect state of harmony between the sexes and of

the total elimination of narcissism and selfishness, and to push genital relations as selfless, and oral and anal relations as selfish in their work with their analysands. Even though no one had ever seen such a thing, *it had to exist*.

In other words, it was a fantasy distorting psychoanalytic theory and practice. I doubt anyone needs to be reminded that a similar fantasy is at work in contemporary psychology, at least in its most popular forms: the absolute bestselling pop-psychology book of all time, *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus*. The title itself seems promising, suggesting that there is *nothing that predestines men and women for complementary relations*; but everything in the book after the first two chapters is designed to help the reader overcome difference and establish *the oneness (or One) that has to be*, the harmonious unity that the age-old fantasy requires.

Lacan's goal is to eliminate all such fantasies from psychoanalytic theory and practice. The elimination of such fantasies, especially insofar as they hamper the subject's attainable Eros, could, I think, be understood as part of the ethics of psychoanalysis.

The fantasy of complementarity is part and parcel of the notion of the harmony of the circle or sphere —that is, of the notion that the circle or sphere was the most perfect, complete of shapes. In Plato's *Symposium*, Aristophanes puts forward the view that once we were all spherical beings lacking in nothing, but Zeus split us in two, and now we are all in search of our other half. We divided beings yearn to be grafted back together, failing which we at least find relief in each other's arms (thanks to Zeus having taken pity on us and turned our private parts around to the inside). As Aristophanes says, "Love thus seeks to refind our early estate, endeavoring to combine two into one and heal the human wound." Love is what can make good the primordial split, and harmony can be achieved thereby.

A great deal of ancient cosmology and astronomy up until Kepler's time was based on the fantasy of the perfection of the sphere, and much "scientific" work was devoted to *saving the truth* (*salva veritate*) by showing how the noncircular motion of heavenly bodies could be explained on the basis of movement in accordance with that shape of shapes, the circle. Epicycles were employed even by Copernicus, and thus the Copernican revolution was not as Copernican as all that. All Copernicus said was, if we put the sun at the center of the world, we can simpli-fy the calculations—which in that case meant something like reducing from 60 epicycles to 30.

According to Lacan, it is not such a move, which keeps entirely intact the notions of center and periphery, that can constitute a revolution: things keep revolving just as before. It is the introduction by Kepler of a not-so-perfect shape, the ellipse, that shakes things up a bit, problematizing the notion of the center. The still more important move after that, as Lacan sees it, is the idea that if a planet moves toward a point, a focus, that is empty, it is not so easy to describe that as turning or circling, as it had been called in the past: maybe it is something more like falling. This is where Newton comes in. Instead of saying what everyone else had been saying for millennia—"things go around in circles"—Newton said, "things fall."

Despite this Newtonian revolution, Lacan claims that for most of us our "world view … remains perfectly spherical" (Lacan, 1998a, p. 42). Despite the Freudian revolution that removes consciousness from the center of our view of ourselves, it ineluctably slips back to the center, or a center is ineluctably reestablished somewhere. The "decentering" psychoanalysis requires is difficult to sustain, Lacan says, and analysts keep slipping back into the old center/periphery way of thinking. Hence the need for another "subversion," another subversion that certainly will not be the last.

Conclusion

The analyst must thus, from a Lacanian vantage point, direct the treatment *not* in accordance with some preconceived notion of the analysand's good or best interest, but to facilitate the analysand's greater Eros. The analyst must also elaborate and continually re-elaborate a psychoanalytic theory that attempts to free itself to an ever-greater extent from a world view that is always and inevitably based, at least in part, on fantasies—some of which are older than others. Those fantasies, constitutive of the *Weltanschauung* the analyst brings with him or her to the therapy, are part of the analyst's countertransference, part of the countertransferential baggage the analyst brings to the treatment, along with the rest of his or her biases and prejudices. For countertransference is, as Lacan defines it, "the sum total of the analyst's biases, passions, and difficulties, or even of his *inadequate information*, at any given moment" in the analysis (Lacan, 2006a, p. 225, emphasis added).

Analysts must continually reexamine their own viewpoints to see to what degree their approach to treatment is guided or skewed by modern-day and ageold illusions. This requires an ongoing reflection upon psychoanalytic theory and praxis.

I have obviously not in any way exhausted Lacan's views on ethics in this short, simplified talk—indeed, I have barely scratched the surface. Lacan devotes a great deal of attention to further paradoxes of human desire and jouissance, such as the death drive, transgression, and the conflict between desire and the drives; he explores the nature of "evil" and sublimation in detail; he reviews a number of different ethical systems, including Aristotle's, Kant's, Sade's, and Bentham's; and he provides certain insights into racism and sexism with his notion that what we tolerate least well in other people is their own particular way of obtaining jouissance.

If Lacan provides anything by way of a possible "solution" to the paradox of human desire and satisfaction, I would argue that it is not via sublimation, but rather via a changed relation between desire and the drives in each of us; for desire usually serves to inhibit the satisfaction of the drives, and this inhibition has to be lessened if satisfaction is to be achieved. To elucidate this solution would, however, require a whole other lecture, and I have already outlined it in print (see Fink, 1997). Nevertheless, I hope I have at least given you a bit of a taste of Lacan's approach to a psychoanalytic ethics.

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5

WHY DIAGNOSE?

A Few Reflections on Diagnosis

> nothing resembles neurotic symptomatology more than psychotic symptomatology.
>
> —Lacan, 1993, p. 216

Why is it important for a clinician to be able to tell if a patient is neurotic or psychotic relatively early on in the therapy? The simplest answer to this sweeping question is that therapy needs to be conducted differently with psychotics than with neurotics. For example, with neurotics the therapist needs to constantly look for places where the patient's speech breaks down, slips, slides, or slurs, in order to help bring out ambivalence, ambiguity, polyvalence, and everything else that indicates that the subject is not of one mind, not unified or whole, but rather split between conscious and unconscious. Such an attempt with the psychotic patient is likely to bring on great distress and possibly trigger a psychotic break.

Freud (1962b) tells us, for example, that his first attempt to employ his usual psychoanalytic method with a psychotic—lying the patient down after a few preliminary interviews and interpreting quite a lot—failed miserably: the patient's state degenerated, and the patient had to be hospitalized, effectively putting an end to the treatment.

Federn (1943) authored an article, entitled "The Psychoanalysis of Psychoses," reporting on several disastrous cases in which psychoanalytic treatment led to no good. In one, a girl Federn erroneously took to be obsessive developed erotomania, began hallucinating, and ended up committing suicide.

Sandor Ferenczi (1916) reported on a case where for 12 years he worked with a psychotic without the couch or interpretation, and everything went fine until the patient read an article that Ferenczi had published in a journal providing interpretations of paranoia that Ferenczi had never tried to use with his patient. This was enough to push the patient over the edge, even though the interpretations were only in print.

Bychowski (1966) reported on the destabilizing effects of interpreting with psychotics (citing, moreover, several other articles that discuss similar phenomena). Czermak (1977) recounted a case in which a psychoanalytic interpretation triggered psychosis in an analysand.

There are far more instances of this happening than are reported on, as few practitioners wish to make such missteps public. As I know from my own experience supervising clinicians, mistakes are much more likely to be recounted in a collegial supervisor–supervisee relationship than in print.

From a practical standpoint, then, the distinction between neurosis and psychosis is of great importance in ensuring that as little harm is done as possible in directing the treatment (*primum non nocere*: our first duty is to do no harm).

The Neurotic is Building a Case

We have the sense at many times that the neurotic patient is building a case, as if making a plea or arguing his case in a court of law, implicitly placing us in the position of judge and jury. "Don't you agree, doctor?" is one of the common questions addressed to us after such a harangue, after opening arguments, the presentation of exhibits A through Z, and closing arguments. "Aren't I right, doctor?" "You don't think I'm crazy, do you?" With a neurotic we can leave these questions unanswered; we can leave the question of the patient's potential craziness in abeyance, as something for the patient to continue to mull

over, as he wonders what the analyst thinks.

Such questions are rarely addressed to us by psychotics. Confirmation by the Other does not seem to be as essential to the psychotic as to the neurotic. Recognition that one is in the right is not as important. The neurotic who sees himself as a victim in life and wants to convince the analyst that he is indeed a victim has no correlate in work with psychotics. Indeed, it might be said that the psychotic does not seek to convince the analyst of anything in particular about his innermost being, whereas the neurotic seeks to convince the analyst of all kinds of things, to get the analyst to acknowledge all kinds of things, and in a word to provide *recognition* of the patient's subjective position or predicament—that is, recognition ("validation") of something that feels true or real to the patient. The psychotic, on the other hand, may—in the context of the social security or mental health systems—strive to convince the analyst to put him on disability or prescribe drugs, but rarely if ever strives to convince the analyst to endorse his account of his own subjective predicament.

This is not to say that the analyst should provide such endorsement to the neurotic. The analyst has to avoid being convinced, even though she may sympathize with many of the neurotic's complaints, given the hardships of the patient's life. The analyst for the most part does not buy the story or agree with the subject's sense that he is merely a victim, a martyr, or a hero. The analyst does not provide the recognition the neurotic is seeking of his inexorably painful existence, of the dramatic situation he finds himself in that is clearly not, he tends to suggest, of his own making.

Thus *the neurotic seeks recognition*, and although we must not provide recognition of what it is that he would like us to recognize, we let him know that we *hear* what he is saying, and that *what we recognize is the desire, of which he himself is unaware, that lurks within or haunts his discourse*. In other words, rather than recognize his alienation as a victim or martyr, we seek to underscore, bring out, and recognize the desire within him for something else. (Our "recognition" of his desire still must not function as an endorsement thereof; rather our acknowledgment of it serves to foster his acknowledgment of its existence, after which it is up to him to decide what to do with it.)

But the psychotic does not seem to seek this sort of recognition. As Lacan (2006a) says in "Function and Field,"

> In madness, of whatever nature [i.e., in psychosis], we must recognize on the one hand the negative freedom of a kind of speech that has given up trying to gain recognition, which is what we call an obstacle to transference; and, on the other, the singular formation of a delusion which [...] objectifies the subject in *a language devoid of dialectic*.
>
> (p. 279, emphasis added)

In saying that the psychotic's speech "has given up trying to gain recognition," Lacan can be understood to be suggesting that the psychotic may well have tried to gain recognition as a child but, not receiving any at that time, eventually gave up for good. And the expression "a language devoid of dialectic" implies a language devoid of metaphor, knowing no gap between signifier and signified, no slippage of meaning.

If we can say that at least one of the things that the neurotic is seeking in coming to therapy is recognition, we must raise the question, "What does a psychotic want?" in coming to speak to an analyst. I will not address this question here, as I have done so at length elsewhere (see Fink 2007, Chapter 10).

The Why and Wherefore of the Law

Lacan is well known to have associated neurosis with assimilation of the law, and psychosis with refusal or "foreclosure" of the law. What did he mean by "law" in this context?

We often talk about law as if we all knew what it should be: fair and equitable, nondiscriminatory, and so on. Nevertheless, there is always a *just because* aspect to the law—something not logical or rational, in the usual sense of the words. Somewhere at the origin of the law there is always a "because I said so." As Henry David Thoreau asked, why obey the law when the law itself is unjust? And no matter how just or fair the law, it is still possible to ask, "Why be fair?" This may sound like a frivolous question, but it is an important one in moral theory and ethical philosophy.

In other words, at the origin of the law, there is an assertion that what we, the lawmakers, say goes because we are the masters. This is related to something Lacan calls the master signifier, the signifier that calls the shots: in France up until two centuries ago, much was done in the name of the king; in the US it has often been "democracy," "science," or "progress." As in the case of fairness, we can ask, "What is so great about progress?" For many people, progress is a master signifier, *an unquestioned end-in-itself*. While for some, democracy is an end-in-itself, for others it is just another signifier, parading as a master, which must be questioned.

The neurotic, as much trouble as he may have with the master signifier (Lacan's shorthand for it is S_1) he grew up with—however much he may seek to deny, destroy, or undermine it—still accepts the *position* that is occupied by that master signifier. A non-psychotic like Jacques Derrida (1982) can call into question the origin of all law in the US—the Declaration of Independence and US Constitution—with the argument that it is only retroactively that the signers of these documents had the right to sign them, in other words, with the argument that they became the legitimate signers of the documents that founded the law only after signing them.

The *power* to enact the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution is something else, and may well have been based on their force of arms. Their *right* to create such a system of laws came only from the documents itself. This is the temporal problem involved in every *founding act*: it has to create its own legitimacy (cf. Lacan's famous claim that "an analyst authorizes himself"). However, it is one thing to point to the logical or temporal paradox of the founding act, and another to uproot it. The neurotic cannot uproot it: an "I said so" has always already operated for him and is inexpungible.

Thus the neurotic can be quite aware of and protest against paternal authority, which is ultimately but a pretense of sorts. His father claims the right to lay down the law, but why him? Why not someone else? Why this particular law? Why right now? And yet for the neurotic the principle of authority itself remains unchallenged at some level. Even if the neurotic admits that the law has no inherent rhyme or reason, he may consider the rule of law itself indispensable.

Even the anarchist, who presumably eschews all authority, often enlists his efforts in the cause of anarchism, subordinates his work to the master signifier "anarchism," works for anarchism. His very act of rebellion against authority is premised upon the acceptance of authority, at some level, acceptance of a reason or law that calls all the other reasons or laws into question. In other words, it is a form of neurotic negation.

Only the psychotic refuses S_1 (he has the "negative freedom" of Lacan's aforementioned madman). The fact is that S_1 institutes and creates something. It involves a founding act from which there is no return. This first "No!"—the Law referred to by Lacan as the Name-of-the-Father—ties signifier and signified together at one point, allowing them to diverge everywhere else.

This text includes a few short reflections extracted from a weekend workshop, entitled "On Differential Diagnosis: Neurosis and Psychosis from a Structural Standpoint," given at the Northwest Center for

Psychoanalysis in Seattle, Washington, on April 19 and 20, 2002.

On Reading Lacan

6

AN INTRODUCTION TO LACAN'S SEMINAR XVIII

D'un discours qui ne serait pas du semblant

I was foolish enough to propose to Pauline O'Callaghan—who, as chair of the Scientific Committee of APPI, was kind enough to grant my request—to present Seminar XVIII to you, a seminar that I worked on quite a bit in the 1980s and the early 1990s, but that I hadn't returned to since then. A published edition having recently appeared (Lacan, 2006c), thanks to the efforts of Jacques-Alain Miller, I figured that proposing to speak about the seminar would force me to reread it a couple of times and formulate a few ideas about it, which is often far more difficult, in my experience, than one might think it should be. This is truer regarding Seminar XVIII than certain others, in part because Lacan was away for a couple of months during the course of it and even apologizes at the very end for the somewhat "truncated" and unsustained character of the work presented in it.[1]

The Title of the Seminar

Let me begin with the peculiar title, *D'un discours qui ne serait pas du semblant*. Note that this seminar has one of those somewhat obscure titles—like a few others of Lacan's seminars—that Lacan feels obliged to return to again and again in the course of the seminar to explain, develop, or subvert.

D'un discours: "On a discourse" or "Regarding a discourse"—this first part is not too difficult to translate. Nevertheless, Lacan tells us twice on the very first two pages of the seminar that it is not his own discourse that he is talking about, making us curious as to why he insists that it isn't and making us wonder if it in fact is. We see later that this is his way of saying that the discourse in question here is a structured discourse that is not based on his own personality. Lacan, as you are probably aware, generally detests psychobiography, and thinks that it is ridiculous to try to draw psychoanalytic theory out of Freud's life history and so-called personality; similarly, he feels that the discourse he is talking about here is structured in a particular way that can be taken up by any number of analysts. Whether you agree with his short-lived plan in the periodical *Scilicet* to have none of the authors sign their names to their work, the idea was that they were working within the same structure and that their insights therefore had more to do with the structure itself than with each of them as individuals. Nevertheless, as we shall hopefully see, he seems to be referring to a kind of psychoanalytic discourse that he himself would like to reach or sketch out but that he has not yet been able to.

Qui ne serait pas—we have here a conditional, as Lacan himself points out on page 163, where he says, "what is at stake is a hypothesis, the hypothesis by which any and every [*tout*] discourse is justified." In other words, you have to postulate or hypothesize something if you are going to produce a discourse, no matter what kind. Recall that regarding Newton's claim, *hypotheses non fingo* ("I make—or frame or feign—no hypothesis"), Lacan says: "like hell you don't." You can't see anything, come up with anything, if you don't begin with a hypothesis of some kind, even if you have to eventually go back and change the hypothesis you began with. Newton's is: instead of going around in circles, things fall (Lacan, 1998a, p. 141).

Once the hypothesis is in place, you can begin to create order and fit all kinds of experiments and calculations into that order, but you never confirm or refute the hypothesis itself. Hypotheses are only changed in the course of scientific "revolutions." By saying all this, Lacan is indicating that *his hypothesis* here—that there might be some kind of discourse that is structured in a certain way in relation to what he calls *le semblant*—is not something that is testable or provable. But that doesn't stop us from talking about it.

This allows us to translate this part of the title as "that would not be." It postulates the hypothetical existence of a certain kind of discourse: "A discourse that would not be …"

Let me add a small proviso here: as some of you perhaps realize, the conditional in French can just as easily work like the older English conditional "would" as in "I would go," which at least in American English would now have to be translated as "I would like to go." This allows us to provide a possible secondary translation of the title as: "On a discourse that would not like to be …"

Not like to be what? That is the question! We have two problems here: how to translate the seemingly obvious *de*, which is, in my experience, the most difficult preposition to translate in Lacan's work, and how to translate the word *semblant*. When I translated Seminar XX, I proposed to translate *semblant* as "semblance," which according to Webster's means outward aspect or appearance; an assumed or unreal appearance, show; a likeness, image, or copy; or a spectral appearance or apparition.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* is as usual more generous, providing the appearance or outward aspect of a person or thing; the form, likeness, or image of a person or thing, considered in regard to another

that is similar; a person's appearance or demeanor, expressive of his thoughts, feelings, etc., or feigned in order to hide them; an appearance or outward seeming of something which is not actually there or of which the reality is different from its appearance; an apparition or vision of a person, etc.; the bare appearance; a person or thing that resembles another; a likeness, image, or copy of something; the fact or quality of being like something; likeness, resemblance.

The French term can be used in the singular or the plural, whereas the English term is generally used without any definite article or plural, but the range of meaning and etymological root are virtually identical. Moreover, to the best of my knowledge, French has no other term that corresponds to the English semblance. That does not seem to have stopped anyone in the English-speaking world from adopting the quirky translation "semblant."

The *OED* lists "semblant" in English as obscure and outdated and my personal copy of it already dates back to 1971. We could of course resuscitate it, if there were no good translation for the French *semblant*, as in the case of semblable.

But it seems to me that semblance works just fine in all the contexts I have thus far come across. I also believe that it is preferable to avoid fetishizing every ordinary French word Lacan happens to use, turning Lacanian discourse in English into a stilted, jargon-infested domain.

> "On a discourse that would not (like to) be ____ [*de*] semblance."

Here we come to the trickiest part. "Of" and "from," the likeliest choices, don't seem to mean a whole lot, suggesting that we need to look a bit further, as is so often the case with Lacan. Given Lacan's glosses on the title on pages 18 and 19 of the seminar, we might conclude that "about" makes the most sense: "On a discourse that would not be about semblance." Presumably such a discourse, avoiding discussion of mere appearances, would be about truth itself!

Yet, if we recall the degree to which Lacan considers truth to be inextricably wrapped up in a fictional structure (e.g., "Truth progresses only on the basis of a fictional structure," p. 133),[2] presenting itself only within the trappings of fiction—whether those of fantasy, dreams, or short stories by Edgar Allan Poe—we have to wonder about this. Psychoanalysis concerns itself with truth as deciphered on the basis of the analysand's inevitably lying speech, speech that can only half-speak the truth, or speak the truth halfway, instead of telling the whole truth and nothing but the truth. As Lacan puts it on page 26 of the seminar, "Truth is not the opposite of semblance. Truth is the dimension—the *demansion* [this is a neologism, combining dimension and *mansio*, Latin for dwelling or abode, and might be rendered dwelling place, dwelling realm, or dwealm; changing the first *i* to *e* makes it look a lot like "demand" too]—that is strictly correlated with the dimension of semblance."

"A discourse that would not be about semblance" but rather about truth itself would, it seems then, verge on a sort of truth about the truth, a discourse that believed it had direct access to the truth without needing to pass through the sneaky, deceptive defiles of speech. Perhaps the distinction between semblance and truth is not the only germane one here. This is not to say that we must exclude it: with Lacan, accretion is the name of the game—titles are overdetermined, being chosen precisely because they allow for multiple readings!

Lacan tells us fairly early on in the seminar that he equates the signifier with semblance ("This semblance is the signifier in itself," p. 14; "The signifier is identical to the status as such of semblance," p. 15; see also, much later, "The signifier, namely semblance par excellence," p. 121). And one of the most important distinctions he harps on in the course of the seminar is that between the signifier and the letter, that is between speech—recall that in Seminar XX Lacan reminds us that the signifier is what you hear

with your ears—and writing. As he puts it on page 118, "nothing allows us to confuse, as has [nevertheless] been done, the letter with the signifier." This is part of the not entirely subterranean debate in the course of the seminar with Derrida who is never once mentioned by name, even though his paper on Freud's magic writing pad is characterized as a load of nonsense on the same page (Miller provides the reference to Derrida's paper on Freud's *Wunderblock*, known in English as "The Mystic [or magic] Writing Pad").

Even though Derrida had not yet published his highly extensive and sarcastic critique of Lacan in "Le facteur de la vérité," which was published in the journal *Poétique* in 1975 (included the same year in *Yale French Studies* 52, as "The Purveyor of Truth," in *The Post Card*, 1987, and in part in *The Purloined Poe*, 1988), Lacan was obviously aware that Derrida was endeavoring to critique Lacan himself and psychoanalysis more generally for privileging speech over writing. (The reference to arché in the seminar on pages 83 and following is obviously a reference to Derrida.)

Lacan takes considerable pains in Seminar XVIII to make clear his most mature position on the interplay between speech and writing, and the enmeshed development of spoken language and written language, including a somewhat obscure excursus on the relation between written Chinese characters and Japanese speech, which for those of us not terribly well versed in either of those languages, is likely to go right over our heads.

We find in this seminar what is perhaps Lacan's longest reiteration of positions articulated in his "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter'"—here he repeatedly clarifies when he is referring to the letter as an epistle and when he is referring to the letter as an inscription, which he almost never did in that particular article; that seems to have led to many of the misunderstandings or ungenerous interpretations found in *The Title of the Letter* by Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe (1992). I suspect that it was probably right around this time that Derrida was talking about Lacan and the purloined letter in his own seminar with these prominent students of his, and Lacan regularly received reports back from people he knew about the topics discussed in that seminar; recall that in Seminar XX he refers to those two authors as *sous-fifres*, underlings—obviously believing them to be henchmen, in a manner of speaking, for the other Jacques.

The distinction between the signifier—as that which is based on speaking and hearing and thus particularly open to misinterpretation—and the letter as that which is written or inscribed leads us to a further possible translation of the title of the seminar: "On a discourse that would not be based on semblance"—to wit, "On a discourse that would not be based on the signifier but rather on the letter, a discourse that would be based not on speech but rather on writing." To take it one step further—a step Lacan explicitly prepares for us on page 122 of the seminar (where he says, "writing—that is, the letter—is in the real and the signifier is in the symbolic")—we could gloss the title as: "On a discourse that would not be based on the symbolic but rather on the real." These three glosses, taken together, make for a pretty long title, but they will perhaps prove to be a little more telling for you than the original one.

Some additional support for translating *du semblant* as "based on semblance" comes where (p. 124) Lacan talks about avant-garde literature as "not being sustained by semblance" (*ne se soutient pas du semblant*), which also literally means "is not based on or founded on semblance."

Just to complicate your lives a little bit more, I must in good conscience indicate that, idiomatically, *du semblant* can function like a number of other French terms, for example, *du toc*. When in French you say *ça, c'est du toc*, you mean that something is fake, that instead of being a real diamond, for example, it is cubic zirconia; instead of being a genuine Chanel handbag, it's a Chinese knockoff. Instead of being granite, it's grey plastic. *C'est du bidon*—it's junk.

Semblant is a bit more erudite and polite than *toc* or *bidon*, but the meaning is quite similar: in this

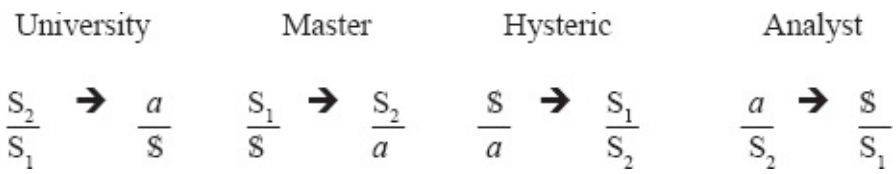
case we're talking about a discourse that would not be a load of malarkey or a crock of shit, if you'll excuse my French, but that would rather be the real thing somehow, the genuine article! Hence, "On a discourse that would not be a lot of claptrap"—which is what logical positivists say of psychoanalysis—or to put it more delicately, "On a discourse that would not be mere semblance."

Here the French expression *faire semblant* ineluctably comes to mind, which means to pretend or make believe. The contrast then is between a discourse that is mere pretense, that pulls the wool over one's eyes, and a discourse that opens one's eyes. In the seminar, Lacan explicitly provides the example of Marx in volume one of *Capital*: capitalism tries to dupe us with the concept of the generation of profit whereas what is really going on is the extraction of unpaid surplus value from the worker (p. 165). Freud certainly plays on the same theme, insofar as he emphasizes the dupery involved in consciousness, which we can dissipate by exploring the unconscious. Lacan says quite clearly at the end of the seminar (p. 166) that psychoanalytic discourse "is listening for a discourse that would not be, and that in fact is not" the discourse of semblance. In other words, the analyst listening for the unconscious is seeking a discourse that would not be based on semblance and indeed finds one.

If you'll bear with me for a moment, I'll rewrite the title of the seminar as follows:

On a discourse that would not be	about mere based on	semblance

Now what would a discourse based on the letter, writing, and the real look like? Lacan gave some examples of it in Seminar XVII with his deceptively simple writing of the four discourses:



He comments explicitly on a number of them in this seminar, incidentally identifying the upper left-hand position in each of the discourses as that of semblance and the lower left-hand position in each of the discourses as that of truth. With his first tentative explorations in the seminar of what will later become the formulas of sexuation, we have additional sketches of what a discourse based on writing might look like—obviously, Lacan continues to go ever further in this direction with his topological inscriptions! Topological figures like the crosscap are difficult to describe in words and impossible to visualize, thwarting the grasp of both the imaginary and the symbolic.

Note here what we might find paradoxical, if not downright contradictory, in 1) the claim that there are only four discourses and that the matheme included in the upper left-hand corner of *each* of these four discourses is occupied by what serves as semblance in that discourse, and in 2) the hypothesis of a discourse that would not be based on semblance! Lacan might seem to be proposing here the possibility of a discourse that is not included in the four discourses he has already sketched out and written down for us (the analysand's discourse?); alternatively, he might seem to be proposing that one of the four is not based on semblance in the way the other three are.

Certainly one of the more pernicious discourses, in Lacan's view, is the university discourse, which places knowledge in the position of semblance, or as he puts it, where we see "knowledge put to use on the basis of semblance" (p. 118). Since virtually everything in our times is becoming part of university

discourse or subsumed within academic discourse,[3] we might say that Lacan is aiming at a discourse in which knowledge is placed in a different position, as for example when knowledge has to do with truth as it does when we explore the unconscious in psychoanalytic discourse. In this sense, we could say that Lacan is contrasting academic and psychoanalytic discourse, the latter being the one that is not based on semblance.

If this is the case, it might help us understand the comment Lacan makes on page 117 where he talks about the divide between jouissance and knowledge, the letter constituting the littoral or frontier between the two. In analytic discourse we find jouissance over knowledge (a/S_2), the two being divided by the bar, and what is a bar after all if not an inscription, a form of writing, in other words, a letter? Lacan says as much again in Seminar XX: "There ain't nothing you can understand in a bar" (Lacan, 1998a, p. 34). I don't believe he was referring to the kind of bar in which you have a few too many drinks and can no longer understand anything anyone says to you.

The primary examples Lacan gives us here of discourses that are fundamentally based on writing as opposed to speech are symbolic logic and mathematical logic, but he never fails to remind us that virtually nothing about these fields can be conveyed to students without the use of ordinary language, that is, without the use of that which is not written. This implies that even those discourses that rely most heavily on writing cannot do altogether without the signifier.

"How Is the Seminar Structured?"

As you can see, I am beginning with the very basics of the seminar, and I shall continue to do so by raising the question, "How is the seminar structured?"

As in Seminar XX, Lacan claims here to be in the position of analysand (p. 11), his audience being in the position of analyst (*a*)—suggesting that Lacan had several hundred analysts, which is quite a lot by virtually any standard of measure. He characterizes his audience as *plus-de-jouir pressé*. This latter can be translated in a number of different ways, and was apparently not appreciated by a certain number of those present! *Plus-de-jouir* is, as you may be aware, a Lacanian fabrication loosely based on the French translation of Marx's *Mehrwert*, surplus value in English, *plus-value* in French, which means that it makes sense to translate it as surplus jouissance or surplus enjoyment. Lacan himself translated his *plus-dejouir* into German as *Mehrlust*.

Pressé has a number of different meanings, and the first that came to mind for me at least was based on fruit drinks you can get in France, like *un citron pressé*—in the States we call it lemonade—or *une orange pressée*, which is supposed to be freshly squeezed orange juice, even if it is sometimes just frothed, not freshly squeezed! (I would propose that *citron* is the word missing on page 29 of the seminar.) So at least at one level, Lacan characterizes his audience as freshly squeezed surplus jouissance, and we might be led to wonder who got squeezed and who did the squeezing! It seems perhaps that Lacan believes that they have been squeezing surplus jouissance out of him by putting him to work, making him give his seminar year after year. One might also think that he is saying they're getting an awfully big kick out of listening to him.

Some analysands, similarly, believe that their analysts are learning a lot and getting an awfully big kick out of listening to them and should in fact be paying their analysands, instead of it being the other way around. It does, I think, make sense to wonder why anyone would pay for an analysis, considering that you are primarily paying for loss, paying to lose something, and are effectively training your analyst as well, but that will be fodder for another talk! Perhaps at the Freud Museum in London next year,

where the topic will be psychoanalysis and money (see Chapter 1 of the present volume).

But Lacan also mentions their *presse*, the fact that there are throngs of them crowded together in this auditorium, there apparently being far more of them than there were seats to comfortably sit in. In this sense, they seem to be *compressed* surplus jouissance.

However, *pressé* also means "in a hurry," and Lacan suggests that although they are situated in the position of analyst in relation to him, they do not have the knowledge that is associated with that position in the analyst's discourse (p. 12):

$$\frac{a}{S_2}$$

Perhaps he considers them to be in too much of a hurry to acquire the knowledge necessary to occupy the position of object *a* in the analyst's discourse! Those of you who have read the seminars in detail are aware of the many disparaging remarks Lacan makes about his audience starting around this time, finding it difficult to understand why so many hundreds of people—who were obviously not familiar with many of the texts he discussed and probably not reading them despite his frequent exhortations—kept coming to his seminar.

Thus there is something curious about the structure of the seminar as Lacan describes it: his speaking at the seminar as an analysand structurally places the audience in the position of analyst, but this is a position that they are unable to adequately occupy. We seem to have here a rather unusual analysand in search of an analyst worthy of him, perhaps akin to Pirandello's six characters in search of an author.

Semblance

The main themes of the seminar seem to me to be as follows: semblance, writing, the phallus, the Name-of-the-Father, and "there's no such thing as a sexual relationship" (p. 65). The latter claim appears in this seminar for the first time in Lacan's work, even though he had several times prior to this insisted that "there's no such thing as a sexual act" (see p. 33 here), "act" obviously to be taken in a very specific sense, much like "relationship" in the better-known formulation.

I'll try first to group together the various things he says about semblance to see what kind of sense we can make of it, to see what kinds of usages it allows for and doesn't allow for. On page 32, Lacan sketches out some interesting boundaries, so to speak, of *the field of semblance*: he tells us that semblance is rife in the animal kingdom, being found in all the varied display behaviors animals engage in during courting rituals, mating rituals, and so on. Some of these rituals find their correlate in human beings, but they are nevertheless taken up in and transformed by discourse. Insofar as they are taken up in discourse, they move, he says, toward an "effect that would not be (based on/about/mere) semblance" (p. 32); we might think this means they move from the imaginary to the symbolic, but it is not entirely clear given the example that follows.

At one extreme, he says that we encounter in human beings a certain limit beyond which all semblance, like the exquisite courtesy of mating rituals in the animal kingdom, falls to the wayside, an example of which is rape, which Lacan characterizes here as a *passage à l'acte*.

Rape seems to be an action in which semblance (or dissembling?) goes out the window, so to speak. Semblance here presumably means ideas in a social group about what is appropriate and what it is inappropriate in relations between the sexes or even within the sexes, since rape can exist between members of the same sex too. Semblance cannot be maintained, does not retain binding force, or breaks down in an encounter with the real, with something presumably drive-related that overpowers or shatters all ideas, values, self-images, etc.

It would seem that semblance is the general background of everything we do, to which attention is not drawn, for when attention is specifically drawn to semblance, we have what Lacan here calls "acting out," which involves bringing semblance onto the stage, putting it front and center, right in front of everyone's noses. He says that we also refer to that as "passion"—by which I assume he means acts or crimes of passion—and passion is generally associated by Lacan with the imaginary realm, due to the intense libidinal investments we have in images, the image of the ideal ego even being said by Lacan to be more valuable to most of us than life itself. (He says that although we are ready and willing to risk everything for desire, even life itself, we are not ready to risk *i(a)*, his symbol for the ideal ego; Lacan, 2001a, pp. 460–61).

We can thus construct a sort of a table here:

Imaginary	*Symbolic*	*Real*
		Semblance jettisoned at the limits of discourse

Semblance in the animal kingdom	Semblance taken up in discourse	
	Everyday life (?)	*Passage à l'acte*

Lacan tells us right from the outset that all discourse is semblance (or is about or based on semblance): "At stake here is semblance as the very object by which the economy of discourse is regulated" (p. 18). In the human realm, semblance is posited only in discourse and is produced by discourse. On the next page he tells us that discourse in general is semblance, it brings into being what we call a world, a world based on semblance. "All that is discourse can but present itself as semblance, and nothing is constructed there that is not based on what is called the signifier" (p. 15).

To translate what he is saying here into terms that may be more familiar to at least some of you, all speech, all discourse, revolves around the social construction of a reality where the question of Truth with a capital T is left by the wayside. There are obviously mainstream constructions and not-so-mainstream constructions, there are what are called dominant discourses versus minority discourses, and a particular social construction of reality may be shared or not so shared by different members of the social group in question. For the most part, however, the struggles and conflicts among these social constructions of reality or worldviews, as they used to be called, are played out at a pragmatic, political level where the notion of absolute truth is conspicuously absent.

The very notion of pluralism implies multiple competing interest groups, something that is only possible when Truth with a capital T is bracketed or relegated to philosophy courses in the academy.

Few people pay attention to slips of the tongue or to the possible truth revealed by someone's employment of an ambiguous formulation when negotiations are underway between management and labor in a factory, between competing political parties, or between trading partners or nations trying to resolve border conflicts.

Nevertheless, psychoanalysis always pays attention to slips of the tongue and to ambiguous formulations—it always pays attention to truth as traceable to the unconscious, whether we characterize that Truth with a capital T or not! In psychoanalysis, slips and bungled actions are not side issues or distractions but rather the main attraction, the main course, the main focus of interest.

When the unconscious is at the center of our interests, all the different semblances—I'll break down here and use a plural—all the different *ideological perspectives*, are viewed as *ego discourses*, so to speak, crystallizations of views of the world and self, views of oneself in the world, that systematically exclude something, something that in psychoanalysis goes by the name of the unconscious.

As a psychoanalysis proceeds—and those of you here who have undergone a considerable amount of psychoanalysis can attest to this fact—tons of things one believed about the world and about oneself fall apart. What is referred to as "identity" in contemporary psychology and in numerous political discourses as well undergoes radical transformation in psychoanalysis, as does the worldview or socially constructed reality one had endorsed if not embraced that usually goes hand in hand with it.

One's identity as "a heterosexual" is called into question as one begins to pay attention to one's homosexual thoughts and feelings. One's identity as "a homosexual" may be rendered more complex with the recognition of heterosexual attractions. Each identity is realized to be sustained precisely by what it excludes, what it represses. One's identity as a man or a woman is pried open to reveal cracks in the armor, and even those who have embraced the idea that gender is performance have to come to grips with the fundamental fantasy, which is *not* a performance, which is anything but a performance.

Semblance here would seem to concern the whole set of ideas and beliefs we entertain and hold about the world and ourselves in the world, which are made of the stuff of the imaginary insofar as it is taken up in discourse. These ideas and beliefs turn out to be propped up by the fundamental fantasy, and as the latter is reconfigured in the course of psychoanalysis, the former are too. This is not to say, however, that

we are no longer deluded at the end of an analysis, no longer having any ideas or beliefs that are mere semblance!

We might be able to go so far as to claim that at least some of the ideas and beliefs that we endorse at the end of an analysis do not exclude the unconscious. In that sense, they are not divorced from the truth in the same way as the ones we had endorsed before.

Another thing that Lacan says about semblance here ties in with his discussion of the Name-of-the-Father: "There is no Name-of-the-Father that is tenable without thunder, about which everyone knows that it is a sign even if we do know what it is a sign of. That is the very figure of semblance" (p. 15).

Thunder (*tonnerre*) is the quintessential sign, without which there can be no Name-of-the-Father, but we don't know what it is a sign of. Of course we try to give thunder a meaning, the Chinese calling it God's decree or heaven's verdict [*le décret du ciel*]. There we were, stealing our neighbor's hens, when suddenly there was a loud crash of thunder, a loud thunderclap. What did it mean? That we were doing something wrong and might soon be punished for it?

In America you can hear people say, at times, "May lightning strike me dead if I am lying." Since that virtually never happens—most of those who are struck dead by lightning are out playing golf at the time, swinging their clubs instead of talking—it's generally what I call an overemphasized assertion and the people who say such things are lying. The point nevertheless is that just as a signifier represents a subject to another signifier, but we don't know who or what that subject is, a sign represents something to someone, but here we don't know what that something is.

Lacan says the same thing about symptoms here: "Symptoms […] are things that [seem to be] signs to us, but that we don't understand anything about" (p. 52).

We try to draw them into meaning, find meaning in them—that's the same thing the child does when faced with the thundering voice of the father. The child interprets it as prohibiting, and what is it prohibiting? Only the child can come up with an interpretation of it for herself or himself—it has no inherent meaning.

The Phallus

Those of you who have been reading Lacan for some time are aware of the importance in his work of the concept of the phallus. As controversial as it may be, especially in our times, Lacan does not hesitate to return to it again and again, glossing it in different ways and equating it with different terms each time he takes it up. Just as you cannot take the lack out of Lacan or the master out of masturbation, the concept of the phallus seems quite central to Lacan's articulation of the functioning of language and to the functioning of sexuality insofar as sexuality in human beings is thoroughly dependent upon language.

Depending upon which seminars and writings of Lacan's you have read, you are perhaps aware that Lacan conceptualizes the phallus not as a biological organ, the penis, but as something located in the symbolic register: the signifier of desire, the signifier of the Other's desire, and even as the bar between signifier and signified. Lacan reminds us in Seminar XVIII that he even once equated the phallus with the Name-of-the-Father, mentioning that certain pious persons were scandalized by that equation when he first made it (p. 172).

When he discusses the phallus in the imaginary register, it is always as something negative, or a minus or loss of some kind: minus phi. In that sense it corresponds to castration—the imagined loss of the jouissance derived from the penis by boys, the imagined loss of jouissance more generally by girls.

For Lacan, the phallus is a sort of a third term that comes between man and woman, making a relationship between them impossible. In that sense, it is much like language itself, constituting an insurmountable wall between all humans—man and man, woman and woman, man and woman, making all communication between them miscommunication, all understanding misunderstanding. In Lacan's view, it is precisely because we are speaking beings that there is no obvious relationship between the sexes, and no simple way of defining man and woman.

In the animal kingdom, relations among individuals are extensively regulated by instinct—to some degree, as we are learning, by a kind of social or cultural evolution as well (see Avital & Jablonka, 2000)—and sex roles are generally quite well defined, even as they differ significantly from species to species. But no animal, for obvious reasons, would even dream of trying to define something like a relationship between male and female—indeed no animal would dream of trying to define anything whatsoever!

As soon as language comes into existence, the relationship between things and beings becomes mediated, not by instinct, not by the courting and mating rituals dictated by instinct, but by signifiers—signifiers in the form of tales, myths, and rituals that are part and parcel of each culture with its stories and wisdom about couple and group relationships, and about relationships among the gods and between humans and the gods. I don't believe I would be stretching things were I to say that the phallus is a kind of shorthand in Lacan's vocabulary for the *mediation* that is introduced by language. It is not a *medium* (p. 142) between man and woman that would allow them to negotiate a relationship but rather an obstacle to any such relationship.

This is what allows Lacan in Seminar XX to equate the phallus with the bar between the signifier and the signified, that bar representing the relative independence of the two levels, the fact that the signifier dominates the signified, and the fact that both signifier and signified remain independent of the referent—the supposed real referent out in the world that some people (e.g., Richards & Ogden, 1945) naively think it is the job of language to represent for us in speech and thought.

This is also what allows Lacan to say that there is no such thing as a sexual relationship because "The sexual relationship is speech itself" (Seminar XVIII, p. 83).[4]

How does Lacan take up the phallus in Seminar XVIII? He begins by announcing that "there's no such thing as a sexual relationship" (p. 65) in the sense that, no matter how much we talk about sexual

relationships, nothing intelligible that captures the relationship between the sexes *can be written*. He then tells us that "The function of the phallus [...] renders sexual bipolarity untenable, untenable in a way that literally destroys anything that can be written about this relationship" (p. 65). He continues:

> The phallus, by placing emphasis upon an organ, does not in any way designate the organ known as the penis with its physiology, nor even the function of copulation that one can [...] attribute to it with some verisimilitude. When one looks at psychoanalytic texts, we see that the phallus unambiguously targets its [the organ's] relation to jouissance. It is in this respect that analytic texts distinguish it from the physiological function.
>
> (p. 67)

Not content to distinguish the phallus from the penis as an organ by saying that the phallus somehow designates jouissance, on the same page Lacan goes on to say, "The phallus is the [male?] organ insofar as it is feminine jouissance" (p. 67). He reiterates this on page 69, just in case we hadn't heard it the first time around. Unfortunately, reiteration doesn't necessarily make it any more intelligible!

"The phallic instrument," he goes on, "must not be confused with the penis. The penis is modeled on [*se règle sur*, meaning adjusts to, adapts itself to, or targets] the law, that is, desire, that is, fantasy" (p. 70). "It is utterly impossible to put the phallic instrument into language," or, as people increasingly say today, "It is utterly impossible to language the phallic instrument" (p. 71).

The icing on the cake here—and this is partly what convinces me that Derrida must have already been talking about Lacan's "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter'" in his own course—is that Lacan tells us he spent one morning before giving his class rereading his 1956 paper on "The Purloined Letter" and found it admirable, naturally; and he tells us that in that paper, "What I'm talking about is the phallus. And I'll go even further, no one has ever spoken about it better!" (p. 94).

Naturally, the phallus is never once mentioned by name in the course of the "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter.'" We, like the rest of Lacan's audience, are obviously clueless as to where the phallus comes into his discussion of Edgar Allan Poe, but Lacan tells us in the next class, in reference to Poe's characterization of the Minister as a man "who dares all things, those unbecoming as well as those becoming a man," that "the phallus is the unspeakable, shameful side that must not be spoken about as regards a man" (p. 96). Whatever that means! (The phallus has something to do with daring those things unbecoming [a man]?).

Lacan even goes so far as to reiterate something he had hinted at in the title of his 1958 paper, "*Die Bedeutung des Phallus*." As I indicated in a note in my translation of *Écrits*, the French title, literally "The Signification of the Phallus," could also be understood as "The Phallus as Signification." Here Lacan explicitly says that his title is

> a pleonasm. In language there is no other signification than the phallus. In the final analysis, language [...] only connotes the impossibility of symbolizing the sexual relationship among the beings who inhabit this language because their ability to speak stems from this habitat [*qu'ils tiennent la parole*].
>
> (p. 148)

On the next page he adds, "Language is constituted by but a single *Bedeutung* (signification)" (p. 149).

> This gives language its structure, which consists in the fact that we cannot, precisely because

> we inhabit it, use it except metaphorically, from which results all the mythical insanities its inhabitants live by, and metonymically, from which they derive the scant reality that remains to them in the form of surplus jouissance.
>
> (p. 149)[5]

You may recall that Lacan at times translates *Bedeutung* not as signification but as *signifiance*, which I have proposed to translate as "signifierness" (see Lacan, 1998a, pp. 18–19, footnote 12).

Lacan seems to be claiming here that all of our elaborate speech and writing is motivated by, and is thus more or less closely connected with, the nonexistence of an articulable relationship between the sexes. We speak and write in order to attest to and/or deny the nonexistence of that relationship—that is, in order to complain that it does not exist, or to show how it does or must exist in some tangential, abstract, or sublimated way (e.g., in the relationship between form and matter). Thus all of our theorizing in every realm tends to revolve around images and metaphors based on the wish that such a relationship existed! This is why language is constituted by but one signification (the basis of all signifierness): the phallus that renders impossible any sort of relationship between the sexes.

At the end of the seminar, Lacan suggests that the phallus has something to do with zero, which allows the whole of a series to begin, and zero is related by Lacan there to the killing of the father of the primal horde (pp. 176–77). Once he has been killed, a lineage or series of leaders can be established (Peano's n + 1), like Henry I, Henry II, etc. We shall turn our attention to the primal horde a bit further on.

Returning to the earlier section of the seminar, we note that he proffers: "The sexual relationship is missing from the field of truth because the discourse that instates it proceeds only on the basis of semblance" (p. 149).

Because we speak, there is

> an irremediable division between jouissance and semblance. Truth involves getting off on making believe (or pretending) [*jouir à faire semblant*], and not admitting in any case that the reality of each of these two halves [jouissance and semblance] only predominates by affirming itself to be based on the other, namely, by lying alternately through our teeth. Such is the half-saying of truth.
>
> (p. 151)

It should not be surprising, after all this discussion of semblance, that Lacan ends up characterizing the phallus as semblance: "It is quite precisely the phallus as semblance [*le semblant du phallus*] that is the pivotal point, the center of everything that can be laid out and contained as regards sexual jouissance" (p. 170).

If we are to view the phallus too as semblance, we must nevertheless keep in mind that—as the bar between signifier and signified—it is the foundation of the entire signifying order. To go beyond it, to enter into a discourse not based on or constituted by semblance, we must, it seems, shift to the level of writing.

The Formulas of Sexuation

This leads us to the whole discussion of the formulas of sexuation, which begins in Seminar XVIII and is continued in Seminars XIX, XX, and XXI. You should be aware that these formulas do not magically appear all at once one day in Lacan's discourse, but are developed slowly over the course of several years, and that not all of his discussions of them necessarily fit with all the others (just as we saw with the phallus).

They are introduced here right after a brief return to the distinction between being and having that Lacan first introduced in "Guiding Remarks for a Convention on Female Sexuality" written in 1958 (included in Lacan, 2006a, pp. 725–36). It is preceded by him telling us, for what is I believe the first time, that "Woman does not exist." He continues:

> Women wish Woman existed, they dream that Woman exists, and it is this wish (or dream) that led to [the invention of] *Don Juan*. It would be marvelous if there were a man for whom Woman existed, because one could be sure of his desire. Don Juan is a harebrained lucubration on the part of women.
>
> (p. 74–75)

Elsewhere he refers to Don Juan as a woman's fantasy. I shall come back to the importance of Don Juan momentarily.

Lacan mentions that the myth Freud develops in *Totem and Taboo* could, perhaps at first glance, "pass itself off as the inscription or writing of the sexual relationship" (p. 105).

The myth suggests that the primal father controls and has access to all the women, which Lacan characterizes as "manifestly the sign of an impossibility" (p. 106). Elsewhere he tells us that a man already has enough trouble satisfying one woman—the idea that he could satisfy more than one is farfetched, to say the least!

The more important idea here—since Freud's myth doesn't really ever say whether the women in the primal horde are satisfied or not—seems to be that it is only from a mythical standpoint, that is from the perspective of the father of the primal horde, that one can make a collection of all women and characterize all women in any one particular way—in this case, they are characterized as belonging to the primal father.

In other words, it is only in this mythical situation that all women can be said to have a common characteristic, and thus that the set of all women can be constructed based on a particular trait, feature, or characteristic (that of belonging to the primal father). This, according to Lacan, is the only thing that would allow us to use the expression "All women are *y*," which is the only thing that would allow us to talk about *La femme*, the only thing that would allow us to talk about Woman with a capital *W*.

In other words, when Lacan says, "Woman (with a capital *W*) does not exist," he means that, outside of the world of Freudian myths, there is no characteristic all women share that would allow us to say they all belong to the same set or can be collectivized in any particular way. There is nothing that could in any way be said to be the essence of women, that defines what all women have in common that allows us to call them all *women*. Stated somewhat differently, in encountering an individual, there is no trait that we could look for in that individual that would automatically allow us to characterize that individual as a woman.

However, Don Juan is the mythical man who desires *all* women, which suggests perhaps that there *is* some feature all women have in common that makes each and every one of them desirable to him. By

suggesting that women would like to believe that such a man exists, by calling Don Juan a female fantasy, Lacan seems to be saying that women wish they could be collectivized, perhaps because he thinks this would allow them to be reassured as to their desirability. Insofar as there exists a man who desires all of them simply because they are women, they know that they are desired. The logic, therefore, of women's wish to believe in Woman with a capital *W* grows out of the uncertainty on women's part of being desired. If Don Juan exists, every woman knows she is desired by at least someone.

This is what allows Lacan to say that an hysteric is not *a* woman but situates herself instead as *toute femme*, that is, with respect to every woman, or Woman with a capital *W* (p. 155), with respect to what she believes to be the essence of femininity, something she believes she shares with all women and that makes her a member of the set of all women. Part of the psychoanalytic project is to help things shift such that she comes to situate herself as a woman, not as Woman as such (pp. 155–56).

Note that in both examples, that of *Totem and Taboo* and Don Juan, the set of all women is mythically constituted in relation to a man: the father of the primal horde who possesses all women or the nobleman who desires all women.

Lacan makes it clear that in his view *Totem and Taboo* is a neurotic product, but insists that the fact that it is the product of Freud's neurosis does not in any way call into question the truth of the construction (p. 161). What he points out is the reversal involved in *Totem and Taboo* in relation to the Oedipus complex. In the Oedipal myth, at least as told by Sophocles, it is the enforcement of the law against incest that, in requiring Oedipus to leave the bed of his mother the Queen, rids the city of the plague and ensures jouissance to the Thebans (law ➔ jouissance). In the myth of the primal horde, we find jouissance at the outset and law afterward (jouissance ➔ law), the result being that for all the sons who banded together to kill the father, *all* women are now prohibited, not just the mother (p. 160; exogamy ensues). This is clearly something we come across in our clinical work with obsessives, and it seems to be the obsessive's rather unique way of collectivizing all women—for him they are all off-limits insofar as they all belong to the father! In other words, the myth presented by Freud in *Totem and Taboo* is not something to be relegated to the distant past: it lives on in and is lived out by a great many neurotics even today.

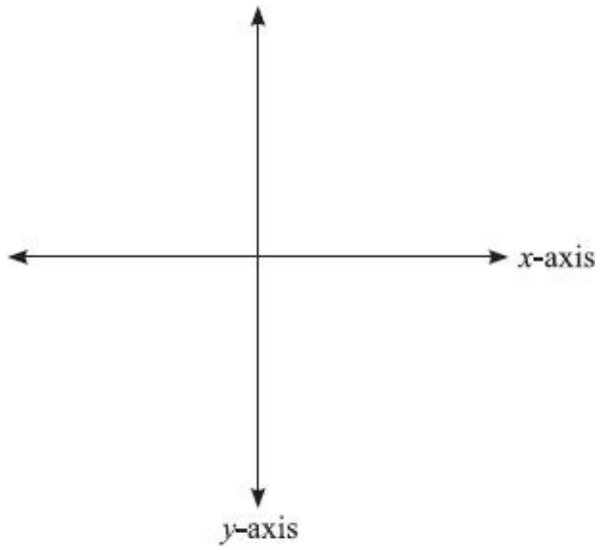
Let us imagine that for some crazy, cockamamie reason you wanted to express the nonexistence of Woman in mathematical terms. What would you say? Given any individual, let us call that individual *x*, and we might even associate that individual with an *x*-axis, which would include all potential individuals —

—no matter what characteristic we think of, and no matter how creative we get in coming up with different characteristics, we will not be able to say that every *x* located on this axis has a particular characteristic, let us call it *y*. Why won't we be able to?

Some of them might have it, some of them might not. For those that do, we will be able to write $x \cdot F(x)$—usually pronounced, to the best of my knowledge, as *x* such that F of *x*. There is an individual *x* such that *x* has the characteristic *y*, and thus can be described by the function F.

$$F(x) = y.$$

This will allow us to plot a number of points on the graph, but the resulting "curve" will not be continuous.



The one thing we will be able to say with some certainty is that not every individual *x* can be described by the function F. Not all of them can be so described: hence Lacan's famous *pas-toutes*. Here (p. 141ff.) he only goes so far as to say, "It is not about every *x* that the function *Phi* of *x* can be written."

Obviously, he is not referring to some biological characteristic, some anatomical or chromosomal specificity, but rather to some characteristic related to the social world of language. If there really were a primal horde controlled by a primal father, we could describe all of the women in the horde as belonging to him. But since there isn't, we can't (regardless of what the obsessive thinks; see the clinical vignettes that follow this paper).

Later, as you are probably aware, Lacan takes this quite a bit further, because one need not spell *toute* with an s at the end, meaning that we shift from *not all* women to not the whole of any one given woman.

Pas-toutes: not all (women)
Pas-toute: not whole (not the whole of a woman)

This is, naturally, terribly complicated by the fact that the *s* designating the plural is not pronounced in spoken French, and since the vast majority of Lacan's opus was spoken orally—well, you get the picture! I won't go into the not-whole here, having discussed it at length elsewhere (see Fink, 1995, 2002).

An obvious implication of Lacan's claim here would seem to be that the contrary is true of men—that there is a characteristic *y* that is found in all men. The question arises what that might possibly be.

The way Lacan expresses himself here, and my stilted translation reflects the unusual French, is:

> Man is the phallic function/a function of the phallus/insofar as he is every man (or all man, entirely man) [*L'homme est fonction phallique en tant qu'il est* tout homme.]. But as you know, there is tremendous doubt as to whether the *every man* (or all man) exists. Those are the stakes here: He cannot constitute the phallic function except insofar as he is *everyman* (or *allman*), that is, except on the basis of a signifier, nothing more.
>
> (p. 142)

This obviously corresponds to the formula of sexuation for men that will take the final form: ∀xΦx.

Lacan's gloss here suggests that it is not that every man is characterized by the phallic function, but rather that it is only insofar as an individual is everyman (or allman) that he is characterized by,

subsumed under, or subject to the phallic function. He is phallic insofar as he is an everyman. In everyday parlance, an everyman is an ordinary man, the common man, the man in the street.

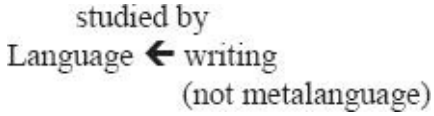
Writing

Before concluding, let me point out something about writing here. Speech, which relies on language as a system (*la langue*), has to do with the realm of semblance, for in that realm we generally seek *sens*, meaning—that is, we try to make sense. Rigor comes in mathematics where, according to certain mathematicians, as Lacan likes to repeat, there is no meaning.

Now, according to Lacan,

> One can only investigate the dwealm [*demansion*] of truth in its dwelling place [*demeure*] [...] via writing insofar as it is only on the basis of writing that logic is constituted.
>
> (p. 64)

> There can be no logic except on the basis of writing, insofar as writing is not language. It is in this respect that I stated that there is no such thing as a metalanguage. Writing itself, insofar as it is distinguished from language, is there to show us that, if language can be investigated through writing, it's precisely insofar as writing is not language, but rather that it is only constructed or fabricated on the basis of its reference to language.
>
> (p. 65)



Writing thus does not constitute a metalanguage and itself has repercussions on language and speech, and yet it allows to us investigate the nature of discourse and sexuality: witness Lacan's writings of the four discourses and the formulas of sexuation, which allow for discussions that ordinary speech would not allow for.

Note here a curious unexplained claim, picked up quite a bit later in Lacan's work: "writing/the written [*l'écrit*] is jouissance" (p. 129).

Conclusion

The few points that I have discussed today will not help you understand everything in the Seminar, but then nothing can help you understand everything! I have avoided taking up the many facets of the seminar that I do not feel I have *any* handle on at all, confining my attention to those that I hope I have said at least something provocative about, if not something enlightening.

To encourage you to read or reread the seminar, let me just mention that it is here that Lacan famously characterizes the superego as telling the subject "Jouis!" (p. 178) and that Lacan tells us how he makes love. This paper was presented in Dublin, Ireland, on September 18, 2009, before the Association for Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy in Ireland (APPI) at the invitation of Pauline O'Callaghan. It was published in *Lacunae: Journal for Lacanian Psychoanalysis, 1/1*(2010), 62–90. The next day, I presented a case ("The Role of Semblance in 'Identity' Formation," included as Chapter 12 in the present volume), preceded by the following clinical vignettes:

The Clinical Relevance of Freud's Myth of the Primal Horde

Here I will briefly describe two different cases that illustrate, at least in part, the relevance of Freud's myth of the primal horde.

Case 1

In the first case, we find a whole series of comments made by the analysand's father about the girls the analysand had crushes on or had in his classes. His father directly mentioned to him that he found his son's first girlfriend very attractive, and the analysand once stole a hundred-dollar bill from his father's wallet to give to her, although he cannot recall whether it was before or after his father commented that he found her attractive.

The father later found one of the analysand's classmates very attractive one day at the beach. Even though the analysand did not like her looks, after that he felt he should be attracted to her.

Later on he wanted his father to say something flattering about his girlfriend in college, and was very disappointed that his father did not, as though he had deliberately set out to find a woman for his father or at least a woman of whom his father would approve.

He says he sometimes has the impression that he should be getting a woman *for me*: he thinks that I want him to get one, to prove that the analysis has enabled him to overcome his erectile dysfunction, but he alternately thinks I want him to learn "to enjoy being alone."

Psychoanalysis with me is getting in the way of his being with a woman, he says, and yet perhaps is helping him overcome his erectile dysfunction. Before he began analysis, he used to go out looking to meet women more often; now he stays home thinking about things to tell me, his libido being caught up in fighting with or struggling with me.

Virtually every woman he's ever been involved with was already involved with someone else from whom he felt he was stealing her, even if her relationship with the other man had ended quite a while before.

He likes it when she is another man's woman, so to speak, preferably the woman of a man like his father: strong, phallic, and domineering. He sees himself as the devious little guy going behind their

backs. (He is not like a young male horse who directly provokes the old male horse who is the leader of the pack, and makes it run far away from the pack until it is exhausted, the younger male then doubling back and mating with the fillies.) He never provokes anyone directly—instead he is sneaky. He essentially enjoys ripping off or betraying the other men, even when they are his best friends.

Whenever he finds himself sitting on the couch in his living room next to a girl who he thinks his *father* would find attractive, whether he himself does or not, he feels like there is a voice telling him, "Kiss her!" He feels that he is not a man if he does not do so for his father, even though his father has been dead for several years. He feels that when he is with a woman, he has to call upon his father's potency in order to make love to her, and that she somehow remains his father's and not his.

All women are his father's, to his mind, not his. In this sense, his father is, to his mind, like the father of the primal horde.

Case 2

The second vignette begins with the old Japanese saying: "The nail that sticks up gets hammered down." This analysand feels he will be punished if he goes after a woman because she is someone else's. Yet he generally prefers this scenario when he pursues women, and even had a child with someone behind her fiancé's back.

In one of his most common fantasies, a woman shows she really wants him and loves him; he does nothing and has nothing to make him lovable: no social status, no money, no accomplishments (these might threaten his father?). If he had status, money or accomplishments, the woman might love him merely for those things, not for himself, and he would ultimately be dumped for someone with more of those things than him.

If she desires him and he has done nothing to bring this on, dad or another man cannot hold it against him: the woman is the only responsible party, his desire is not in play. Were his own desire to be in play, it would run up against a man or father to whom all women rightfully belong.

Notes

1 “I’m sorry that things were necessarily truncated this year” (p. 177).

2 For another example: “The subject [is] what is divided in fantasy—in other words, in reality insofar as it is engendered by a fictional structure” (p. 134).

3 Even as the latter is becoming ever further subsumed within the logic of business, that is, the discourse of capitalism, with its emphasis on the numerical calculation of productivity via “instruments” like Teaching Effectiveness Questionnaires (TEQs) and Student Evaluation Surveys (SESs), and via such notions as Full Time Equivalent (FTE).

4 There is no sexual relationship because there is “no way in which to write it currently” (p. 83).

5 “Nothing that language allows us to do is ever anything but metaphor or metonymy,” he adds later (p. 170).

7

LACAN ON PERSONALITY FROM THE 1930s TO THE 1950s

In taking up the topic of personality in Lacan's early work, I will begin with a highly schematic account of his comments on personality in his doctoral dissertation originally published in 1932. In his dissertation, Lacan (1980, pp. 36–37) argues against a metaphysical conception of personality, including soul, form, and/or substance, as well as against a psychological conception of personality, including "synthesis of our inner experience," "intentional reality," and "personal [i.e., ethical] responsibility" (pp. 32–33). He proposes instead a notion of personality based on the dialectical "development of the person" (p. 37). By "dialectical," I assume he simply means here that the person's development does not proceed in a fixed direction, but at times hesitates or vacillates between alternatives, changes tack, and so on. "We thus find here a law of evolution [of the person] instead of a psychological synthesis" (p. 38), "a regular and comprehensible development" (p. 39).[1]

Lacan goes on to provide an "objective definition of personality phenomena" (p. 42), which stipulates that if we are to relate something that manifests itself in human beings to personality, it must involve three things:

1 biographical development—that is, the affective ways one reads (i.e., understands) one's own history;
2 a self-conception which includes dialectical progress (or movement);
3 a tension in social relations—that is, conflict between one's own autonomy and one's ethical links with other people.[2]

We can already see here, in the opening pages of his dissertation, that to Lacan personality is not based on a personal synthesis or psychological unity, which would be synchronic; rather, personality is *diachronic* in some important sense (p. 43). It is something that is not present all at once but is in fact defined by its very movement and progress, that is, by its meaningful—albeit not necessarily predictable—unfolding over time.

Lacan's concern with personality here seems to be part of a larger debate over the origins of psychosis (paranoia in particular): is it biologically determined or psychologically determined? Biogenic or psychogenic? Constitutional or personality-based?

Personality seems to have often been discussed in the early 1900s in terms of character and Lacan addresses this question: is paranoia characterological—that is, defined by a series of character traits—or is it, rather, based on life events, being related to the evolution of one's personality and having an impact

on the latter?

Lacan argues, first, that there is no unequivocal link between psychosis and a "definable characterological disposition" (p. 53). "What we take at first to be an identity of character [among psychotics] may merely be a formal homology between similar appearances that in fact relate to entirely different structures" (p. 51). Similar traits may, in different people, be the product of very different psychic structures, very different underlying personalities, if you will. (*We can extend this important line of argument: there is rarely an unequivocal link between a particular personality trait, or symptom even, and a particular psychoanalytic diagnostic structure*. The same behavior, character style, or symptom may express or represent something very different in neurosis than in perversion or in obsession than in hysteria. Constipation, for example, is not intrinsically linked to obsession and can be found in virtually every other structural category at one time or another. Narcissism is not inextricably linked to some particular structure—it is found across the diagnostic spectrum.)

Second, Lacan argues that

> a so-called constitutional characteristic [*propriété*]—when it is a function whose development is linked to the history of the individual, the experiences that make up his history, and the education he undergoes—should only be *a priori* considered innate in the last resort.
>
> (p. 51)

In other words, if something in the subject's personality has meaning to the subject (i.e., he or she sees it as related to his or her history, life events, and/or language) it should first and foremost be considered psychogenic.

His overriding concern is to see *not* if there is some correlation between paranoia and "a definable characterological, constitutional predisposition," but rather to see what impact the evolution and semiology of paranoia have on the personality, *personality being defined as a diachronic self-conception that evolves in tension with other people*. In other words, his concern is to see what kinds of life experiences lead to paranoia and what happens to one's personality when paranoia is first triggered.

Lacan claims that "right from the outset, German authors recognized a wide variety of character dispositions among those with delusions" (p. 82). This was not so true of the French, who were fond of delineating specific character types. (This has a long tradition in French thought, going back at least as far as Charles Fourier's nineteenth-century outline of 810 personality types.) However, the traits that defined this paranoid character type among the French were very different depending on which author one consulted! In other words, French psychiatrists could not agree among themselves on what characterized the paranoiac's character. In the 1950s, Lacan (1993, p. 4) reflects back on his early years in psychiatry and indicates that among the character traits attributed to paranoiacs, one found such vague items as nastiness, intolerance, pridefulness, distrustfulness, excessive sensitivity, and having an overblown sense of oneself.

At one point in his dissertation, Lacan (1980, p. 253) himself seems to drift toward providing a typology of personalities: he says that his patient, Aimée—the main patient discussed in the thesis—has "the salient features" of psychasthenics (Janet) and of sensitive types (Kretschmer). This sort of drift even leads him to talk about the "self-punishing personality" (p. 254). One can nevertheless understand at the end of this discussion that Lacan is using the term "personality" above all to talk about the psyche as opposed to the organism: "What my research has led to, and let me emphasize this, is a problem that has no meaning except as a function of the personality or, if one prefers to put it this way, as a psychogenic problem" (p. 254).

I would conclude here that Lacan's reason for adopting the term "personality" is not so much that he is a firm believer in the term, but that he is employing it polemically to combat the then-prevalent belief in the biogenic nature of mental illness. *It is a shorthand term in his vocabulary for the psyche*, and it is quite clear at the end of his dissertation that he understands personality to be composed of the classical psychoanalytic agencies or instances: the id, ego, and superego. It is also quite clear that he does not consider the latter to operate in a harmonious, unified fashion, but rather views them as constituting a conflictual, evolving system.

Driving the last nails into the constitutional coffin, Lacan says that the so-called paranoiac constitution (the supposed set of personality traits of paranoiacs) is often not found in actual cases of paranoia, whereas other "constitutions" (such as psychasthenic and sensitive) are found instead (p. 346).

His general conclusion is that

> The key to the nosological, prognostic, and therapeutic problem of paranoid psychosis must be sought in a concrete psychological analysis that is applied to the entire development of the subject's personality—that is, to the events of his history, to the progress of his conscience, and to his reactions in the social milieu.
>
> (p. 346)

In other words, the key is something highly individual, akin to the kind of analysis involved in a psychoanalysis!

While he still allows that "organic processes" (biology) may play some role in the genesis of psychosis, and that "life-threatening conflicts" (trauma) may serve as the "efficient cause" (immediate trigger) of psychosis, a third "specific factor" must always be considered, which may take the following forms (p. 347):

1 an anomaly of the personality (e.g., the subject's affective history);
2 an anomaly of the personality's development;
3 an anomaly of the personality's functions (infantile fixations at the oral and anal stages).

Overall, we can see that Lacan's major concern in adopting the term "personality" is to combat various tendencies prevalent at the time, including the tendency to attribute all mental illness to biological causes (specific illnesses or problems) or to certain constitutions present from birth, although perhaps evolving over time. His emphasis from the outset is on the importance of *development*, whether that development is smooth or proceeds by discontinuities; the importance of the subject's view of him- or herself in understanding that development (in other words, the way the subject reads his or her own history); and the subject's conflicts with other people. This conception seems to open the door to Lacan's later multilayered view of the psyche or personality in the L schema (see Lacan, 2006a, p. 53, and 1988b, p. 243).

Lacan's dissertation was hailed by surrealists and others in the 1930s as a giant step in the direction of seeing psychotics as *human beings*, not as mutants or diseased patients suffering from a biogenic condition.[3]

Lacan on Lagache

Let us now fast-forward some 25 years and turn to Lacan's work in *Écrits* (2006a), in particular his paper entitled "Remarks on Daniel Lagache's Presentation: 'Psychoanalysis and Personality Structure.'" Daniel Lagache (1903–72) is often referred to as the father of clinical psychology in France. He studied philosophy at the École Normale Supérieure, became a physician, and then an analyst, being analyzed by Rudolf Loewenstein, who was also Lacan's analyst. Lagache became a professor of psychology at the Sorbonne after World War II, and supported the work of his students Laplanche and Pontalis in preparing their well-known dictionary of Freud's work: *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (1973).[4] The paper by Lagache that Lacan comments on here (entitled "Psychoanalysis and Personality Structure") was published in 1961 in *La Psychanalyse*, a journal directed by Lacan himself. Nevertheless, both Lagache's paper and Lacan's commentary on it date back to a conference held in 1958 in the town of Royaumont in France.

According to Lacan, Daniel Lagache's view of personality directly contradicts Freud's second topography, which Lacan claims is "not personalist," meaning that it does not form a harmonious state governed by a "higher synthesis" of some sort, as Lagache would have it.

Lacan (2006a, p. 671) reminds us that the root of the term "personality," *persona*, means mask; the Etruscan root of the Latin term *persona* means a theater mask, the kind of mask worn by actors on a stage. Such a mask might be understood to unify a character because it is fixed in expression; it disguises heterogeneity of feeling, ambivalence, and fragmentation, creating instead something singular and monolithic. *To talk about personality is thus a lure: it amounts to being taken in by the lure of wholeness*, to succumbing to the illusion that a person is or becomes a unified whole.[5] Lacan specifically indicates that two aspects of what Lagache calls personality, Freud's ideal ego and ego-ideal, do not fuse in any way or come to form a synthetic whole, for the first is an imaginary formation while the second is largely a symbolic formation (p. 672).

In his commentary on Lagache, Lacan presents optical schemas with which to depict the ideal ego and ego-ideal (2006a, pp. 673, 674, and 680). I will not go into all the complexities of these diagrams as they would take us very far afield; let me simply note here that in these optical schemas, he shifts the vase from the out-in-the-open position (in Figure 7.1) to the hidden position (in Figure 7.2), suggesting perhaps thereby that the container forms something of an illusion (he identifies the vase with the body *qua* container on page 676 and the flowers with part-objects or object-relations). When we think of the person as a whole or of personality as such, this is an illusion, and this particular illusion is based on our vision of the other who we see as a whole, whereas we only see parts of ourselves, unless we can catch a glimpse of ourselves in a mirror—in which case we come to see ourselves as we see other people.[6] This brings about *the illusion of unity*, of ourselves as forming a harmonious unit of sorts.

According to Lacan, Lagache "attempts to provide a personalist translation of Freud's second topography" (p. 678)—that is, Lagache tries to create unity from the diversity of the id, ideal ego, ego-ideal, and superego. Lagache considers the "medium of intersubjectivity" to be not speech, but rather the simple distance between the ideal ego and the ego-ideal.

Lacan suggests, however, that the ego-ideal is the constellation of the insignias of the (parental) Other's power, the Other's power "to turn [the subject's] cry into a call" (p. 679)—that is, to humanize it, to transform it into human language, into the symbolic. "The person truly begins with the *per-sona* [*sona* referring to sound, in other words, the voice of the superego], but where does personality begin?" (p. 684). In saying this, Lacan is using "person" as a synonym for "subject," not as a synonym for

"personality." He seems to be saying here, in other words, that the subject begins as a response to the Other's booming, resounding voice.[7] It is this voice that turns the subject's cry into a call, humanizing it. Hence, the subject is quite heterogeneous, including as he or she does the Other's voice within him- or herself.

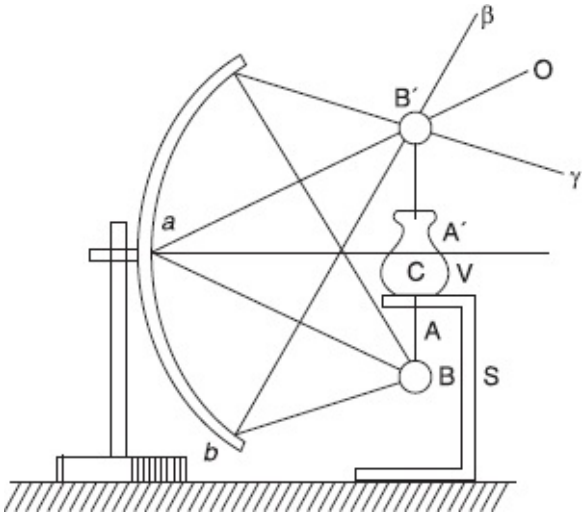


Figure 7.1 Bouasse's inverted bouquet illusion (Lacan, 2006a, p. 673)

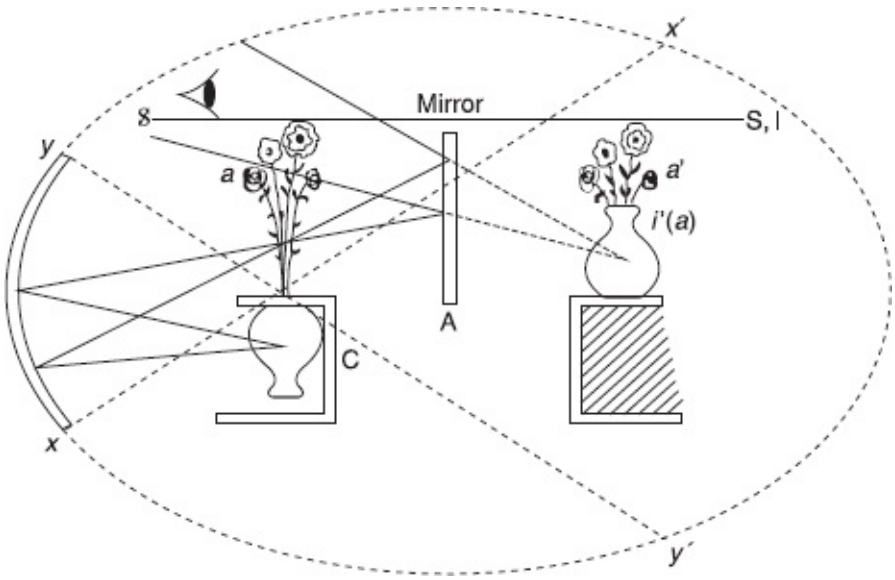


Figure 7.2 Lacan's first optical schema (Lacan, 2006a, p. 674)

Let me back up momentarily and try to unpack something Lacan says earlier in his paper on Lagache:

> To point out that the *persona* is a mask is not to indulge in a simple etymological game; it is to evoke the ambiguity of the process by which this notion has managed to assume the value of incarnating a unity that is supposedly affirmed in being.
>
> Now, the first datum of our experience shows us that the figure of the mask, being split, is not symmetrical. To express this in an image, the figure joins together two profiles whose unity is tenable only if the mask remains closed, its discordance nevertheless instructing us to open it. But what about being, if there is nothing behind it? And if there is only a face, what about the *persona*?
>
> (p. 671)

If one has not read Lévi-Strauss's article "Split Representation in the Art of Asia and America" in *Structural Anthropology* (1963), one is likely to be lost here, for split masks are not necessarily something one comes across every day. Lévi-Strauss points out that Caduveo masks (see the drawing of one such mask in Figure 7.3) are often split into four quadrants, the symmetry being between the upper right and lower left and lower right and upper left (reminiscent of Lacan's L and even I schemas). The symmetry is far from perfect even then: in certain cases the opposing quadrants are more complementary than symmetrical. This is more visible in the two-dimensional drawing presented here than in three-dimensional painted faces (see, for example, Lévi-Strauss, 1963, Plates IV, V, and VI after page 251), since in the latter one cannot see the two different profiles perfectly at the same time.

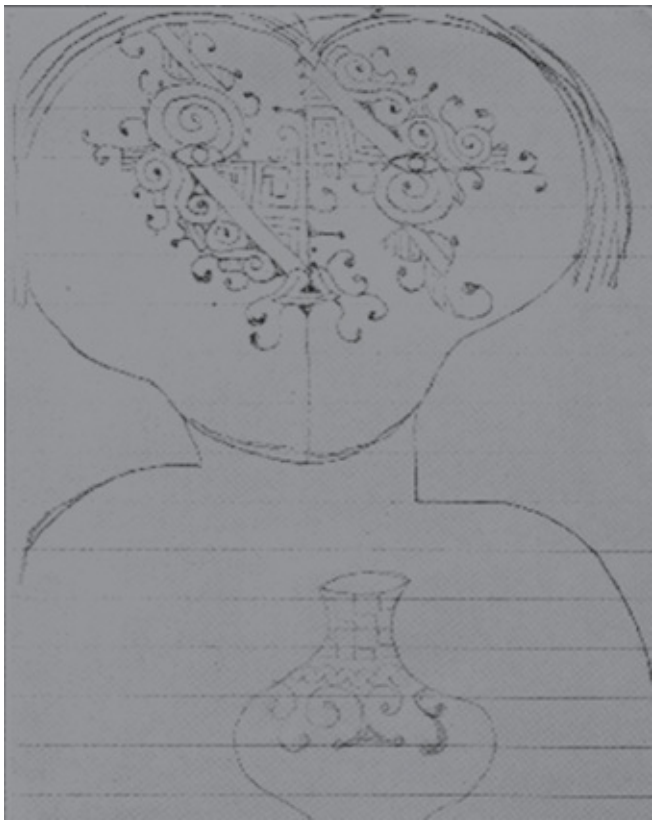


Figure 7.3 Plate VIII: Caduveo woman's drawing representing a figure with a painted face

In the Caduveo culture, one is considered "stupid" (an animal) prior to having one's face painted in such a way; face painting inscribes one in the social order in a particular place, a place based on one's genealogy and the social rank of one's family. Spiritual messages are included therein: "it is not just a design etched in the flesh, but all the traditions and philosophy of the race etched in the spirit" (Lévi-Strauss, 1963, p. 257, trans. modified). As Lévi-Strauss puts it:

> In native thought … the design is the face, or rather it creates the face. It is the design that confers upon the face its social being, its human dignity, its spiritual significance. Double representation of the face … thus expresses a deeper, more essential splitting—namely, that between the "stupid" biological individual and the social person whom the individual must incarnate.
>
> (p. 259, trans. modified)

Hence, we see here the social face of the subject, which comprises her ideals and those of her family and

group, contrasted with the raw, brute, "stupid" organism that has not yet been brought into and alienated in language. Perhaps we can now begin to understand Lacan's (2006a, p. 671) aforementioned words:

> [O]ur experience shows us that the figure of the mask, being split, is not symmetrical. To express this in an image, the figure joins together two profiles whose unity is tenable only if the mask remains closed, its discordance nevertheless instructing us to open it. But what about being, if there is nothing behind it? And if there is only a face, what about the *persona*?

The latter part of the quote still seems rather opaque, so let us look to another text to see if it can shed any light on this one.

Lacan on Gide

Here is a related passage from Lacan's article entitled "The Youth of Gide, or the Letter and Desire" (also written in 1958):

> Must I, in order to awaken their attention, show [analysts] how to handle a mask that unmasks the face it represents only by splitting in two and that represents this face only by remasking it? And then explain to them that it is when the mask is closed that it composes this face, and when it is open that it splits it?
>
> (Lacan, 2006a, p. 752)

The Caduveo mask "unmasks the face it represents only by splitting in two" (right and left profiles; area above the nose and area below) and it "represents this face only by remasking it"—the face can only be represented via a mask for there is no representation without a representational system that is something other than the living organism. The opening and closing of the mask might seem to refer to the laying flat of the two different profiles, which can never be seen by a human being in the ordinary course of life (as in Figure 7.3); the closing might seem to refer to each profile as seen separately. However, Lévi-Strauss (1963, p. 262) also mentions that there are certain kinds of

> masks with flaps (*volets*) which alternately present several aspects of the totemic ancestor: sometimes peaceful, sometimes angry, sometimes human, sometimes animal. Their role is to offer a series of intermediate forms that assure the transition from symbol to signification, from magic to normal, from supernatural to social. Their function is thus both to mask and unmask. But when it comes to unmasking, it is the mask that—through a sort of reverse split—opens up into two halves, whereas the actor himself splits, in the split representation that aims, as we have seen, to both display and lay flat [*faire étalage de*] the mask at the expense of its wearer.
>
> (trans. modified)

Having read that, I decided I had to find some images of such masks, since Lévi-Strauss did not provide any in that particular article. I came across Lévi-Strauss' preface to *La voie des masques* (1975), translated as *The Way of the Masks* (1982), where he cites at length his own 1943 article, "The Art of the Northwest Coast at the American Museum of Natural History," which Lacan very likely read. In it Lévi-Strauss explicitly mentions the extensive collection of masks made by American Indians of the northwest coast of North America on exhibit at the Museum of Natural History in New York; here is what he had said about those masks in 1943:

> For the spectators of the initiation ceremonies, these dance masks—which suddenly open into two flaps (or shutters), allowing one to perceive a second face and sometimes even a third face behind the second, all of which are mysterious and austere—attest to the omnipresence of the supernatural and the proliferation of myths.
>
> (Lévi-Strauss, 1982, pp. 11–12)

I then finally managed to find some books that contained pictures of these dance masks. Figures 7.4 and 7.5 reproduce just one example from *A World of Faces* (1978) by Edward Malin.

Figure 7.4 Family crest mask closed (Plate 27A)

Figure 7.5 Family crest mask open (Plate 27B)

As you can see from these figures, the outermost mask is often a stylized representation of an animal, fish, or bird, whereas the innermost mask is usually of a human being, ordinarily one's ancestor; yet the innermost mask itself never opens up to reveal the face of the actor wearing the mask. Given the relationship between man and his totemic ancestor, we can perhaps now try to understand what Lacan (2006a, pp. 751–52) means when he discusses "a mask that unmasks the face it represents only by splitting in two and that represents this face only by remasking it." We can perhaps also grasp the notion that "it is when the mask is closed that it composes this face, and when it is open that it splits it." For when such a mask is open, we see quite clear images of the outer mask all around the inner one; we do not see one mask alone: we see the inner one and aspects of the outer mask simultaneously.

Let us consider anew the above-cited passage:

> [O]ur experience shows us that the figure of the mask, being split, is not symmetrical. To express this in an image, the figure joins together two profiles whose unity is tenable only if the mask remains closed, its discordance nevertheless instructing us to open it. But what about being, if there is nothing behind it? And if there is only a face, what about the *persona*?
>
> (p. 671)

We certainly never see the person or being behind the mask. We never see anything but a clash of totemic and human visages, and a transition from one to the other. We have here a multiplicity including

our ancestors—the Other's thunderous voice that brought us into being—and certain familial identifications: hardly a harmonious whole!

Reich: Confusing the Imaginary and the Symbolic

Pursuing this discussion of Lacan on personality just one step further, I will take up his comments on Wilhelm Reich in "Variations on the Standard Treatment" (2006a), which was originally published in 1955. Here Lacan enunciates a sort of "deconstructive" method (*avant la lettre*), which he often uses: "Let us follow the path of a kind of criticism that puts a text to the test of the very principles it defends" (p. 341). In other words, we apply the principles laid out in the text to the text's own argument and see what we come up with.

What does Lacan have to say about Reich's (1972) notion of character and character armor? He seems to suggest that the latter is tied up with the imaginary—that is, with the narcissistic image. For he says that the notion of armor suggests a defense against something that is repressed (hence armor is structured like a symptom), whereas what Reich calls character (or personality) is, rather, an armorial or *coat of arms* (p. 342). An armorial is a configuration of heraldic signs (see Figure 7.6), and the latter are designed to visually impress people and display one's prestige; they are used to determine precedence in public ceremonies obeying a certain protocol, based on social rank. Lacan obviously associates this with display behavior (in reproduction rituals and aggressive territory determinations) in animals.

Although Reich conceptualizes what he is doing in analytic treatment as breaking through the subject's defenses, Lacan seems to suggest here that at the end of such "treatment" the subject is still carrying around the weight of his defenses; it is simply that the almost symbolic mark they formerly bore has been effaced. These defenses "play only the role of a medium or material, since they persist after the resolution of the tensions that seemed to motivate them. This medium or material is, no doubt, ordered like the symbolic material of neurosis" (p. 342).

Figure 7.6 Coat of arms of the Duke of St. Albans

While Reich argues that these defenses disappear in the course of treatment, Lacan's claim is that they persist: it is simply their origin and lineage that have been effaced, leading Reich to assume that the subject has been freed of them (unbarred?). In Lacan's view, their mark has been effaced but their weight has not. It would seem to Lacan that analysts should instead consider the mark to be indelible, as it is the

mortal mark of death. A family coat of arms brings you into being within a certain tradition or family line, but it also seals your fate: you are destined to die in the service of *x*, *y*, or *z*. According to Lacan, Reich tries to exclude the mortal mark we bear when he refuses to accept Freud's notion of the death drive.

One might propose that Reich fails to recognize that the neurotic's body is overwritten with signifiers. An exaggeratedly erect body posture may, for example, be understood as a phallic signifierness (*signifiance*), but it may alternatively be the incarnation of "uprightness," suggesting a grafting onto the body of a parent's moral admonitions or identification with a parent's rigid moral stance (see Fink, 2007, pp. 196–98). Reich, however, seems to take the body as if it were a natural thing (to sit hunched over is viewed by him as a protective phenomenon, as a sign of a self-defensive "character," as it might be in the animal kingdom, and as we might see it in most human beings who had just been punched in the stomach) or as pure resistance, instead of as manifesting unconscious identifications with one's ancestors, the taking on of their family crest (blazon, arms, armorial), and so on—in short, as something in which one's mortal fate has been etched.

What then is Lacan's "deconstructionist" reading here? Adopting Reich's principle of interpreting everything as a defensive move, Lacan interprets Reich's refusal of the death drive—the death drive being a proxy for the symbolic in Lacanian theory—as itself a defense. Just as Reich, in his clinical work, constantly accuses the analysand of defending him- or herself against the analysis, Reich the analyst is accused by Lacan of defending against psychoanalytic theory itself. As is so often the case, Lacan does not really develop the argument here—it is simply suggested.

Subjectivity Is Essentially Untotalizable

Beyond 1960, one would be hard-pressed to find Lacan use the term "personality" in anything but a pejorative way, ridiculing those who refer to the "total personality" or to personality as a unifying unity (or unit). He repeatedly asserts instead that "There is no unity to the subject" (see, for example, Lacan, 1983) and that the unconscious cannot be understood as some sort of second (evil or malicious) personality. He seems to view the term itself as almost ineluctably tending toward some totalizing view of the human condition, some totalizing view of subjectivity, and thereby overlooking our split subjectivity. On the only occasion on which he takes up the word in his own name, he says that "personality is the way in which someone subsists in the face of object *a*" (Lacan, 1978b), object *a* being viewed by Lacan as precisely what makes us divided subjects. This paper was originally presented on September 23, 2004, during a day-long workshop entitled "Personality and Personality Disorders" in Omaha, Nebraska, sponsored by the Creighton Medical School and the Affiliated Psychoanalytic Workgroups (APW). It appeared in the *Journal of European Psychoanalysis, 26–27*(1–2) (2008), 257–74.

ABSTRACT: The concept of personality plays an important polemical role in Lacan's early work, where he stresses the importance of psychological as opposed to biological determinants of mental illness. He defines personality at that point in time as a diachronic self-conception that evolves in tension with other people, it being a shorthand term in his vocabulary for the psyche. By the time he comments on Lagache's work (1958), he indicates that those who concern themselves with "personality" are taken in by the lure of wholeness, succumbing to the illusion that a person is or becomes a unified whole. Lacan instead emphasizes the mask-like quality of personality, relying on Lévi-Strauss's work to undermine the notion that a psychoanalytic topography could allow us to conceptualize a person as unitary. Lacan's work on Gide and Reich provides a number of other points regarding masks and so-called personality.

Notes

1 He seems to integrate the ideas of "intentionality" and "responsibility" into this development, intentionality being understood as the fruit of "education" and as based on "the whole of one's personal development."

2 These three aspects (development, self-conception, and tension in social relations) are reiterated on page 56 and could, without much difficulty, be situated on the L schema, with *a–a´* associated with self-conception and S–A with tension in social relations.

3 In the English-speaking world, R. D. Laing is probably more widely believed to have been the first to take this step, but his *Divided Self* was originally published only in 1960.

4 In the "Geneva Lecture on the Symptom," Lacan (1989a, p. 18) comments that "In *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, Lagache *a là gaché* [a play on words implying spoiled or ruined] all of psychoanalysis. Well, in fact, it isn't so bad, I shouldn't exaggerate. The only thing that probably interested him was to 'Lagachize' what I said" (trans. modified).

5 This illusion can be found, for example, in Erik Erikson's work on "integration" in *Childhood and Society* (1963); cf. his eighth stage of development in which the central conflict is "integrity versus despair."

6 As Lacan (2006a, p. 675) indicates, according to the optical schema, in order to see *i´(a)*, his ideal ego, the subject must be situated in such a way as to see himself in the cone x´y´—that is, to see himself as *i´(a)*. In this sense he sees himself in the "other" ("form of the other") seen as a whole there. He only comes to think of himself as a whole because he sees the other as a whole, as a body or container. Note here that *i(a)* is the real image and that *i´(a)* is the virtual image; *a* stands for the part-object, regarding which Lacan says: there is no "ideal totalization of this object" (p. 676).

7 In Seminar XXIV, he puts this a little differently, suggesting that the subject begins as a response to S_1, a first signifier, which comes from the Other.

8

AN INTRODUCTION TO "KANT WITH SADE"

> The Other is absolutely essential, and this is what I wanted to articulate when I gave my seminar on *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, in relating Sade to Kant, and in showing you that the essential interrogation of the Other by Sade goes so far as to simulate the requirements of the moral law, and not just accidentally.
>
> —Lacan, 2004, p. 193

"Kant with Sade" was written in 1962 and came out in April 1963 in the journal *Critique*. Lacan first seriously discussed Kant in the same breath with Sade in December 1959 in Seminar VII, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis (1959–1960)*, and continued his discussion of the questions raised there in Seminar X, *Anxiety (1962–1963)*.

Curiously enough, Adorno and Horkheimer (1972) also talked about Kant and Sade in the same breath, so to speak, in a chapter of their joint effort, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*,[1] called "Juliette or Enlightenment and Morality." (I refer to it hereafter as Adorno's work because it appears that Horkheimer had a bad case of writer's block and that Adorno ghostwrote much if not all of what Horkheimer signed his name to.) It seems rather astonishing that in the space of less than 15 years, that is, between 1944 and 1959, thinkers as divergent in their orientations as Lacan and Adorno should make Immanuel Kant and the Marquis de Sade into the most unlikely of bedfellows!

How could a Frenchman steeped in surrealism, psychiatry, and cybernetics and an effete German Frankfurter interested in atonal music, mass culture, and the authoritarian personality have possibly come up with the same improbable association of one of the greatest obsessives of all times, by whom the local townspeople could set their watches, and of a man whose name has been associated for two centuries with perversion, leather, and sexual excess in every shape and form? Was Lacan a reader of Critical Theory? There is at least one reason to think that Lacan was aware of the existence of the Frankfurt School: Horkheimer (1948) published an article in the *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*.

Adorno's Critique of "Science" and "Reason"

Let us briefly consider the relationship Adorno outlines between Kant and Sade. Like Lacan, Adorno deems philosophy to be part and parcel of the master's discourse. He disparagingly refers to philosophers as "genuine burghers." Despite the use of the word "morality" in his chapter title ("Juliette or Enlightenment and Morality"), he seems to consider Kant more from a systemic point of view than from an ethical one, focusing on his notions of science and universality. In particular, he considers the categorical imperative to be nothing more than a joke: "The citizen who would forego profit only on the

Kantian motive of respect for the mere form of law would not be enlightened, but superstitious—a fool" (p. 85). Kant, he says, confirms "the scientific system as the form of truth"; thought thus "seals its own nullity, for science is technical practice, as far removed from reflective consideration of its own goal as are other forms of labor under the pressure of the system" (p. 85). In other words, Kant is taken to task for promoting a particularly abstract form of scientificity and for invalidating every other form of thought.

Adorno quotes Kant as saying that enlightenment is "man's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity. Immaturity is the inability to use one's understanding without the guidance of another person" (p. 81). To Adorno's mind, fascism is the ultimate implementation of such an "enlightened" system. It treats emotion *"ac si quaestio de lineis, planis aut de corporibus esset"* ("as if it were a question of lines, planes, and [solids]" (Spinoza, 1994, p. 153). It spares its subjects the trouble of having "moral feelings" or "moral sentiments,"[2] as they are sometimes called, as there is no longer any need for them to have them:

> The totalitarian order gives full rein to calculation and abides by science as such. Its canon is its own brutal efficiency. It was the hand of philosophy that wrote it on the wall—from Kant's *Critique* to Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals;* but one man made out the detailed account. The work of the Marquis de Sade portrays "understanding without the guidance of another person": that is, the bourgeois individual freed from tutelage.
>
> (p. 86)

Science, according to Adorno, provided the "powerholders" with the means necessary for the reproduction of a subjugated mass society, and "Sade erected an early monument to their sense of planning" (p. 87). He did so by emphasizing *organization*, which is a key term in Adorno's critique of Kant, Sade, and everyone else for that matter. Adorno, who himself erects an edifice that is astounding by its very bulk and repetitiveness, its high degree of structure and all-encompassing, totalizing systemization (what could be more arid than reading Adorno?), criticizes Kant and Sade for precisely that same approach as applied to politics and social forms. "Reason," he writes,

> is the organ of calculation, of planning; it is neutral in regard to ends; its element is coordination. What Kant grounded transcendentally, the affinity of knowledge and planning, which impressed the stamp of inescapable expediency on every aspect of a bourgeois existence that was wholly rationalized, even in every breathing-space, Sade realized empirically more than a century before sport was conceived. The teams of modern sport, whose interaction is so precisely regulated that no member has any doubt about his role, and which provide a reserve for every player, have their exact counterpart in the sexual teams of *Juliette*, which employ every moment usefully, neglect no human orifice, and carry out every function. […] The architectonic structure of the Kantian system, like the gymnastic pyramids of Sade's orgies, […] reveals an organization of life as a whole which is deprived of any substantial goal. These arrangements amount not so much to pleasure as to its regimented pursuit—organization—just as in other demythologized epochs […] the schema of an activity was more important than its content.
>
> (p. 88)

A fine gloss on the sex scenes in the Marquis de Sade's work, Adorno's account could be translated

psychoanalytically as taxing Sade with severe obsessive neurosis where nothing can be left to chance, where one has to have a system for everything—even "leisure." Few would deny, I imagine, that such obsession looks rather totalitarian when translated into the political arena. Adorno quotes Sade's Francavilla here and then provides his own commentary:

> "The government must control the population, and must possess all the means necessary to exterminate them when afraid of them, or to increase their numbers when that seems desirable […]." Francavilla indicates the road that imperialism, the most terrible form of the *ratio*, has always taken: "Take its god from the people that you wish to subjugate, and then demoralize it; so long as it worships no other god than you, and has no other morals than your morals, you will always be its master […]."
>
> Since reason posits no substantial goals, all affects are equally removed from its governance. (p. 89)

Adorno's objection to Sade seems to be that emotion is given no place in Sade's universe and, when presented at all, is degraded or serves the purpose of ideology. He writes of both Kant and Sade, "Enthusiasm is bad. Calmness and decisiveness constitute the strength of virtue. […] Juliette believes in science. She wholly despises any form of worship whose rationality cannot be demonstrated" (p. 96).

Adorno sounds most like Lacan when he says that Sade's work "constitutes the intransigent critique of practical reason, in contradistinction to which Kant's own critique itself seems a revocation of his own thought" (p. 94). For here Adorno seems to be suggesting, as does Lacan (2006a, pp. 765–66), that Sade completes Kant's work, taking it further than Kant himself did: Sade takes what Kant developed to its logical conclusion.

Lacan too emphasizes the scientific aspect of Kant's approach, and goes so far as to retranslate Kant's maxim, "Act in such a way that the maxim guiding your will can always be taken as the principle of a law that will be valid for everyone," in terms derived from early cybernetics: "Never act in any other way than one in which your action can be programmed" (Lacan, 1992, p. 77). Note that the law here appears to be thoroughly transparent: we can and do know it and, moreover, we know it in its entirety.

Desire and the Law

One of the central problematics in "Kant with Sade" is the relationship between desire and the law, and one of Lacan's conclusions regarding their relationship is that "law and repressed desire are one and the same thing" (Lacan, 2006a, p. 782).[3] This gloss is by no means the first Lacan provides concerning the relationship between desire and the law. Let us consider a discussion provided in Seminar II where Lacan (1988b) takes up a passage found in an odd little novel by Raymond Queneau entitled *On est toujours trop bon avec les femmes* (in English, see Queneau, 2003).

> In this book, [...] a young typist, who gets caught up in the Irish revolution and some very scabrous misadventures, makes, while locked in the bathroom one day, a discovery in every respect like that of father Karamazov.
>
> As you know, Karamazov's son Ivan leads his father into the audacious avenues of thought of cultured men, and in particular, he says, "If God doesn't exist, then all is permitted." This is obviously a naïve notion, for we analysts know full well that if God does not exist, then nothing at all is permitted any longer. Neurotics prove that to us every day.
>
> Our typist, locked in the bathroom, makes a still more impressive discovery for someone who is a subject of His Majesty. Something happens to disturb the maintenance of order in Dublin, which leads her into doubt, doubt that leads her to the following formulation: "If the King of England is an idiot [*un con*], we can do whatever we like." From then on [...] she no longer denies herself anything.
>
> (Lacan, 1988b, pp. 127–28)[4]

Naturally, this does not mean that the law on the books that states that "Anyone who says that the King of England is an idiot [*con* means idiot, asshole, cunt, and so on] will have his head cut off"[5] has magically disappeared. The subject's desire to call the King of England an idiot (or worse) is correlated with and dependent upon the very existence of this law.

Lacan had said much the same thing already in his 1951 paper "A Theoretical Introduction to the Functions of Psychoanalysis in Criminology" in discussing Saint Paul's *Epistle to the Romans* 7:7, where one finds the following: "I can only know sin by means of the Law. Indeed, I would never have thought to covet had the Law not said 'Thou shalt not covet'" (Lacan, 2006a, p. 126). We learn to desire the very thing the law prohibits. Here, however, Lacan takes things a step further:

> Any similar primordial law, which includes the specification of the death penalty as such, includes, by the same token, through its partial character, the fundamental possibility of not being understood. We are always in the position of never completely understanding the law, because no one can master the law of discourse in its entirety.
>
> If it is forbidden to say that the King of England is an idiot, with having one's head cut off as punishment, one will not say it, and one will be led to not say quite a lot of other things as well —in short, everything that reveals the glaring reality that the King of England is an idiot. [...]
>
> It follows that all speech which is of a piece with the reality that the King of England is an idiot is cast into limbo. The subject is caught up in the necessity of having to eliminate or extract from his speech everything pertaining to what the law forbids one to say. Now, this prohibition is not understood in the slightest. At the level of reality, no one can understand why one would have one's head cut off for speaking the truth—no one grasps where the very fact of

> the prohibition is situated. Thus, one can no longer assume that someone who says what mustn't be said and has the idea that all is permitted will be able to purely and simply cancel out the law as such.
>
> (Lacan, 1988b, p. 128)

The law subsists precisely inasmuch as we do not understand its why and wherefore. It continues to function in us even as we break it.[6]

> The difficult thing we encounter in analytic practice is the very fact that there is a law. And this is what can never be completely elucidated in legal discourse: why there is a law in the first place.
>
> […] A subject of the King of England has many reasons for wanting to express things that are directly related to the fact that the King of England is an idiot. Let us say that it finds its way into his dreams. What does he dream about? […] That he has his head cut off.
>
> There is no need to wonder about some sort of primary masochism, self-punishment, or desire for chastisement. On this occasion, the fact that the dreamer has his head cut off means that the King of England is an idiot. This is censorship. It is the law insofar as it is not understood.
>
> (pp. 128–29)

In the dream in question, one does not dream that one is shouting from the rooftops that the King is a cretin; the enforcement of the law seems to imply, however, that one has already done so. The law here serves as the Other as language—that is, as the symbolic order. We are submerged in it and cannot possibly grasp or assimilate it in its entirety: it is far too immense, far too subject to influence by other languages and to daily change by its native and not-so-native speakers to ever be encompassed or contained by one individual.

Now desire is woven with linguistic thread. Recall that, according to Lacan, for need to be articulated, it must pass through the filter of language.

Need → Language → Desire[7]

In the process, however, desire arises as something that is subject to the already existing relations and interrelations among elements in the signifying chain: "conversation" is related to "conservation," not so much by a conscious association of ideas or by some conceptual relationship between them, as by the fact that they contain identical phonemes and letters. Desire thus arises out of a language structured in a particular way, a language that supplies circumlocutions such as "His Majesty the King," for example, which allow one to mouth ready-made phrases in the presence of the fool, without getting oneself into trouble. The laws of the land are in a sense already embodied in the very linguistic configurations with which we express our thoughts.

Yet desire, being written or ridden with language embodying the law, is already self-defeating: insofar as desire allows itself to wish for transgression, the punishment is already forthcoming. Consider the following example of a patient whose mother hated redheads. Whenever he tried to talk to a redheaded girl—and he immediately fell head over heels in love with every redheaded girl he laid eyes on—he immediately became clumsy, oafish, danced as if he had two left feet, and promptly put his foot in his mouth whenever he tried to make conversation with them. The Other's law, the mOther's prohibition of

redheads, while transgressed in fantasy, was obeyed in practice.

Lacan's example here is still more radical, however, in that the British subject who dreams his head is lying in a basket near the guillotine *would not even dream* of saying "the King of England is a bastard." Censorship short-circuits the transgression stage—the stage at which one might get a kick out of saying "the King is a total jerk"—proceeding directly to the stage of punishment.

This takes us to another statement by Lacan (1988a): "repression and the return of the repressed are one and the same thing" (p. 191). Note that this statement has exactly the same structure as the one we find in "Kant with Sade," "law and repressed desire are one and the same thing" (Lacan, 2006a, p. 782).[8]

To illustrate the idea that repression and the return of the repressed are one and the same, let us consider another example Lacan provides in Seminar II:

> I knew someone whose writer's cramp was tied, as his analysis revealed, to the fact that in Islamic law, under which he had been raised, a thief must have his hand cut off. He never could stomach that. Why? Because his father had been accused of being a thief. He spent his childhood at a serious distance from Koranic law. All of his relations with his original milieu—everything solid, the legal system, order, and the basic coordinates of his world—were barred to him, because he refused to understand why someone who was a thief should have his hand cut off. Furthermore, for this reason, and precisely because he didn't understand it, it was he who had his hand cut off.
>
> That's censorship, insofar as there can never be any relationship to the law in its entirety, since one never completely makes the law one's own.
>
> Censorship and the superego must be situated in the same register as the law. [...] Censorship is neither at the level of the subject nor at that of the individual but rather at the level of discourse, for discourse constitutes, all by itself, a full universe, and at the same time there is something irreducibly discordant about it, in every one of its parts. It takes very little, very little at all—being locked up in the bathroom or having a father falsely accused of Lord knows what crime—for the law to suddenly manifest itself to you in a cutting form. This is what censorship is, and Freud never confuses *Widerstand* (resistance) with censorship.
>
> (Lacan, 1988b, p. 129–30)

Lacan's patient (also discussed in Lacan, 1988a, pp. 196–98, and in Fink, 2004a, pp. 9–10) had clearly forgotten or refused (that is, repressed) this aspect of Islamic law, but it had hardly forgotten him. It returned by inflicting a punishment on the son (he effectively had no use of his writing hand) that was supposed to have been inflicted on his father owing to the accusation of theft against the father. What was repressed (that a hand must be cut off) and its return (a hand being for all intents and purposes cut off) were of a piece, one and the same.

In Seminar X, Lacan (2004) explains "the identicalness of desire and law" (p. 176) by the fact that "they share an object" (p. 126)—that is, they both concern the mother. Desire, which is at the outset the father's desire for the mother, "is identical to the function of the law. It is insofar as the law prohibits her that it makes us desire her, for, after all, the mother is not in and of herself the most desirable object" (p. 126). It is the very prohibition of incest (p. 176) that brings desire for the mother into being, a desire that must then—in most cases—be repressed. When it returns—when it manifests itself in the subject's life—its connections with the mother and the prohibiting Other are unmistakable, assuming we know how to see through its often flimsy disguises (see, for example, the case of the analysand I described in Chapters 10 and 11 in Volume 1 of the present collection).

The Good or Doing the Right Thing

Let us turn now to the subject, not of attempted transgression, but rather of acting in accordance with the moral law or the old saw known as "the Good." This old saw takes us back at least as far as Socrates and Plato. Socrates tells us that it is enough to *know* what is right in order to *do* it. According to Plato, a person who knows what is good has no problem implementing it; knowledge alone is sufficient to determine the will, to induce one to do the right thing. Wrongdoing is due to wrong thinking, a misunderstanding of what is good and bad, right and wrong. The notion of the Good, with a capital G, seems to date back at least this far.

In "Kant with Sade," Lacan (2006a, p. 766) suggests that centuries of ethical debate have revolved around the following question: "Do you feel good when you do the right thing?" Despite the theoretical differences among utilitarians, deontologists, teleologists, and every other ilk of moralists who concern themselves with identifying what the right thing might look like, there is a practical problem: that of convincing people—once you have gotten them to believe in your version of what is right—to actually *do* the right thing. Because what is right often seems to have something unpleasant about it, nicely embodied in the very word we use to talk about it in English: "duty." It always seems to involve a sacrifice of some kind, some sort of drudgery, pain (see Lacan, 1992, pp. 80 and 108), or repression. Moralists, social reformers, and revolutionaries have all, at one time or another, run into the theory/practice quandary of convincing people that the sacrifice involved in doing their duty is worthwhile, that the payoff is greater than it seems at first glance.

Plato argues that there is no such thing as a theory/practice gap; rather, to know (what is right) is to desire (to do what is right), and to desire is to act (on that desire). If people do not act in such a way as to do what is right, there must be something imperfect about their knowledge of what is right. It sounds good on paper, but the argument does not seem to be borne out in practice. Indeed, the elaborate atonement procedures developed by virtually every religion seem to attest to the inapplicability of Plato's argument. We might even understand Alcibiades' outrageous words and actions in Plato's *Symposium* as constituting an implicit self-critique on Plato's part of this obviously false notion.

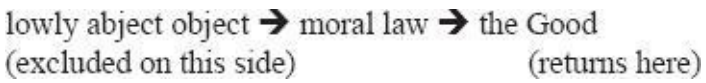
Lacan (2006a, p. 766) notes that German does not allow for a formulation that French does: "*on est bien dans le bien*." German requires that such an adage switch between two different terms: *wohl* and *Gute*; *Man fühlt sich wohl im Guten*. English seems a bit more flexible, and we can translate the French by either "doing the right thing feels right," or "it feels good to do a good turn (or "to do a good deed," or simply "to do good"). Translating in such ways, French and English using one and the same word to render the two different German terms, *wohl* and *Gute*, covers over the radical distinction between the two uses. *Wohl* is the notion of wellbeing that I will call "feeling good"; *être bien* in French means to feel comfortable, at ease, to feel that all is well with the world; *wohl* and *être bien* refer to affects or feelings. *Gute*, on the other hand, is a philosophical notion: the Good with a capital G; in French it is called *le Bien*, with a capital B; I will refer to it here as "the right thing." It is related to what Plato calls the Just, and to the whole Western philosophical tradition revolving around the questions of justice and fairness.

Kant (1999) would certainly not accept the 1960s' slogan, "If it feels good, do it!" Feeling good is nothing but an affect, according to *The Critique of Practical Reason*, and thus contemptible when measured against the yardstick of reason, which is the categorical imperative ("Act in such a way that the maxim guiding your will can always be taken as the principle of a law that will be valid for everyone"). Of course it is not quite so contemptible if "good vibes" arise directly from doing the right thing, and Kant seems at pains to show that they do at certain points. Nevertheless, what is essential to him is to act in accordance with reason, to do the right thing. If it happens to feel good, then so much the better.

If you act in the interest of obtaining pleasure, or with even so much as a glimmer of a hope for some kind of reward for your action, some kind of payoff, your object is "pathological" in Kant's terminology (meaning that it is an object to which you are emotionally attached, with which you have a relationship that is characterized by a certain "pathos"). Your action, in order to be ethical, must not be based on any kind of interest in getting credit for it, inheriting the family's summer home on Cape Cod, being loved, or satisfying whatever other type of desire you might have. Nor must it be based on an attempt to avoid pain, suffering, or fear for yourself or others. No utilitarian-style calculation of the greatest pleasure for the greatest number is admissible, unless, of course, it can be made to agree with the ultimate criterion that a moral principle is one that can be legitimately adopted by everyone, not just by certain people or a certain number of people (e.g., the majority).

By denigrating affect, and relegating feeling good to the status of a possible after-effect (a sort of "after-affect") of doing the right thing, a new dialectic develops in Kant's work, Lacan suggests: *Wohl* (feeling good) becomes associated with *das Ding*, "the extremely good object" or Thing (*"l'extrême du bien,"* as Lacan, 1992, p. 73, puts it) that cannot be articulated (but that is associated with mom), whereas *Gute* (the Good or the right thing) becomes associated with the bad object and the law. *Wohl* and *das Ding* are excluded. The only object involved in Kantian morality is a bad one (undesirable, not thought of as likely to bring pleasure) at the outset, but a type of redemption seems possible, insofar as the bad, abject object reappears in the guise of the Good.

Owing to the moral law, the lowly abject object is taken up into the Good:



The abject object is filtered through the Other as moral law, and disgorged on the other side as the Good. (Kierkegaard [1995, p. 424] might be seen to make a similar move when he tells us that we must love our neighbor and that "the neighbor is the ugly"; genuine Christian love is love for that which is ugly, and it thereby redeems what is ugly.) We seem to have a type of exclusion here: Kant's moral law is such that the repressed (or excluded) and the return of the repressed (or excluded) are one and the same.[9]

The one compliment Lacan pays Kant is that his ethical system avoids the pitfall of reciprocity—that is, the imaginary relationship, *a-a´*. Formulated in terms of logical time, insofar as the latter plays a role in every precipitation of subjectivity, Kant does not get bogged down in a certain intermediary step. Recall that, in "Logical Time and the Assertion of Anticipated Certainty" (Lacan, 2006a, pp. 197–213), there are three moments or times of the constitution of the subject:

1 impersonal subjects (two blacks: one white)
2 subjects who are undefined except by their reciprocity (if I am black then the other is thinking that …)
3 the personal form of the knowing subject that can only be expressed by "I."

Lacan (2006a, p. 769) credits Kant with moving beyond the imaginary stage of reciprocal relations (time 2), of seeing one's neighbor as one's fellow man, like oneself, and treating him equally *because* he is so similar to oneself, *because* one can identify with him, *because* one can feel about him as one feels about oneself. Kant is credited with emphasizing strictly symbolic relations: a relationship between the subject and the Other as Law (not the laws of any particular existing state or social group, but rather the Other as moral law per se).[10]

Kant requires us to 1) give up the extremely good object (*das Ding*), give up on our desire for it, and 2)

stick to a strictly symbolic or universalizable formulation. In Sade's "ethical" system, the same two imperatives "are imposed on us [...] as if upon the Other, and not upon ourselves" (Lacan, 2006a, p. 770).[11] In Kant's system, these imperatives are clearly imposed on us (not on the Other), but we are commanded to follow them both by the Other—that is, by language and law, something set over and against ourselves—*and* by something that is within ourselves (the "voice of conscience"). The Other that governs us from within is, Lacan suggests, the discourse of the unconscious:

> The bipolarity upon which the moral law is founded is nothing but the split in the subject brought about by any and every intervention of the signifier: the split between the enunciating subject [the voice of conscience] and the subject of the statement.
>
> (p. 770)

This quote takes us right to the heart of Lacan's interpretation of Kant: the nature of Kant's universal maxims is such as to bring into play the difference between

- the subject as determined by the signifier, that is, as alienated within the symbolic, by the very language he or she speaks—the subject of the statement—and
- the subject as something, some kind of agency or instance that goes beyond language, exceeds language, finding its being in the process of enunciating, existing in enunciation itself, altogether split off from meaning or signification.[12]

Kant's appeal to universality, as an appeal to the Other (of language, of the law beyond oneself), amounts to an eclipsing of the subject whereby no emotion comes into play, no consideration of objects or pleasure, gain or loss. However, by situating the moral law within ourselves (as the voice of conscience), Kant covers something over. "In coming out of the Other's mouth, Sade's maxim is more honest than Kant's appeal to the voice within, since it unmasks the split in the subject that is usually covered up" (Lacan, 2006a, p. 770, see Figure 8.4, which concerns masochism). For Lacan, there can be no honest discussion of ethics that does not take the split subject into account, and the "split" obviously evokes the division of the subject into conscious and unconscious as well.

Sade and the Discourse of Human Rights

Sade presents *his* maxim—"'I have the right to enjoy your body,'" anyone can say to me, "'and I will exercise this right without any limit to the capriciousness of the exactions I may wish to satiate with your body'" (Lacan, 2006a, p. 769)—as deriving directly from the rights of man, that is, from the eighteenth-century theory of natural right (whose origins can be found in England and France for the most part, involving such figures as Hobbes and Rousseau). The idea is that man is born with certain unalienable rights, such as "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Sade's is not a maxim we hear within ourselves—at least, it is never presented that way by Sade. It is absolute truth. In other words, it is Truth with a capital *T*, which comes from the Other. Moreover, it is incontrovertible: it is not based on individual or class interests; rather, it is true for everyone (well, maybe not for women or slaves, given the century).

Sade's discourse about man's right to enjoy takes the Other as the being who pronounces this discourse. No one individual subject need pronounce it. If it is not God who pronounces it, then it is nature itself; if not nature, then it is the Law itself (Natural Law), which is cast as the mouthpiece. Insofar

as Sade repeats this discourse, he simply makes himself into the Other's delegate, deputy, or agent.

According to Lacan, a contrast can be drawn between Kant's moral imperative insofar as it is enunciated by the voice within and Sade's moral imperative as it is enunciated by the Other (e.g., "Nature tells us that we have the right to …"). Nevertheless, Kant's inner voice is, to Lacan, simply a manifestation of the Other that has been assimilated or incorporated; this is why he considers Sade's maxim to be more "honest" than Kant's (p. 770). Sade's admits from the outset that it is the Other who enunciates the Law, not the subject (or even some part of the subject).

Were we to try to associate the enunciation of the law with the enunciating subject and he who suffers or sacrifices for the sake of the law with the subject of the statement (to refer back to the split Lacan mentioned earlier), it would seem that *the enunciation of the law cannot be even theoretically divorced from jouissance*, jouissance being involved in all enunciating. Insofar as the enunciation of the law may be associated—to get ahead of ourselves—with the superego, we see that the superego may well derive jouissance from imposing a sacrifice of jouissance (of pleasure related to *das Ding*, the extremely good object) on some other aspect of the subject, the already constituted, alienated subject spoken of in statements. In other words, affect (i.e., jouissance) which is apparently excluded from Kant's and Sade's universalizing systems, is refound in both at the very point at which the law is enunciated. This brings us back to what Lacan said in Seminar II regarding the lack of a why and wherefore of the law, of an explanation for the fact that there is a prohibition in the first place (1988b, pp. 128–29). Affect (as jouissance) seems contemporaneous with the very point of origin of the law, with the very coming into being of the law!

The Ten Commandments

In discussing Sade's system, Lacan (1992) is led, in Seminar VII, to the following:

> Take the exact opposite of all the laws in the ten commandments and you will have a coherent exposition of something whose ultimate mainspring can, in short, be articulated as follows: "Take as the universal maxim of your action the right to use [*jouir de*] anyone else as the instrument of your pleasure."
>
> Sade demonstrates quite coherently that, when universalized, this law, while it allows libertines to have all women equally at their disposal, whether they consent or not, also liberates women from the sum total of duties imposed upon them by civilized society related to their conjugal, matrimonial, and other relationships. This conception throws wide the floodgates that Sade imaginarily proposes at the horizon of desire, everyone being encouraged to take the requirements of his covetousness to extremes and to realize them.
>
> (p. 79)

Lacan asserts that the disgust this conception arouses in us amounts to a feeling ("pathos") that Kant's notion of ethics would not allow us to take into consideration. Lacan suggests that, curiously enough, one can find overtones of Kant's ethical formulations—the requirement of a universalizable maxim—in a good deal of libertine literature.

Lacan takes up a number of the ten commandments in his discussion in Seminar VII, in particular the commandment, "Thou shalt not lie." He begins with the liar's paradox, "All men are liars" (Lacan, 1992, p. 82), a statement that calls into question the status of its very enunciation. If I say, "All men are liars," and I am a man, then the words suggest that I too must be a liar, and thus whatever I say is false. Then not all men are liars. We wind up in a situation where both statements, "all men are liars" and "not all men are liars" seem to be true at the same time. Lacan attempts to do away with this old conundrum, known as the paradox of Epimenides, by distinguishing between two subjects: the subject of the statement and the speaking or enunciating subject.

Consider the statement, "I am lying." The word "I" in that claim refers to the subject of the statement. The claim, as it stands, can be understood as referring to the person designated by the word "I" contained in the statement. The speaker could have pronounced those words in the course of quoting someone else, in which case the word "I" in the statement referred to another person altogether. The speaker might also have been quoting herself, and might thus not have been implying that she was at that very moment lying. She might be implying that what she said just before was a lie—that is, no doubt, the most usual context.[13] The statement might, alternatively, have been ironic or comical, showing a clear split between the speaking subject and the subject who appears in the statement in the guise of the word "I." (We can also imagine that she was an actress simply reciting her script.)

In discussing another commandment, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife," Lacan comments on the relationship between thy neighbor's wife and *das Ding*, the Thing. Consider what he says here:

> Is the Law the Thing? By no means! Yet, had it not been for the Law, I should not have known the Thing. I would not have thought of coveting if the Law had not said, "Thou shalt not covet." But the Thing, finding opportunity in the commandment, wrought in me all kinds of covetousness. Apart from the Law the Thing lies dead. I was once alive apart from the Law, but when the commandment came, the Thing came back to life and I died; the very

> commandment that promised life proved to be death to me. For the Thing, finding opportunity in the commandment, deceived me and through the commandment killed me.
>
> (Lacan, 1992, p. 83)

Note that Lacan has again borrowed Saint Paul's *Epistle to the Romans* 7:7, simply substituting "the Thing" (instead of "desire") for "sin" this time. The main difference between Paul's version and Lacan's here is that in the continuation of Lacan's the Thing did not simply come back to life, but burst into flames; and at the end, "The Thing, finding the opportunity, seduced me owing to the commandment, and thanks to it turned me into a desire for death" (Lacan, 1992, p. 83).

Perversion and the Other

> Sade works like a dog [...] to bring about the jouissance of God.
>
> —Lacan, 2004, p. 194

We have been discussing the role of the Other (in the guise of Natural Law, in particular) in Sade's work and this might be juxtaposed with the fact that the Marquis de Sade was a self-proclaimed atheist. To quote a dialogue from *Philosophy in the Bedroom*, Madame de Saint-Ange says, "I trust he does not believe in God!" and Le Chevalier replies, "Oh, perish the thought! He is the most notorious atheist, the most immoral fellow ... Oh, no; his is the most complete and thoroughgoing corruption, and he the most evil individual, the greatest scoundrel in the world" (Sade, 1965, p. 187–88). Yet we see in his writing that the Other with a capital *O*, which also goes by the name of God at times, is absolutely essential to Sade's whole way of thinking and being.[14] We might postulate that *the Sadean pervert strives to make the Other exist* so as to claim or demand from this Other his own identity as a whole, undivided being. If he can convince himself that the Other is complete, then he simultaneously proves that he himself is whole, complete, and lacking in nothing. His discourse can be summarized in the following logical proposition:

protasis	apodosis
If the Other exists	then I am complete

While it may seem like a sort of "He's okay, I'm okay" doctrine, the sadist's problem is to convince himself that the protasis is true—that is, to make the Other exist somehow.

We can, as I have argued elsewhere (Fink, 1997, Chapter 8), define clinical types *within neurosis* according to the strategies adopted to deal with the Other. Furthermore, we could utilize the different possible statuses of the Other to differentiate the broader psychoanalytic categories: neurosis (the Other clearly exists, and can be dealt with in a variety of ways), perversion (one must make the Other exist, and there are different ways to go about doing so),[15] and psychosis (the Other does not exist per se).

Now, if the sadist's problem is to convince himself that the Other exists (that is, that the protasis is true), what is the payoff? Let us consider the first schema Lacan (2006a, p. 774) provides for sadism in "Kant with Sade":

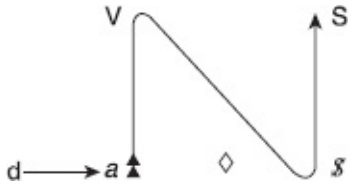
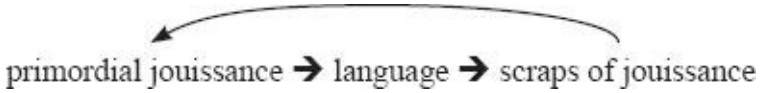


Figure 8.1 Sadism in *Écrits*

This schema, which illustrates the sadist's trajectory (through the Graph of Desire, as we shall see), suggests that if the sadist can convince himself that the Other exists, he can move from his state of alienation—here in the bottom right-hand corner of the graph (where we see the sadist as split subject who has come into being in language and had his needs transformed into alienated desire)—to the higher state of wholeness or completeness denoted by the unbarred S. The latter is a sort of utopian moment of a subject who has not been barred or castrated in his struggle with the Other; his pleasure has not been relegated to the mere pittance meted out to your run-of-the-mill speaking being.

Lacan (2006a) refers to this unbarred subject as the *sujet brut du plaisir*, the brute, raw, crude, or unhewn subject of pleasure, and as the "pathological" subject who is attached to the objects that bring pleasure (p. 775). This subject's pleasure has not had to pass through the filter of language and, therefore, technically speaking, we probably should not even refer to it as jouissance; Lacan, nevertheless, moves back and forth in the discussion here between the two terms, and in fact what we might postulate is that the sadist attempts the impossible in his effort to *jouir* as if none of this (language, repression, or castration) had ever happened, as if no obstacles had ever been erected in his path towards pleasure. We might alternatively say that he tries to turn the scraps of jouissance left over after the imposition of the symbolic order back into the hypothetical primordial jouissance that obtained before the letter.



The neurotic, according to Lacan, envies the pervert, believing the latter succeeds in this endeavor: neurotics think perverts get an awful lot more pleasure out of life than they do. Lacan suggests that even though perverts may know where their own jouissance comes from (something neurotics often seem to avoid knowing) and actively pursue it, anxiety is more central to their experience than jouissance.

Schemas of Perversion

Lacan's discussion of his schemas in "Kant with Sade" are terse to say the least, and it is necessary to examine the seminars given around the time Lacan was writing this article (Seminar IX, *Identification*, and Seminar X, *Anxiety*) to elucidate them more fully.

The Sadean schema provided in Seminar X (Lacan, 2004, p. 123), that is, five months after the supposed final redaction of "Kant with Sade," is said by Lacan to be an abbreviation of the Graph of Desire. Now, the Sadean schema (Figure 8.1) has only four vertices, whereas the Graph of Desire has many more; but the Sadean schema designates a specific trajectory within the Graph of Desire: one single and unique trajectory. Recall that Lacan traces Hamlet's trajectory on the Graph of Desire in Seminar VI (see Chapter 6, "Reading *Hamlet* with Lacan," in Volume 1 of the present collection). Hamlet, for example, begins in the field of the Other (A) and makes a move towards the upper level of the graph, but is condemned to descend to *s*(A). The end of the play seems, to Lacan's mind, to represent something more, a shift to the upper level of the graph (to S(Ⱥ)). In any case, the point is that Lacan traces out there what he calls a *parcours*: a path that is scrupulously followed. Each and every one of the vertices or endpoints must be traversed by Hamlet in order for him to find a solution to the question he raises or that life raises for him.

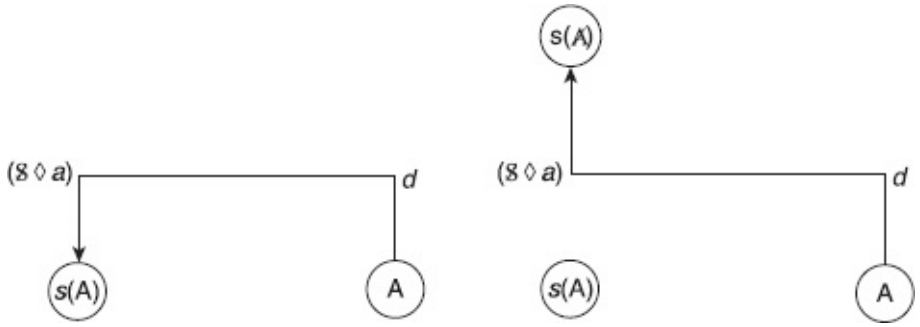


Figure 8.2 Hamlet's trajectory

In his discussion of Freud's case of little Hans in Seminar IV, Lacan says that little Hans was obliged to try a whole variety of combinations (the mother has the penis, the maid has it, the father …) and permutations until he finally found a way out of his predicament. He had to try out a certain number of positions successively in order for some kind of change in structure to come about. (Hans can be understood, according to Lacan, as having moved from phobia to perversion.)

Thus, while the Sade diagram (Figure 8.1) most closely resembles the L Schema in appearance, its unilateral orientation (note the starting point and endpoint indicated by the arrow) distinguishes it therefrom rather significantly. With its four vertices, the Sade diagram also bears a certain resemblance to the four discourses, and there is perhaps even a function associated with each of the vertices as the graph rotates: as in the four discourses, something may well remain the same despite the 90-degree shifts.

Lacan shows us only a first 90-degree shift in "Kant with Sade," but we may be justified in rotating the schema twice more, thereby generating four distinct structures. The first two structures are derived from Sade's texts, the first corresponding to sadism and the second to masochism.

Schemas of Sadism

According to Lacan's (2004, p. 123) gloss on the schema in Seminar X, to the right we find the field of the Other and to the left that of the subject. This may strike us as a bit surprising, since the usual mathemes for the subject are thus located in the field of the Other (see Figure 8.3). To Lacan, the counterintuitive field of the subject on the left concerns the not-yet-constituted "I," the subject to which he keeps coming back: not the subject of meaning ($\mathbb{S}$), and not this sort of unbarred subject (S) at which the arrow ends, but rather the subject at some more fundamental level—this is part of what makes Lacan's work so complicated, there being at least three different concepts of the subject floating around at any one time, and here even on one and the same schema! The more fundamental level here seems to be that of the drives, where he would have us locate object *a* in this context.

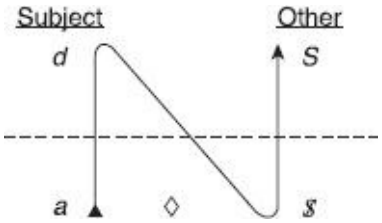


Figure 8.3 Sadistic desire in Seminar X

Despite the differences between this version of the schema and the one found in *Écrits* (Figure 8.1), the whole subject, $\mathbb{S}$, and the barred subject, $\mathbb{S}$, are situated in the field of the Other in both versions, indicating their subordination to the Other or dependency on the Other. $\mathbb{S}$ is barred by the Other, while the raw subject of pleasure exists in total dependency on the existence of the Other (as Natural Law or God), as I mentioned above. The Other thus has to exist if something is going to be restored to the sadist at the end of his trajectory.

On the right, we seem to have unadulterated pleasure (S), while on the left we have inchoate desire (*d*). Desire and its cause (*a*) line up in the field of the subject (on the left in Figure 8.3), the subject as identified with the object as cause. V and d are clearly the pivotal point (see Figure 8.1) where Lacan locates the Kantian will, *volonté* (and perhaps also the void, *vide*, and the voice, *voix*, as we shall see shortly).

The usual formula for fantasy ($\mathbb{S} \lozenge a$) is inverted in Figure 8.3: the subject in the sadistic scheme of things sees himself as the object that provokes or incites something in the partner. The sadist's partner is not object *a*. In neurosis the partner is generally chosen precisely insofar as he or she is able to embody or incarnate object *a* for the subject. (This can be seen in the table Lacan provides for the formulas of sexuation, at least as concerns those subjects with masculine structure, insofar as the arrow from the masculine side goes towards object *a* on the feminine side).

Here, however, the tables are turned: the subject takes himself for an object, for an object that is whole, complete, and undivided. The subject refuses to see himself as an ordinary mortal subdued by language or subjected to the law. Instead, the subject imagines himself (at least in fantasy, and that is what we are trying to get at here, the parameters of the sadist's fantasy) as not lacking or desiring, but rather as a tool, as an object that brings about something in the partner. We must always keep in mind that object *a* is not the object *of* desire, the object that might be desired by the partner; rather it is the object that causes desire, that is responsible for desire.

cause of desire ➔ desire ➔ object of desire

Unlike the masochist, the sadist does not view himself as the object of another person's desire, as an object to be desired by his or her partner, but rather as the cause of some state in the partner (who is the subject here). The state this cause creates can be clearly seen in the Sadean formula itself ($a \lozenge \$$),[16] which we can also write with an arrow ($a \rightarrow \$$): the sadist as object *a* is the cause of the subject as split, is the cause of the split in the subject. This is why the sadist's fantasy is inverted when compared to the neurotic's ($\$ \rightarrow a$).

In "Kant with Sade," Lacan, as we have seen, speaks in particular about the division of the subject into the enunciating subject and the subject of the statement. As we shall see, these two subjects can be situated on the schema itself, but note first that five months after finalizing "Kant with Sade," Lacan takes us a few steps further in Seminar X.

When Lacan says that the sadist's aim is to bring out the division or split in the other, he means in the other person, the partner: the sadist tries to make his partner anxious. He does not try to make his partner suffer, but rather to make the partner anxious. While everyone has always thought that the sadist's goal was to corporally castigate the partner, to inflict pain in one form or another, Lacan claims that it is to make the partner sweat in a rather different way. It is not the physical suffering of the partner that does something for the sadist, but rather the partner's anxiety, which may or may not result from physical pain.[17]

Consider the exhibitionist, as it is quite easy to see the importance of anxiety in his activities. He does not go to nude beaches or sex clubs where his nudity will be easily accepted by his entourage. Instead, he spends his time violating other people's sense of decency, propriety, and modesty by exposing himself to those most likely to be shocked by his unexpected nakedness. To violate them in this way is to call forth their division as subjects: it is to call forth their disgust, which is indicative of their repressed desire. This evokes the split between their desire to see and their moral repugnance, or between the unconscious and the ego (or superego).

The anxiety aroused in the partner by the sadist points, according to Lacan, to the presence of the Other's desire and thus proves that the Other (who prohibits incest with castration as implied punishment) exists.

protasis	apodosis
If my partner is anxious	then God exists

The sadist is reassured as to the existence of the Other, via his assurance that the Other's desire to castrate is alive and kicking. And he knows that the Other's desire is at work as soon as he notices that his partner is anxious. The reasoning here would seem to be that if his partner is anxious, it is because the Other must be demanding that the partner give up something very important to him, that he hand over what is most important to him (his mother or his penis?). Lacan (2004) refers to this as *la cession de l'objet* (p. 375), meaning the yielding, transferring, giving up, or handing over of the object. The sadist's aim thus is not anxiety itself, but what it attests to for him: the object to which the law applies and, thus, the existence of the lawmaker.

Schemas of Masochism

> What escapes the masochist, making him like all other perverts, is that he believes, naturally, that what he is seeking is to bring the Other jouissance, but the very fact that he believes this means that it is not what he is seeking. What escapes him [...] is the fact that he is seeking to make the Other anxious.
>
> —Lacan, 2004, p. 178

Let us turn now to the second schema found in "Kant with Sade," which seems quite clearly designated by Lacan (2006a, p. 778) as related to masochism.

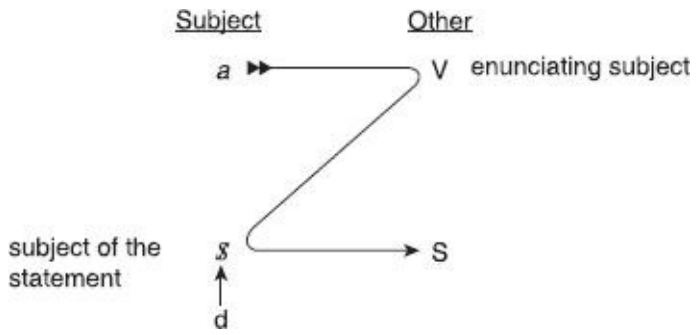


Figure 8.4 Masochism in *Écrits* (annotated schema)

Note that whereas in the schema of sadism in *Écrits* (Figures 8.1 and 8.5), the voice of reason or categorical imperative is situated within the subject,[18] in Figures 8.4 and 8.6, V, referred to in this context as the "will to jouissance" (Lacan, 2006a, p. 773), is located in the field of the Other. Lacan (p. 778) speaks of it here as the "moral force implacably exercised by the President of Montreuil" on Sade—she (the President of Montreuil), as the proverbially horrible mother-in-law, had him thrown in prison several times. Note that the two "parts" of the divided subject (the enunciating subject and the subject of the statement) need not be found in the same person here.

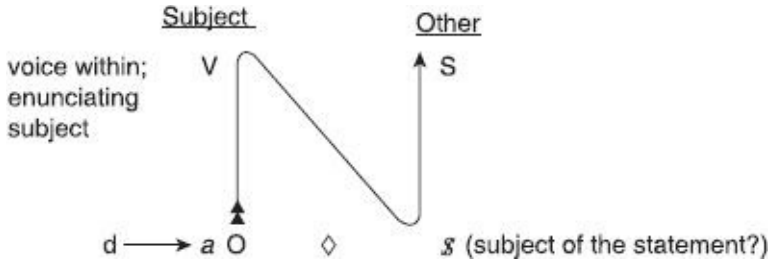


Figure 8.5 Sadism (annotated schema)

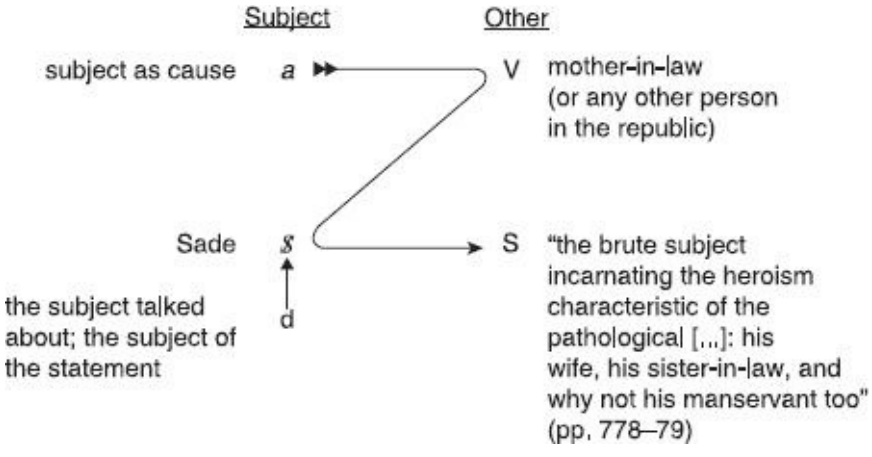


Figure 8.6 Masochism, example of Sade

In the schema of sadism, the voice, corresponding to the enunciating subject, was the voice within, the inner voice as found in Kant's system. But in the schema of masochism, the mother-in-law (or mOther-in-Law) is the enunciating subject, the voice.

The masochistic subject, like the sadistic subject, still manages to come in the Other, to achieve jouissance as S (that is, as undivided subject) *in* the Other (on the right-hand side of the schemas).[19] Note that Lacan (2006a) seems to take Sade's political stance here of giving everyone the right to get off on his body as a masochistic gesture (p. 778).

Lacan (2004) qualifies the masochistic position as follows: "the incarnation of himself as an object is the declared goal" (p. 124). He seeks to become

> a dog under the table or a commodity, the kind of thing one negotiates contracts about, selling it along with other objects on the open market. In short, what he is seeking is to be identified with an everyday object, an exchangeable object. It remains impossible for him to grasp that, like everyone else, he is an *a*.
>
> (p. 124)

> He is so interested in this recognition, which remains impossible. […] To recognize oneself as an object of desire […] is always masochistic.
>
> (pp. 124–25)

Another obvious difference between Figure 8.3 and Figures 8.4 and 8.6 is the absence of the diamond or lozenge (*poinçon*). Whereas in the schema for sadism, fantasy is constituted as such, this is not the case in masochism. Lacan (2006a) says on this score that "desire is propped up by a fantasy, at least one foot [*pied*] of which is in the Other, and precisely the one that counts, even and above all if it happens to limp [*boîte*, which figuratively means to wobble or be shaky]" (p. 780). In the schemas of sadism (Figures 8.1, 8.3, and 8.5), *a* is in the field of the subject and $\mathbb{S}$ is in that of the Other. In the schemas of masochism (Figures 8.4 and 8.6), *a* and $\mathbb{S}$ are both found in the subject's field, and the symbols v (vel or union) and ^ (disjunction or intersection) that make up the lozenge (related to alienation and separation; see Fink, 1990) do not allow for that combination.

Thus, in masochism, it seems, in a sense, that separation has not taken place, desire has not become independent, and fantasy has not been able to develop. (Or is it that the subject simply takes himself in fantasy as an abject object?)

How do the two sides of the split subject line up in masochism (Figure 8.6)? We have:

1 the one who enunciates the principle (let us put it in the second person now), "you have every right to use me," and
2 the subject of the statement, "me."

Normally we would imagine Sade, the masochist, as the speaker, here at $\mathbb{S}$. But Lacan says, "The constraint [Sade] endures here is not so much one of violence as of principle, the problem for the person who makes it into a sentence not being so much to make another man consent to it as to pronounce it in his place" (p. 771). If I understand his claim correctly, the problem for the person who adopts this principle as punishment for himself is not so much to get the partner to agree to the sentence, "you have

every right to use me," but to get the partner to *say* it himor herself from his or her own position on the graph (V), that is to vocally express his or her will to use and enjoy (*jouir de*) the masochist as he or she pleases.

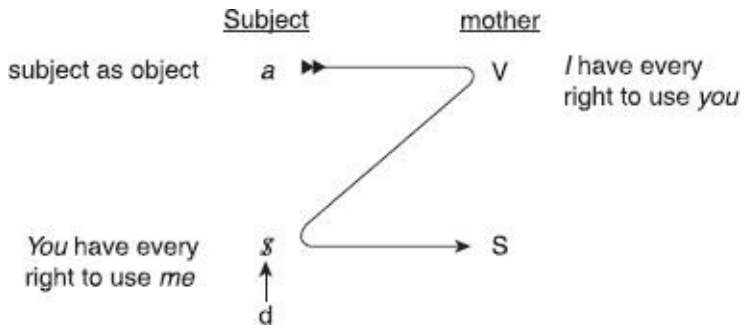


Figure 8.7 Sade's masochistic maxim

V is the place or site of enunciation, and in order to enunciate the sentence from this site, the partner has to turn it around—"I have every right to use you." This is a reminder of Lacan's claim that the subject receives his message from the Other in an inverted form; here, in order for the partner to pronounce the sentence, he must invert it (note that the partner is situated here in the field of the Other).

What is more important still, however, is that the partner, by pronouncing the sentence, by saying these words, is not simply a part of speech, as he or she was when Sade, the masochistic subject, pronounced the words "*you* have every right to use me." The partner, in being cajoled into pronouncing the inverted message, also comes into being as speaking subject and is thus implicated in the situation in a deeper way. The masochistic subject has to work hard at times to get the partner to willingly accept the role of enunciating subject, of involving more than his or her alienated self in the game. By agreeing to pronounce the words, the partner has also agreed to transform the masochist into an object ("you"), a part of speech, a dead and lifeless thing from which pleasure will be extracted with no regard for the pleasure or pain that object might feel.

It is not enough for the masochist to put words in his partner's mouth—the masochist requires his partner to willingly take up the position of *jouisseur* (the one who uses or enjoys the masochist as an abject object). Yet this is not so easy to do; indeed the partner may have to be made extremely anxious by the masochist before he or she is willing to take up any such position. Thus the apparently free agent—the partner as Other—is little more than a puppet in the masochist's scenario.

We see here that at certain points we can identify the partner—as small other, one's fellow man, one's semblable—with the Other. An important aspect of the game is to be able to see in the partner an incarnation of the Other, and to get the partner to play the role of such an Other. Through his or her verbally expressed will to jouissance, the partner is promoted from the role of simple other to that of Other.

In the masochistic schema, thus, we see that the discourse that asserts that people have a right to jouissance posits the Other as free *qua* enunciating subject—that is, the speaking Other is free to do as he or she likes. Masochistic discourse says to the Other, "you are free to use me," but by the very fact of telling the Other that he or she is free, it saddles him or her with a certain constraint or responsibility: "you are free *so you must* …" (as in theology, "man is the creature endowed with free will, so he must … use his freedom responsibly," and as in philosophy, "man is a rational creature, free from instinctual constraints, and so he must act rationally at all times"). Freedom here is an illusion, as it usually is in Lacan's work.[20] Freedom is in fact directly correlated with a "you *must* use me." This is what Lacan refers

to as the murderous aspect of the masochist's discourse, a discourse that thus resembles in some sense Kant's: a type of freedom is posited, which is then altogether annihilated by the categorical imperative. Lacan (2006a, p. 771) plays here, as elsewhere (Seminar XX), on the homophony in French between *tu es* ("you are" … free, and *must* therefore …) and *tuer* ("to kill").

Thus the Other, while posited as free by masochistic discourse (p. 771), is at the same time seriously constrained by it. Although Lacan says that in the masochist's fantasy scene the Other's desire *fait la loi* ("lays down the law" or "makes the law"), in fact the desire the Other may have is dictated to him or her by the masochist's law, here dressed up as a discourse on human rights (which Lacan ironically qualifies as granting us "the freedom to desire in vain," p. 783).

In discussing the masochist's position, Lacan asks, "What is masked by his fantasy of being the object of the Other's jouissance?" (Lacan, 2004, p. 192). Although it appears that the masochistic aims at giving the other jouissance, he actually aims at making the partner anxious about the masochist's status as an abject object (a dog under the table, for example). It is the partner's anxious response that is ultimately sought, not the partner's jouissance. Whereas in sadism, the importance of making the partner anxious is quite obvious, in masochism it is far less immediately evident.

Lacan goes on to say that the masochist's discourse is no less determinant for the subject of the statement than for the enunciating subject. Regarding the discourse that claims, "You are free, and must therefore get off on me," Lacan says, the "jouissance, shamelessly avowed in its very purpose, becomes one pole in a couple, the other pole being in the hole [*vide* also means void, vacuum, or empty space] that jouissance already drills in the Other's locus in order to erect the cross of Sadean experience in it" (Lacan, 2006a, p. 771). This is classic Lacan: it sounds intriguing, but no one most likely has any immediate idea what it could possibly mean!

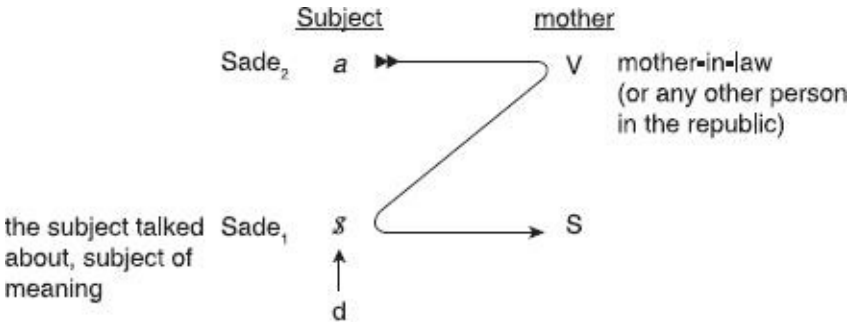


Figure 8.8 Sade's masochism

As soon as Lacan says "pole," we should probably think of an axis and thus of a schema.[21] We have Sade identified with the barred subject ($Sade_1$). He manages to get the Other, personified in some individual, to speak the fateful words, "I have every right to use you [let's complete the sentence] not as a feeling subject but as a lowly object," and *voilà*: Sade is catapulted from the abject position of divided subject into the cherished position of subject as object, little *a* ($Sade_2$). Or rather, is he catapulted from the abject position of divided subject into the cherished position of undivided subject (S), which is located in the Other? It is not clear to me which, if either of these alternative explanations, should be preferred.

Coming back for a moment to the topic of law, Lacan (2004) says that even in the case of

> perversion, where desire seems to take on the role of that which lays down [*fait*] the law, that is, of that which subverts the law, it in fact verily and truly props up a law [makes the Other lay down the law]. If there is something we now know about perverts, it is that what appears

> from the outside to be satisfaction with no holds barred is in fact defense, the implementing of a law insofar as it restrains, suspends, or stops the subject on the road to jouissance. The will to jouissance in perverts, as in anyone else, is a will that fails, that encounters its own limit or restraint in the very exercise of desire … [T]he pervert knows not in the name of what jouissance his activity is carried out. In any case, it is not in the name of his own.
>
> (pp. 176–77)

Does the masochist ultimately aim to get the partner to adopt the position of the Sadean Other and declare his or her right to use and enjoy the subject however he or she likes, thereby confirming the masochist's position as a lowly object? Or rather, is the aim to make the partner so anxious about the extremes to which he is willing to go in abjection that the partner finally puts a stop to it, enunciating a will to non-jouissance, a will for at least minimal "human rights" to be accepted? I will leave that as an open question here. The connection with law and rights seems, in any case, to be crucial in masochism.

Two Further Implied Turns of the Screw

There are many opaque formulations in "Kant with Sade" that I have not ventured to comment on here (for example, much of Lacan, 2006a, p. 773), confining my attention to what I thought I could elucidate with at least some hope of appositeness. In concluding, let me simply furnish the other two schemas that are implied by the 90-degree rotation from the Sadean to the masochistic schemas Lacan provides, without attempting to say what they might apply to (voyeurism? exhibitionism? or something else altogether?). 128

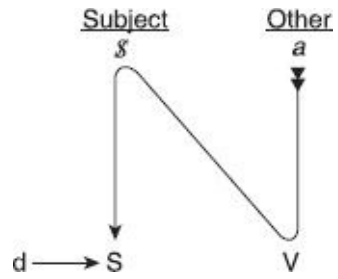


Figure 8.9 Schema X

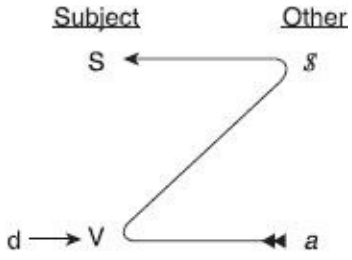


Figure 8.10 Schema Y

The material presented here is a portion of that prepared for a seminar given in winter 1990–91 through the University of California at Irvine at the invitation of Kenneth Reinhard and Julia Lupton. It was written up in La Jolla, California, in 1992, and somewhat recast in 2000 and again in 2012.

Notes

1 Adorno claimed the book originally came out in 1947, but the Social Studies Association, Inc. copyright dates back to 1944.

2 See Adam Smith (1759).

3 Later in the paper, he says, "desire is the flip side of the law" (p. 787).

4 I have modified the translation of all quotes from previously published seminars by Lacan. Note that the published English translation of Queneau's (2003) novel reads as follows here: "But," cried Gertie, "if the King of England is a stupid cunt, we can do whatever we like!"

5 Cf. Freud (1955a, p. 179).

6 "Neurotics … can only desire in accordance with the law. They cannot grant status to their desire except as unsatisfied by them [hysteric] or impossible [obsessive]" (Lacan, 2004, p. 177).

7 This same process is indicated on the Graph of Desire in the movement from the triangle, Δ (representing need; Lacan, 2006a, p. 805)—which is replaced by the divided subject in the "Complete Graph"—to A and on to *d* (for desire) on the right-hand side (p. 817).

8 Although it is stated somewhat differently, we might associate these two statements with a third: what is foreclosed from the symbolic order returns in the real. (I will suggest a bit further on that certain Kantian notions can be expressed in similar forms.) For this would seem tantamount to saying that what is foreclosed and what returns (in hallucinations, for example) are one and the same.

9 What is foreclosed from the symbolic returns, according to Lacan, in the real, but here it would seem to be the other way around: what is foreclosed in the real, returns as the Good.

10 For a detailed commentary on "Logical Time," see Fink (1995b).

11 Loss and subjective division (castration) are forced upon the Other, the subject seeming to remain whole and intact.

12 This is the constituting as opposed to the constituted subject, in the terms Lacan adopts in "Variations on the Standard Treatment" (Lacan, 2006a, pp. 323–67).

13 Imagine a scene between two people where a wife has been making up excuses about where she has been to her jealous husband. At some point the husband comes out with, "That's a crock, and you know it," and the wife finally admits, "You're right, I'm lying, I was out with this guy." The "I" in this statement refers to the subject who was speaking just a few seconds before, and who is here reified and designated by the word "I." The speaking subject has distanced herself from that "I" as other.

14 Lacan (2006a, p. 790) even suggests that the Supreme Being takes the form of the devil for Sade.

15 Note, however, that in Seminar X, Lacan (2004) says that it is clear that the Other exists for the sadist (p. 193).

16 This differs from the hysteric's fantasy, which might be written as follows: $a \lozenge \not\mathrm{A}$ (see Fink, 1997, Chapter 8).

17 This should not be confused with what arises in the hysteric's attack on her partner—she makes the latter sweat, not so as to prove that the Other exists, but rather to decomplete the Other and create a space for herself therein.

18 Freud (1961c) refers to "Kant's Categorical Imperative [as] the direct heir of the Oedipus complex" (p. 167).

19 One more turn of the screw, however, and that will no longer be possible, as we shall see further on.

20 As Lacan said on Belgian television in the 1970s, when asked about freedom, "I never talk about freedom." Except, one might add, when discussing psychosis; see his comment that the madman is "free" insofar as he has given up on the Other and is thus "free" from the Other): "In madness, of whatever nature, we must recognize […] the negative freedom of a kind of speech that has given up trying to gain recognition" (Lacan, 2006a, p. 279).

21 We might, alternatively, understand the hole "in the Other's locus" as related to the signifier of the lack in the Other: $S(\not\mathrm{A})$.

9

FREUD AND LACAN ON LOVE

A Preliminary Exploration

> It is clear that I went into medicine because I suspected that relations between man and woman played a decisive role in the symptoms of human beings. […] The ultimate truth is that things do not work between man and woman.[1]
>
> —Lacan, 1976, p. 16

The terms with which thinkers have attempted to understand the incredibly complex human experience of love are highly varied and have shifted considerably over the course of time. In addition to the Eastern traditions, which I will not address here, there are at least two major Western traditions—the Greek and the Catholic—both of which have evolved considerably over the millennia.

In the Catholic tradition, an opposition is made between "physical love" and "ecstatic love," but, according to Rousselot (1907), physical love was not understood in the Middle Ages as corporal or bodily but rather as "natural love," the kind of love one finds in nature between mother bear and cub, for example ("natural love" was apparently the term preferred by St. Thomas Aquinas); sensuality was apparently not included under the heading of love at all. It should not in any way be assumed that all of the theological thinkers within the Catholic Church even at one particular moment in time would have agreed with the opposition between physical and ecstatic love, much less finding it adequate to cover all aspects of love.

The Greek tradition, on the other hand, provides us with the well-known term "Eros," which seems to cover a broad spectrum of experiences, much like Freud's term "libido" which, as Lacan suggests in 1932, is

> an extremely broad theoretical entity that goes well beyond the specialized sexual desire of adults. This notion tends rather toward "desire," antiquity's Eros understood very broadly—namely, as the whole set of human beings' appetites that go beyond their needs, the latter being strictly tied to self-preservation.
>
> (Lacan, 1980, p. 256)

Nevertheless, Freud, like many other analysts after him, tried to define some of the components of libido, and was led to use numerous different terms at different times in the development of his theory—"love," "desire," "affection," "cathexis"—and even to define each of those terms somewhat differently from decade to decade.

Let me thus make it clear at the outset that I make no pretense here of extracting some single coherent theory of love from Freud's work or from Lacan's work, much less from the two combined; instead I shall try to explore and compare and contrast a few of the many different attempts to discuss love by both authors. Let me also mention at the outset that the experience of love is examined for the most part by these two thinkers from a male perspective, and we shall have to either extrapolate or completely revise their notions of love to accommodate a female perspective, if indeed there is a distinctly female perspective.

Narcissism and Love

In 1914, Freud (1957c) takes up the subject of love largely from the perspective of narcissism. He sees love as involving a transfer of libido from the subject's own self or person (*Ich*, not yet *das Ich*) to another person, a transfer he refers to as a cathexis or an investment. Such an investment can be made for a variety of reasons, as we shall see, but note first that the investment is revocable—that is, it can be taken back at certain times as need be. Note too that when such an investment is made, the subject's own self is less highly invested, or, as Freud puts it at times, his self-regard diminishes, the idea being that each subject only has a certain amount of libido at his disposal and thus if some is transferred to an object, less remains for the subject. (It is not terribly clear here whether Freud thinks of the object as a representation in the subject's psyche or as a real object in the "outside world"; his language would seem to suggest the latter, in which case it is not clear how the libido passes "outside" the subject.)

In this first detailed discussion of love, Freud (1957c) strenuously upholds the distinction between ego-libido (libido invested in oneself or one's person) and object-libido, even though the sum total of both of them must always remain constant in his system (an increase in object-libido necessarily leads to a decrease in ego-libido and vice versa; there does not seem to be any room here for the notion that both object- and ego-libido could grow simultaneously).

EL (ego-libido) + OL (object-libido) = C (constant)

The first form of ego-libido Freud discusses he terms "primary narcissism"; it is the kind of concern for itself that every animal has, insofar as it considers itself to be worthy of being alive, meaning worthy of eating and of defending itself (activities associated with the "ego instincts"). To Freud, libido attached to oneself does not pose any sort of special problem in terms of how it got that way—it is automatic. In Lacan's work it is more elaborate, not automatic. In Freud's work, we might call it "animal narcissism."

When one becomes attached to or makes an investment in an object, one's narcissism declines: some of the libido attached to one's own person flows over onto the object. Should one lose that object, the libido invested in it flows back, like a fluid, to oneself, leading to what Freud calls "secondary narcissism" (strangely enough, associated by Freud with schizophrenia, though more commonly with ordinary physical illness that makes one decathect or divest from those around one and focus all of one's attention upon oneself).

According to Freud we choose objects of two fundamentally different types:

1 If we choose someone who resembles or reminds us in some way of the person who looked after us as children and satisfied our earliest needs, we make what Freud calls an "anaclitic"- (or "attachment"-) type object-choice (love is here, as it were, propped up on need). The object may resemble the original (that is, the early caretaker) in several ways or in but one: name, eye color, hair color, or smile, for example. Falling in love is based here on confusion of the object with a pre-existing ideal image we have in our heads: we equate the partner with our mother, father, or some other primary caretaker.
2 If we choose as an object someone who resembles us instead of resembling some other person, we make a "narcissistic" object-choice. The resemblance here may be quite global or involve nothing more than the primary sexual characteristics, the object chosen being of the same sex as the subject. Falling in love here is based on the confusion of self with other, on the virtual identification of self with other (me = other).

These two different kinds of object-choice lead to two different situations as concerns narcissism or self-

regard:

1 If we fall in love with someone who resembles one of our earliest caretakers, our ego is depleted: we are at the lowest level of ego-libido and at the "highest phase" of object-libido. The main examples of this are a male subject who falls in love with a female who reminds him of his mother—she does not necessarily resemble him in any way and is of the opposite sex—and a female subject who falls in love with a male who reminds her of her father: he does not necessarily resemble her in any way and is of the opposite sex.[2] In these cases, the object is felt to be everything and the subject to be nothing:

EL (virtually zero) + OL (constant) = C (constant)

Naturally, however, the object does not fully coincide with the mother or father, and this will be discovered in due time, presumably leading some of the object-libido to flow back to the ego.

2 "The state of being in love" does not deplete the ego of libido, however, when the object chosen is similar to oneself, for one is essentially in love with oneself in the other or with the other in oneself (me = other).

EL = OL = C

As Lacan (1998a) puts it in Seminar XX, "*elles se mêment dans l'autre*," "they love each other as the same" or "they love themselves in each other" (p. 85). In Freud's view, men tend to love, to invest their libido in objects, whereas women need to be loved, not to love. Freud's view here leads to the following:

Man:	EL = zero, OL = C
Woman:	EL = C, OL = zero

Although the association between women and cats, that are standoffish and wrapped up in themselves, is a longstanding one, there still seem to be plenty of women who feel a need to love and not simply to be loved! (Does Freud restrict women to loving either themselves or children, but not men?) In any case, Freud introduces here a curious facet of love, which would seem to apply not only to men, which is that we human beings are attracted to people (women and children, for example) and animals (cats, for example) that show little or no interest in us. Are we then interested in anything that seems narcissistically wrapped up in itself (its interest in itself pointing the way for our own interest or desire?) or are we interested in these things precisely because they seem inaccessible? Do we pursue them because they shun us and wound our own narcissism? Do we pursue them because they seem the most valuable—valuable precisely because they are so difficult to win—because we suspect that we will never win them? That would seem to be the obsessive's unwitting goal. He loves them because he can rest assured that they will not love him back, love him in return. He cannot then be overwhelmed by their love, something the obsessive is often likely to be. Since women are defined by Freud as wrapped up in themselves, they can be loved safely by obsessives (anaclitically). Yet, the basis for anaclitic love is object-choice based on a past loving figure. This leads to a paradox: the man who makes an anaclitic choice essentially selects a woman based on her similarity to his mother, but with the important difference that this woman cannot love him, for she simply wants to be loved. The contradiction is that she will not give him the real satisfactions that were supposedly at the basis of his object-choice.

I'll leave that as an open paradox here, and will confine myself to suggesting that Freud provides us here with something of an obsessive theory of love, allowing us to speculate about what a hysterical theory of love might look like. (Giving what you do not have?)

The more usual Freudian case would seem to be less all or nothing, as follows:

Man:	EL (1/3C) + OL (2/3C) = C (constant)
Woman:	EL (2/3C) + OL (1/3C) = C (constant)

The quotient of ego-libido (1/3C) comes to the man from the woman as if from his mother, and to the woman (2/3C) from the man as if from her father.

It might not be too unfair to suggest that *Freud's anaclitic type of object-choice is made with a view to "real satisfactions"*—even if the choice of object is fostered by one or more symbolic or imaginary traits, the emphasis here seems to be on the search to find anew the kinds of satisfaction one experienced with a caretaker as a small child—whereas *the narcissistic type of object-choice is made with a view to imaginary satisfactions*, so to speak, or perhaps even with a view to avoiding a decrease in primary narcissism.[3] It involves wanting to see oneself reflected in the other, and is imaginary in that the other is thought to be the spitting image of oneself, or at least like oneself in some important regard. In any case, the first seems to emphasize the real, the second the imaginary. (This is curious because Freud's earlier papers on love, which I will discuss further on, seem to emphasize the symbolic.)

Nevertheless, Freud already introduces a possible symbolic component here insofar as he indicates that narcissistic object-choice can involve the choice of someone who is like you now, someone who is like you were before, someone who seems to be the way you would like to be, or someone who was once part of yourself (unless he is referring to Siamese twins who become surgically separated, I guess he is thinking of mother and child). It is especially the part about "someone who is the way you would like to be" that introduces the question of ideals—that is, the ego-ideal—which shifts things to the symbolic register.

Love for the Ego-Ideal

At an intrapsychic level, Freud (1957c) suggests that when the ego-ideal forms (based on our parents' ideals, their approval and disapproval, and what we think we need to be in order to be loved by them), libido is displaced onto it, and we obtain satisfaction from fulfilling the ideal and dissatisfaction when we do not live up to the ideal. He refers to the ego-ideal here as "imposed from without" (p. 100), presumably by our parents, suggesting thereby that it introduces a kind of alienation: something grafted upon us that we can perhaps never achieve or live up to, a kind of asymptotic project. However, it is not so automatic a process, I would suggest. We have to accept these parents too to assimilate their ideals. We may nevertheless continue to experience the ego-ideal as a sort of foreign body, as something grafted upon us. In certain cases, we come to love the ideal more than ourselves; we feel that we are worth nothing next to our ideal, nothing without our ideal; if we cannot realize it, if we must give it up, we are indeed nothing whatsoever.

We feel miserable when we do not live up to it, we have low self-regard or low self-esteem (the term that has had such galloping success in the United States), and can often only find a way out by finding a love object who we think embodies those ideals: we put a lover in the place of the ego-ideal and love the

person in the place of that ideal. Freud suggests here that the choice of lover is often based on narcissism, for the goal is "to be [one's] own ideal once more … as [one was] in childhood" (p. 100). This harks back to the "primary narcissism" theme whereby we all supposedly take ourselves to be her/his "majesty the baby" right from the outset. Here one seems to want to love someone who is like oneself but better than oneself. Freud refers to this as a "cure by love" (p. 101), the problem that is cured presumably being the libidinal depletion of the subject, for Freud writes, "In the last resort we must begin to love in order not to fall ill" (p. 85). This curious claim would then seem to apply in his theory to men more than women. Note, however, that this foreshadows problems for both men and women. For men, the beloved woman is put on a pedestal: ideals are projected onto her (for example, beauty, purity, truth, and love) as the man tries to put and keep her in an idealized position. She is not chosen to satisfy his needs like his mother did here but to be his better half, be what he feels incapable of living up to. This impedes his sexual interest in her. Problems arise for the woman too should she take the bait and identify with the position she is put in by men: frigidity, for example, according to Lacan (2006a, p. 733). What if she puts him in the place of her ego-ideal? Is he loved by her then as (a more perfect) father? Is he put on a pedestal while she takes herself to be worthless? Freud does not expound upon this.

Even though Freud introduces the notion of the ego-ideal here, he nevertheless seems to situate the choice of an object that embodies this ideal as a narcissistic choice, perhaps simply because it is based so entirely on *one's own* ego-ideal, not on the beloved's ego-ideal.

Love Triangles

"A Special Type of Choice of Object Made by Men" (1957a)

The symbolic dimension is emphasized more strongly by Freud in two of his earlier papers on love, the first being "A Special Type of Choice of Object Made by Men" (originally published in 1910). Here Freud outlines a specific type of obsessive "male love" (as opposed to "normal love") in which a father-like rival must be present for a man to fall in love with a woman. She is uninteresting to him without this formal, structural, symbolic condition, which is obviously related to the Oedipal triangle (see Fink 1997, Chapter 8, for an example). Freud indicates that the man needs to feel jealous and has "*gratifying impulses of rivalry and hostility*" toward the other man. The relationship to the woman alone is not gratifying enough for him. A man may have a whole series of such attachments, showing that it is not the particular women he gets involved with who are important but rather *the structural situation itself*. Should a woman he is interested in leave her boyfriend, fiancé, or husband, the triangle falls apart and the woman is no longer of any interest to him.[4]

This is where Freud introduces his famous Madonna/whore dialectic. The mother, who was formerly seen as a pure Madonna-like figure, falls from grace when the child learns the facts of life and realizes that she must have had sexual relations with the boy's father. Suddenly she is seen as not so different from a whore. According to Freud, this often leads to a rescue fantasy: that of finding a whore and restoring her to her earlier state of purity.

Freud suggests here that in "normal love" only a few characteristics of the mother as a prototype are found in the object chosen by the man. However, in the "male love" of the type he outlines in this article, the mother-surrogates are very much like the mother (though perhaps primarily due to their structural situation). I will simply raise a few questions about Freud's formulation here: the mother had been imbued with large quantities of libido and then lost a lot; is it that the "fallen" women he becomes interested in are not imbued with much and need to have it restored? Or is it that after the mother's fall, all libido went to the old ideal image of her and the male tries to redirect some of that to himself? If he rescues a woman, does he himself become worthy of love again? He was no longer worthy because of his mother's fall? When she fell he fell? Is there no constant total level of libido here (as there is in 1914)? Did object-libido not get transformed back into ego-libido?

"On the Universal Tendency to Debasement in the Sphere of Love" (1957b)

Historically speaking, this article (originally published in 1912) at times seems quite dated (in particular, its discussion of the Viennese bourgeois household), and yet certain aspects of it seem to still hold true. "Love" here is at first distinguished from "desire," which Freud seems to reserve for sexual desire (p. 183), but then perhaps the two are confused in *Trieb*, "drive," which is unfortunately always rendered in the English translation as "instinct," and perhaps designates the *global* libidinal investment one makes in an object, regardless of how it is distributed between ("attachment"?) love and sexual desire.

Freud makes it clear from the outset that something is rotten in the state of Eros or in *la carte du tendre*:[5] "We must reckon with the possibility that something in the nature of the sexual drive itself is unfavorable to the realization of *complete satisfaction*" (pp. 188–89). This might be viewed as a forerunner of Lacan's infamous and oft-repeated claim that "there's no such thing as a sexual relationship" (see, for example, Lacan, 1998a, p. 57).

An example Freud provides is that of a man who is inclined to make an anaclitic object-choice, that is, a choice based on a resemblance between a woman and the man's mother; he has a strong sensual tie to his mother and sister (Freud, 1957b, p. 182) and, *due to the prohibition of incest*, he becomes impotent. What seems to happen here is that the affectionate current remains active, and the man is able to choose a woman like his mother, but the sensual or sexual current becomes utterly and completely repressed. Since to him the only suitable love object is a woman like his mother or sister, and yet all sexuality with such a woman is prohibited, sexual desire in the form of erections in the object's presence are impossible. The new love object is equated in his mind with his mother or sister for all sexual intents and purposes.

Freud suggests here that in "the normal male" the affectionate current (love) and the sensual current (sexual desire) have to combine or fuse (p. 180). However, according to Freud this rarely happens; indeed, he suggests that impotence due to psychical causes is very widespread, especially if we consider cases of *partial impotence* (now generally referred to as erectile dysfunction or ED, reminding us of Oedipus) and men's tendencies to select lower-class wives (pp. 184–85), the latter presumably not resembling the men's bourgeois mothers. The solution of choosing wives who are of lower-class extraction than the men's own mothers presumably allows sexual desire to appear separately: the men do not love these wives as they did their mothers, and there is no real combination or fusion of love and desire here; they desire these lower-class wives but do not love them per se.

Hence the two components of Eros here are:

1 love: affectionate current, attachment, anaclisis
2 desire: sensual, sexual.

The usual configuration of love and desire for men with partial impotence is as follows:

1 love for a bourgeois woman (Madonna); desire impossible
2 desire for a low-class woman (whore); love impossible.

Here there seems to be some sensual tie to the mother who is also loved, but also some possible sexual desire for other women as long as they do not become love objects. If they become love objects over the course of time, they evoke the mother, and if they become esteemed like the mother, impotence results; hence the importance of continually *debasing the sexual object* so that she never seems worthy of esteem like one's mother. Things only work out as long as love and desire remain separate. Freud's implicit assumption here seems to be that if love and desire fuse later in life (on the post-Oedipal, not preoedipal object), there is no need to repress one of them or leave one of them out of the Eros equation. Qualifying the more usual case, however, Freud says, "where they love they do not desire and where they desire they cannot love" (p. 183).

There are, thus, two different possibilities here: in the first case, in which we see total impotence, there has been a total fusion of love and desire for the mother (as a preoedipal object), and desire becomes repressed due to the prohibition of incest; here, then, love persists but desire is impossible. In the second case, in which we see impotence with women who are like the mother but not with "lower-class women," there has been only a partial fusion of love and desire for the mother. Note that, although Freud says early on in the article that it is normal for love and desire to fuse, their fusion cannot, he seems to indicate here, involve or center around the mother. It would seem that the fusion of love and desire—that is, of the affectionate and sensual currents—must not occur before the prohibition of incest occurs but only afterward, after the mother is given up as the primary love object. In 1921, Freud (1955e) makes it clear that he thinks this fusion should take place in adolescence, thus after the resolution of the Oedipus

complex; but what then brings about the fusion? Hormones? Socialization? Freud does not tell us how or why such fusion occurs.

Freud's (1957b) conclusion here regarding men is as follows: "Anyone who is to be really free and happy in love must have surmounted his respect for women and have come to terms with the idea of incest with his mother or sister" (p. 186). It would seem, in other words, that a man must stop putting women on a pedestal, stop seeing them as Madonna-like figures (I assume he does not mean that a man must lose all respect for women, although some might disagree with me here; does respect for a woman automatically put her in a class with the mother and sister?), for in such cases he cannot desire them sexually. The second part of Freud's sentence would seem to suggest that a man must come to terms with the fact that sexuality with a woman always involves some incestuous component; and incestuous impulses invariably appear in every analysis, assuming it is taken far enough, whether or not there has been direct sexual contact between siblings or between parent and child.

It is not entirely clear how we should characterize this configuration from the standpoint of the imaginary, symbolic, and real. Freud suggests that the choice of an object like one's mother is an anaclitic object-choice, and yet the mother here is idealized, placed on a symbolic pedestal, as it were. This idealization seems to be primarily symbolic, insofar as it is not based on a resemblance with oneself at the level of images (physical resemblance), that is, of the imaginary, but rather on culturally valued characteristics leading to "respect": social position and rank, respectability, purity, and so on.

Now what does Freud say about *women* in this article on a supposed *universal* tendency to debasement in the sphere of love? He says that women have little need to debase their sexual object (p. 186), but he says almost nothing as to why. Don't they love and become at least partially attached sexually to their father? Is it because they do not have to give him up really? Because there is no real need to repress their love for him? Just a gradual transfer from one man to another, perhaps? Or is it rather that love, in the majority of instances, remains attached to the mother while sexual desire targets the father?

Whatever the case may be, Freud suggests that women often need there to be a prohibition to get sexually excited; this showed great foresight regarding a whole series of French films in which a man's wife or mistress can only get excited if they make love in public places where it is not allowed and where there is a risk of getting caught. Freud says that this leads in women to love based on certain structural conditions involving prohibition or "forbiddenness" (p. 186). However, Freud does not really say why. Is it that the prohibition of incest has not been very strong and must be evoked or provoked?

Freud foreshadows some of Lacan's comments on the courtly love tradition when he says here that men create their own barriers to love so as to heighten its pleasures (p. 187). "If sexual freedom is unrestricted" satisfaction is not full: indeed, it never is. Education is such that satisfaction is never full. Civilization is self-defeating to some degree in this respect: education of the "love drives" only happens at a cost, that cost being "a sensible [that is, palpable or tangible] loss of pleasure" (pp. 189–90).

To recoup some of that loss, it would seem that we erect barriers so as to heighten our pleasure; does this explain in any way women's often-remarked fascination with "bad boys," guys who presumably do not fit the mold of their own idealized father figures? Or are those bad boys simply new editions of their own fathers who were not terribly idealizable in the first place? In certain cases at least, it seems that for a woman to desire, there cannot be much resemblance between her *beloved* ideal father and a man for whom she can feel sexual *desire*; perhaps she too cannot so easily love and desire in the same place, cannot so easily love and desire the same object. To be sexually excited, she has to be with the wrong kind of guy, a guy who has been around the block, who does not treat her like a princess the way her father did, for the latter would lead to love, not desire. He must not give her a respectful, loving look, but

rather an insolent, lustful one.

Before turning to Lacan on passion, let us consider how Freud formulates the drive-component of love. In 1921, Freud (1955e) suggests that sensual love "is nothing more than object-cathexis on the part of the sexual drives with a view to directly sexual satisfaction, a cathexis which expires, moreover, when this aim has been reached." He also refers to sensual love here as "earthly love" (p. 112), and indicates that it is uninhibited in its aim. "Earthly love" seems thus to correspond to what he earlier called "sexual desire." The investment in the object here is short-lived, and disappears as soon as sexual satisfaction is achieved. He goes on to say, however, that when prohibited, sensual aims become repressed and often give rise to "aim-inhibited drives" (pp. 111–12), referring to affectionate love as just such an aim-inhibited drive. Affectionate love here seems to involve idealization of the object, attention being paid to its spiritual merits as opposed to its sensual merits.

Note that *affectionate love is not considered here to precede sexual love, but rather to result from the inhibition of sensual love*. Earlier in Freud's work, these had seemed to be separate currents that were somewhat independent from each other; here it would seem that it is due to the prohibition of certain real satisfactions that a kind of symbolic idealization occurs, leading to *an affectionate current that is secondary*, not primary. Idealization, as we see it in courtly love, would thus seem to involve sublimation of the sexual drives. This 1921 formulation is rather different from what Freud had said earlier: "affectionate love" before was either anaclitic or narcissistic.

Passion: The Ideal Ego and the Ego-Ideal

> The phenomenon of passionate love (*amour-passion*) [is] determined by the image of the ideal ego.
>
> —Lacan, 2006a, p. 344

Owing to constraints of space here, I will confine myself to a discussion of Lacan's earliest formulations on love and passion. I will assume that the reader is familiar with Lacan's work in "The Mirror Stage" and "Aggressiveness in Psychoanalysis" where he emphasizes the formative, defining role of images in the animal kingdom, and points out that in many species a significant developmental process requires seeing something: an image of a member of the same species. He postulates that in human beings, the ego first forms between the ages of six and 18 months on the basis of images one sees of oneself in the mirror (or any other reflecting surface), or of images of children similar in age to oneself. Lacan suggests that the ego as precipitated in the mirror stage has a certain quantum of love or libido attached to it, which he refers to as narcissistic libido. Unlike Freud, he does not think that we cathect ourselves automatically, like animals do. In his revised version of the mirror stage in Seminar VIII, Lacan (2001a) suggests that the mirror image is internalized and invested with libido because of an approving gesture (a nod, for example, related to Freud's *einziger Zug* [1955e]) made by the parent holding the child before the mirror or watching the child look at itself in the mirror. It is owing to the parent's recognition, acknowledgment, or approval that the ideal image of oneself seen in the mirror (the "ideal ego") takes on such importance. It is not internalized unless it is *ratified* by a person of importance to the child, and this ratification instates what Freud calls the "ego-ideal" (*Ichideal*).[6]

Narcissus

Let us briefly consider the case of Narcissus. In the myth, Narcissus is not interested in girls—he is not interested in the nymphs, whether Echo or any of the others. A maiden who is shunned by him prays that he will be made to feel unrequited love, and indeed he does. He becomes so enamored of his image in a fountain, thinking it is a water-spirit living in the fountain, that "he cherished the flame that consumed him, so that by degrees he lost his color, his figure, and [his] beauty … He pined away and died" (Bulfinch, 1979, p. 121).

The image of himself that Narcissus sees is just that, an image, indeed the kind of image that is the stuff of the mirror stage. He does not endow the image with such symbolic qualities as honesty, integrity, intelligence, or what have you, but rather simply with beauty. That beauty fascinates him; he is captured by it as certain predators are captured by the peacock's eyespots on its feathers or the rabbit is by the weasel's mesmerizing look. It captivates him, it hypnotizes him, he can do nothing but gaze at it. There is a kind of mortal passion or fatal attraction here for this image, for this beautiful reflection of himself that closely—oh so closely—resembles himself. It is still more ideal than he is insofar as it is totalizing, that is, shows him virtually all of himself at once, creating a harmonious whole that he can never get a glimpse of in any other way.

The problem for Narcissus is that he is unable to take this image into himself, to introject it, to internalize it the way one does through the help of the Other in the mirror stage. Even when one is able to internalize it, one remains alienated from it insofar as one can only approach it asymptotically, as Lacan puts it; one always remains at some distance from fully inhabiting this ideal image of oneself. Nevertheless, in Narcissus' case the image remains exterior, outside himself in a sense.

Sibling Rivalry

A 1922 paper by Freud, "Some Neurotic Mechanisms in Jealousy, Paranoia and Homosexuality," seems to have played an important role in Lacan's work on love; it is no doubt significant that in 1932 Lacan himself translated this particular paper by Freud (1955c) into French. In this paper, Freud notes an interesting contrast between something that occurs in certain cases of homosexuality and something that occurs in paranoia. In certain cases of homosexuality, we find, Freud tells us, a situation in which brothers who initially rivaled with each other for their mother's attention later become "the first homosexual love-objects" for each other (p. 231). Owing to the repression of sibling rivalry, love displaces from the mother to the brother with whom one rivaled. Early antagonism turns into affection:[7]

manifest love for sibling
repressed hatred for sibling

What strikes Freud here is not so much the reversal of hostility into love, which is common enough, but rather that it is precisely the opposite of what happens in paranoia where it is the person who was originally loved who later becomes the hated persecutor. Love turns to hate in paranoia, hatred to love in this case of sibling rivalry. Note that there is a gain in ego-libido here: object-libido attached to the mother returns to the subject who falls in love with someone like himself.

Lacan comments on this in his paper on the Papin sisters in *Le Minotaure* 3/4 (1933–34), written a year after his translation of Freud's text was published. He says, when "the forced reduction of the early hostility between brothers occurs, an abnormal inversion of this hostility into desire can occur" giving rise to "an affective fixation still very close to the solipsistic ego, a fixation that warrants the label 'narcissistic' and in which the object chosen is as similar as possible to the subject; this is why it takes on a homosexual character."

In other words, whereas Freud perhaps saw this reversal of hate into love among brothers as a nonpsychotic path to homosexuality (nonpsychotic insofar as it involves repression, a specifically neurotic form of negation), Lacan, at this very early stage of his work, emphasizes the importance of the "*solipsistic ego*" in such cases. He mentions that all of the persecutors of Aimée, the psychotic woman whose case he discusses at length in his 1932 doctoral dissertation, were duplicates or stand-ins for her first persecutor, her older sister, whom she also loved earlier on in life. He suggests here that a reversal of love into hatred occurred in her case, leading to her dramatic assault on an actress who was one of the stand-ins for her sister. The series of her persecutors is made up of "the doublets, triplets, and successive 'printings' of a prototype [of her older sister]. This prototype has a twofold value, both affective and representative" (Lacan, 1980, p. 253).

Consider a few of the comments he makes about Aimée:

> The future victim [a famous actress of the time] is not her only persecutor. Just as certain characters in primitive myths turn out to be doublets of a heroic type, other persecutors appear behind the actress, and we shall see that she herself is not the final prototype. We find Sarah Bernhardt, who is criticized in Aimée's writings, and Mrs. C., a novelist whom Aimée wanted to accuse in a communist newspaper. We thus see the value, which is more representative than personal, of the persecutor that the patient recognized for herself. She is the stereotypical famous woman, who is adored by the public, newly successful, and living in the lap of luxury. And although the patient attacks the lives, artifices, and corruption of such women vigorously

> in her writings, one must highlight the ambivalence of her attitude; for she too, as we shall see, would like to be a novelist, have a place in the footlights, lead a life of luxury, and have influence on the world.
>
> (p. 164)

The women who become her persecutors are women who live the kind of life she herself would like to lead. They are the very image of a woman worthy of love in her eyes; they are what she feels she would have to be in order to be loved by herself, to be as loved by herself as she loves others: they are her ideal. Lacan goes on to say, regarding one of the persecutors, Miss C. de la N., that "the person thus designated was both her dearest friend and the dominating woman she envied; she thus appears as a substitute for Aimée's sister" (p. 233).

A bit further on he says,

> this type of woman is exactly what Aimée herself dreams of becoming. The same image that represents her ideal is also the object of her hatred. She thus strikes in her victim her *externalized ideal*, just as the person who commits a crime of passion strikes the only object of his hatred and his love.
>
> (p. 253)

He even goes so far as to use the expression "internal enemy" (p. 237), at one point, to designate the person she attacked (although the context is slightly different). He says that in striking this famous actress with a knife "*she struck herself*," and that it was precisely at that moment that she felt relief, manifested in her crying, the delusion abruptly dissipating (p. 250). There is an obvious confusion here between inside and outside, internal and external. This is part of what Lacan refers to as the "fraternal complex" (p. 261), a term found again in another work by Lacan (1984, p. 47).

Lacan (1980) suggests that "these people … symbolize … Aimée's ideal" (p. 263). More generally stated, in paranoia,

> The main persecutor is always of the same sex as the subject and is identical to, or at least clearly represents, the person of the same sex to whom the subject is most profoundly attached in his affective history.[9]
>
> (p. 273)[8]

Lacan even comments in a footnote here that although many authors have provided case histories in which this is true, few of them have realized how regularly this is the case. He mentions that shared delusions almost always involve mother and daughter pairs or father and son pairs (p. 284).[9]

Les complexes familiaux (Family Complexes, 1938)

Long before Lacan comes up with the idea that parental approval is necessary to the internalization of the ideal ego in the mirror stage and before he formulates the notion of the symbolic, he hypothesizes an initial mother–child unity that is lost at the time of weaning (Lacan, 1984). It is at the moment of weaning that the child loses the "unity of himself"—a unity he had apparently found in his nondifferentiation from his mother, in his sense of forming a whole with her (a sense that is only

constituted retroactively, of course, when it is lost),[10] or at least with her breast ("the imago of the maternal bosom dominates all of man's life," p. 32). He suddenly finds himself to be a fragmented body and experiences a "tendency [that is, an impulse of some kind] … to restore his lost unity"; he attempts to restore that lost unity by relying on the "imago of the double" (p. 44), a "foreign" image or model: the image of another person. (Lacan does not seem to tell us why it happens in this way.) Lacan calls this the "intrusion complex" and he proposes that it is "starting from this very stage that one first begins to recognize a rival, that is, an 'other' as an object" (p. 37)—this seems to be his first use of the term "other" in this way.

This "intrusion complex," which is most common, according to Lacan, when there is only a very small age gap between the children in question, involves "two opposite and complementary attitudes" that children seem to be required to adopt: seducer and seduced, dominator and dominated. The small difference in age between the children involved means that the subjects have to be very similar to each other in size and capabilities. "The imago of the other is linked to the structure of one's own body, especially the structure of its relational functions, by a certain objective similarity" (p. 38).

Lacan does not see the positions of seducer and seduced, dominator and dominated, so much as choices, but rather as established by nature—by instinct, one might say, since these same positions are found in many other species. He suggests that they are at the origin of sadomasochism (p. 40): both parties are required to play these roles whether they like it or not and both parties relate equally to both roles, at least at the outset. The sense we have of the other at this stage is, he claims, entirely imaginary (p. 38): the other is not fundamentally different from ourselves.

The kind of identification with the other that is at work here leads to a situation in which aggression toward the other is tantamount to aggression toward oneself; Lacan even refers to the role played by masochism in sadism as an "intimate lining" or "intimate doubling" [*doublure intime*] (p. 40).

Lacan characterizes the child's world at this stage as "a narcissistic world" and says that it "does not contain other people [*autrui*]" (p. 45). As long as the child simply mimics another child's gestures, faces, and emotions through a form of transitivism, "the [child-]subject is not distinguished from the image itself," that is, from "the image of the semblable," from a person very like himself. "The image merely adds the temporary intrusion of a foreign tendency"—a tendency borrowed from another—to the child's pre-existing tendencies. Lacan refers to this as a "narcissistic intrusion," saying, "before the ego affirms its identity, it is confused with this image that forms (or shapes) it, but that alienates it primordially" (p. 45). (Insofar as there are not two fundamentally distinct objects present here, except from the outside observer's vantage point, it is not strictly correct to talk about "intrusion" here, intrusion requiring that there be two separate objects, one of which encroaches upon the space of the other.)

Lacan goes on to try to explain how this primordial confusion of self and other is overcome through jealousy, it being rivalry for a third object that triangulates the situation and introduces a pact or agreement between the parties; we have here Lacan's early attempt to use the Hegelian master/slave dialectic to go beyond the struggle to the death, an attempt that is given up once Lacan (2001a) realizes the symbolic's important contribution (the unary trait, *einziger Zug*, from the parent) to the mirror stage. Whereas Lacan initially attempts to bring the symbolic pact into being out of a purely imaginary dialectic, he later gives up such an effort as futile.

Nevertheless, even taking into account Lacan's revised views of ego formation in Seminar VIII, we can still accept his notion here that "the ego is modeled" on "the primordial imago of the double" (Lacan, 1984, p. 48). He suggests that we see its importance later in life in a number of different cases, including homosexuality and fetishism, and in paranoia where it plays a role "in the type of persecutor, whether outside or inside" (p. 48).

In other words, Lacan does not restrict the influence of the "fraternal complex" to paranoia—where it leads to "the frequency of themes of filiation, usurpation, and spoliation, [and to the] more paranoid themes of intrusion, influence, splitting, doubling, and the whole set of delusional transmutations of the body" (p. 49). There may well be an important role played by the "fraternal complex" in other diagnostic categories as well.

Lacan suggests that psychoanalysis allows us to see that the "elective object of libido at the stage we are studying is homosexual" and that love and identification fuse in this object (pp. 38–39). In his dissertation, he points out how often the persecutor is someone of the same sex as the patient, suggesting that the whole question of "repressed homosexuality" (p. 301) or of a "defense against homosexuality" in the psychoses might actually be related to *the passion tied to the image of someone who looks very much like oneself* (a-a´).[11]

He goes on to propose that,

> this early ambiguity [presumably, the fusion of love and identification] is refound in adults, in the passion of jealousy in love relations and it is here that one can grasp it best. One must recognize it, in effect, in the powerful interest the subject shows in his rival's image: an interest which, although it is asserted as hatred—that is, as negative—and although it is motivated by the supposed love object, […] must be interpreted as the essential and positive interest of this passion.
>
> (p. 39)

In other words, the passionate interest in the other woman in hysteria, for example, is based less on a passionate attachment to the man who is supposedly the true object of her affections, Lacan would seem to be suggesting here, than on a fascination with the other woman (who she takes to be a rival) as the imago at the core of her own being. Lacan does not emphasize this facet of things when he discusses the dream of the butcher's wife many years later, but it is perhaps an important facet to keep in mind anyway (see, for example, Lacan, 2006a, p. 452). It might be thought of as playing a role in Dora's fascination with Frau K., insofar as the latter represents Dora's own femininity. Indeed, women's concern with the question of femininity, of what it means to be a woman, may well be related to this fascination with the imago of another woman. (Perhaps something similar could be said of men's attempt to fathom what it means to be a man: see "Logical Time" in Lacan, 2006a, pp. 212–13.) Consider, too, the frequency with which a second man is present in men's sexual fantasies about women, where it seems there has to be a struggle with another man to make it interesting: a brother-like rival or father.

This preliminary exploration has probably raised more questions than it has answered, but given the constraints of space here it is impossible to even begin to attempt to answer some of these questions with Lacan's later formulations on courtly love, beauty, and so on. I hope to address those in an upcoming book on love.

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Notes

1 All translations of Lacan's work here are by me.

2 More complex configurations may exist in the case of homosexual object-choice, for the object chosen may resemble both oneself and an early caretaker.

3 Object-choice appears here to be all or nothing, not partially anaclitic and partially narcissistic even in theory.

4 Clinical experience has taught me that women, too, sometimes derive more jouissance from rivalry with other women—taking men from them, as they perhaps felt they took or tried to take their fathers from their mothers when they were girls—than they derive from the men they get involved with.

5 *La Carte du Tendre* is a seventeenth-century map of the tender/amorous sentiments—perhaps a forerunner to Adam Smith's (1759) theory of the moral sentiments—drawn by Madeleine de Scudéry. It purported to trace out all the stages of love, all the stages of develop-ment of the tender feelings, as well as all of the obstacles and problems one might encounter along love's path such as jealousy and despair. It can be found in her ten-volume novel *Clélie* (1654–60). The map can be found in Joan DeJean's *Tender Geographies: Women and The Origins of the Novel in France* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).

6 For discussions of the earlier and later versions of the mirror stage, see Fink (1995a, 1997, and especially 2005).

7 Freud (1922) also describes here another way in which homosexual object-choice may come about: he mentions a boy who is fixated on his mother and who, a few years after puberty, comes to identify with her and takes as his love object a boy around his age at the time the identification occurred. For many years thereafter, perhaps, it is boys of that age that attract him—in the case of one of my own analysands, a homosexual male was particularly attracted for some 20 years to boys around 15 to 17 years old, his moral scruple here being that they were minors, under age. Freud qualifies this as a solution to the Oedipus complex, which involves remaining true to his mother while retiring in favor of his father by not competing with him for his mother's love (pp. 230–31); this is similar to the explanation he provides in a reversed form regarding the famous case of the "young homosexual woman" (Freud, 1955f).

8 Lacan (1980) also suggests that "narcissistic fixation and homosexual drive thus stemmed in this case from points of libidinal evolution that were very close to each other" (p. 264).

9 He mentions something quite similar in Lacan (1984, p. 49).

10 Cf. Aristophanes' myth in Plato's *Symposium*.

11 Here love turns into hate, and punishment of the other translates into self-punishment.

On Translation

10

THE TASK OF TRANSLATION

Talk given upon receipt of a prize for translating *Écrits*

I would like to begin by thanking many people: by thanking all of you for coming here today; by thanking the French-American Foundation and the Florence Gould Foundation for providing this generous award; by thanking the eminent members of the jury for recognizing my work after taking the time to read a book that has often been characterized as unreadable and untranslatable, and which was said by the first professor with whom I studied it to have been repeatedly thrown across the room by him in exasperation; and by thanking my wife, Héloïse Fink, for having painstakingly reviewed all 900 pages of the translation line by line! Many other people helped me in a significant yet more sporadic way with the work, and I have thanked them in my introduction to the translation, but my wife deserves special mention because of her unfailing willingness to ensure that I didn't put my feet in the plate, as the French say, or at least my foot in my mouth, that I didn't do anything overly stupid—at least regarding the translation.

It is, after all, so easy to translate stupidly, even the straightforward parts. False cognates make such fair-weather friends, and idiomatic expressions are not simply difficult to render but often simply go unnoticed by unwitting translators who only see the explicit or non-idiomatic meaning, ending up translating things like "how do you like them apples" or "you ain't just a whistling Dixie" in the most incongruous of ways. I know whereof I speak, having fallen into such traps myself, and having confused *le geste* with *la geste* now and then …

With our current emphasis on what we naively call "fluency" when it comes to learning foreign languages, we seem to stress the speed with which a foreign tongue leaps from our mouths rather than the employment of comprehensible grammar, subtlety of expression, or the ability to find *le mot juste*. People who have lived abroad know that they can sometimes get their speech up to speed within a year or two, but it is perhaps only after about five years living in a foreign country that one begins to see just how much one doesn't understand, and after ten years that one really begins to see just how much one doesn't understand! Learning a language—whether it is one's so-called native tongue or a foreign tongue—is a lifetime endeavor.[1]

I am emphasizing the difficulties of translation and the decades-long nature of language learning because a significant proportion of French theoretical texts are currently translated into English by proverbially starving graduate students who are willing to work for a pittance but whose language skills leave a great deal to be desired. Little money is devoted by publishers to the important work of translation, and publishers all too often get what they pay for—shoddy work that sounds like French, even though the words are ostensibly English. This not unsurprisingly leads to disappointing sales figures. Publishers are left scratching their heads: how could a book that sold so well in France "fall stillborn from the press," as Hume put it, in the US? Are we really that anti-intellectual?

Publishers of literary works are perhaps more attuned to the importance of good translations than publishers of social science treatises and more inclined to open their wallets to get them. However, in the social sciences, publishers seem to succumb to the same policy as academic institutions in general where translation is viewed as at best a secondary activity. Few if any professors at American universities have ever received tenure or promotion on the basis of their painstaking translations of theoretical texts. In essence, in the US academy, non-tenured and even associate professors are ill-advised to devote years of research and craftsmanship to the careful rendering of theoretical texts, since the work involved is unappreciated and undervalued. Few chairs or deans in our day and age have any idea what it means to learn a foreign tongue in any depth, or how much work is involved in researching background material and sources alluded to—those of you who read French theoretical texts are aware that rare is the French author who cites his or her sources, much less the particular text, edition, and page number being cited from.

Curiously enough, translations become something that only full professors can afford to do, that is, professors who have already made their reputations by commenting on texts that they have never studied as thoroughly as they are obliged to when they translate them. Their commentaries on an author thus *precede* the kind of thorough engagement with his or her work required to translate it! The whole system is, in fact, derrière backwards, the cart before the horse. As Lacan was wont to say, you have to translate Freud's work before you can understand it, not the other way around. I was fortunate enough to feel obliged to prepare my own draft translations of many of Lacan's texts starting 20 years ago, long before I began writing about them—his French was so difficult that an off-the-cuff translation of a line or two here and there in a commentary never seemed convincing to me.

If I may be so bold as to make a suggestion or two here, I think it would be wonderful if the French-American Foundation could attempt to persuade publishers and universities alike that accurate and readable translations *are* important, that "the task of the translator" (to allude to Walter Benjamin's text on the subject) is a difficult one, and that something must be done to make it worth a translator's while to work, rework, and rework yet again successive drafts of a translation. The translator should follow Boileau's advice to the poet: "*vingt fois sur le métier remettez votre ouvrage*." The articles by Lacan that I translated in this volume often went through ten or more complete drafts—not 20, but quite a few nevertheless. Lacan is admittedly more difficult than many authors, but Foucault, Derrida, Badiou, and plenty of other French writers give him a run for his money! A publisher of psychoanalytic texts recently told me she'd be willing to bring out an important book on the treatment of psychosis by an eminent French analyst if the analyst herself were willing to pay for the translation. Perhaps this reflects the small market for English translations of French psychoanalysis, but I think it also reflects a widespread devaluing of the activity of translating itself. (Indeed, such practices seem to be becoming the rule, not the exception.)

I would propose that the French-American Foundation consider providing *seed funding* for the translation of important theoretical texts, such funding being in incredibly short supply in the United States. When university officials see that a project has received *outside* funding, no matter how slight, they suddenly become convinced that the project has merit and are prompted to match the outside funding with release time; as Lacan was fond of saying, man's desire is the Other's desire—show academic officials that someone outside the university wants the translation to be done and those officials will magically want it too. People want what other people want. In the past ten to 15 years, the National Endowment for the Humanities has been progressively weakened by budget cuts and I was lucky enough to receive some of their scarce funds in the late 1990s. However, there are few other sources left and it would a great boon if the French-American Foundation were to step into the breach.

Speaking of the National Endowment for the Humanities, I think it of interest to mention that one of the committee members designated to judge the importance of translating Lacan's *Écrits* into English commented in his negative appraisal of the project: "I thought Lacan was passé anyway." To his mind, Lacan had become passé even before a sizable number of his works had become available in English. Perhaps this was true, to some extent, in literary circles, where the first truly enigmatic translations of Lacan's work in the 1970s sparked a lot of interest, which waned with the growing disenchantment with theory in general in comparative literature departments in recent years. In psychoanalytic circles, on the other hand, Lacan simply never had a chance: the translations done in the 1970s were, for the most part, incomprehensible to anyone with American psychoanalytic training, not simply because of the philosophical backdrop of Lacan's thought with which English-speaking analysts were not very familiar, or because of the ambiguous word-for-word renderings of his texts, but also because the translators knew precious little about Freud's work or about psychoanalysis in general. When Lacan would refer to a dream mentioned by Freud in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, the translator, never having bothered to read Freud's seminal work, had no idea what Lacan was talking about and even called the woman who had the dream a man. I have seen instances in which big-name translators, being ignorant of even basic psychoanalytic terminology, rendered *transfert* not as "transference," but simply as "transfer," and *souvenir-écran* as "memory-screen" instead of as the obvious "screen-memory," getting the simple noun and adjective word order wrong. Most analysts I talk with who tried to grapple with Lacan's work in the 1970s and 1980s said they were convinced Lacan had no idea what he was talking about—what a surprise!

Poor translations can make or break the reputation of an author and, in a field like psychoanalysis, can even relegate to the dustbin of history something that has the potential to revitalize a sclerotic psychotherapeutic practice. Let me give but one example:

Psychoanalysts in America rather quickly fell into the nasty habit of believing that they were masters of knowledge, believing that they knew what was in their patients' unconscious. They came to believe that it was their task to figure everything out, convey their perfect knowledge to their patients, and wait for their patients to agree with them. If the latter contested their knowledge, the analysts taxed their patients with resistance. The less inclined their patients seemed to be to believe their interpretations, the more such analysts berated them for "resisting the process." "You will be cured," they would tell their patients, "the day you accept that what I am telling you is true."

Lacan begged to differ: he argued that although patients often *assume* that their analysts know the unconscious causes of their symptoms, it is actually the patients themselves who know the reasons for their problems in life. This knowledge is contained in their unconscious and it is up to the analyst to bring their patients to divine this unconscious knowledge. It is not the analyst's role to guess it himself and simply pass it on: patients are far more convinced and far more involved when they figure it out themselves, with the analyst's help of course. This major point was lost in the early translation of Lacan's work when the translator wrote that "the analyst tries to *expose"* the patient's unconscious whereas what Lacan had said was that "the analyst strives to *get the analysand* to guess (lui *faire deviner*)" what is in his unconscious. These therapeutic endeavors are light years apart, but those light years were obliterated in that rendition and Lacan became just like so many other analytic theorists, intoxicated with their own incredible powers of insight. It may be a subtle difference in translation, but it marks the giant step Lacan took, leaving behind most analysts of the International Psychoanalytic Association.

Lacan's work has in fact transformed analytic technique in much of the non-English-speaking world today. Psychoanalysis is full of life in Italy, Spain, and most of South America, despite the rise of psychiatry and psychopharmacology, largely as a result of Lacan's efforts. There are probably as many analysts practicing in a Lacanian manner in the world today as there are non-Lacanians, but you certainly

wouldn't know that by looking around the United States. One of the main reasons for this is, in my view, that the early English translations of Lacan's work were simply too unreliable for serious discussion.

I discovered that it is often considered taboo in America to criticize translations.[2] When I tried to publish in a recent book of mine a commentary on glaring translation errors in psychoanalytic texts (Fink, 2004b), the editor asked me to delete that chapter; he told me he thought it potentially libelous.[3] It seems to me to be rather scandalous that one cannot have an open, critical dialogue about other people's translations in an area as important as psychoanalysis. Such a dialogue is necessary if students are to be made aware that their professors and translators do not always know what they're talking about—professing to have knowledge of languages that they do not actually have—and if translators and their publishers are to be encouraged to revise their flawed editions with some regularity. I myself have asked readers of my translation of *Écrits* to contact me with any errors they believe they have detected, and—as disheartening as it is to me to be alerted to mistakes I made in a project that took me the better part of ten years to complete and that finally came out last year—I have already received about a dozen corrections, mostly minor, fortunately. They will be included in the second edition of the translation. Indeed, I hope, with Norton's cooperation, to regularly update the translation as I learn more and as my readers help me learn more.[4] No one is infallible, no one knows all fields and all expressions, and it is important for we translators to convey to our readers our *non-mastery* of the subject at hand even as we try to convey as much of it as we *have* been able to understand thus far. A belief in one's own absolute mastery is perilous for the analyst and the translator alike.

The history of psychoanalysis in different countries around the world has always been intimately linked to the timing and quality of translations—first of Freud's work, then that of other analysts—into the languages spoken in those countries. And in a field like psychoanalysis, translation is a serious business that has real-life consequences for people who are suffering. Translators should be held accountable for diminishing patients' chances of being helped. Lacan was one of the few post-Freudians to have maintained the importance of the unconscious as another scene, something unknown to us, something that we don't want to know about. Many American clinicians rushed to forget the unconscious and its unpleasant truths, recentering therapy on adaptation of patients to the practitioner's view of reality, the rebalancing of hormones and neurotransmitters, and so on. For many patients this has led to endless therapies providing little relief or a lifetime of psychotropic medications. In my own practice, I have encountered numerous patients who have spent 20 years in contemporary American forms of psychoanalysis and psychotherapy or who have been on various antidepressants since they've been on the market. Having tried everything else, they come to me as a sort of mental health provider, or indeed lender, of last resort and they often achieve more in a year of Lacanian psychoanalysis than they have in the preceding decades and permanently go off medication within a few months or years of beginning analysis. It's not an easy process—psychoanalysis is admittedly hard work—but it delivers results. Lacanian psychoanalysis can be a serious counterweight to the biologism endemic to the majority of contemporary approaches to mental health problems.

To return to my hopefully not out-of-place suggestions, I would thus ask the members of the French-American Foundation to consider working to promote discussion of existing translations of important theoretical texts in the social sciences and humanities, and working to promote the revision and updating of those translations by publishers. I would also ask them to consider forming an advisory committee of people whose work in English to French and French to English translation is recognized; editors and universities could contact such a committee for assistance vetting translations and for an outside opinion on the quality of other translators' renditions.

If the Foundation could somehow make French publishers easier to work with as well, that would be a true blessing, but I suspect that is beyond their powers—indeed, perhaps beyond anyone's powers. My first editor at Norton became so frustrated and discouraged, she gave up the project of publishing Lacan in English altogether. My second editor, Angela von der Lippe, had to employ infinite patience to refinalize the contracts, once *never* being enough, not to mention some patience with me as well. This prize is thus also a tribute to her intelligence and perseverance!

It would be remiss of me to say nothing about Lacan's notorious writing style, which has often been characterized as Baroque, and is generally believed to be inimitable. To quickly describe what Lacan does to the French language, I can do no better than to cite a music critic's (Philippe Beaussant's) comments on the compositions for the viol or viola da gamba written by the French master Antoine de Forqueray in the late-17th and early-18th centuries:

> Every measure, every phrase, poses a problem and demands that the interpreter outdo himself. Forqueray indubitably took the playing of the viol to its zenith. There is viol music that is more tender and delicate, more radiant and sensual, more expressive and plastic. But none gives one the impression like this does of pushing the instrument to its limits, none manifests the same mixture of savage grandeur, excitability, continual violence, control, and power. […] Forqueray seems like a knight who is always on the verge of working his horse to death, but who knows his horse too well to go quite that far. […] Excess was at the very heart of Forqueray's nature, and one cannot have the fire that burned in him without risking burning slightly whatever one touches.
>
> (From the booklet accompanying Jordi Savall's CD entitled *Forqueray, Pièces de viole*, 2002)

As you can see from this, Lacan's style of composition is situated within a previously existing French tradition. I have not attempted to work English to death in my translation of Lacan's *Écrits*. Rather, I have striven to do what the performer Jordi Savall does for Forqueray's music: make it look easy. Although I am sure I have not succeeded as masterfully with Lacan as Savall has with Forqueray, I hope that I have managed to render a Lacan who still burns slightly whoever reads his writings.

Thank you once again for this fabulous honor!

Talk given at the Century Club in New York upon receipt of the Florence Gould and French-American Foundations' nonfiction translation prize in 2007 for *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2006).

Notes

1 Many of you have no doubt had the experience of thinking you understood a word or expression based on one or two contexts in which you encountered it, only to discover years later, upon hearing or reading it in a third context, that you had completely missed the point. It is not simply that there are so many idioms in a spoken language that one can never know them all, but that they are so fundamentally different from one language to another that it often takes a good deal of time to grasp fully how they are used.

2 One might wonder what the logic is behind the fact that one can say something positive about people's translations, but that one cannot say anything negative. Yet the same logic seems to be at work in 1) the fact that one can publicly praise an analyst's (or an analytic school's) work, but it is horribly frowned upon to criticize it (one's comments are at times even censored), and 2) the fact that at universities today one can laud a student's work till the cows come home, but one has to be extremely careful and parsimonious when doling out criticism. Doesn't praise itself become suspect when critique is no longer permitted?

3 This has now happened to me twice.

4 The latest set of corrections is always available on my website, brucefink.com.

CASES

11

IN THE WAKE OF MEDEA

A Case of Obsession from a Lacanian Perspective

It is never easy to know where to begin in preparing a case history, but every now and then a pivotal event in someone's life can be discerned that retroactively organizes and reorganizes much of what came before and leaves its indelible mark on much of what comes after. In the present case, a pivotal event of this kind was very prominent and it took the form of a murder: a mother's strangulation of her child.

This child, who was in her early teens at the time, was the only female of four siblings and was believed by the mother to be her husband's favorite child. Five years before the murder, the husband had hired a new receptionist at his office and soon began having an affair with her; within three years he and his wife had gotten divorced, and some six months after that he married his receptionist. About a year and a half after his remarriage, his ex-wife chose his birthday as the day on which to exact revenge by killing his only daughter.

The mother's motives do not seem to have been exactly the same as Medea's in the eponymous play by Euripides. The mother here showed many signs of psychosis prior to the murder (although no one seems to have really noticed or cared), and her state seems to have taken a serious turn for the worse at the death of her own mother about nine months before the fateful event. This grandmother had developed breast cancer some time before that, and seems to have gone somewhat mad after her mastectomy; she perhaps later developed a brain tumor as well. Visiting the grandmother's grave with their mother two months after the funeral, one of her children noticed that their mother had something of a "crazed look" on her face.

Their mother apparently saw a psychiatrist a few times several months after her own mother's death, but this did not stop her from developing a fairly classic delusional system involving a number of religious beliefs, religion apparently having been of only minor importance to her before that time. She became convinced that the world was a corrupt place and told her four children that they would be going to a better place when they died. She thought that there were "impurities" and "evil in the house" that had to be eradicated; as the fatal day drew near, she no longer permitted them to drink orange juice because it was impure—water became the only beverage allowed in the home.

Her children became increasingly scared and upset, and the night before the father's birthday his daughter even called him worriedly, asking him to come over or to let her go over to his house. The mother interrupted the phone call and the father seems to have done nothing even though he lived fairly close by.

The case I will be presenting today is that of the youngest son, whom I will refer to as Wesley. Wesley spent the night before his father's birthday sleeping at the foot of his mother's bed (I do not know why).[1] The house seemed strangely quiet in the morning when he awoke, and he (who was ten) and his next older brother, whom I will refer to as John, quickly joined forces and decided to bicycle over to their

father's house. The rain soon forced them to turn back, and upon entering the house Wesley heard voices coming from the living room. He peered through the louvered doors between the dining room and the living room and could see naked pelvic regions but no faces. Hearing that someone was there, the bodies quickly disappeared, and Wesley later wondered why he had not pushed open the doors into the living room: were they locked or did he not want to see?[2]

Wesley next recalls one of his brothers coming down the stairs into the dining room and telling him that his sister was dead. Lying on the floor under the dining room table, Wesley began pounding the carpet with his fists, yelling and screaming.

As ten-year-old Wesley soon learned, his mother had strangled his sister with a sash from some article of clothing; she had apparently done it while the sister was sleeping and had covered the body with Wesley's guitar case (Wesley never actually saw the body). And, as he learned approximately five years later from his oldest brother—the person who was, as it turned out, having sex with his mother on the floor in the living room when Wesley entered the dining room[3]—the mother led the eldest brother into the basement when Wesley came home and told him she needed his help to kill off the rest of them: the two younger brothers, presumably. The oldest brother, whom I shall refer to as Ned, apparently refused and purportedly slapped his mother. The police were called in, the mother was arrested, tried, sent to jail and then into mandatory therapy, and the three boys were sent to live with their father, his second wife, and her daughter (a social worker and a psychiatrist were apparently asked to speak with the children once or twice, but no therapy was initiated for them).

Such are the main outlines of the life-changing events that affected Wesley's family, some of which Wesley recounted in the very first session, but many of which only came out little by little as the analysis proceeded. It seemed that Wesley did not wish to remember a number of these events and was not, in fact, sure whether or not to believe some of the claims made by Ned.[4] (Moreover, when Wesley recounted some of these events during our first session, I believe he stated that his mother had killed his sister with a knife, not by strangling her with a sash—we shall see the significance of this possible "mistake" further on.)

My aim in recounting these events is to sketch out an apparent paradox. Although I will first recount what seem to have been the effects on Wesley of these traumatic events, we shall see further on that they were in some ways not nearly as traumatic for him as we might at first have surmised.

Wesley is now in his early forties, and I have seen him in analysis for a little over three years, starting at a frequency of two sessions a week for about the first ten months, then three a week for about a year, and four a week for the past year and a half. It should be clear that in the time allotted I can present only a very small portion of the material collected over the course of more than 500 sessions.

Jouissance Crisis?

One of the first questions that may well come to the practitioner's mind is why Wesley entered analysis almost 30 years after the murder and not before. My working hypothesis is that it was due to the fact that he suddenly found himself in a situation similar to the one that his father had been in at the moment of marrying Wesley's mother. A kind of fate or destiny seemed to be involved.

Wesley was encouraged to go into therapy by a male friend of his to whom he had made critical remarks about the friend's girlfriend, the male friend characterizing Wesley's remarks as "misogynistic." This encouragement was given to him, however, quite some time before he actually called me. About five months before he first contacted me, his stepsister, whom I will refer to as Sally and who is a couple

of years his junior, reminded him that their parents had often said that Wesley and Sally could get married some day since they were not blood relatives, even though they had grown up together under the same roof for many years.

Wesley had apparently always hated it when his father and stepmother would say this, and yet he experienced it as a kind of fate or destiny. Two weeks into the analysis he suddenly came to the conclusion that he loved Sally and almost decided to drive many hours to go propose marriage to her. One might speculate that he had transferred onto this newfound sister many of his feelings about his biological sister, whom she had almost instantaneously replaced in his family (their names were even somewhat similar).

One might also speculate that he later transferred onto her many of his conflicts with his stepmother; Wesley had quite a tumultuous relationship with his stepmother, who was apparently quite attractive and considerably younger than Wesley's father. Wesley initially could not abide his stepmother's attempt to change the way everything had been done in their family prior to that time, and yet was attracted to and indeed fascinated by her as a woman. She seems to have been somewhat coquettish with him, and perhaps even gained his complicity in cheating on her husband with various workmen who came to the house.[5]

The fact that Sally mentioned to Wesley the possibility of them marrying almost 20 years since they had last lived together seems to have thrown him into a tailspin and was perhaps the deciding factor in his entering analysis. He had thus far managed to avoid being involved with women who wanted him—for some obvious and some not-so-obvious reasons, he was quite afraid of women's motives and wondered what they might be plotting against him. He also was likely concerned (albeit unconsciously) that, were he to marry Sally, he would be repeating something his own father had done, which was to marry a woman out of pity, for Sally had heart troubles and had suffered a heart attack not long before Wesley first called me. Wesley's father had once told Wesley that the father had met and fallen in love with a woman shortly before he and Wesley's mother were supposed to marry. But when the mother's father suddenly died six weeks before the wedding was to take place, the father felt sorry for her and went through with the marriage anyway. Were Wesley to marry Sally, perhaps a fate similar to his father's might befall him? He might be tempted to marry out of pity, out of the "goodness of his heart." (Given the similarity between his sister's and stepsister's names, there was perhaps even a sense in which this non-incestuous match struck him as all too incestuous, and even as a marriage to death itself.)

Note the similarity here to the case of the Rat Man (Freud, 1955a): the son repeated with his well-connected cousin and his Lady the predicament his father had been in regarding the choice between his well-connected wife-to-be and his beloved penniless girl, the butcher's daughter. Wesley perhaps wished he could, like his father, have two women to choose from, instead of just one, even if he were doomed to marry a woman he did not love but merely pitied.

Relations with Women

Having discussed the "call of destiny"—leading to a kind of libidinal (or jouissance) crisis—that may have led Wesley into analysis, I will turn to Wesley's relations with people. His relations with his parents were obviously not determined solely by the tragic events that occurred when he was ten. Indeed, his experience of these tragic events was premised upon his pre-existing relations with his parents.

Wesley's most commonly repeated comment about his mother was that he felt that he could have "no effect on her." He would try to get her attention as she looked elsewhere at people at the local pool club, or talked on the phone "like a sphinx." As a child, he would bang his head into her genital region, that mound that made him mad, while she stood chatting on the phone and would run around the house naked trying to attract her attention (he did not do so when his father was home). "She went to extra lengths to ignore me when she could have had me all to herself," he complained.

In his opinion, she did not believe that he could have any thoughts of his own. Expressing thoughts to her thus seemed pointless to him—indeed, he often simply could not express himself with her and even began to speak quite late in general, as we shall see further on. "She doesn't believe I'm separate from her; she includes me"; this statement introduces the extremely important theme in his narrative of the absence of a gap between himself and a woman. Having never had the impression that his mother could in any way be affected by him, it seemed to him that there was no lack in her—at least none that in any way corresponded to something in him, or to something he had or could give—leading him to be utterly and completely confused about female sexuality for quite some time.

When Wesley was nine years old, his mother took him to see the movie *The Godfather*, which had a profound effect upon him. He hated the movie but was taken with it and even bought the book. Reading it at around the age of ten, he came across a passage that said, "he entered her," a passage he could not understand for the life of him. He commented that "It was like a hole in the middle of the text … it sounded as if all of him went in[to her]"; "the mechanics of it escaped me."[6]

At one point in the analysis, Wesley declared that "women's bodies are impossible … there is this flat, enormous pubic area—the most outrageous thing I've ever seen!" At age seven or eight, he was convinced his sister had a penis and would have to use the boys' bathroom in junior high school; he was "incredulous" when his mother told him that his sister could not use a urinal. His conclusion at the time was that "women don't have genitals," not seeming to realize that there might be some other form of genitalia than the male form.[7]

Later in the analysis, he likened a girl's pubic hair to "a shaggy dog down there that might bite you." Still later, he wondered, "Do I hate the vagina? There's all this hair, but no penis—there's an absence … it's appalling." He likened the vagina to a door, saying that there was something scary inside, and in his mind's eye he imagined this door opening to the left—like his parents' bedroom door, he opined. He recalled that he had once heard his mother moaning in the parents' bedroom, thought she was being "tortured" or "maimed," and knocked loudly at the door. His father immediately and sharply told him, "Don't bother us—we're busy." This cut him to the quick, he said. In session, he even imagined there being a step behind this door/vagina and something *calamitous* going on inside. When I echoed back to him the word "calamitous," he thought of Calamity Jane, whom he associated with his mother, and it occurred to him next that he could trip on that step behind the door and fall down the stairs into the basement where she and Ned had purportedly plotted to kill him.[8] The female genitalia certainly constituted a dark and dangerous place for him.[9]

Regarding sexual intercourse, he commented that he did not want to put something into women but

was rather concerned with extracting something from them, "like syrup from trees." He wanted something "out of them." He sometimes talked about breasts and nipples as hard, not giving or generous, as if he had to work hard to get something from them. What he wanted did not flow easily from them—there was never more than a trickle.

His perception was that women wanted him to give whereas he wanted to take from them. He certainly could not give to a woman who *could* receive, only to one who could not. He often mentioned his sense that there was a membrane between himself and women that he wanted to get under, bore through, or "tear asunder." There was no gap in women or between himself and them, but rather a barrier of sorts; as he put it, "Women are impenetrable—sexually and emotionally." He felt that he could not affect them in any way.

One day Wesley said that he would like to eviscerate his mother and eat her guts, to kill her like his dog once killed a weasel (we shall see the importance of weasels later), shaking it back and forth in its jaws until it died. He said he wanted to "get in there" and "rip shit out." It sounded to my Lacanian-trained ears as if the goal were to somehow create a gap within her,[10] but I suspect Kleinians might take a rather different view of this.

Despite his mother's seeming lack of interest in him, she often let him know that she felt she owned him. When Wesley was in his thirties and trying to forge his own path in life, his mother even told him, "You'll be the way I made you." To this day, she continues to oppose all attempts he makes to follow his own course and tries to dictate to him what he should be interested in pursuing. According to Wesley, she wants to "inhabit and annul [his] imagination, inhabit and denature it." He suggested that she does not want him to listen to other women and does not accept the notion that he has his own ideas about things—she expresses her own as if they sufficed for the both of them. ("Speaking to my mother does not involve thinking," he opined.) He feels that his mother does not want him to ever be with another woman than her, and once postulated that his mother will "get sick and die" when "I acquire girlfriends." He proceeded to project this onto me, thinking that I might be angry if he went out with a woman. (Note the use of the term "acquire," as if he had to purchase girlfriends.)

Nevertheless, the mother's persistent interest in something else—in her husband, people at the local pool, and the friends she talked with endlessly on the phone—seems to have allowed for some recognition on Wesley's part that he was not the be-all and end-all of her existence and that she wanted something beyond him. As frustrating as her ever-straying attention was for him, it may well have been this—as opposed to some intervention on his father's part[11]—that allowed him to separate from his mother to at least some degree and not succumb to psychosis himself.

The degree to which Wesley remains enmeshed with his mother is indicated by an incident in which she told him that she had purchased a crypt for herself when she died and asked him if he wanted to reserve a space in it for himself. Although he was initially horrified, he soon said yes, saying to me, "There's a certain attraction to lying with my mother."[12] He nevertheless said this with considerable self-irony, irony being an important indicator of distance from something; psychotics, for whom there is no solid distance between self and other, tend to use astonishingly little irony!

Wesley also felt that his mother did not create any boundaries or want any, "until even death do us part." This led him to be afraid that people would invade him, contaminate him, or change his native impulses; in response to this he pulled away, he commented. Even with certain close friends who had no trouble expressing their own opinions, he had to withdraw in order to preserve his own opinions. Difficult imaginary relations with semblables, as Lacan calls them (that is, people like himself in some way), had been quite prominent in his life.

Relations with His Sister and Other Women

Wesley made a connection between sex and death very early on in the analysis (such a connection also being obvious in the fact that he saw his brother and mother lying together naked within a few moments of learning about his sister's death), by indicating that his sister hit puberty shortly before she was killed (for a very long time, he always said, "she died," as opposed to saying "she was killed" or "she was murdered," presumably to downplay his mother's involvement in it). Her puberty was quite difficult for him; he was, as he said, fascinated and "appalled" by her breasts, and would peek at them (not at her genitalia?) when she was in the shower. At age nine, he wanted to grow breasts himself and would sometimes push his pectoral muscles together to make it look like he had them. This "breast-envy" may well have been related to the fact that, around this time, his father had left the house to marry another woman (preferring her to his mostly male progeny) and to Wesley's perception that his sister, whom I shall refer to here as Sandy, was his father's favorite child. Wesley certainly envied Sandy that privileged position, and he indicated, *after about two years of analysis*, that when his brother told him that his sister was dead and he was pounding the carpet with his fists in a demonstration of rageful mourning, part of him was wondering why he was doing it: "It was pantomime … a partially affected show of emotion—was I elated that she had died?" He later recalled seeing the sunset that evening and telling himself, "All the days from now on will be different," commenting that he was not really terrified but primarily resigned. Perhaps Wesley thought he would finally have the opportunity to become his father's favorite?

Wesley averred that no one in the family ever said anything about his sister's breasts when they first started to appear; he was clearly fascinated by them as well as by his stepmother's. Both females had something of interest to his father that he himself did not have; Wesley may have had the impression that he would have gotten more attention from his father had he had them. His interest in having breasts of his own seems to have disappeared after Sandy's death.[13] He mentioned a sense of relief when his sister died: "these breasts [it was not clear if he was referring to hers or his] didn't have a hold on me any more."[14]

In his sexual fantasies, a woman would often be on top of him, like his sister was at times when she sat on him as a young boy. She was, he claimed, aggressive and bossy, and held him down and restrained him; it was not playful, to his mind. While this was clearly an exciting position to him—he once even referred to it as "*the* position," indicating that he saw it as a feminine position—he would also talk about trying to "get out from under [his] mother." He talked about being under his mother as a "toxic pleasure" involving "anger and tasty pleasure at the same time." The problem, he maintained, is that while he wants a dominatrix, a woman who is initially willing to play that role turns out to want to be dominated herself.[15]

He was most attracted to what he referred to as "large women," but was always concerned that a "bigger man" than himself would come along and take these women away from him. The association to his mother as someone larger than himself who would be taken away by a bigger man like his father seems fairly self-evident (but his sister was also older and bigger than him, and he resented the fact that she and Ned would hang out with their friends in Ned's room and send Wesley packing whenever he would try to sneak in). The nexus of thoughts around large women was usually accompanied by a worry about the size of his penis and the assumption that a bigger man would have a larger penis than him. While female anatomy seems to have remained unthinkable to him for quite some time, he nevertheless seems to have concluded that women were interested in men's penises (perhaps due to his mother's interest in his father and other men and to his sister's interest in boys).

He complained, right from the beginning of his analysis, of being impotent with women and opined that his poor track record with women (the paucity of his conquests) was due to a "lack of self-confidence." Compounding his sexual difficulties with women was the fact that he sometimes imagined men observing him during the sexual act, for example, being on a white examining table with doctors bent over examining what was happening from behind his back. His father, who was a physician, had once introduced him to a girl whom the father found particularly cute, shortly after examining her on a white examining table. Wesley had been quite upset and even scared at his father's interest in this girl and at his attempt to enjoy the girl vicariously through Wesley. This concern with being observed during the sexual act and not measuring up to a father's standards is not uncommon in obsessional neurosis, in my experience.

We can see how his mother's crime affected his sex life in a comment Wesley made to the effect that he could not imagine how he could have an orgasm with a large woman because during orgasm he would not be aware of what was going on, his guard would be down, and she might strangle him. He averred that, even when masturbating, he would get anxious when he had an erection and experienced "a special anxiety when [he reached] orgasm." The one woman he did have intercourse with for a while once referred to her hands as "tendrils," and this frightened Wesley because he associated those tendrils with the sash his mother had used to strangle his sister. Orgasm was, he suggested, directly connected with dismemberment for him due to its connection with the word "spasm" and the Greek word for dismemberment, which sounds something like "spasm." This might well remind us of Lacan's (2006a, p. 853) discussion of the lizard that drops or jettisons its own tail in situations of great distress.

Corresponding to his own dismemberment (or even fragmentation) was what he referred to as his inability to relate to a woman "as a whole" during sex (he intended "w-h-o-l-e" when he said that, but we can also hear it without the *w*). Since he had not detected the faces of his mother and brother through the slits in the door between the dining room and the living room, but only pelvic regions, he sees women as "just an assemblage of body parts" when they are naked; this is less true for him when they are clothed.

Commenting once on a military scene in a dream, Wesley mentioned how shocked and yet fascinated he was by stories of rape committed by soldiers, stating that "sex and aggression don't go together." He said he once told his brother that there was a decent chance he would someday end up in prison for having committed a violent crime, and the first such crime that came to mind (when I queried, "Violent crime?") was a shooting that occurred at his university in which a male student shot his own girlfriend.

Wesley reported "unbelievable rage" toward women and affirmed that he would like to "go there," that is, engage in an "extreme spectacle … one long, delicious, intelligent tantrum" in which he would "rage on forever" (he apparently threw many a tantrum as a young child, some of which were so violent in tone that his mother or brother threatened him with a straightjacket and a padded cell). He once said that he would like to see women as "facilitators" of his Eros, but slipped and said "fatilitators," in which he heard the word "fatal."

He once told me he was afraid that the goal of therapy was to make him amoral. He associated morality with neurosis and thought that he should perhaps be more like his mother and a certain coworker of his who, as he said, "know no guilt." Were he to become amoral, he might express his rage in real life, not just in his sessions. The prospect worried him (even as it confirmed to me yet again that he was neurotic, not psychotic, not a psychopath lacking in guilt or inhibitions to the expression of aggression).

It seems that rather than express any of the violence that inhabited him, he generally adopted a diametrically opposed position. "I don't want to be a dick … I should want to be a dick, not an asshole,"

he said, seeming to imply thereby that the position he adopted was that of the penetrable asshole. He went on to describe a fantasy in which he was pulled apart by women, starting from his legs; first the buttocks split and then they pulled him apart all the way up to his head. He claimed to have enjoyed the fantasy and said that it "released energy"; it seems, however, to have been limited to one particular weekend.

An image Wesley evoked very often in the early years of his analysis was that of a weasel, which according to him is seductive, in that it mesmerizes its prey—whether a rabbit or a chipmunk—and then flies to its neck and kills it in a bloodthirsty, cruel manner, not even necessarily wanting to eat it. Wesley even characterized weasels as leisurely biting their prey, remarking that "they represent absolutely remorseless violence."[16] While he often thought of himself as the prey (and believed the rabbit must love and feel compassion for the weasel), there was a sense in which he would have liked to be the predator. "I'd be grown up if I took the right to be aggressive," he asserted. He complained that he could not assume the modicum of aggression necessarily involved even in intellectual arguments.

In a dream he had years before beginning analysis he was dancing with his mother, a dance he qualified as "a dance to the death." She would not let go of him despite a lot of hostility and anger on his part. They were holding each other at the hips and he was facing her; this was the same position in which he found himself in a dream he had during the analysis in which he was killing she-wolf after she-wolf, holding them in the same dance position. He said that he was no good at aggression, could not express it, and could only throw a tantrum, like he did as a child: "I can't accept my own violence." To have sex with a woman would involve wounding her, he believed, and he would rather be the prey than the predator. He usually could not accept what he thought of as the aggression necessary on his part to have sexual intercourse.

Relations with His Father

As I turn to Wesley's relationship with his father, I think it important to emphasize anew that the event that occurred when Wesley was ten years old was a defining moment of his life, but that it was what it was for him due to the whole of what he had experienced prior to that time, which had led to the development of a *neurotic structure*. While my ears perked up when he told me about his mother's psychotic behavior, I never had even the slightest impression that Wesley himself was psychotic. It was apparent right from the outset that Wesley could hear the multiple meanings of words and expressions he used and forge new metaphors, and that he made plenty of slips of the tongue that could be easily harnessed for the work of the therapy. It seemed to me quite early on that there was a complete obsessional neurosis present prior to age ten. Evidence of Oedipalization could be seen in what appeared to be repressed anger at his father, identification with his father, rivalry with his sister for his father's attention leading to Wesley's marked ambivalence at his sister's death (conscious sadness, but unconscious "elation," leading to a sense that beating the floor with his fists partook of "pantomime"), and so on. I will endeavor to tell the story of this earlier period in his life as it unfolded in the analysis itself.

The story Wesley had told himself for almost 30 years about the family drama slowly began to come apart at the seams after about six months of analysis. Formerly, he had seen his father as "saintly, spotless, and professional." In analysis, he began to see his father as "willful—not simply a martyr." His father had portrayed himself as a martyr in telling Wesley the story that he had married Wesley's mother out of pity: he had portrayed himself as having sacrificed a new love he had just found for the sake of the mother's happiness (her father having died just before he was about to break it off), and as having later been a victim of the mother's madness.

Wesley began to see that his father had played a role in his mother's illness and Wesley's subsequent suffering. After all, it was the father's affair with his receptionist that led to trouble in the home and eventually to the parents' divorce. The mother's killing of her daughter was obviously designed to strike out at the father, since it occurred on the father's birthday and since the mother clearly saw the daughter as the father's favorite.

Prior to that time, all of Wesley's anger had seemed to be directed at his mother, but gradually more anger began to target his father. There seems to have been a slight foreshadowing of this in the very first session, for in that session Wesley told me (assuming the notes I took after the session were reliable) that his mother had killed his sister with a knife, even though this was not factually true, and knives turned out to be closely associated with his father: the father had once cut himself quite badly in the leg with a "carpet knife" and, being a doctor, had sewn himself up with a needle and thread. Wesley's misrepresentation of the murder weapon in the first session could be understood as *implicating his father in the crime* as well, as if both mother and father had had a hand in it.

He later recounted a dream in which there were two people, one of whom was female; while one held him down, the other put a knife into him. One might postulate that it was the female who held him down, like his sister had when she sat on him (and like women did in his sexual fantasies), while his father wielded the knife. Wesley's own leg would tingle at times when he was thinking about such things, and it turned out to be the same leg his father had cut with the carpet knife (this passing psychosomatic symptom perhaps involved an image of his father as a castrating figure, Wesley having been castrated by him, putting his leg in the place of his penis, or in the place of his father's leg).[17]

Wesley recalled that he had once imagined killing his father; it was when he was around 14 and his father told him that he and Wesley's mother had engaged in "wife swapping" some years prior during a

ski trip (the father had slept with the woman whom he was to later marry and the mother had slept with another man whom Wesley also knew). Does this imply that Wesley had allowed himself to become somewhat aware the day his father told him this story that his father was responsible for the divorce and subsequent family tragedy it had led to? Recalling in a session his anger at his father that day, he did not seem to know why he had suddenly gotten so angry with him. Wesley went on to say that, rather than express his anger to his father, he had killed himself, in a sense, after his mother killed his sister—he said that he had been more "authentic" before that. It was perhaps starting at age ten that he had begun to act as if he were "naive and had never seen anything."

When the father moved out of the family home around the time of the divorce, he initially lived alone in a small apartment; Wesley felt sorry for him, as if the father were no longer happy. (Wesley obviously assumed that he had been happy when living with the family, perhaps projecting his own relative happiness at that time onto his father.) Wesley seemed to have repressed some of his anger toward his father at that point, transforming it into pity.

Quite recently in the analysis, Wesley has been expressing a great deal of anger at his father that he may have felt both before and after the divorce—anger at him for being so ineffective as a father, for allowing intense rivalry and competition among the children in the home, for disciplining them in a "loud, capricious, and shattering" manner, and for allowing their mother's craziness to get the upper hand. It may be that he was never really very aware of being angry at his father back then, or that he put his anger aside, in some sense, when he moved in with his father after his sister's death, perhaps finding it easier and more comfortable to project that anger onto his stepmother.[18]

If we piece together some of the *major turning points* in Wesley's life, they all seem to involve his father in a rather important way.

1 On one occasion in the analysis, Wesley mentioned that he had been enthusiastic and euphoric up to around age four, age five seeming to mark a turning point. The turning point might be related to Oedipalization, of course, but it could also or alternatively correspond to the moment at which his father began to be less interested in the family because he had begun an affair with his new receptionist.

2 Another turning point occurred when Wesley was in second grade. He was doing well in school, and had a crush on his second-grade teacher who also seemed to like him. However, toward the end of second grade, at age eight, his parents divorced, and he claims to have lost confidence in school by age nine. He was no longer inspired by his activities and remarked that he has since been "facing backward," not forward in life; it was at that time that he became interested in the history of firearms and fossils, "not life," as he put it. He became more interested in what came before than in the present or future.

He claimed also to have become forgetful after his father moved out (something for which he was often berated by his father). One wonders if there was not something that he had forgotten at a deeper level that showed up in particular instances of forgetting, such as his anger at his father! Wesley believed that before his father moved out, he could deal with "worldly things," but that at age eight he became "complex." We might postulate that a considerable amount of repression occurred at these two turning points (at ages four to five and eight to nine).

These turning points in his self-confidence and enjoyment of life did not come up in an abstract discussion of his childhood, but were rather remembered as his self-confidence began to improve after eight months of therapy. He indicated at this point that he had not felt this self-confident in 30 years,

which led to a discussion of the turning point in second grade. After about three years of analysis he mentioned feeling quite euphoric for a few days and related it to a state of mind he had not experienced since the age of four.

These critical events from earlier in his life suggest that the traumatic events that occurred when Wesley was ten impacted an already established obsessive structure. They gave it a form that might easily be misrecognized by some, but its main outlines have become ever clearer as the trauma at age ten has been progressively worked through in the analysis.

The degree to which Wesley's anger at his father remained unconscious for many years is reflected in the following incident: as a teenager, Wesley once took his brother's 20-gauge shotgun and shot a hole through a Lazy Boy armchair and into the wall of his bedroom. He referred to that as testing his father, for his father was home and screamed, thinking that Wesley had shot himself. Regarding the gun incident, Wesley commented, "I wasn't thinking of killing my father." Removing the "not" from the comment, as Freud (1961b) recommends we do, it is not terribly farfetched to assume that something in Wesley was thinking of killing his father.[19]

In a different vein, Wesley once claimed that when he was little, his father's anger relieved his anxiety because he at least knew where he stood once his father exploded. His father did not explode very often, but when he did it seems to have been very sudden and "shattering."[20]

In the third year of the analysis, Wesley returned to the idea that his sister's death was a relief in the sense that it put an end to the persistent petty nastiness of everyday life in their home, making it clear that he attributed much of this nastiness to his father. Her death allowed for ordinary mourning or grief in the family, instead of petty nastiness. It seems as though the petty nastiness soon returned, however, in his father and stepmother's home.

In the transference, Wesley often thought *I* was angry from the very second the session began and seemed to think I might be capable of the same kind of sudden, capricious anger as his father. Almost immediately after opining that I must be angry, he would often comment that he himself was angry about this or that interaction he had had with someone.

Words, Words, Words

Wesley apparently did not speak much until the age of three and a half,[21] and his parents were worried about him. In his late thirties he still felt that words were often being "pulled out of [him]."

In Wesley's work, naming played quite an important role and he worried about "the thing named not being properly delimited" or "giving it the wrong name." "What," he wondered, "if I don't know what's there?" In the very next session he used almost the exact same words in talking about his mother's pelvic region as seen through the louvered door between the dining room and living room, saying, "I didn't know what was there." The inability to name, in general, and the inability to name the female genitalia, in particular, seemed closely related here. He had been given no words for the female genitalia and he could conceptualize them only as the lack of the genitalia he did know—that is, as the lack of a penis. The absence of a name for "the lack in the Other," as Lacan calls it—which is not exclusively related to the genitalia, but more generally related to what the Other does not have and thus wants from the subject or from someone else—seemed closely linked to a broader difficulty naming.

Wesley occasionally stated that he hated words because they were obstacles to him, not instruments. He had to "hack things aside" and he ended up bleating or yelling; "fist-clenched tantrums" were the only way he felt he could express himself. His attempt in speech and writing was to bore through the barrier

or membrane that he sensed separates him from women.

When writing papers in college he felt he could never say anything original, and instead used "modular plug-ins," phrases glued together. Even now he says he has a hard time thinking he can choose words. He claims to have never learned the rules of English grammar, saying no one ever taught him the rules of grammar until he learned Latin. It was still worse, he felt, with his mother: with her there were no rules whatsoever, only conventions, and he could never find any inherent logic in those conventions. "Words are power, but there are no rules," he complained. "The words aren't mine." (Perhaps it is not surprising that he later became fascinated by logic and mathematics.) He suggested that his mother was contemptuous of questions he would raise about language, for example, how the verb "ignore" is related to the noun "ignorance." He indicated that his study of foreign languages was a way to get away from her.

After several months of analysis Wesley indicated that it was becoming "easier to think, declare things, name things, and enunciate them." Naming for him always seemed to have something to do with the existence of a gap or space between himself and a woman, or between himself and his memories. It might be hypothesized that my repeated emphasis on sexual significations in analysis, especially on significations related to sexual difference, contributed to his ability to name the lack in the Other, allowing there to be a clearer space or gap within the Other and a correspondingly clearer gap between himself and the Other.[22]

Early on in the analysis, Wesley claimed that his speech and writing functioned according to the "but mode," in the sense that he did not connect thoughts with the word "and."[23] (He connected them instead with the word "but"—which made him think of "butt" and "buttocks," his earliest memory being that he once defecated in the bathtub at age two or three, and found it very pleasurable; his mother, however, was clearly disappointed in him because of it.) Were he to use the word "and," he would be building an argument, and confidently declarative. Instead, he proffered that he always dwells on ambiguity and has a very difficult time assembling an argument. Here we see a link between a particular anal concern (his mother had also once given him a rectal thermometer) and a rhetorical tic and even an argumentational obstacle. Put otherwise, we can see a link here between a life problem—not wanting to draw certain obvious conclusions by constructing an argument—and a difficulty formulating and defending a thesis. These anal connections obviously fit quite well with the notion of a fully formed obsessional neurosis prior to age ten.

Wesley later indicated that in his writing and work in general he is always more interested in details than in the big picture: "I don't want to see the whole! It's boring." (It would probably be just as legitimate to spell what he said here as "I don't want to see the hole.") Were he to think about the larger picture, he might have to face the seeming premeditation in his mother's actions (her plot to kill the other children after Wesley's sister), and perhaps the desire to commit a crime lurking in his own actions (recall the prediction he made that there was a good chance he would someday be arrested for a violent crime). He once commented that, were he to publish the book he has been working on for some time, he would want it to "go off like a bomb." His difficulty developing systematic arguments instead of getting bogged down in the endless ambiguities of the details of the texts he is commenting on perhaps reflects a reluctance to see his own intentions, his own direction, and his own motives head on—a reluctance to come to terms with certain of his aggressive impulses, directed at the entire reading public in his area of specialization.

Wesley has often said that to be able to write he would have to face things head on, and that it is very difficult for him to look at things, look people in the eye, and see what is going on around him, as if he does not want to see what he might see and wishes he had not seen what he once saw. One day—after he

had told me a dream in which he was trying to gain access to the White House and went in around the back, and had told me a story about how he had visited the house he had grown up in a few years back and had not wanted to visit his sister's room while in the house but had looked up at her window from around the back of the house—when he again mentioned that to write would be to take something head on, I added, "instead of going around back."

This led, over the course of the next several sessions, to quite a lot of material, including his recollection that he had thought at age seven or eight that his sister could use a urinal, and the "alarmed" conclusion he arrived at when his mother told him that she could not, which was that women do not have genitals. Wesley also had a dream in which his father arranged a murder of some kind. In the second part of the dream his father was his boss at work and there was a missed connection in the job they were doing, a gap some six inches wide, he imagined, that was caused by his father. He characterized it as a neat, orderly, but absolute and also interesting gap. When I underscored the words "six inches wide," he claimed he did not remember ever having seen female genitalia as a child, even though just several weeks earlier he had mentioned that he had perhaps once seen his parents having sex together when they were staying at a hotel—he could not recall whether he had been punished by his father for that or simply felt that he should have been punished.

"I root things up with my snout," he opined regarding his writing (in which he feels blind), instead of looking directly at things and people (suggesting an identification with a dog, pig, or weasel?). He said that he could not "keep it up," referring to his "head." He felt angry if he looked directly at something, "as if in thrall to the thing seen."

"Trying to have sex with a woman is like trying to put words on a page," he once said. His "tool" was not his own, nor were words his own—he could not detach them and "swing them around." In his writing, he felt he was trying to "stop up a gap … cram words down a little tube." He had the impression that his words had no effect whatsoever on a woman.[24]

One day, when he was talking about his sense that he could not get a reaction from his mother, he continued by saying that with women he doubted his "ability to get an erection," but he slipped and said "reection," which brought to mind both "reaction" and "rejection." He did not seem to be able to associate anything to "rejection" here except his usual hopelessness about ever having a relationship with a woman, but one might speculate that, insofar as each woman was so closely identified with his mother by Wesley, rejection signified the prohibition of incest and the consequent maintenance of a gap or space between himself and a woman. Indeed, this extremely common feature of neurosis—seeking rejection in a seemingly self-defeating manner—might more often than we think be related to a wish to support or shore up the prohibition of incest.

After about three years of analysis Wesley occasionally began to feel aroused around women and felt that there was a gap—presumably, a gap in which he could come into being and get aroused. He said that when there is a gap, he can write or be horny. He even managed to get an erection just by thinking about a woman recently. (He commented at that point, "You're enabling my dick." This perhaps illustrates what Lacan means when he suggests that the analyst should try to further the analysand's Eros [Lacan, 2001a, p. 18].)

Excursus on Gaps

What are we to make of the gap that Wesley felt to be essential when it came to writing? There are probably at least several different strands here:

1 He sensed his head was pressed up against a woman (as it often was with his mother and grandmother, who pressed his face tightly into their bosoms), which impeded him from getting any kind of perspective on something, any distance from something. Here he was rooting around with his snout, focusing on details, and enjoying (or wallowing in) his own frustration about getting so little out of them as he tried to "milk" them. (One might imagine his mother crushing his head into her bosom as a breastfeeding infant.)

2 After a long discussion of a summer property his family used to spend time at, that grew out of a dream in which he was finally able to write his name on something (on the ground or on a piece of paper), Wesley commented that in all his previous memories of the summer place he always saw the property and the objects there in his mind as if he himself were not there taking it in. He said, after the initial session in which we discussed the dream, that he had for the first time the sense that *he in fact had been there, thinking, perceiving*—he even went on to cite Freud's famous *Wo Es war, soll Ich werden*, suggesting his own recognition that there was a kind of retroactive subjectification at work (see Fink, 1995a). Compared with his earlier comments about writing, to the effect that he did not choose his words and simply used "modular plugins," the gap here may be related to the space in which the subject can come into being between one signifier and the next, between one memory and the next. On a later occasion, he commented, "There has to be slippage if you're going to rearrange things and put them in order." This might well remind us of the game Fifteen, in which there is a board with 16 spaces (in a four by four arrangement) and 15 tiles, it being the absence of one tile that allows one to move all of the others around and put them in various orders forming words or pictures (see, on this point, Lacan, 2006a, p. 723).

3 The gap might be related to the importance of slippage between signifier and signified, which he could put to the use of representing the metonymy of his own desire (see Fink, 2004a, chapters 1 and 3). This was something his mother perhaps dismissed when he would ask her questions about language. In psychosis, there is no room for ambiguity in the relationship between signifier and signified.

His desire certainly seemed to be tied up with impotence and ineffectiveness at the outset of his analysis, and he repeatedly talked about the conflict between his work with computers and his writing. At one point, he spent a couple of sessions talking about his "obsession with UNIX," the computer operating system. When I indicated that the sound of the word could be spelled differently, like eunuchs, he laughed hysterically and at the next session told me that I had "killed" his obsession with learning computer languages. UNIX, the computer operating system, was consciously foremost in his mind as an object of study, but the motive for such study seemed to be its unconscious resonance with (or association with) emasculation, and his identification with his father insofar as he thought his father as not much of a man, as ineffectual.

For quite some time he so closely associated his writing with the prospect of getting a new job in a different line of work that virtually all of his joy in the writing process itself disappeared and he was constantly concerned with the effect each line would have on his readers. It came out, in the course of our many discussions of writing, that his mother had once published a book and that his sister Sandy had been quite involved in creative writing; he began to wonder if he was simply competing with them (or

carrying on for them?). He indicated that an "enormous energy" was released when he said in one session that he did not want to be a writer. "Will my analysis make it easier to write or will I realize I don't want to?" he once queried, calling it "the big question."

It also came out that his brother John read voraciously as a teenager and that Wesley thought his brother was perhaps better qualified to pursue a career in writing than Wesley was. Wesley sensed that his father believed Sandy and John were the most creative kids in the family; perhaps Wesley was thus simply trying to prove him wrong, win his affection by being creative, or shove John's face in the career he had neglected. In short, Wesley concluded that his motives might be "purely personal" for writing. I underscored the words "purely personal"—after all, what motives are not ultimately personal at some level?—and at the next session he opined, "Maybe it's delightful if I write just for my own enjoyment."[25]

Features of Obsession

Providing one day what might be referred to as the obsessive's motto, Wesley declared, "My whole life is a dry run," indicating thereby that he was only going through the motions in life as if they did not really count, and that he had never really asserted himself. In this sense he was, in typical obsessive fashion, playing dead, or, as Lacan (2006a, p. 633) put it, had "tucked [his being] away" (and was perhaps even waiting for his father to die). He was keeping his desire on the sidelines or out of the game. Wesley, we might say, was orchestrating "circus games" (as Lacan calls them) with his mother, in an ego-to-ego relationship along the imaginary axis, while keeping his desire off to the side, out of the line of fire, identified with his father as Other (see Lacan, 2006a, pp. 630–33; Fink, 2004a, pp. 24–37; and Chapter 13 in the present volume).

Wesley could not be interested in women who were friendly toward him but only in those who were inaccessible—their inaccessibility excited him, their distance and/or rejection creating the gap he needed to sustain his desire. This is a very common feature of obsession. He occasionally even thought that a woman was angry at him when in fact it turned out that she was "hitting on" him (an aggressive expression consecrated by contemporary usage); he also indicated that he tended to see anger in the women he was attracted to. His interest in inaccessible women (and his "perception" of anger in a woman rendered her inaccessible) allowed him to maintain an impossible desire; it kept his desire alive and yet simultaneously preserved it from any chance of appearing on the stage of life, of affecting his life.

In the session after the one in which I made what Wesley considered to be my first interpretation, which seems to have been that he sees most clearly when he's angry (giving the lie to the consecrated phrase "blind with anger"),[26] Wesley commented that I had listened with discipline for a year and a half and then seized the occasion to "give a read on something." He indicated at that point just how difficult it was for him to look at and listen to people. Later he put it even more strongly: "I can't stand having to understand things spoken by other people!" He laughed hysterically about this, realizing the full extent of its truth for him. This might be understood as corresponding to what Lacan (2001a, p. 245) refers to as the obsessive's annulling, canceling out, or destroying of the Other. The counterpart of this, the ripping away of object *a* from the Other, can also be seen in Wesley's case, since he one day recounted the fantasy of cutting off his mother's breasts—effectively detaching object *a* from the Other in that fantasy.

Wesley indicated that he feels that he is always late, we might even say "always already" late, because he slept through his mother's lethal act—he woke up too late to do anything about it. This feeling of being late (or behind, or out of sync) is quite common in obsession, although the specific life event that it is related to differs widely from case to case. In another case of mine, the analysand was encouraged by her teachers to skip a year of school at a certain point early on, but her mother decided to hold her back; ever since then, she always felt behind, behind schedule. This led her to feel a great deal of pressure to press on in a career that she was not sure she wanted to pursue, rather than take a break and perhaps change course.

Relation to the Analyst

"Mother Transferences"

After about two and a half years of analysis, Wesley repeatedly dialed my number whenever he was trying to call his mother, and about six months later he repeatedly called her when he was supposed to call me (very occasionally "accidentally" ringing his father too). He regularly slipped when saying that he was late in sending me a check, saying that he was late in sending me his "bill." This was perhaps because I was often associated in his mind with his mother, and he felt she owed him something and not the other way around. He also once sent me a check with a variation on my ZIP code on the envelope that turned out to resemble his mother's and oldest brother's ZIP codes; he commented that maybe they would kill him so that no one would ever reveal the secret that the two of them had had sex, but perhaps he could appease them by sending them money.

In a dream that he told me about, he had a female analyst and he wanted her to "do it" the way I do it; she looked like Connie Chung, who was caught on camera "necking" with her husband, I believe he said. He professed to hate the term necking—it sounded like suffocating to him. Chung was flirtatious with him in the dream—perhaps she wanted to neck with and suffocate him? Since I "twist[ed] off" the session, as he once put it—that is, strangled or suffocated it—when I ended one of our variable-length sessions, perhaps this is what I wanted to do to him too? In the dream he simply had a woman do it to him instead?

Wesley occasionally imagined me committing adultery, having sex with someone, just before our session. Indeed, he imagined at times that he was interrupting something by his arrival at my home (like he interrupted his mother and brother? Or his mother and father?).

At one point after a couple of years of analysis, Wesley began to call me a "bitch." He imagined that I had "tits" and said he was angry with me for tempting him with them. He imagined something being pulled out of his mouth and throat in a dream, as if a breast had been shoved down his throat, the way his face was shoved into his mother's and grandmother's bosoms at different times he described over the years. He complained of being unable to breathe in such cases because the woman's breasts suffocated him, if he faced her directly. He felt like he had to bore or gnaw through them, like a rat would, to create a gap.

This related, he stated, to his fear of having someone behind him and to his fear of anal penetration (his mother once gave him a rectal thermometer from behind his back and his father once stood behind him as he sewed up his scalp). Wesley complained that he could not play certain sports very well because he could not pay attention to what was going on behind him and was worried about it. It was statements like this (as well as others I shall come to shortly) that led me to wait quite some time before putting him on the couch.

Wesley once said, "I don't imagine my mother strangling you," the negation seeming to indicate that at some level he *was* sicking his mother on me (on me as his father?). Later, as things began to change, he said one day that he would come after me with a hatchet if he could and get it over with. He did not seem any longer to need to sick his mother on me—he could express aggression himself! (Needless to say—though some practitioners, in my experience, may need to be reminded of this nevertheless—these were obvious fantasies enunciated within the transference, not actual threats.)

"Father Transferences"

I would like to be aggravated with you; I'm not sure why.

It often happened that in recollecting events Wesley did not recall how he felt about them at the time, but the affect occurred quite spontaneously in his thoughts about me. For example, he was once talking about what things were like when he lived with his mother and father before his sister's death; he recalled sitting with his father at the dinner table but could not imagine what it was like. It suddenly occurred to him that I was angry at him, the fairly obvious conclusion being that his father would sometimes be angry with him. Wesley confirmed this by saying that his father was always yelling at him to "eat his meat," meat that the son often found quite disgusting as a child. His father's attitude toward him emerged first in the transference projection and only then as a memory.

"What if you got blindingly angry at me?" he once asked. There would, he imagined, be "hard intonations" and "the blows would rain down." I would be standing over him; there would be a commotion above him and he could not see where the blows were coming from. In discussing such things, Wesley would get tingling sensations in his scalp, which turned out to be related to the time his father sewed up his scalp after Wesley got a three-pronged fishhook caught in it. The father anesthetized the area and Wesley heard a kind of grating sound (he also referenced "gristle") and felt some sort of "commotion" as his father worked at getting the fishhook out while standing over and behind him.

Wesley even seemed to worry that since he could not feel anything at the time, he "had no way of knowing what he did, what he took out." His father could have taken whatever he wanted out of his head and Wesley would not even know it; he might have eaten Wesley's brains. This touch of paranoia led me to wait a rather long time before putting Wesley on the couch, as did the fact that he generally sat completely hunched over, staring at the floor that his head was not far from touching, or talked with his eyes closed during sessions with me, almost whispering instead of really speaking to me. I waited until he sat up and looked at me much more regularly during sessions, and enunciated more forcefully so that I could easily hear him. When I finally directed him to the couch after about two years of working together, the first thing he said upon lying down was, "I wonder what you're up to."[27]

This suggests a fairly fundamental mistrust, reminiscent of his mistrust, after his sister's death, of his mother's sentiments—for she had always expressed love for her daughter, and yet had killed her, so perhaps she had lied about her affection for Wesley too.[28]

In a dream he recounted, a guy he admired had his head cut off from behind; Wesley had the horrible realization that in such a state he would not be able to think anymore. It seemed to Wesley as if I could inflict this terrible blow at any time. His fear that I would do it might also suggest a wish that I do it, for that would relieve his anxiety: he would not be forced to see things anymore as he felt he was forced to in the analysis.[29]

In one dream he recounted, I "deftly poked out" his eye (which we could also hear as "I"), depriving him of "a certain visual faculty, the absence of which [he didn't] readily miss," he said (note the interesting phraseology). Perhaps, he wondered, I would help him become blind so that he would not have to see—perhaps I would be complicit in his will not to see certain things. Or perhaps I would make him into an Oedipus, who is forced to see and thus has to have his eyes taken out. Curiously enough, it is his brother who is Oedipus, as he is the one who slept with their mother, but it is Wesley who seems to take out his own eyes, in a sense, by refusing to see,[30] by acting naive, as if he "had never seen anything." For when he saw, he would become angry.

Course of Therapy and Conclusions

After six months of analysis Wesley stated that he did not see the world as quite as two-dimensional and *against him* now as he had before. This seemed to indicate a slight decrease in paranoia—that is, in the dominance of the imaginary axis, in Lacanian terms. Interestingly, I have had several patients use the exact same wording: they had grown up thinking of the world as fundamentally "against them," and analysis had changed that—they did not feel that people were trying to attack them so much anymore. Most of these patients had at least one psychotically structured parent.

With regard to the notion that "bigger men" would come along and take "large women" away from him, Wesley opined (after about a year and a half of analysis), "Maybe there's nothing behind the curtain" of the supposedly deadly power such men wielded, "no great and powerful Oz." In a dream he had just discussed, a man had tried to stop Wesley from having sex with Wesley's girlfriend; the man was a weasel, but Wesley caught him, skinned him, and "bisected" him. Wesley seemed by then to be a bit less mesmerized by people who could express aggression, and to be able to express his own aggression a little bit better (in earlier dreams he would just stand by idly as other men interrupted his sexual relations with women).

I mentioned earlier his reports in the course of the analysis of increases in self-confidence and enjoyment of life (related to his discussion of the turning point in second grade), and his occasional euphoria (related to talk of his turning point at age four). As I could also witness personally in the analysis, Wesley became increasingly able to look directly at people and listen to them. After three years of analysis, he mentioned having had "too much fun" talking with several women at a party he had gone to, something he had previously found quite difficult to do, the "too much" seeming to be related to his mother: Wesley believed she would not approve of how much fun he was having with other women than herself.

Quite recently, Wesley indicated that he felt that some of his endless associations to his sister's death were "fake at times," and characterized them as "a place to hang [his] hat." When I queried him about this place to hang his hat, he commented that it sounded like "home," in a sense, a kind of "frame of reference." We might speculate that the whole nexus of events surrounding his sister's death had become a center of gravity or symptomatic home for him, a center he no longer needed and could finally begin to move away from. It was at this point that he first mentioned that his sister's death was a relief because it was "good old-fashioned sorrow" instead of "the perpetual imminent nastiness" of everyday relations in the family; most recently, he has begun focusing more on the aspects of his life before age ten that I have detailed above. His sister's death had served a number of different purposes for him, but it had also distracted him from certain more fundamental problems related to gaining distance from women—in particular, separating from his mother—and had led him to displace his anger toward his father onto his stepmother.

While that symptomatic nexus appears to be coming apart, it remains to be seen exactly where Wesley will next opt to hang his hat …

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Notes

1 It was after almost two years of analysis that Wesley finally mentioned that he had slept at the foot of his mother's bed the night she killed his sister (who was a few years his senior). "How could I not have noticed?" he wondered. "How could I have missed the fact that something so enormous was going on?" He even wondered if he saw his mother get up during the night. Nothing, however, has ever in any way confirmed that he did.

2 The memory of peering into the living room only came back to him in association with an image of a certain "blue or green" object in a dream (indeed, that was all he remembered of the dream; see Fink, 2007, pp. 102–103), which turned out to be the color of the carpet in the dining room where he was standing when he looked through the louvered doors; he apparently had not thought of that in a very long time.

3 She had apparently said, "I'm going to show you what it means to be a man!" The brother reported that it lasted all of 15 seconds.

4 The latter claimed, for example, to have immediately put the sheets he and his mother had had sex on in the washing machine so that no one would find out, his concern being that in the small town they lived in, word would get around and his reputation would be ruined forever. But Wesley had not noticed any sheets on the living room floor and wondered if that was a pure invention on Ned's part or if the mother and brother had already had sex in the mother's bedroom or the sister's bedroom prior to having sex again on the living room floor.

5 Wesley was not entirely sure these indiscretions had actually occurred, but thought he remembered her smiling and saying, "Let's keep this our little secret, okay?" This allowed Wesley to be somewhat more special in her eyes and yet at the same time made his own father into a "dolt"—whether in his imagination alone or not.

6 He later wondered whether the movie gave his mother the idea to strangle his sister, because a character by the name of Carlo is apparently strangled in the movie.

7 He told me at the next session that he was worried that that comment had revealed something about the depth of his pathology!

8 It was only five months into the analysis that Wesley first told me that his mother told his brother that she would need his help to kill the rest of the children in the family. (Wesley felt left out of this as well; not only was he not included in the sex, but he was "not even important enough to be included in the plan.") When this particular addition to the story came out, it helped explain Wesley's sense that there is "a greater plot growing"—that is, that there is "method in [women's] madness" and that they are often intending or plotting more than he thinks. "I think a lot of women want to bury me," he opined. Every woman may have a plot to kill him in the dark, he feels, and so he has to keep his guard up. That keeps him "straitjacketed" with girls who like him.

9 He once likened the appearance of the female genitalia to what one sees in skinning an animal, in particular, the site between fur and flesh.

10 And perhaps to create a gap within himself as well, for he once slipped in talking about his "irritable bowels" and said "eatable bowels" (which almost even sounds like "Oedipal bowels"!).

11 His father's role in separating Wesley from his mother may, at best, have been retroactively constructed, taking the form of "cutter" or "knife," since we saw just how noninterventionist the father was when he failed to respond to his daughter's call for help the night before her death.

12 We can, of course, hear that as "telling lies" with his mother, that is, putting himself in his oldest brother's shoes in more ways than one.

13 While he did not fantasize about having her anatomy live on in himself after her death, he did perhaps try to make her creative writing talents find a continuation in his own work. Perhaps he thought she was especially valued for them as well by their father.

14 He usually saw women's breasts as mean faces, he once said, although he did not see Sandy's as mean.

15 As he put it, he wants the phallus from them, but they want it from someone else. Does he want to extract it from them?

16 There may well be a connection here between the weasel and the popular nursery rhyme, "Pop Goes the Weasel." The latter involves a monkey that chases the weasel and, curiously enough, the name Wesley gave his tickle blanket as a very young child was a combination of his own first name and the word "monkey." His real first name does not have anything in common with the word "weasel."

17 This also recalls his use of the words "cutting" and "sharp" in describing his father's voice when Wesley knocked on the door while his parents were making love in the bedroom. It seems that to Wesley his father was capable of castrating the mother, but did not do so.

18 Wesley would sometimes talk about wanting to protect his father and feeling sorry for him—protect his father from the mother and from the kids? Perhaps he was, above all, concerned with protecting his father from Wesley's own violence? (And wanting to think of his father as weak so as to ridicule him?)

19 Wesley reported another variant of something he supposedly once told his brother: that he was worried he would end up in prison for "killing [him]self." The curious logic of being imprisoned after dying perhaps hides the true, intended victim, his father, with whom Wesley identified.

20 It would not be terribly difficult to draw a relation between Wesley's explosive anger as a child and his father's sudden outbursts.

21 Was this what allowed for his euphoria and enthusiasm prior to age five?

22 Though why this would have allowed a nameable gap to appear in Wesley's case more so than in others (see, for example, Chapter 9 in Volume 1 of the present collection), I would be hard-pressed to say; perhaps it owed to the fact that it was always clear to Wesley that his mother wanted something beyond him.

23 Compare this with the case of the analysand discussed in Chapter 10 of Volume 1 of the present collection, whose speech also

functioned according to the "but(t) mode."

24 His fascination with something suggestive of the death drive, that of swerving into oncoming traffic, seems to be related to this sense that he cannot affect a woman, because he indicated that what he liked about the thought was that he might get a real, immediate reaction for once. The same, he suggested, was true of what he called "career-limiting remarks," the kind that could spoil your future career prospects definitively.

25 This may be related to his usual ambiguous formulation regarding publishing his written work: he does not want to "let go of [his] book." He is not sure he is willing to release it, as though it were feces he is keeping inside, moving about, dwelling on, playing with, so no one else can take them. He hoards his ideas so that no one can steal them.

26 By not wanting to see he would avoid getting angry and by refusing to get angry he would avoid having to see.

27 Wesley would also occasionally express worry about a blow he could not see coming, a kind of "karate chop," as his father used to say.

28 An aspect of his mother's murderous intent may also possibly be seen in what seems to be a hallucination she had involving Wesley when he was two or three years old. According to her, they were staying at a hotel and a balloon they had purchased for him had floated away out the window. When she looked up from the street to their hotel window, he was supposedly halfway out of the hotel window on a ledge. She ran up to the room and found him sitting quietly in his crib. He never knew quite what to make of this, but she would often recount it tearfully. This memory came up in connection with a neologism made by a woman Wesley was talking to, "dilemmacy," the association being that his mother said plenty of things like that that did not make any sense to him.

29 He also obviously would not have to worry about what the Other wanted from him anymore.

30 Although he would sometimes speak of being blind with anger as a small child, it seems that anger and seeing were correlated for him as an adult.

12

THE ROLE OF SEMBLANCE IN "IDENTITY" CONSTRUCTION

The case I will discuss today is one of a young man in his twenties who, like so many other members of the younger generation today, has been completely obsessed for about ten years with his so-called identity.

Identity

I have only been seeing this man, whom I shall refer to as George, for about four months, but as far as I can see thus far, his obsession with his identity began at a crucial turning point for many students in the United States: the passage from elementary (or primary) school to junior high (or middle) school. George claims not to have even been aware of the concept of popularity prior to that time. His best friend in elementary school suddenly began acting as if he did not know the patient any more when they arrived at their new school, and the best friend was part of the popular in-crowd from which the patient was excluded.

It is convenient to use the passive voice here—*was excluded*—because it is not at all clear whether the patient was actively rejected by members of the in-crowd or whether he simply felt uncomfortable around them and did not associate with them.

He felt hurt by the betrayal by his best friend, and he also found it unfair that he was finally being shown some attention by the opposite sex whose "faithless" members apparently paid him little heed before he went through puberty. He resolved at that time not to want to be found interesting because of his looks and not to be concerned about looks himself—which is more easily said than done.

On the one hand, he currently claims to be happy that his girlfriend of almost eight years has never been attracted to him because of his looks, preferring his brains, so to speak, which he feels are more about him and not simply a fluke, the luck of the draw; but on the other hand, he is crushed that she does not seem to be sexually attracted to him and never initiates sexual activity of any kind.

Returning to his experience at the beginning of junior high school, he at first attempted to become popular by deliberately angering teachers in class and getting detention, which he believed would make him look cool to other students. This, however, did not get him very far and he next decided to spurn the popular crowd and to concern himself with whatever they were not concerned with. Curiously enough, this made him an object of interest by the very group he felt excluded from, and he ended up becoming popular through his very rejection of popularity. He made it clear to me that, deep down, he had not actually given up all interest in being popular and was quite pleased with the success of his strategy.

He employed the same strategy some nine or ten years later in graduate school where the students in his program were being strongly encouraged by certain professors to pursue trendy developments in his field, as opposed to more traditional approaches. As he described it—in connection with a dream in which he was trying to place his tennis serves in the right box on the tennis court—he attempted to be seen as thinking outside the box precisely by thinking inside the box. In his graduate program, working within the traditional parameters of his field seemed to him to be a radical divergence from what his fellow students were doing—in other words, he was being different by not being different. His project, as he put it, was "to get outside [the box] by being inside it."[1]

George's goal in junior high and graduate school seems to have been to achieve notoriety and popularity precisely by eschewing or renouncing both of those things. To openly and actively pursue popularity or recognition would, to his mind, be an inauthentic activity, and George is thoroughly steeped in "the jargon of authenticity," as Adorno (1973) called it. His pleasure at achieving popularity and recognition in a roundabout manner also strikes him as inauthentic, and he beats himself up for it in certain ways, but he nevertheless enjoys it. It is at least more palatable to him if he has not actively and intentionally sought it out, and it just happened to come along.

He believes that this is what happens in the case of real superstars, whether musical or academic—they just do their thing, and it is the very power of their music or intellectual work that turns them into superstars without them deliberately trying to become such. At the level of identity, one might say that

his ultimate goal is to be an academic superstar who becomes famous for criticizing and destroying everyone else's arguments (much like Abelard).

Many facets of this identity began to form when he was a teenager and had a teacher who changed his life. This teacher took it upon himself to tell all of the students that they were selfish, middle-class, ignorant of the problems of 99 percent of the world's population, and should devote themselves selflessly to helping the poor and underprivileged. To enjoy their leisure and wealth was tantamount, in his view, to going along with the Holocaust, and George came to feel he was a criminal and guilty for virtually everything his family represented. (He likely felt guilty primarily for something else, but it was displaced onto this.) He endorsed the teacher's view that the only worthwhile thing in life was to help others, not oneself, a belief that betrays a curious logic if universalized.

This teacher ruthlessly criticized the bourgeois existence of his students' parents and their "country club mentality," leading George to suddenly reject his parents' affiliations with the "upper crust" in his city, their interest in having him go to a private high school the following year, and his father's concern that George be part of a fraternity in college that was associated with serious study and people from "good families" (George was convinced he would never be able to get along with such people). His father was incredibly disappointed that George refused to join that fraternity—which was incidentally the same fraternity that George's grandfather had been a part of and had strongly recommended George join.

George's father gave George the silent treatment for several months after he refused to join that fraternity, this refusal leading to the biggest conflict ever between them. Note, however, that around puberty George had already decided to never do any homework again to thoroughly thwart his father's goals for him, which were to get good grades, read a lot, and study hard.

It has always been incredibly important to George to be unique and original. In junior high he was already tortured that others might be having the exact same thought as him at the exact same time. He wants to believe that he wants things that no one else wants, his fantasy in graduate school being to join the CIA, because this would be unimaginable to his left-leaning professors and fellow students.

His high school teacher wrote him a letter of recommendation for college in which he made George sound deep, like some sort of philosopher/poet, and when George got to college he tried to "seem profound," pretending that he had had spiritual experiences that he could not articulate to anyone. (To try to be deep and spiritual, he attempted to force himself to have visions through drugs and meditation.) It was at this point that he first became attracted to authors who seem to say to their potential readers, "You're not smart enough to follow me." Hence, no doubt, his interest in Lacan …

His high school teacher's critique of the fascism of everyday middle-class life and his college studies made him come to feel that he himself is a fascist due to his wish to dominate a woman sexually. Although he claims to want to be pushed around and dominated by his girlfriend in many ways, in his sexual fantasies he wishes to control a woman and force her to have sex with him. In these fantasies, the woman is often the wife of an older man he looks up to; she initially resists his attempts at seduction. In those fantasies he forces the woman (including his girlfriend's mother) to do things that his girlfriend has never been willing to do. He says that in real life he cannot make his girlfriend do anything with him sexually for ideological reasons, because he needs to see himself as a "good feminist." He nevertheless manages to get her to clean the house and cook for him, by essentially refusing to do either of those himself. He is enamored of Neil Young's song, *A Man Needs a Maid*, which is about how a man simply needs someone to clean his house and prepare his meals; then, as far as he is concerned, she can just leave.

He has had several virtual relationships with women online, all of whom have been rather domestic

and easy to dominate, according to him, all of whom were willing to do whatever he wanted.

George says he cannot bring himself to dominate anyone in real life, even though domination is what he thinks about all the time during two principal activities: 1) masturbation, which he has sometimes engaged in for as many as five hours a day, and 2) in his intellectual work, where he ruthlessly attacks other people's arguments—his fondest wish while writing papers being to reduce his professors to absolute silence, to silence so total they cannot even respond to his papers.

He both admires and hates men whom he perceives to be aggressive, men who, like his grandfather, dominate other people both in the business world and at home—in particular, their wives. His fear is that he will be found out as a fascist, because his wish to dominate *a* woman is tantamount to wishing to control everyone.

I will come back to these various facets of George's struggles around identity, but I think it is already clear that identity construction is hardly a straightforward process here, involving instead contradictory self-images and ideals, involving many a "I do but I don't," "I do but I can't," and "I want but I won't."

Identifications

I will turn now to a few of George's identifications. The level of identification is not at all, to my mind, the same as the level of identity, despite the similarity between the words.

We find a number of identifications with deep roots, reaching back into his family history prior to George's birth. His maternal grandfather, who was widely viewed as the patriarch of the family, had several daughters but only one son. This son was cherished by the grandfather, but committed suicide in his midteens, and George apparently very much resembled this son in both looks and ability right from an early age. George was often mistakenly called by the dead son's name in the family and was even told by his teenage girlfriend's mother, who had a considerable influence on him, that he was the reincarnation of his dead uncle.

George's own mother, who was quite a bit older than George's maternal uncle, told him that it was precisely at the time of her brother's suicide that she decided to quit her job as a teacher and begin to have children with her husband, as if she then took it upon herself to replace her father's lost son with one of her own, to give her father a replacement heir to the throne, as it were. She at least once referred to this dead brother of hers as George's guardian angel, claiming to have seen him save George from oncoming traffic he had run out into while walking with his mother one day as a little boy.

George believes that the son who committed suicide felt overly pressured by his father to be like the father, and George himself has felt terrible pressure over the years to do what the grandfather wanted and to be the kind of person the grandfather wanted him to be. The grandfather was a businessman whose priority in life was making money through hard work, and George has done everything to avoid working or making money. In college George began to adopt anticapitalist perspectives, all the while allowing his grandfather to pay for his college education. George's top choice of a university was dictated to a certain degree by his grandfather, as it was that of a nontraditional school the latter would obviously balk at paying for. When the expected refusal came, however, George capitulated and has regretted ever since the fact that he was too scared to cut financial ties with his grandfather and take on student loans and part-time work in order to go to his first-choice school. He ended up attending what he himself believed be a lower-tier school where he hated virtually all the students and teachers.

One might say that his whole life for most of the past decade has been dominated by a delicate dance between pretending to do at least some of what the grandfather wanted by pursuing higher education and yet simultaneously studying every kind of theory that would refute the grandfather's worldview. He has referred to this stance as an "ineffectual rebellion" involving him growing his hair long, smoking weed, and entertaining left-wing political ideas. He has also said that the main source of his energy in writing papers for college is his interest in refuting his grandfather. When his grandfather died, George was no longer able to complete papers, being unable to find the necessary motivation to write them.

Insofar as George's mother always seemed far more fixated on her father than on her husband, George himself seems to understand what a man should be and do on the basis of what he perceived his grandfather to be like, as opposed to how he sees his father. Masculinity is thus not so much associated with his father's apparent sensitivity and moodiness as with his grandfather's "go get 'em, no holds barred, ride 'em cowboy" approach to business. George describes his mother as embracing virtually all of her father's views and as, in fact, wishing that she could have been her father's son instead of his daughter, the grandfather apparently having lavished far more attention on his only son than on all his daughters combined.[2]

In addition to George's strong identification with a son who committed suicide and who managed to hurt his entire family—above all his maternal grandfather—by doing so, which is a kind of lethal

identification, George also identifies with his *paternal* grandfather who was killed while doing a job abroad. Indeed, it was his paternal grandfather's work in a dangerous part of the world that led at least in large part to George's choice of field of study. George has toyed on several occasions with the idea of studying the language and culture of that part of the world during an extended stay there, but canceled at least one trip at the last minute—purportedly because he felt he could not live without his girlfriend for even a couple of months, but perhaps more because he really wanted to leave his girlfriend and therefore would not allow himself to do so.

In any case, George has indicated that a considerable portion of his interest in studying there stems from the wish to freak his father out, his father having been extremely upset by his own father's death overseas.

To add one more deadly identification to the list: when George's paternal grandmother died of smoking-related cancer when George was around 16, George apparently sat in his room for days on end smoking dope, knowing full well it was making it far more difficult for him to participate in the activities he was so involved in at the time. He also knew full well that his parents would find out about this, but they never took the kind of action that he wanted them to, never becoming terribly punitive about it. George told me that he was high every day for four years after that and smoked cigarettes for most of the next decade until very recently.

In the past six months he has been preparing himself for a race, literally running himself ragged, and claims that he will not be happy until he reaches, not the times he was able to achieve before he began smoking cigarettes and dope, but the times he would have been able to achieve had he never begun smoking in the first place. The goal seems to be to turn back the hands of time and do over that whole portion of his life, in order to fully reclaim what he feels he has lost.

This seems to be the way many of us deal with loss, whether on the stock market (see Chapter 1 in the present volume) or in other aspects of life, it not being enough to us to simply get back what we once had, but to want still more—what we would have had now had we never lost anything in the first place.

Kierkegaard provides a perfect example of this way of thinking in his notion of repetition as he sees it in the biblical story of Job: Job does not simply get back what he had lost, but gets it back twofold. After his trials and tribulations, Job receives far more land, sheep, and all the other components of prosperity than he had initially lost. Curiously enough, Kierkegaard refers to *that* as repetition! In this sense, George is in good company, even if he does not call it "repetition."

Thus at the level of identification—which is, in my view, more profound than that of identity construction—we have three somewhat lethal identifications:

1 with his maternal grandfather's only son (i.e., his mother's brother) who committed suicide
2 with his paternal grandfather who was killed abroad
3 with his paternal grandmother who died of cancer when George was a teen.

Semblance

One cannot necessarily attribute any particular belief, feeling, or conflict in George's life completely to semblance—in other words, completely to an ideology, belief system, or set of ideals fostered by a particular religion, society, educational system, or what have you—because there is always ineluctably an interplay between semblance, identifications, and many other factors as well.[3] Nevertheless, a certain quantum of semblance can easily be pointed to.

At the level of his identity construction, George is obviously a product of the stereotypically American ideal of the self-made man, having the classic obsessive wish to be influenced by no one, to pull himself up by his own bootstraps, to prove he is a man by not having to accept money or support from anyone, whether his grandfather, his parents, or his girlfriend, despite the fact that he obviously has been up until now and still is quite dependent on all of them.

His current fantasy is to leave graduate school and spend the next decade reading and studying on his own and then publishing a book that will catapult him into stratospheric academic superstardom—he says that Max Weber did something like that, isolating himself for years and not publishing a word until he brought out his *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. All of this independent study would presumably be financed by his girlfriend once she finishes her own academic program.

One of his other longstanding fantasies is self-sufficiency, not exactly like Tom and Barbara Good of the 1970s British TV series *The Good Life*, but out on a farm where he would literally depend on no one for anything and could physically exhaust himself to the point where he would be unable to think about anything whatsoever.

Not only is he quite dependent on many people, he is even remarkably suggestible. For example, his girlfriend's mother, who believes in past lives, destinies, chakras, and the like, has told him all kinds of things about himself and his girlfriend that he believes: that he will never be articulate—even though he is highly articulate compared to most of the graduate students I have worked with—that he is the reincarnation of his dead uncle, that his girlfriend has a mission to save the planet, that he and his girlfriend were together in past lives, which means he should never leave her, and so on. No matter how absurd the things are that she and others too tell him, he is often inclined to believe them.[4]

George's concerns with originality and popularity also are obviously culturally specific, rarely found in Amish culture, for example, but rampant in contemporary American culture where one finds an incessant call to originality for originality's sake. George went so far in junior high school as to sometimes act crazy so as to be seen as unusual and different, even if his craziness was not always seen by his peers as a desirable form of originality. Americans can obviously be said to be largely alike in their selfsame quest for originality, for being different, for being individuals, in order to live up to the American ideal of "rugged individualism."

It is not exactly because this way of thinking is *stupid* that I associate it with what Lacan calls *semblance*, for it is not necessarily any stupider than Hillary Clinton's opportunistic book title, *It Takes a Village* (to raise a child). We all patently depend on a certain number of people as we grow up, and the world in general is becoming increasingly interdependent. Yet there *are* nevertheless people who break away from a certain kind of "groupthink"—even if it is, at times, only in order to be better accepted by the group that they try to be different from, as we see in George's case.

The Amish concern, for example, with standing out from the group as little as possible, with dressing like, talking like, walking like, and being as much like everyone else constitutes a discourse that propagates ideals that play an important role in Amish children's identity construction, whether they align themselves with those ideals or against them. I mention the Amish here as an example since I live

close to several Amish communities in Pennsylvania and have read quite a lot about them and their methods of what we might call indoctrination when it comes to socializing their children.

A similar phenomenon was brought home to me about 30 years ago when I was traveling behind the still clearly existent Iron Curtain in Romania. I went to a discotheque, if you could call it that, in Bucharest, and part way into the evening a young woman came over to me and asked me why I could not dance like everybody else. Not only was there a somewhat codified way of dancing among the people at the discotheque, as there often is to some degree even in many Western countries, but it clearly bothered her that I did not dance like the rest of them! The fact that I could not so easily be in or carry my body the way she carried hers obviously never occurred to her …

Being like everyone else was probably a fine survival technique in Romania's Communist culture of the time, since many of the people that I spoke with there were quite afraid of being seen talking to an obvious foreigner like myself, fearing no doubt that they would be taken in for questioning if they were seen or overheard talking with me. In private they could be more like Milan Kundera of Czech fame, but in public it was obviously safer to conform.

The Amish—perhaps to some degree like the Romanian Communists—have adopted conformity not simply because it is supposed to thwart vanity (although they recognize that one can obviously become vain about conforming better than other people) but also in opposition to the dominant Western culture with which they find themselves surrounded. In that sense, conformity becomes a kind of negative identity.

Many students in American schools find it safer to stand out as little as possible, the melting pot often not being a place where differences are accepted and celebrated but rather forced out of existence as one is expected to fully embrace American culture. Schools are the front lines, in a manner of speaking, of assimilation for recent immigrants in particular. The norms to which students and adults as well are expected to conform have, naturally, changed somewhat over the past century, and those norms are more or less constraining and constrictive depending on one's own psychology, interests, talents, sexual orientation, religion, and so on. They are rabidly upheld by certain members of the group who are often self-selected, and furiously contested by other members.

It would not be, I think, going too far out on a limb to say that the tyranny of normality or normalcy has been, in certain ways, getting worse and worse in recent decades due to the ever more extensive possibility of employing tests and scales to measure whether people conform to the norm or not, whether it be those so-called *normal* curves of IQ, anger, anxiety, or narcissism.

Nevertheless, all such systems of norms (Romanian, old-order Amish, and stereotypically American) are similar in that they provide ideals for people to try to live up to, occasions for self-chastisement when they fail to live up to them, and—like the law itself—opportunities for getting a rush or kick when they deliberately flaunt or contravene the norms.

In other words, each such set of norms functions as a discourse, and it is very often in one's interest to act and to speak as though one endorsed those norms, as though one lived up to those norms, even when one does not. One may know full well that one does not, or one may fool oneself into believing that one does at least to some degree.

Let me provide here a few examples of how George has devoted himself to thumbing his nose at the norms he was presented with by his family, religion, and social group.

- His grandfather and father wanted him to go into business, and he vowed to spend his time destroying business. All of his family members are politically conservative, by American standards, meaning they tend to fully embrace the most laissez-faire capitalism possible, wheras George has at times viewed

himself as a leftist revolutionary.

- His father wanted both his older sister and himself to study hard and do their homework; she always did her homework, which greatly pleased their father, and George had to be different from her, occupy a different niche in the family, vowing around puberty never to do homework again. (She did well because she worked hard and he could not see any virtue in that—*he* would do well without working hard, he decided, and maintained a view of himself as very gifted even when he began not doing so well in school. His goal was to be the best at school without trying, and if he was not the best then there was no reason to try at all.)
- He apparently never once thought about being gay until puberty when his mother told him he could not be gay because it was a sin.
- He spent several years running track in school, really enjoying it because he was good at it, and stopped the day his grandfather asked him if he was running toward something or away from something. He was not really sure what his grandfather meant by this but, since he certainly did not want to be thought to be running toward something, he promptly stopped.
- His grandfather wanted him to do something practical, so George has never wanted his work to become practical.
- He masturbated somewhat as a teenager, but it was not until he read a Tibetan religious book that said that every time you masturbate you have to spend two hundred extra lives in a lowly mortal state that he began masturbating compulsively for several hours a day. The more horrible and criminal it seemed, the more he wanted to do it. This reminds us of Lacan's (2006a, p. 126) comments about St. Paul (*Epistle to the Romans*, 7:7), who indicated that were it not for the law, we would not know sin.

George is hardly unusual, in my experience, in his wish to do and be exactly the opposite of what others say he should do and be. Many of the analysands, teenagers, children, and even adults I have known have been just as adamant in defining themselves as *not that*, as *not* being whatever it is authority figures around them have told them they should be.

The ideologies that surround each of us lead to the creation of what Freud called the ego-ideal—an ideal that the ego is supposed to live up to in order to be lovable to ourselves and others. We berate ourselves when we do not live up to the ideal, or we simply fail to notice when we have not been fully living up to the ideal, interpreting our behavior so that it seems to conform to that ideal even when it does not.

George has rejected certain ideals, above all those presented to him by his family, and he has consciously embraced others, usually those diametrically opposed to his family's, such as feminism, antiracism, and nonviolence. However, as we are well aware, consciously embracing something is not the same as feeling it in one's bones and living it spontaneously.

- George likes to think that he is being what he calls "a good feminist" by being supportive of his girlfriend's education, but prefers not to realize that he manipulates her into doing the cooking and cleaning in the household by doing neither of those himself, thereby making it harder for her to study for her exams.
- George can tell himself that he is not a racist like some of his other family members, and not a snob, but then spends hours playing violent video games in which he brutally attacks space aliens of different colors, shapes, and social classes.
- He holds out for himself the ideal of nonviolence, and yet perhaps in a way has remained with his girlfriend precisely because they are so very much at war with each other, he having long since figured

out how to hurt her by letting her discover his online relationships with other girls, accidentally on purpose leaving the computer at home on with a conversation with one of them open.
- He is able to imagine that he is the kind of man who devotes himself to making a woman happy, all the while wanting to be the cause of her unhappiness. He believes he is exemplifying the virtue of loyalty by staying with his partner through thick and thin, whereas it is perhaps his enjoyment of being rejected by her and his enjoyment of betraying her that keeps him with her. He once likened their relationship to a film he saw about a city being bombed, the people refusing to leave no matter how bad things got—as if he wanted their relationship to be bad so that he could think of himself as a martyr for staying with her (remaining faithful to his love, unlike his mother who, in the usual Oedipal scenario, he perhaps saw as not faithful to him; see Chapter 9 in the present volume).
- He sometimes tells himself that he wants to become a teacher in order to destroy capitalism, whereas his perhaps greater motivation is to be in a position to ridicule the fraternity boys who will enroll in his classes. George will thereby get displaced revenge on his relatives.

Ideological systems, whether religious, political, racial, or cultural, encourage the formation of an ideal, an ideal that we continually compare ourselves to, hoping not to find ourselves sorely lacking. In order to "save the truth" of our correspondence to the ideal, in other words, to convince ourselves that we really do live up to these ideals, we repress, overlook, or scotomize other motives within ourselves, other wishes that do not fit an ideal characterization of our feelings and behavior.

This has led in George's case to the construction of a largely negative identity, and in the course of the few short months of analysis, he has come to see contradictions between his ideal view of himself and his behavior and lifestyle. For example, he is now living off the interest generated by a stock and bond portfolio left to him by his grandfather and money given to him by his parents—he finds himself unwilling to refuse to accept money from his parents and uninterested in giving the portfolio away, leading him to consider that he is perhaps less radical than he had initially believed. But where then does that leave him? Does it mean that he is precisely what he had tried to negate, a laissezfaire capitalist? He worries that this might be true.

He has come to realize that he is less of a good feminist than he initially believed—does that mean he is a macho, chauvinist pig? Or worse still, a fascist? When the negative attribute he has adopted begins to show cracks, he wonders if he is not simply the very thing he had rejected in the first place; there seems to be no middle ground, no Hegelian synthesis of the two, and no possible position which is neither the one nor the other.

Psychoanalysis, without taking a stand as to whether one set of norms is superior to another or endorsing cultural relativism, is one of the only discourses that emphasizes the fact that there is a conflict between ideals and the unconscious. Unlike contemporary psychologists—who in my experience take themselves to be the arbiters of what is normal and what is not normal, willingly and elaborately responding to patients' questions about whether what they are doing, feeling, or fantasizing about is normal—psychoanalysts sidestep this question in favor of farther-reaching ones: why do you think you are feeling what you are feeling, regardless of whether other people feel the same thing in similar situations? Are you doing what you want to be doing? And if not, why not?

The kind of questioning and deconstructing we engage in related to semblance, related to norms and identity construction, in psychoanalysis may well lead analysands to feel adrift for quite some time, to feel they no longer have an identity, no longer know who they are (see, for example, Cardinal, 1983). Realizing that they are not who they thought they were does not tell them who they are. Analysts, in their attempt to get at what analysands desire and enjoy, cut through semblance, calling into question the

norms and ideals that analysands repeat and appeal to—asking questions, for example, like, "Is that really what a good person is?" "Is that really what it means to be a woman?" "Is that really the only thing worth pursuing in life?" "Is that what you really enjoy?"

If there is a recentering that occurs in the course of psychoanalysis after this kind of decentering, it can only occur around what one effectively desires and enjoys, not around what one believes one *should* be, do, pursue, and enjoy.

At the outset of an analysis, one very often believes one *does* desire and enjoy what one believes it is normal to desire and enjoy, and at the very least one believes that one *should* desire and enjoy those things even when one is not sure if one does. One believes that one lives in accordance with semblance, whether the dominant semblance or one formed perhaps in opposition to the dominant semblance. In other words, one misrecognizes what one actually seems to want (judging on the basis of one's actions and their real consequences, not on one's conscious beliefs about why one engaged in them) and what one actually gets off on (judging on the basis of what leads to one's jouissance, not on one's conscious beliefs about what one gets off on).

Psychoanalysis, in countering such misrecognition, does not, in my view, directly tell us much about what we should believe ethically, socially, politically, culturally, and so on, nor does it tell us what ideals we should adopt regarding our own conduct and endeavors in life, except to say that when those ideals are not in accord with our own desire and enjoyment, misrecognition and neurosis ensue.[5]

This paper was presented in Dublin, Ireland, on September 19, 2009 (that is, the day after my "Brief Introduction to Lacan's Seminar XVIII: *D'un discours qui ne serait pas du semblant*" which is included as Chapter 6 in the present volume), before the Association for Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy in Ireland (APPI).

Notes

1 He likened this strategy to a song about fame that he resonates with; the song is "Mr Jones" by the band Counting Crows.

2 This is regrettably a not-at-all-uncommon phenomenon, which is at least in part the legacy of the more or less thousand-year-old inheritance practice known as primogeniture. It obviously reflected the grandfather's own narcissism as well.

3 On the Lacanian term "semblance," see Chapter 6 of the present volume.

4 Perhaps obsessional neurotics' suggestibility often grows out of doubt as to the veracity of all of their own ideas; being uncertain as to whether they love or hate someone, in particular, the most important person in their lives (ambivalence being so prevalent among them), they themselves cannot know anything else (see, on this point, Freud, 1955a) and must rely on others to tell them what they should think.

5 Cf. Lacan's (2006a, p. 779) comment about "squar[ing] accounts with [our] own desires."

13

THE FREUD MAN AND THE FUNDAMENTAL FANTASY

> To a certain degree, fantasies cannot bear to be revealed in speech.
>
> —Lacan, 1992, p. 80

Readers of Lacan's work are often struck right from the outset by the term "fundamental fantasy," a term rarely if ever found in other psychoanalytic works. It suggests that a distinction should be made between everyday fantasies and something else, something more profound, something more original or primal, something more constitutive of the subject's very being.

Before attempting to characterize such fundamental fantasies, let us consider what we mean by "everyday fantasies." In the case I shall present here, the very nature of ordinary fantasies was fodder for discussion. In the early months of my work with this particular analysand, I would occasionally ask him if he had had any dreams or fantasies, and on one occasion he told me that he found it distressing that I would mention such radically different entities in the same breath—for, as he put it, dreams come from the Other, whereas he felt he had control over his fantasies.

It came out that what he referred to as fantasies were essentially scenarios that he would run through his mind—deliberately, he felt. He would select his favorite sexual scenes from the past, replay them mentally, and perhaps guide them in a certain preferred direction now and then. He noted that he never fantasized about anyone he had not already had a sexual encounter with, and rarely diverged in his fantasies from the text of the sexual scenario as it had in fact played out. To his mind, then, fantasies were markedly different from dreams, for he felt the latter to be radically foreign or Other. He would report them to me as things that had simply come to him, experiences over which he had no control.

Nevertheless, in the course of the analysis, it became clear that there were certain thoughts that would come to the analysand's mind as if he simply heard them being enunciated in his head—yet these he referred to as "intrusive thoughts," not as fantasies. Analysts who have themselves spent many years on the couch would probably be inclined to stress the fantasmatic dimension of virtually all such intrusive thoughts, but to this analysand a sharp distinction was called for.

This raises the larger question of what we mean by fantasies in psychoanalysis, and how our use of the term may well differ from the use of the same term in the culture at large. It would seem that popular culture restricts the use of the term fantasy to something one imagines that is pleasurable, and, especially in recent years, to an imagined sexual scene. Should one find oneself or catch oneself imagining an unpleasant scene—say, for example, a situation in which one is approaching a desired sexual partner, but

just at the moment of contact a third party enters the picture and diverts the attention of the desired sexual partner away from the fantasizer and onto the intruder (this was the substance of numerous fantasies and dreams described by the analysand whose case is discussed in Chapter 11 of the present volume)—the popular mind is inclined to call that anything other than a fantasy: a nightmare, a "daymare," a bizarre thought, or what have you.

A series of images and/or thoughts that flash through one's mind in which a man breaks into one's apartment and one finds oneself fighting with a thug who turns out to be armed and is about to kill one—the man in the street is likely to try to forget any such phenomenon as quickly as possible and certainly not likely to consider it to be a *fantasy* production. The analyst, on the contrary, is inclined to emphasize the fantasy elements therein, despite the reportedly unpleasant tenor of the events.

We might say that psychoanalysis defines any and all such mental phenomena as fantasies, whether the affect associated with them is pleasant or unpleasant. Indeed, Freud often recommends that we consider the affect to be secondary: a disguise, a way of concealing one's real interest in the events occurring. In other words, something hardly needs to be consciously enjoyable for it to be understood as a fantasy in the psychoanalyst's lexicon. We might conclude that popular culture calls "fantasy" only those imaginary scenarios that provide an enjoyment correlated with the pleasure principle, whereas psychoanalysis calls fantasy all kinds of scenarios—auditory, olfactory, visual, tactile, or thought-related—whether correlated with the pleasure principle or with something beyond the pleasure principle (Freud, 1955b).

Identifying with Freud

Let me now properly introduce this analysand, whom I will refer to as the "Freud Man." I will do so, not because of some profound connection between him and Sigmund Freud, but rather because of a certain number of fantasized identifications on the analysand's part between himself and Freud. In the very first week of his analysis he spoke of thinking of himself as like Freud, because even at a relatively young age he already thought of himself as old, just as Freud indicates he did in a number of his writings. When the analysand's eldest child was born, and to his surprise turned out to be a girl—he having been convinced that it would be a boy—the first words that came to his mind were "Anna Freud." A more significant identification, however, seems to have been with Freud's work schedule, which the analysand characterized as involving seeing patients ten hours a day and then attending meetings, studying, and writing into the wee hours of the morning.

Having read this at some point in his adult life, the analysand associated it with his own erratic sleep schedule and his belief that, if he stayed up late at night, he would get more work done. It was not until five years into the analysis that he realized this was an illusion, because in fact he was not very alert in the middle of the night and therefore did not work very efficiently during those hours. He finally began sleeping eight hours a night on a regular schedule, and realized he was just as productive and, in fact, doing better quality work. The thought "I'm not Freud!" came to him at that point.

Nevertheless, there was a still more significant identification with Freud based on an autobiographical childhood scene that Freud (1958a) recounts in *The Interpretation of Dreams*:

> When I was seven or eight years old there was another domestic scene, which I can remember very clearly. One evening before going to sleep I disregarded the rules which modesty lays down and obeyed the calls of nature in my parents' bedroom while they were present. In the course of his reprimand, my father let fall the words: "The boy will come to nothing." This must have been a frightful blow to my ambition, for references to the scene are still constantly recurring in my dreams and are always linked with an enumeration of my achievements and successes, as though I wanted to say: "You see, I *have* come to something."
>
> (p. 216)

On the basis of this passage, the analysand worked and reworked things his own father had said about him, which were originally reported to me as, "You don't count," and, "You're never going to amount to anything," but which were progressively reshaped into the fateful formulation, "You'll never succeed at anything." (Note that the word "coming," provided in the English translation of the reprimand made by Freud's father, "The boy will come to nothing," was left out here, being replaced by "succeed"; the third person formulation became a second person formulation; "nothing" was replaced by "anything"; and the word "never" was interjected.)

I shall return to this formulation later, but let me remark here that, just as Freud himself seems to have set out to prove his father wrong—and felt that no matter how much he accomplished, the list of his successes was never enough to definitively prove to his father that he amounted to something (see, in this connection, Fink, 2010a)—the Freud Man seems to have countered his father's pronouncement in his own mind with a retort whose logic I will explore further on, but whose form I will indicate right away: "I will succeed at everything."

This is one of the reasons I have decided to speak about him at this conference on "Fantasy and Imagination," and it will connect up with my more immediate reason for doing so, which is that I believe

that other fantasies he has spoken of in the course of his analysis—not his sexual fantasies but rather his intrusive thoughts—allow us to hone in on what Lacan refers to as the fundamental fantasy.

A Child Is Being Molested or Abused

The Freud Man had become a father shortly before beginning analysis and, although he never formulated this as one of his reasons for entering analysis (years later, he noted that the two coincided closely), it became clear rather quickly that he was troubled by myriad thoughts of child abuse and child molestation. He would get almost physically ill if he read about or saw images of child abuse on television. And he was troubled by statements he made at home, even one as seemingly innocent, for example, as saying to his wife, when their daughter was crying, "You go upstairs and get some rest, I'll go sleep with our daughter." The possible ambiguity of the words "sleeping with" disturbed him, even though he said he knew he would never do anything sexual with his daughter.

He was similarly disturbed by intrusive thoughts of falling down the stairs while holding his daughter, and by a series of dreams in which a child was abused and he did nothing about it. In those dreams, he could not make up his mind as to whether it really was abuse or not, even though upon waking he was sure that burning a child with a cigarette, for example, constituted abuse.

Another dream was so disturbing that he initially decided upon waking not to tell me about it. In the dream, he was changing his daughter's diaper and cut into her abdomen with a knife; he hoped that his wife would not notice, and when the latter came in, all that was left of what he called the "operation" was a faint line on their daughter's skin. Child abuse made him think of castration and reminded him of his dislike of circumcision. Indeed, he mentioned that he was happy in the end that he had not had a son because he thus did not have to decide whether or not to circumcise him.

We could, of course, jump to the conclusion that this analysand had serious sadistic tendencies, and that the distressing affect associated with his thoughts and dreams was simply a sign of repression, designed to make those tendencies unrecognizable to him. There were certainly signs of aggression (towards his siblings) and of repressed aggression in the analysand's history and discourse, but then aren't there always? For example, at age ten or 11, after a number of incidents in which he had "accidentally" hurt other children at school, he consciously decided that he needed to "calm down" and "stop being so wild," as he put it, and later adopted the principle of never "responding in kind" to acts of aggression, regardless of what he felt like doing.

But rather than be content with a formulaic notion like "sadistic tendencies" and assume that the analysand was fundamentally a sadist, it seems to me that fantasies, intrusive thoughts, and dreams must always be interpreted within the larger context of the analysand's clinical structure and the larger Oedipal drama as it unfolded in his life. This is not to deny all sadism in the analysand's life, but I believe we need to look further. The Freud Man gives us a number of very explicit reasons to look to the larger Oedipal drama, insofar as he explicitly indicated that he was attempting to be a better mother to his children than his own mother was to him and a better father as well. In other words, as might well be expected, his relations to his children were very much determined by his relations to his own parents—determined, that is, by what he had wanted from them and believed he had not received.

Very early on in the analysis, the analysand mentioned that he felt like he was "in trouble with [me]": he had complained about my fee for sessions one day and felt that I must be angry with him for that. He repeatedly dreamt that I was angry with him or yelling at him, and indicated that as a child he felt he could be in trouble any minute. He had always had the sense that something bad was about to happen,

that he was always already in trouble.

Had the analysand been from an extremely chaotic family in which child abuse was a constant feature of everyday life, this might have seemed perfectly natural in a sense, but given the relative calm and stability of the household as he depicted it in the analysis, it struck me that the constant fear of being in trouble for something was in fact based on a *wish* or *fantasy* that his father would be angry at him for something. Indeed, we might say that, from the analysand's point of view, his father was never angry enough with him, and the question we have to ask is: angry enough for what?

This question can be considered in light of one of the Freud Man's biggest complaints in his analysis, which was that he felt that his mother did not love him, or certainly did not love him enough. He cited a number of examples of what he considered to be neglect on her part, a very limited number, let it be said in advance, and a number of examples of betrayal. In one of these very few examples, at around age three he tried to help paint the family house in order to surprise and please his mother, but when she saw this she reported it to his father who then spanked him for doing something he was not supposed to do.

The Freud Man qualified his mother as "unreliable," citing an incident in which she failed to feed him properly because she refused to let him eat before he had finished his weekend chores (neglecting, of course, for quite some time to wonder whether or not he had in fact provoked her by not doing his chores when he knew he was supposed to); when he finally did them, one particular food item had been polished off by his siblings, for which he bitterly criticized her, crying, "You see what happens when you don't let me eat!"[1]

His complaints that his mother did not love him enough, did not breastfeed him, did not properly care for him, and in fact betrayed him can perhaps shed some light for us on his fear/wish to be in trouble with his father. He never felt that his mother loved him enough to constitute a threat to his father and craved a sign from his father that the son was a true rival for his mother's affections. *The father's anger would be proof of the mother's love for her son.* And since, at least in the early stages of the analysis, he associated me with his father, if I were to yell at him it would (fantasmatically) prove that his mother really loved him.

A number of critical events showed how this sense of not being loved enough played out in the analysand's history. At age two, the analysand was at his maternal grandfather's house and noticed that his grandfather took pills, apparently for a heart condition. At some point the analysand went into the kitchen and grabbed a few of the grandfather's pills and swallowed them. A sibling saw him do so, told the parents, and the mother rushed him to the hospital to have his stomach pumped. Rather than tax the analysand with some kind of primary masochism (we could just as easily say that he was trying to hurt his grandfather by taking away his medication), I think we can more plausibly hypothesize that the incident indicates an identification with his mother's beloved father.[2]

It is a subsequent incident, however, that brings out most clearly the dynamic at work in relation to his mother. One night the analysand went into the parents' bathroom at home, climbed up on the sink, opened up the medicine "chest," as some of us call it in English (it was thus likely related to the bosom and to the analysand's complaint that he was not breastfed by his mother), and began swallowing cough syrup with codeine and a bunch of different pills. His mother finally came in and asked him if he had taken them, to which he replied, "No, do you think I want to go to the hospital and have my stomach pumped out again?" In recounting the incident, the analysand made it clear that he fully expected to have to go back to the hospital and have his stomach pumped again when he began taking the medications, and thus that he was doing so as a gesture designed to have a certain effect on his mother.

What kind of effect? He had gleaned from the first incident that he had done something very dangerous that had worried his mother sick. The deliberate repetition of this dangerous situation was

obviously designed to worry his mother and get her to show him proof of her love for him. The incident seems to nicely illustrate the question the child asks himself in the logical operation Lacan (2006a) refers to as separation: *"Peut-il me perdre?"* (p. 844)—literally translated as "Can he [or she] lose me?" but perhaps better translated as "Can she afford to lose me? Is she willing to lose me? Is she willing to give me up? Can she bear to let me go?" All of these are related to the child's question regarding its value in its mother's eyes or heart, as the case may be.[3]

When these two pill-taking incidents were initially recounted in analysis, they were characterized by the analysand as examples of his mother's neglect, his comment being, "Who lets a two-year-old child into the bathroom unsupervised?" However, I think it is clear in the larger context of the Oedipal dynamic at work in this case that these acts—above all the second—were designed to get the mother's attention and perhaps more enduringly change the mother's attitude towards her child. For, after all, we generally come to realize that an object is of crucial importance to us when we are on the verge of losing it (or being forced to give it up; see Lacan, 2004, p. 377); we often need to be confronted with an object's imminent loss to realize that it is an object *a* for us, a cause of our desire. The seriousness with which the analysand posed the question, "Is she willing to lose me?" is indicated by a remark his mother made to the family on the day the boy turned three: she had not been sure, for a while there, whether he would make it to his third birthday.

Not all of the young child's techniques for winning his mother's affections were quite so dramatic. The Freud Man recalled lying on the couch in the living room in front of his mother and "humping" the couch cushions in a masturbatory manner, and characterized it as an attempt to get her to share in his enjoyment. He was unsuccessful in doing so, as she rejected this attempt at seduction, saying, "Don't do that, you'll get a rash," a comment he already at that time considered nonsensical. In a perhaps still earlier scene, he seems to have been masturbating in a dark room near his parents' bedroom, and imagined that someone, his mother perhaps, was there in the hallway looking in (he mentioned once that perhaps he was not even masturbating but was somehow getting into trouble; perhaps he was listening in on his parents in the bedroom or going out to the bathroom). If she was indeed out in the hall, he did not succeed in getting her to come in and show that she was enjoying his enjoyment.

Now that I have spelled out some of the larger context, these incidents shed light on a number of his child molestation fantasies, beginning with the curious formulation he used to indicate that he wanted to be a better parent than his mother had been: *"I want to love my daughter the way my mother didn't love me."*[4] Since his mother failed to seduce him or succumb to his attempts at seduction, it would seem that *he brought about the seduction* in his child molestation fantasies: he himself played the role of his mother succumbing to a child's seduction ("I'll go sleep with our daughter"), while his daughter played the part of the analysand as a young child. Or, alternatively, *he himself provided proof that such a seduction had occurred* in his child abuse fantasies by playing the role of a father punishing a child (consider his thoughts of burning a child with cigarettes or cutting a child with a knife); his daughter stood in for the analysand as a young child who had successfully seduced the mother (success thus equals seduction) and had to be punished for it.

In one dream—about which the Freud Man commented that in it he was both observing and in the scene as well—*he was a baby lying on a table and his mother was trying to have sex with him. Both of them were naked and she had a penis; in his role as observer, he thought, "that can't be right" and then it switched: she had lost her penis and he had it. However, it was awkward for him to have the penis. Another man was standing nearby watching all of this, a man he thought was his father.*

Apart from the question of who had the penis—which raises the question of the so-called maternal

phallus[5] and of the subject's sexual positioning, which would require a detailed discussion in its own right—the Oedipal dynamic seems to be laid bare fairly clearly in this dream, including the father as observer of the scene who will be able to attest to it and the analysand's identification with the father in the position of third party observer.

"Oh, to be made love to by one's mother right under one's father's nose!"—wouldn't this seem to be the most fundamental of the boy's most fundamental fantasies? In Lacan's (2001a) terms, this would seem to confirm the diagnosis of obsession—suggested by so many other features of the analysand's discourse and daily landscape—the obsessive analysand staging "circus games" between himself and his mother (a and a′) for the father (Other) to observe (Lacan, 2006a, p. 630; see, also, Fink, 2004a, pp. 24–29). This kind of formulation of the Oedipal scenario in obsession—whereby the analysand and his mother as egos are situated on the imaginary axis, and the father is situated on the symbolic axis, the analysand as unconscious subject being identified with the father in that position—is found in Seminars IV and VIII, as well as at the end of "Direction of the Treatment" where Lacan talks about one of his own obsessive patients.[6]

But what exactly should we refer to as the fundamental fantasy in the case of the Freud Man? The fantasy of a child being abused or molested? The wish presented in the dream? Or the never presented, never dreamt of, never consciously remembered part? Freud (1955d), in his essay, "A Child Is Being Beaten," breaks the fantasies he discusses down into three phases, suggesting that the second, almost never remembered phase, is the most "momentous," even though it is but "a construction of analysis" (p. 185). In what he refers to as the "male fantasy"—which is not nearly as well known as the three phases of the "female fantasy" he goes into earlier in the essay—being beaten stands for being loved, just as it does for my analysand here, but the origin of the fantasy is different, since Freud sees the primary love object in the male beating fantasy as the father, not the mother. Here are the three phases he proposes:

Phase one: I am loved by my father.
Phase two: I am being beaten by my father.
Phase three: I am being beaten by my mother.

The third phase may be conscious at times and is thus not considered by Freud (1955d, p. 198) to be "primary." Going backward, the second phase is obtained by a change in the sex of the parent serving as agent and almost always remains unconscious. What Freud calls "the original form of the unconscious male fantasy," phase one, is obtained by the inversion of beating into loving.

Does the Freud Man's child beating fantasy allow of a similar schematization? The ultimate wish there—phase one, as it were—was presented in the dream of being made love to by his mother under his father's nose, suggesting that it was characterized by pure wish-fulfillment, not by the ambivalent affect and unbearable jouissance Lacan leads us to associate with a fundamental fantasy.[7]

Phase two, the part that remained unconscious and was a pure construction of the analysis, was the wish to be beaten by his father for having seduced his mother. Phase three, the part available to consciousness, was the idea that a child is being beaten, for that is what the analysand usually meant when he said a child is being "abused" (one of those overly used American terms, whose extension seems to know no bounds).

Phase one: I am being seduced by my mother (my father witnesses this).
Phase two: I am being beaten by my father (because of the seduction).
Phase three: A child is being beaten (usually by a male figure).

It was the third phase that provided the analysand with the kind of intolerable jouissance we expect a fundamental fantasy to provide, and yet the other two phases seem more primary. The third phase was obtained from the second by leaving the agent vague (though it was usually a male figure) and displacing the object of the beating (from the grammatical first person to the third). The second phase was obtained from the first by changing the sex of the agent and inverting loving into beating. (Intermediary steps could be introduced if we wanted there to be only one inversion each time; for example, phase 1.1 could be either "I am being seduced by my father" or "I am being beaten by my mother.")

The analysand also had a slightly different fantasy involving "molestation"—another vague term that might be better translated psychoanalytically as "seduction"—which perhaps should be articulated differently:

Phase one: I am being seduced by my mother (my father witnesses this).
Phase two: I am being seduced by my father (he is jealous of my [love for my] mother?).
Phase three: A child is being seduced (usually by a male figure).
(Note that phase three of both fantasies can be condensed with the vague term "abuse": "A child is being abused.")

This three-phase schematization is quite speculative. Note that to assume, as I have done here, that the analysand's primary love object is the mother, not the father, yields different results than Freud's analysis, and that we should never make a priori assumptions about this, allowing ourselves to be guided instead by the analysand's discourse. In any case, there seemed to be little here that went beyond the classical Oedipal predicament.

Interestingly, this particular analysand came to analysis with the hope of finding some dramatic, traumatic event in his early years that would explain all of his later difficulties in life, and constantly tried to locate what he referred to as a "traumatic primal scene." Much to his dismay, nothing horrible came out, apart from the pill-taking scenes that I mentioned earlier, whereas the analysand had hoped to discover that he had been molested at some point, that he had been taken advantage of or abused at some early date. Instead, all he found was the typical Oedipal situation; he obtained thereby a growing conviction that the Oedipal drama had never been resolved in his case.

Lacan suggests that we view a fundamental fantasy as an axiom—that is, not as something to be proven or elaborated on in any great detail, but simply as something that informs all of the subject's actions and his whole way of seeing the world. The axiomatic nature of the fundamental fantasy is one of the conclusions Lacan (1966–67) draws about the fundamental fantasy in Seminar XIV, *La logique du fantasme* ("The Logic of Fantasy"). In his view, a fantasy like the one Freud mentions in his article "A Child Is Being Beaten," although it has certain analyzable meanings, functions as an axiom in the analysand's way of seeing the world around him. He sees the world through the lens of his fundamental fantasy—as Lacan (1968) puts it, "fantasy constitutes for each of us our window onto reality" (p. 25). In the case of the Freud Man, the analysand imagined that authority figures around him were angry with him and wanted to punish him.

Yet, psychoanalysis can change not only the analysand's everyday fantasies, but also his axioms. It seems to me that we have to be careful not to conclude about any particular fantasy that it is the ultimate fundamental fantasy for all time; indeed, I would be tempted to suggest that by the time an analysand brings forward most of the elements of a fundamental fantasy, it has already begun to change and give way to something else (although the dream in which the Freud Man's was presented most clearly was dreamt quite early on in the analysis, it seemed more striking to me at the time than it did to him). This is

a regular feature of psychoanalytic work, whereby the analysand is far more able to articulate something that no longer has the same hold on him anymore than to articulate something that he is still currently in the grips of.

What might that something else have been here that the fundamental fantasy was already giving way to? Note that the staging of what Lacan calls "the circus games" between the analysand and his mother (*a* and *a'*) for the father (Other) to observe came out most clearly in the dream I mentioned in which *he simultaneously identified with the father's role of outside observer*. In other words, in classic obsessive fashion the Freud Man was saying, "Yes, this is what is happening, but *my* desire is not really in play—it is on the sidelines." His identification with the Other implied that something else was going on: a kind of meta-level or metaposition had been introduced in which the subject's desire was truly desire in the sense that it was fundamentally a desire for something other than what was being played out on the stage, the preoedipal stage.

I call it preoedipal because, if we look closely at the phases of the male beating fantasy as Freud outlines it, we notice that the second parent is brought in only by way of displacement, in order to disguise what is really at issue. The male and female beating fantasies Freud analyzes operate only in relation to one parent, the disguise being required perhaps due to pressures involving the other parent, but there does not seem to be a fundamental playing off of the one against the other.

Phase one: I am loved by my father.
Phase two: I am being beaten by my father (this transformation/disguise is required because my mother is in the way, a rival).
Phase three: I am being beaten by my mother (this feels better because I hate her, so it makes sense for her to hate me).

This depiction seems to involve nothing but rivalry: the struggle unto death of the imaginary register alone, the *jealouissance* (jealous hatred and enjoyment) that is endemic to the preoedipal stage. Oedipalization would seem to require the bringing into play of both parents in relation to each other and the level of identification. Compared to the male beating fantasy described by Freud, the Freud Man's dream already suggests its own beyond, a beyond that is introduced in order to try to resolve a set of problems. Nevertheless, the beyond remained at the level of something wished for, not something already achieved.[8] The beating fantasies Freud analyzes are thus more preoedipal than my analysand's here, which is perhaps more Oedipal. Does this make the latter less fundamental? I shall leave that as an open question here.

A decisive life event seems to have prodded the analysand to move in a certain direction, to move toward a specific kind of solution to the Oedipal triangle, which remained in abeyance until the analysis helped him go further with it. This event was the birth of a younger sibling when the analysand was about three years of age.

There were already several children in the analysand's family when the analysand was born and, as the analysand found out when he was in his twenties, his mother had asked his father to remain abstinent after the birth of the analysand as she did not want to have any more children but did not wish to use birth control. The father apparently made good on this agreement for the first couple of years after the analysand's birth, but gave way to his desires thereafter, leading to the birth of yet another child when the analysand was three.[9] The fact that his attempts at sexual seduction and at suicidal blackmail (almost killing himself twice with pills) seem to have occurred primarily between ages two and three may be a coincidence, linked to his earliest remembered experiences, or may be related to his realization, no doubt brought home to him by his siblings, that his mother was about to have another child, which would

effectively oust him from the position of the youngest, the baby of the family, the position he had hitherto enjoyed.

The birth of this younger sibling served as an important turning point, according to the analysand, because it gave him an opportunity to choose between his mother and his father. The parents were apparently at odds over the name to be given to the newborn, and asked the children in the family to vote for the name preferred by the mother or the name preferred by the father. The vote was evenly split and the analysand cast the deciding vote—in favor of the name preferred by the father. To his mind this was a decisive move toward an identification with his father and a rejection of his mother.

The question that seemed to plague him, however, was who rejected whom? Perhaps it had been all too easy to give up his mother because in fact she had rejected him. Perhaps he had thrown his fate in with his father, not because his father had prohibited his mother as a love object but because she had prohibited herself; perhaps she had made it clear to him that she did not want him, that he was not preferred. How then could he prop up his identification with his father and go on to establish relations with women other than his mother? How could he be sure he had made the right choice?

These may be the questions that motivated the analysand's construction of a solution that we might term a new fundamental fantasy here. My sense is that this exact fantasy did not exist prior to the analysis and thus could not yet serve as an axiom; perhaps it was already there, waiting to come to the fore in some sense, but that was not my impression. A prop or support of the fantasy may have come to the analysand in the form of a home movie he saw around age five in which there was a certain shot of him standing a short distance away from his mother, the two of them facing each other. He had the sense that the movie had shown his younger sibling trying to walk and then falling down; the analysand, in his stance facing his mother, was, he seemed to think, blocking the doorway so that his mother could not go help the sibling. There was in his mind a confrontation of sorts, a wordless standoff, which he referred to repeatedly and which he himself described as a kind of fundamental fantasy.

In the relatively static image that repeatedly came to him of this scene, which incidentally never included his sibling, there was no real action, but merely a stance, an oppositional positioning between the two. A certain phrase—like "I am confronting my mother"—would come to mind, often accompanied by such an image, and that is all. The sentiments of each party remained unknown: it was not clear whether his mother loved or hated him or whether he loved or hated her. This kind of standoff seemed to characterize virtually all of the analysand's adult relationships.

One of the clearest examples of this concerned a woman he became very friendly with during the analysis itself. She was, by all accounts, very taken with him, but he could recognize neither her amorous interest in him nor his own in her. No matter how much time they spent together, he never had the impression that she liked, much less loved him, nor could he for the longest time fantasize about her sexually. All of his friends told him that she never took her eyes off of him and hung on his every word, but he seemed to need to remain deaf and blind to this.

In this real-life situation, he was seen by a woman—which was the only thing that animated him, as he said, and made him feel alive like nothing else (that is, her gaze served as object *a* for him)—but he nevertheless played dead by not allowing himself to think that he had seduced her and by getting her to play dead as well, hindering her from openly declaring her interest in him. As long as he declared nothing and she declared nothing, he did not risk being rejected and could simply enjoy being looked at or noticed by her. As he put it, "I could never admit to myself that a woman liked me," adding, "the only way I know how to maintain desire is in a museum—mummified." (We can, of course, hear the mum or mom in the word "mummified.") Desire could not be exposed to the harsh conditions pervasive in the outside world: it had to remain locked up in a museum.

Note that, as is often the case with such fantasies, the Freud Man's standoff or confrontation fantasy was quite static, not like a daydream or a masturbation fantasy that might begin in a certain kind of setting and take 15 seconds or several minutes to play itself out. It involved a positioning or staging of something, but repeated rather than evolving over time.

Let us consider this fantasy in terms of some of Lacan's formulations about fantasy in *Écrits* and elsewhere. In "Subversion of the Subject," Lacan (2006a, p. 824) maintains that "fantasy [is] the Other's desire." What does that imply? The Other's desire is always relatively unknown to us; we are quite aware of the Other's demands, because those demands are formulated in words to us by the Other, usually repeatedly. But the subject nevertheless wonders what the Other desires: "You're saying this, requesting something, and demanding some specific thing, but what is it that you really want?" Differently stated, the Other's desire (unlike the Other's demand) is never explicitly articulated or spelled out by those who come to represent the Other, but rather has to be interpreted by the subject.

According to Lacan (2006a, p. 826), the subject's interpretation of the Other's desire is hardly flattering to the subject: as he puts it, *"le névrosé … se figure que l'Autre demande sa castration"*; "the neurotic … figures [or imagines] that the Other demands his castration."[10] The neurotic subject concludes that the Other's desire involves something horrible or disastrous—in other words, that the Other wants something unspeakable from him. This is, according to Lacan, how the neurotic inevitably interprets the Other's desire. And this is why the neurotic works hard to reduce what he believes the Other's desire to be to something else, to something presumably less threatening: to the Other's demands. For the Other rarely demands anything quite as horrendous as what the neurotic believes the Other really and truly desires.

What do we see in the standoff fantasy articulated by the Freud Man? If his fantasy is the Other's desire, that is, if his fantasy is a *mise en scène* or staging of what he believes the Other's desire to be, then it would seem that his mother in the scene wants to get close to him to carry out some unspeakable act—some traumatic act, the likes of which he believed he would find in his past when he began analysis—and yet he neither retreats nor attacks directly, circling around instead to maintain the same constant distance between them. He has her neither approach nor run away; and he neither approaches nor runs away. She does not seduce him or he her, and he cannot know for sure whether or not he has been successful in enticing her.

Nothing Succeeds Like Success

The idea that he believed that the Other wanted something terrible from him was hardly a leap of interpretation on my part: over the course of five years, the analysand on many occasions expressed his fear/wish that I wanted to castrate him, so to speak—that, for example, if he spoke to me about masturbation, I would make him give it up, and if he spoke to me about certain women he was entertaining different ideas about, I would force him to give them up as well. Indeed, to his mind, all of his sexual satisfaction was juxtaposed with the continuation of the analysis—all of his sexual interests were obstacles or counterpoints to the analysis. Here we see quite clearly his notion that the Other wanted to take his jouissance away from him, which is certainly one possible way of saying that the Other "demanded his castration," wanted him to be deprived of all sexual enjoyment.

How then, in Lacanian terms, did he come to grips with what the Other allegedly wanted? By reducing the unbearable desire that he attributed to the Other to concrete demands. What were those concrete demands? There were quite a few of them, and many of them revolved around work and success. Whereas his mother was convinced early on that he was a "talented" or especially gifted child, his father seems to have believed that he would never achieve any kind of success because he was lazy. His mother had been told by one of his teachers that he was not living up to his potential because he was not working, and the analysand seems to have concluded that the Other demanded first that he work and second that he fail.

Indeed, one of his initial complaints upon coming to analysis was that he was unable to work—that he was stuck on protesting against this demand he felt the Other was making of him. This complaint disappeared fairly quickly, the problem centering not around his ability to work, but his ability to finish anything.

I mentioned earlier that he identified with Freud owing to the remark once made by Freud's father that the boy would come to nothing. I also mentioned that the Freud Man worked and reworked his own father's comments about his ineptitude such that his final formulation was, "You'll never succeed at anything," characterizing it sometimes as a verdict, sometimes as a demand, and sometimes as an imperative. Now there is not much one can do about a horrendous desire on the Other's part (especially since one does not even want to know what it is, preferring to hide one's head in the sand), but the Other's demand is very specific, and it is this very specificity that allows it to be accepted or refused. One can even sort of accept and sort of refuse—in other words, do a dance around the question of accepting or refusing it.

Note that the formulation, "You'll never succeed at anything"—which is, of course, patently absurd, since everyone succeeds at something, if nothing else, at wasting time, at losing money, or at frustrating other people (in other words, one *can* succeed at failure)—allows for numerous retorts or responses, which can be characterized as reversals or negations of different kinds. One could, perhaps most simply, dispute the word "never" and protest that one will, *at some point*, succeed at something. Even though one is not succeeding at anything right now, one could argue that there is nothing fundamentally stopping one from succeeding at something later on.

A second response would take the reconstructed formulation of the father's judgment as a universal negative claim: "For every last thing you try your hand at, you will not succeed" (formulated using logical quantifiers: $\forall x \sim Sx$, where S stands for success at project x and ~Sx stands for failure at project x). This would allow the subject to retort, by way of a contradictory claim, in the Aristotelian sense, with a particular affirmative: "I will succeed at something" (that is, $\exists x Sx$—"there exists something I will try my hand at, at which I will succeed").[11]

Curiously, the analysand's response to his father's presumed demand to fail went in neither of these directions. Instead of disputing the temporality of the claim ("never") or the universality of the claim (disputing an implicit "you will fail at everything"), the analysand's retort seems to have taken the form of the contrary—that is, the universal affirmative, "I will succeed at everything." In his daily activities, he seemed to try to excel in many different registers, in many different fields at the same time, feeling that he needed to excel at absolutely everything. If he did not have the time to do so, well then, he would simply have to give up sleeping.

It eventually became clear to the analysand that this response was a way of maintaining an impossibility, of sustaining an impossible desire, impossible due to its infinite pretensions. He noted that such infinite desire had the same result, ultimately, as playing dead, because he could not possibly succeed at everything and thus felt paralyzed by his ambition—he ended up being able to do nothing. Only finite desire could make something possible for him, and he realized that he could only succeed at one or two things at a time. He decided to concentrate on being a good father and proceeding with his analysis.[12]

The all or nothing aspect of success expressed in the formulations, "You will succeed at nothing" versus "I will succeed at everything," perhaps stems from the fact that, to the analysand, success ultimately meant successful seduction of the mother.[13] This was the only thing that counted, and thus other accomplishments of whatever sort and whatever quantity meant nothing without it. There was only one thing he could be successful at; success was thus all or nothing by its very nature.

Ensuring the Other's Jouissance

Let us consider a further comment Lacan (2006a, p. 826) makes about fantasy in "Subversion of the Subject": "the fixation of object cathexis" involved in fantasy "takes on the transcendental function of ensuring the jouissance of the Other." How does the subject's fantasy ensure the Other's jouissance, or in other words, ensure that the Other receives or achieves a certain jouissance?

Note, first of all, that the subject's earliest career choice was very closely related to his mother's abandoned career choice—in other words, the path she herself abandoned when she married the analysand's father and began having children. It does not seem to have been very difficult for the analysand to achieve the educational status necessary to follow the career path his mother had abandoned. In that sense we could say that he fulfilled her dream and assured her at least a certain vicarious jouissance with relative ease.

What was more difficult was to go beyond his father's educational status. His father had achieved a certain position but never obtained a doctorate in his field. Indeed, the father could hardly have been described as a very successful man and the analysand seemed to have sensed that his father did not want the son to do better than he himself had done.[14] At times the analysand even indicated that he felt he could not decide whether his parents would more enjoy his success or his failure, hence his tendency to remain in limbo.

I think that we can see in the standoff fantasy a compromise solution to the analysand's predicament in which he believed that his mother considered him to be talented and expected great things from him, whereas his father thought him a "moron" (the father said this on one occasion when the analysand was quite young) and expected nothing but failure from him. By never finishing his studies, the Freud Man managed to maintain the appearance that he was a researcher with great potential, yet he could ultimately amount to nothing, thereby satisfying his parents' contradictory desires as he had construed

them.

This solution had the simultaneous advantage of eternally sustaining his own desire in an impossibility that kept him from having to reckon with the achievement of what he had worked so hard to attain, a situation that often leads to depression in obsessives, due to what we might call a "deflation" of desire. Should the obsessive occasionally achieve what he wants—accidentally or through no fault of his own—he is threatened with the fading of his desire and thus with vanishing as a subject. A standoff position or limbo sort of existence ensured that this would not happen. As the analysand himself put it at one point, when he had been doing some serious work on his dissertation: "I am in danger of finishing my thesis." Here, where his desire was about to flag, about to sputter out, the fundamental fantasy stepped in to sustain it; this is the purpose, as Lacan (1966–67) puts it, of the fundamental fantasy.

Misrecognition

We all have a tendency to misrecognize our own subjective position, and this analysand seemed to prefer to think of himself as an hysteric rather than as an obsessive.[15] One day in talking about the kind of women he would get involved with, and wishing to state a hysterical position, as he understood it, along the following lines—"I want to desire them, I don't want to be satisfied by them"—he instead slipped and started to say, "I want to be satisfied by them, I don't want to desire them." He had intended to affirm his lack of interest in satisfaction, protesting that he preferred to go on desiring like an hysteric, but unwittingly ended up saying that he was perfectly happy with the satisfaction he got from his sexual relations with women, as long as he did not have to desire them. To desire them was the real threat.

At the beginning of the next session he attempted to repeat either the phrase he had meant to say the time before or the phrase he had ended up saying unintentionally, but wound up slipping again, this time saying, "I want to satisfy them." To satisfy someone is, of course, one way the obsessive stops the Other from showing any sign of desire, it being the Other's desire that threatens to eclipse his own. His desire has to stay out of the game, has to remain reserved for something loftier.

Reconfiguration of the Fundamental Fantasy

What Lacan refers to as the traversal or traversing of the fundamental fantasy implies a shift in position on the subject's part, a shift he sometimes refers to as a "reconfiguration" (1966–67). Lacan has a tendency at times to suggest that this reconfiguration occurs all at once in a sudden moment of *bascule*, of swinging or shifting. This is perhaps not, however, the most common case, and it seems to me that intermediate configurations frequently arise along the way, configurations that in many cases may even incline the analysand to leave analysis altogether, either content with the partial progress made or disgusted with the specific features of the intermediate stage.

In the case of the Freud Man, I would suggest that by the time the confrontation or standoff fantasy came to the fore after four and a half years of analysis, it had already begun to give way: it was already no longer the axiomatic principle of his existence. Shortly after discussing it in a number of sessions, the analysand recounted a dream in which he went on a date with his mother. They rode together in a carriage and went to a restaurant; later they went into a gift shop and browsed at the items available for purchase.

Prior to that time his attraction to a woman had always been a problem, and he was very uncomfortable around a woman who looked at him or paid attention to him. In this dream, he was comfortable with his mother for the first time, could abide her gaze, feeling neither overwhelmed or smothered by her presence *nor* anxious about her leaving or rejecting him.

This dream suggested a possible evolution toward which the analysand was moving, a shift toward something other than a simple standoff. One thing to note here in particular is what the analysand had to say about browsing, which for him was a very relaxing experience (which he even associated with masturbation at one point). Whereas in the standoff fantasy his mother's gaze was central and threatening, here it seemed to be his gaze that came to the fore: his gaze at the objects in the gift shop.

Note that when Lacan refers to the traversing of fantasy in the case of neurosis, the neurotic subject, in his view, stops occupying the position of divided subject and comes to occupy the position of cause of his or her own desire. Insofar as it seemed to be the gaze that was at issue for this analysand (serving as his cause of desire), his assumption of the gaze—his coming to be in the place of the gaze—suggested possible progress in the direction of traversing fantasy. What his new, reconfigured fantasy would eventually look like, I obviously could not predict in advance.

Here I will simply summarize in a highly schematic and speculative fashion the various steps or stages we might discern in the evolution of the Freud Man's fantasy:

1 Seduction. The fantasy here is that it *has* happened: he has seduced his mother, or she him, and he is in trouble with his father (and other father figures) for having done so.
2 Standoff. He (perhaps?) wants to seduce (or abuse) her and she him, but there is an obstacle and/or he cannot bear to confirm who desires what.
3 Peaceful coexistence. In the carriage dream, he and his mother are comfortable together and neither seems to be striving to get anything in particular from the other that is not already being made available (there is, for example, no deprivation—for example, no dearth of nourishment at the restaurant).

In Conclusion

Presenting a case to illustrate theoretical material is always a somewhat hazardous endeavor, in that one subjects the material to a predetermined agenda to a certain degree, and necessarily selects what best supports one's argument. In other words, one sets aside most if not all of the analysand's statements that would contradict one's thesis—and such statements abound in virtually every case, due to the very nature of the unconscious and the dialectical process of analysis. Moreover, the material is unwieldy and always allows glimpses of things that go well beyond what one can say of it and that may potentially contradict one's conclusions.

Rather than view this as a drawback, I believe it should be considered an advantage for reflection. In the best of cases, we present enough of what the analysand actually said that readers can see more in the clinical material than we ourselves saw and could formulate with the conceptual categories (and blinders) at our disposal. Freud's case studies have fueled decades of often hateful and acrimonious debate, at least in part because of something positive we can say about them: he provided enough of the material articulated by his patients that his readers are able to interpret it anew in a light far different from that Freud himself cast upon it. Regarding a case like that of Dora (Freud, 1953), for example, we might say that *nothing succeeds like failure*: there are few cases in the Freudian opus about which later readers have spilled more ink!

I can only hope that the richness of the material outlined in this presentation gives readers pause for thought, even as they may disagree heartily with my speculations about its meaning and significance.

There is much here that remains to be developed and articulated further. The same basic way of understanding beating or abuse fantasies might fruitfully be applied to devouring fantasies—that is, fantasies that a parent and/or partner wishes to devour one, which is an especially prevalent fear/wish among men. Freud (1964, pp. 81–82) suggests that early on in life, loving something or someone is not so different from wishing to bring that person or thing inside oneself, to assimilate or eat that person or thing up. Devouring fears and fantasies could thus possibly stem from a wish for proof that mom loves her child more than she loves anyone else in the household. Similarly for fears and fantasies of domination (in various forms).

Could an interpretation of the Other's desire that does not proceed from a feeling of neglect but rather from a sense that one is loved too much give rise to a fantasy production structured along lines somewhat analogous to those we saw in the case of the Freud Man? Although Freud suggests that children's craving for love is insatiable, there are clearly children who feel smothered by their parents. If one feels suffocated by a parent's care, one might conceivably interpret the Other's desire wishfully as a desire for someone or something beyond oneself, and the slightest indications might serve to confirm one's interpretation. One might feel the need to sense that the Other (parent or partner) desires elsewhere and to provoke such a desire in the Other when it is not easily visible or spontaneously forthcoming. Hence, perhaps, the hysteric's attempt to highlight even the merest semblance of a desire for someone else (e.g., "the other woman") on her partner's part, in an attempt to convince herself that he desires something outside of herself. (This may lead to an acute sensitivity to his fleeting glances at passersby, which serve as confirmation even as they may be bitterly complained of, perhaps in part to make as big a deal as possible of them.) Hence, too, perhaps, the origin of certain hysterical fantasies, like the one that she is part of a man's harem, being but one of many women he desires.

A Possible Hysterical Fantasy

0 My mother's care and/or concern are suffocating me[16]

1 My mother must love/desire another than me (so I can breathe easy and have some space of my own)
2 My father must love/desire another than me
3 A man must love/desire another than me (I then identify with this other who seems to me to be desired).

Whatever the merits or demerits of this speculative formulation, it seems to me that a great deal remains to be elucidated here.

I hope I have at least illustrated that the child abuse fantasies recounted by the Freud Man were neither straightforwardly sadistic nor analyzable exactly in the same way as the fantasy Freud discussed in his article, "A Child Is Being Beaten." However they were organized, the fact remains that they served to point us in the direction of a possible fundamental fantasy, even though some uncertainty remains as to which phase of the fantasy should be considered most fundamental, or whether it is, in fact, the three or more phases taken together that should be considered fundamental. The very notion of a fundamentally (and essentially) fundamental fantasy must also, perhaps, be called into question, given the transformations fantasies undergo in the course of analysis, and the degree to which it is often only after a particular configuration has started to change that an analysand is able to bring it to the fore and spell it out.

This presentation—of what was, at the time, an ongoing case—was given on February 14, 2002, at a conference on "Fantasy and Imagination" sponsored by the Department of Psychology at the Catholic University of Louvain, at the invitation of Paul Moyaert and Philippe Van Haute.

Notes

1 He also taxed her with unreliability because of the way in which she taught him the alphabet, starting with the letter a, which she told him could be pronounced in two different ways (ahh and ehh), without giving him a rule explaining how it should be pronounced on any given occasion. This immediately struck him as problematic, and to his mind, colored his whole relation to language—his mother tongue and foreign languages as well.

2 It perhaps even indicates some burgeoning understanding of what it metaphorically means in English to have heart problems—that is, to have tribulations in matters of love.

3 See my discussion of the importance of this question in Chapter 10 of Volume 1 of the present collection.

4 This formulation presents rich grammatical ambiguities, insofar as it suggests (at least at one level) the exact opposite of what he was ostensibly affirming—that is, that like his mother who failed to love him, he would fail to love his own child.

5 On the "maternal phallus," see Fink (2004a, pp. 33–36).

6 For a more detailed discussion of this point, see Chapter 3, "Fantasies and the Fundamental Fantasy," in the present volume, especially Figure 3.2.

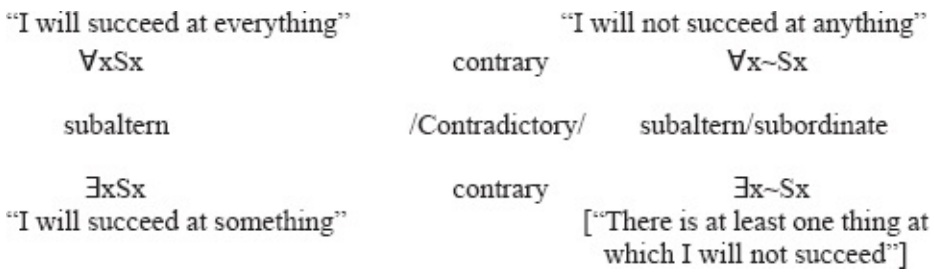
7 The dream contains other rich material that I am not taking up here—for example, the shift of the penis from mother to child, its awkwardness, the thought, "that can't be right," and so on.

8 We might be inclined to think that the desire that was played out in the analysand's adult life again and again—and I have yet to lay it out here—is essentially the same good ol' Oedipal desire, but that it had simply succumbed to a series of subsequent inhibitions. Nevertheless, it could be argued instead that the fundamental fantasy was not this initial Oedipal desire itself, but rather a solution to the problem posed by this initial Oedipal desire.

9 The analysand retroactively felt that this abstinence was at least partly responsible for his father's apparent dislike of him. He also felt it explained his sense that he should be having a fairly exclusive relationship with his mother, his mother looking to him for certain satisfactions she was not getting from the father.

10 A potential ambiguity here, in English as in French, centers around whether the Other wants to castrate the subject (regardless of who the agent of the castration is, the Other in person or some agent working for the Other) or whether the Other somehow wants the subject to transfer to him or her the castration the subject has already undergone—in other words, somehow cede to him or her a loss, alienation, privation, or negative value of some kind.

11 We can display the possible classical negations on Apuleius's square as follows:



12 Being a good father implied succeeding his father, in another sense of the term to succeed, in other words, to come after, to be the next father in line.

We might associate his former position (that of believing he could succeed at everything) with what Lacan calls the neurotic's strong ego in "Subversion of the Subject," a position that implies a denial of castration. Lacan indicates that, in neurosis, minus phi is situated under the subject, not under the object, as in perversion.

In the neurotic's fantasy, and more specifically in the "degraded" form of fantasy wherein object *a* is reduced to the Other's demand (where we have $◊D instead of $◊a), castration in the form of the subject's finitude is denied. We might even say that when castration is denied in this way, it is as if the subject were not barred, as if the subject were all ego. Similarly, in perversion, when the object's castration is denied, the object—for example, the mother—is considered not barred but, rather, complete, that is, as possessing a phallus (the "maternal phallus").

This could perhaps still be seen, for a while, in the case of my analysand in the persistence of the belief that he could succeed at absolutely anything, if he simply decided that that was what he wanted to do: his limitation was one of time, not of ability; in other words, he still continued for some time to see himself as talented and especially gifted in each and every field.

13 This is why I termed the success function S; for S(x) = sex.

14 The father's disparaging remarks about his son's abilities may quite naturally have reflected what he (more or less secretly) thought of

his own.

15 There are, of course, always *elements* that incline one to think of hysteria in a case of obsession and vice versa, but the overall clinical picture (and above all, the fundamental fantasy) usually strongly suggests one rather than the other. Here we might think that the Freud Man's wish to be a crucial object for his mother situated him as hysterical, especially when taken in conjunction with his wish to be looked at by a woman. There is nevertheless some uncertainty here, it seems to me, as to whether her gaze caused his desire (which would situate him as the desiring subject and her as embodying object *a)* or whether he wished to be the object that caused her desire. As we shall see momentarily, it is not so clear he wanted to arouse a woman's desire, perhaps preferring her loving care to expressions of desire.

16 Here the mother's care and/or concern perhaps primarily take the form of worry.

14

CONTOURS OF TRAUMA

An event usually takes on the value or status of a trauma against a certain backdrop—in other words, in a certain life context. The case I will discuss today raises a number of questions about trauma, but I will begin by discussing the backdrop against which certain events that might well be termed traumatic occurred.

The case is that of a young man who first came to see me owing to distress he was experiencing related to his sexual orientation and difficulties he was having getting schoolwork done. Although in his mid-twenties, Patrick, as I will pseudonymously refer to him here, had not yet completed his Bachelor's degree, had changed schools a number of times, had numerous incompletes, and felt he had little direction in life. Having little knowledge of psychoanalysis himself, much less of Lacan, he had heard about me through some fellow students. His work with me was not his first foray into therapy, for he had gone some years before to a therapist with whom he vehemently criticized his Catholic upbringing and Catholic school education for about six months. At that point, the therapist told Patrick she was Catholic, leading Patrick to feel so guilty he never went back to see her (a not uncommon example of how contemporary psychotherapists sabotage their work with patients because they cannot or refuse to keep their own backgrounds and personalities out of the therapy).

Our work together lasted about seven years in all, but the frequency of sessions never exceeded two sessions per week and was often just once a week (even dropping at times to twice a month) owing to the poor state of the analysand's finances and the considerable distance between his home and my office. Sessions took place in person for the first year and then exclusively by phone, owing to my move to a distant state.

Backdrop

Patrick described his early childhood as conflictual and full of disappointments. His mother was, he said, depressive, dissatisfied, "stole [his] energy," and "weighed [him] down." His father was a "workaholic," and the mother turned to Patrick, the eldest of her three boys, to make up for the scant attention she received from her husband. She felt her husband was emotionally detached, the only time he showed emotion toward her being when he vented anger at her. She took her oldest son everywhere with her, to fabric stores in particular, and was devastated if he did not like her cooking or tried to blame her for something.

Patrick had been told that he had broken his mother's tail bone when she gave birth to him—he referred to himself as her "pain in the ass"—and he had been trying to make it up to her ever since. He characterized her as controlling and jealous of him, and felt he was not allowed to express any kind of anger toward her as it would send her into still worse depression. He recounted incidents in which she would give him help when he did not want it and give him nothing when he made direct requests for assistance. She told him that she had been unable to breastfeed him as a child because he was allergic to her milk, a story he believes she invented.

He was, nevertheless, very touched by her sorrow, and felt impotent in his efforts to help her. One day he came into the kitchen and saw her crying at the sink. His first thought was, "What have we done?"—feeling that he and his father and brothers were somehow responsible. He left the kitchen without saying anything, feeling useless, but gathered together his father and brothers to talk about how to fix things.

Early in life, Patrick was always quite excited when his father would come home from work. He would run up to him eagerly, hug him affectionately, and feel around in his father's pocket for a surprise the latter had brought home for him. He fondly recalled the smell of his father's suits and cologne. He characterized his father as "very lenient" with him, and yet decisive at home and work and highly opinionated. The father relentlessly criticized his wife's intelligence and, though he would say that his children were smarter than he was, he competed with them at all kinds of games and was very concerned with beating them at everything. "He has to be the smartest person in the room all the time," Patrick declared.

The father's need to be the best and brightest was probably the sign of deep-seated insecurity on his part. In any case, the son *felt* that his "father would be devastated if [Patrick] beat him at something." Patrick could neither best nor criticize his father—he believed his father was too fragile for that.

The father wanted Patrick to play baseball in Little League, but Patrick hated it; he tried to get his son involved in scouting and other "typical father/son activities," but Patrick rebuffed him. While at first the analysand often said that he felt his father rejected him for preferring his mother's company to his father's, Patrick later said he felt he himself had rejected his father's attempts to get close to him. His mother's confidant at home, he eventually stopped greeting his father at all when the latter came home from work—an omission for which his mother subsequently reproached him.

At five years of age, Patrick had to undergo a kidney operation, during which he was frightened and urinated on an operating table in front of everyone. He was terribly ashamed of this unmanly reaction.[1]

As his father became more and more critical of Patrick over the years, Patrick came to feel that there was something wrong with him "at the core." All of the attention his father paid him began to take the form of criticism. The father claimed he lived and worked so that Patrick could enjoy life, but when Patrick did enjoy himself, his father would be harsh toward him. Only hard work and pain seemed worthy to his father: "I owe my father pain," Patrick commented.

The father became friendly with a man his own age while Patrick was still a young boy. This man

apparently looked somewhat like the father, had a similar personality to the father, and was even more successful financially than the father. This friend turned out to be gay and Patrick said he developed a crush on him around the age of ten, suggesting a fixation on (a man like) his father, as in what is often referred to as a "reverse Oedipus" wherein the father, not the mother, is the boy's primary love object.

Also at around ten, but leading in a rather different direction, Patrick "borrowed" one of his father's *Playboy* magazines for "sexual experimentation." When his mother found it under his bed, she told his father about it and his father spanked him.[2] I unfortunately was not able to determine whether this occurred before or after he developed a crush on his father's friend.

Events

Such, briefly stated, was the backdrop against which two events occurred, events that Patrick referred to in the analysis as "traumatic." I will begin by describing the later of the two events to supervene, as it was the first to come to light in my work with him.

Prior to coming to see me, Patrick had participated in a gay and lesbian discussion group at his college campus in which he had come to the conclusion that he had become gay because he had been "molested" by his uncle at age 16. He did not tell me this right away and, when he eventually did, professed that he did not remember what had happened very well. While the group had encouraged him to think of it as "sexual abuse," he had obviously not been encouraged to think in any detail about what had actually happened and his part in it. For a long time in the analysis, Patrick described the "abuse" in the vaguest of terms; I remained curious about the traumatic nature of the event for a very long time, never hearing anything from him that sounded like molestation.[3]

Over the years, Patrick's memory of this and myriad other events became far clearer, and the following was his fullest account of what transpired. The mother's brother, Patrick's maternal uncle, lived alone a few hours away from Patrick's family and ran a small business. Patrick would occasionally visit him during academic vacations, and when Patrick turned 16 his uncle offered him a summer job in his business, proposing to let him stay at his home. Patrick was eager to rebel against his parents and jumped at the opportunity to get away from them for the whole summer.

He and his uncle spent a great deal of time together that summer, and one of their regular activities included watching pornographic movies, above all homosexual porn. At one point, after having done this together on a number of occasions, *Patrick asked his uncle if the latter wanted to have anal intercourse with him*. The uncle said that would be dangerous and instead began performing fellatio on Patrick. Patrick changed positions so as to be able to perform fellatio on his uncle at the same time, but the uncle changed positions and began kissing Patrick's neck. Patrick felt that he had done something his uncle had not wanted him to do, and ejaculated immediately.

Such was the tenor of the purportedly "traumatic" event that, at the outset of his analysis, Patrick saw as the origin of his homosexuality and described as "molestation." It appeared that Patrick himself had invited his uncle's advances and that *numerous* sexual encounters occurred that same summer between Patrick and his uncle.

We may well be inclined to see in Patrick's accusation of abuse, directed at the uncle a decade after the fact, the hysteric's casting of blame onto those around him and refusing to see the part he himself had played in bringing about the sexual encounter. In any case, his discourse about his uncle in analysis was hateful, resentful, and full of thoughts about telling his parents. Indeed, his most common vindictive thought consisted of "confronting" his uncle about the molestation and asking him to apologize.

His resentment toward his uncle seemed rather incommensurate with the events as he described them, suggesting perhaps 1) that the sexual encounters retroactively took on meanings they did not have at the outset, 2) that some element of the encounters may have been overlooked in his initial telling of them, and 3) that a certain amount of resentment had been displaced onto the uncle from other figures. In fact, all three of these were probably true:

1 To have sex with his uncle, his mother's brother, was, he felt, to lash out at his mother—to rebel against her and express anger toward her—and he felt terribly guilty about it after the fact. He seems to have concluded that, as a father figure, the uncle should have said no to Patrick, that it was the uncle's responsibility to refuse Patrick's invitation. We might surmise that this substitute father figure's refusal

to prohibit an illicit relationship with a member of the maternal side of the family recalled the father's failure to interfere in Patrick's relationship with his mother, which Patrick considered to be overly close. Patrick thus felt as if he had been handed over by his father to his mother as compensation for the father's inability or refusal to make his wife happy. Patrick's resentment at being handed over to his mother (or to another member of the mother's family) by his father seemed to build only long after the sexual encounter with the uncle. Indeed, resentment might be thought to have accrued to the event on every subsequent occasion when Patrick felt his own mother was weighing him down, sapping his energy, controlling him, or guilt-tripping him.

2 There was an element of the initial sexual encounter with the uncle that was a long time in coming out: when the uncle kissed Patrick on the neck, Patrick experienced it as aggressive. He described it as a "lunge," an "attack," and a "violation." He was so shocked by it that he ejaculated at that very moment. "It tickled" him, and he said it was "too much," it was "overwhelming." The fact that he experienced it as so overwhelming might lead us to suspect earlier experiences of being kissed on the neck or tickled in some such way, but no related experiences ever came out in the course of our years of work together. Still, clues as to its significance to him may be seen elsewhere: in a nightmare he had, a cockroach came out of a crack in the wall and landed on his neck, horrifying him; he associated the cockroach with his mother due to certain details of the dream. A further clue may be seen in a fantasy and his associations to it: He was to be sold to the highest bidder and the bidding was to begin at $10,000; he asked the auctioneer why the initial bid was so high and was told that the buyer would have the right to slit his throat while having sex with him. When we discussed the fantasy in a session, the first person he thought of in regard to slitting his throat was his mother. His uncle's kiss on his neck during their initial sexual encounter thus seems to have constituted a sort of *kiss of death*. Counterintuitively, it seems thus that at least part of the traumatic effect of the sexual encounter had nothing to do with what would legally constitute "abuse" or "molestation," but with a kiss on the neck. This kiss had a somewhat unique—though by no means totally unique—signification to Patrick, presumably due to unknown earlier experiences, and led to immediate orgasm, creating an association or link in his mind between sex and death. (Lacan, 2004, p. 198, discusses the close link on certain occasions between anxiety and orgasm.)

3 I mentioned earlier that it seemed likely that some of the seemingly incommensurate anger directed in later years toward the uncle might have been displaced onto him from other figures, and this appears to be borne out by the recollection of a further traumatic episode, one that occurred earlier in Patrick's life.

When this further event came to light, Patrick claimed he had not thought about it in some 15 years. This might be at least one of the reasons why Lacan (1973–74) refers to trauma as a hole or gap—*un trou*—forging the pun *troumatisme* (class given February 19, 1974): it is something *missing* from the subject's memory and history.[4]

At age 11, Patrick's first cousin on his mother's side molested him. The cousin, whom I will pseudonymously refer to here as Dick, was several years older than Patrick, considerably stronger, and had been mean to Patrick on several earlier occasions. The story once again took quite a long time for him to piece together, parts of it surfacing at various times over the course of at least a year.

Patrick's mother was very close to her sister—Dick's mother—and loved spending hours chatting with her. One day, Patrick's mother brought Patrick with her to her sister's house and, while the two women were talking, Dick locked Patrick in his bedroom and forced Patrick to perform fellatio on him. Patrick apparently called out numerous times for his mother, but she did not come—presumably she had not

heard him. The cousin purportedly taunted him at first for being such a baby, crying for his mommy, and Patrick was shamed into shutting up. He then tried to climb out the window of the bedroom, but Dick physically stopped him from escaping. When Dick forced his penis into Patrick's mouth, Patrick—not knowing about ejaculation yet—thought that Dick was urinating in his mouth and was rather horrified by it.

This particular event thus involved not simply an older boy who forced his will upon Patrick; it involved a mother who did not hear or protect her son. Indeed, there are some indications that Dick had been cruel in other ways to Patrick prior to this episode, and that Patrick had for some time indicated to his mother that he did not like visiting Dick. In other words, the event seems to have involved a mother who exposed her child to some sort of violence at the hands of her nephew, despite her own child's objections and protests.

If Patrick's reluctance to visit his cousin was not obvious to his mother prior to this first sexual encounter, it was clearly evident thereafter, for Patrick claims to have protested every time his mother subsequently proposed to go visit her sister and Dick. When she asked Patrick *why* he did not want to go, he never said. In analysis, he told me that he wanted to protect Dick because he knew Dick would get in trouble if he told on him. Dick had a reputation as the bad boy in the family, whereas Patrick was the good boy held up as a model child by Dick's mother to Dick. Patrick no doubt identified with Dick to some degree: he would have liked to be less of a goody-goody, less obedient toward his parents and teachers than he was. He would have liked to be more like Dick.

In other words, the situation here included the fact that Patrick believed he was not man enough, having refused to participate in Little League and scouting, and felt intimidated by a boy who called him a sissy for crying for his mother. It seems likely that such a boy could well have been associated in Patrick's mind with his father who was forever criticizing him and who clearly considered him to be more of a sissy than his younger brothers.

Other sexual encounters with Dick seem to have occurred after the first, despite Patrick's reluctance to visit Dick. A number of years into the analytic work, Patrick said that he felt responsible for what happened with Dick, suggesting a growing acceptance of the fact that there had been some complicity on his part in the continued sexual activity between them. He remarked that this must somehow be related to his attitude toward cases of child molestation he heard about as part of his training as a mental health professional: he found, to his surprise, that *he had absolutely no empathy for children who had reputedly been sexually abused*. He found himself completely uninterested in such cases and unsympathetic to such children's pain.

Much further on in the analysis he noted that he continued to have very "fond feelings" for Dick, this cousin who treated him so roughly, whereas he could still muster up intense anger toward his uncle who treated him in a "loving, caring way."

Aftershocks

Let me turn now to the effects of the backdrop to these two sets of events and of the events themselves in Patrick's life as an adult.

Inability to Express Anger Directly

In his everyday life, Patrick was generally incapable of saying what he wanted and what he did not want, of working out arrangements and setting limits with roommates, and of expressing anger when someone upset him. He described everything in terms of "boundary issues": people never respected his boundaries, and rather than address such things directly, he claimed that he became "passive aggressive." The pop psychology category did not really fit here, as is so often the case; there was nothing *passive* about the way Patrick expressed his aggressiveness: it was simply indirect and/or done in secret. He did things behind people's backs, rifled through their belongings while they were out, was ironic and sarcastic to their faces, and deliberately did things to get on their nerves.

The angrier he felt at someone, the more complimentary he would often become toward that person. The more he wanted to explode at someone, the harder he would try to hide it—being sure the person would notice his attempts at dissimulation. He always expected people to take revenge on him if he expressed the slightest annoyance with them. It was only after several years of analysis, for example, that he began to be able to tell his mother she was bothering him when she was—and still he felt guilty about doing so for quite some time. He often felt that if he was late for a session or paid me late, I would take revenge on him by terminating with him. If he expressed anger about scheduling or about how the therapy was proceeding, he believed I would take it personally, he would feel terrible, and I would stop seeing him altogether. There was, of course, a wish therein to have me put an end to his analysis—thereby relieving him of the effort required to change things—but there were also at least two other things at work:

1 the need he felt to protect the fragile, parental other, despite his intense anger at that other, and
2 the wish to be punished by me for what he referred to as his "acting out" (by which he usually meant nothing more than acting "badly") and his "passive aggressive" behavior toward me.

The latter—his wish to be punished by me—played an important part in the transference. For years, Patrick refused to have more than one session a week with me, partly because of his sorry financial situation; partly because he viewed once a week as the norm in American psychotherapeutic contexts and to have more sessions would mean he was really "nuts"; and partly because he found it scary to put his faith in me. At times he said he was afraid I would try to turn him into a heterosexual, a "fear" he expressed so often at the outset that it seemed clearly to contain certain wishful elements as well (indeed, on one occasion, he came with a young woman to a seminar I was giving, and ostentatiously draped his arm around her shoulders all evening—to convince me that he was bisexual, as he told me afterward in a session). At other times, he said he was afraid that analysis would take away his fantasies or steal from him the enjoyment he derived from them. Other people seemed to him to be fundamentally untrustworthy, and were presumed to want to take from him what he had (as he felt his mother did).

Aware that psychoanalysis usually involves several sessions per week, Patrick seemed to always expect me to criticize him for his refusal to have more frequent sessions. Whatever I did was read by him as a sign that I was criticizing or punishing him, and he did not hide the fact that he enjoyed thinking such things. He interpreted his "forgetting" what he had said from one session to the next as his way of asking me to punish him, as was his reluctance to talk about anything other than everyday concerns, even though he knew from his reading that this was not the stuff of analysis. He did not dream, according to him, or if he did, he could not remember his dreams. When he said he "supposed [he] could keep a notebook and pencil next to [his] bed" and I said "Umm …" it did not happen. When I would change the subject during a session from an everyday complaint by asking him about his fantasies and dreams, he would take it as a punishment and get a kick out of it. If I ended a session when he said something that struck me as particularly important, he would sometimes take it as a punishment and get off on it, feeling he was finally receiving the punishment from me that he craved.[5]

The stimulus such redirections and punctuations (see Fink, 2007, Chapter 3) give certain analysands was often simply a source of pleasure in punishment for Patrick, leading to little if anything by way of analytic work. When Patrick began to tell me about what he referred to as "S&M" sex—and I will talk in some detail about what he meant by this further on—his wish was that I would tell him not to engage in such activities, that I would tell him that it was bad for him, and that I would show a strong interest in protecting him from these things. I would rescue him from hurting himself and punish him for being a "bad boy" (like his cousin Dick?). My expression of anger toward him would prove I cared.

It might be thought that Patrick was asking me to lay down the law for him, a law he felt his father had not provided—and I think many therapists would have been highly inclined to comply by simply handing down orders. Yet it seems to me that it is not the analyst's immediate role in such cases to "lay down the law" or represent the law somehow for analysands, but rather to underscore and interpret the appeal made by an analysand to the analyst to do so. For it is an appeal to an Other, an outside force, to hold the subject in check: the attempt or wish to set up an outside force that would check the subject's drives.[6]

In the session in which Patrick first talked about "S&M" sex and his fantasy that I would intervene when I saw how "serious" it was, he went on to remark that he would not accept any such intervention on my part and, in fact, hoped I would say, "It's okay"—in other words, that I would give him permission. I did neither for quite some time, adopting something of a wait-and-see attitude.

The appeal on the analysand's part to an outside force suggests a conflict within the subject, a conflict that is burning up a great deal of energy.[7] In the years prior to engaging in "S&M" sex, Patrick

complained of not being able to "*enjoy* [*his*] *enjoyment*," of not being able to be of one mind in his sexual pleasures, such that all his sexual encounters were somehow tainted. His guilt and uptightness during sex were such that one could surmise a severe superego seemingly ruining most satisfaction of the drives.[8] Patrick even spoke of indulging in his guilt, as if guilt itself were enjoyable to him.

It seemed to me that the point was not to try to lay down the law immediately, but rather to explore Patrick's relation to a law that was already in place, at least in the form of a hypercritical superego: he was never good enough, smart enough, or working hard enough. No matter how many degrees he got, he would never be as successful as his father. Indeed, Patrick manifested certain typically neurotic features in relation to his father: when the phone rang early one morning, waking him up, he imagined it was to announce to him that his father had died. His immediate thought was: "What a relief not to have to have to try to live up to his expectations anymore."

Nevertheless, his wish for punishment from me and his attempt to read the majority of my interventions as an implicit criticism of him remained important facets of the transference for quite some time. It availed little for me to remind him, for example, that I punctuated and/or ended sessions on what I considered to be important points; he continued to read punctuations, interpretations, and scansions as punishments, first and foremost.

Fantasy Life

Let me turn now more directly to Patrick's fantasy life. When Patrick first began working with me, thoughts of his uncle would very often come to him during his masturbation fantasies; he described such thoughts as "intrusive" and was obviously very distressed by them. These thoughts ceased once most of the elements of the sexual encounter with the uncle had been brought out.

Others developed, however, many of which Patrick found disturbing and had a hard time even remembering, much less discussing in his sessions. There were fantasies of having someone urinate in his mouth, fantasies of being raped, fantasies of having someone choke him with his penis while Patrick performed oral sex on him, and even a fantasy of having sex with his father.[9] Some of these fantasies harked back to his sexual relations with his cousin—above all, the urination and choking fantasies. Like those of many other analysands, Patrick's fantasies evolved considerably over the course of the years of analytic work, as if exploring all possible organs and orifices, and all imaginable power combinations, including having his penis pierced, being led around on a leash, having someone order him to eat feces, being castrated, being "pounded" during anal sex, molesting a younger man himself, and so on. Analysands are sometimes frightened by specific fantasies, but the analyst must bear in mind that most such fantasies appear but once or twice and, assuming they are discussed in the analysis in a thoroughgoing way, give way to other fantasies running the gamut of the analysand's libidinal possibilities. Some of the fantasies may persist for a while, but few remain the same for years. Like dreams, fantasies "join in" and become part of the analytic dialogue, changing as the dialogue evolves, and presenting new material in response to discussions and interpretations during the sessions.

One element that seemed to dominate Patrick's sexual fantasies and actual experiences with partners was whether he had control over what was happening or not. Consciously, he wanted to be in control and would feel anxious if he did not have control over the situation, but his fantasies often went in the direction of a loss of control on his part: his partner would push him further than he wanted to go and he would get explosively angry. He would become very calm after such outbursts of anger in his fantasies.

Trust in me grew over the years, and after four years he said he realized for the first time that I was not trying to make him "straight"—realizing at the same time that it had been a projection on his part all along, for he had been trying to make himself heterosexual. I could be trusted, he felt, not to take his enjoyment away from him, and he became willing to talk more openly about his fantasies. At around the same time, fantasies involving his uncle and cousin disappeared. One might say that some of his "bad jouissance" (as one of my analysands once put it) or "bad enjoyment" evaporated.

Love Life

Patrick had had mostly short-lived relationships with men when he first came to analysis. He had often fallen for men whom he described as "virile" and who were not gay; he devoted considerable effort to seducing them, which proved to be in vain. One important facet of his love life was his penchant for men who were already involved with someone else, and who were thus inaccessible, creating elaborately strained love triangles. Here we might think of the "impossible desire" typical of obsessive neurosis.

Patrick felt he had a small penis and would only date men whose penises were bigger than his. He always wanted to play the role of "bottom" in anal sex, and quickly left any man who wanted him to play the role of "top." At times he lamented the fact that he did not have a vagina, and could not give an only-recently-out-of-the-closet boyfriend a child—he felt this man would leave him for a woman who could give him a child. He was particularly interested in men with good, stable jobs who, like his father, would be able to support him as a "housewife." Here we see a fairly obvious identification with his mother: wanting to play a wifely role in relation to a man like his father.

Although he was ostensibly interested in decisive men, no-nonsense men, in the course of his analysis he had a year-long relationship with a rather wishy-washy man, and the two could never decide on anything, as they were always asking each other: "What do you want to do?" "I don't know—what do *you* want to do?"

He claimed to fall in love with men who were "needy"—indeed, with men who were "in need" of something but did not know it. Their neediness gave him a place, a sense of purpose in filling their need. His most common sexual fantasy involved performing fellatio on a man, which might be understood as his fulfilling the male Other's need, filling his lack, bringing him jouissance, making him whole somehow. On the other hand, bringing the partner jouissance could be understood as a way of shutting the partner up, of suppressing any and all signs of desire, dissatisfaction, or criticism on the partner's part—which is something Patrick wanted to do yet felt incapable of doing in relation to his mother.

Patrick would usually end up acting very competitively toward other men: he always felt he was trying to prove he was better than they were and was always involved in a "power struggle." In one fantasy, he imagined he was being forced to swallow a man's penis—he resolved to wrest it from the man and have that virile man's penis inside him. In general he said he found it far easier to get along with women than with men, for he did not try to compete with them. Toward the end of his analysis, Patrick said that he noticed that the men he met were not nearly as aggressive toward him as he at first imagined them to be, and that much of the aggressiveness came from him.

Sex Life

Over the years, cybersex began to play a larger and larger role in Patrick's sexuality; he would meet different partners online and write messages back and forth while masturbating (this was in the mid-1990s). While at times he seemed to be looking for love, at other times the goal seemed to be to quickly find someone to exchange phone numbers with who would play the role of master with him on the phone, telling him to hit himself with a belt, and so on, while masturbating. In session, Patrick would often laugh about these incidents, saying that while his partner thought he was really hitting himself and letting himself be dominated, he was actually just hitting the table or the phone and pretending to play along.

This activity blossomed into a long period of trying out a variety of cybersex/phone-sex partners, including some who wanted him to play a teenage boy for a daddy, and even the occasional one who wanted *him* to play the master. Usually calling himself an "aggressive bottom," one day he played the master ("top"), enjoyed being sadistic, and as he ejaculated thought, "I can't wait to tell Dr. Fink." He told me he was sure I must think he "should become sadistic." In other words, he believed that *sadism was somehow the truth of his masochistic sexual fantasies*, as though the one were merely the flip side of the other (see Chapter 8, "An Introduction to 'Kant with Sade,'" in the present volume). He said that he would turn the anger he felt toward sadistic partners against himself, and would feel very calm and relieved after he had been punished—he presumably standing in for the torture-worthy partner in such instances. He said that his will to be submissive actually covered over a will to dominate, the truest facet of himself being the exact opposite of what he showed the world.

A few years into the analysis, Patrick's sexual activity moved cautiously from masturbation via the computer keyboard and telephone keypad to sexual acts he characterized as "S&M" sex with partners whom he characterized as "sadistic." I put *S&M* and *sadistic* in quotes, because there are a number of provisos to be mentioned here:

- First of all, Patrick established numerous ground rules with his partners—met over the Internet for the most part—ground rules designed to ensure that they took their punishing activities with him no further than he had agreed to in advance. In other words, there was a symbolic pact that was made prior to the commencement of the "sadistic" activities, and it governed the entire encounter.[10] One important area that pact covered was the agreement to engage in nothing that might be understood as "unsafe sex." Patrick tended to prefer partners he trusted—trusted not to go too far—with whom he could relax, knowing they would play according to the rules of the game. One of the things Patrick appreciated most about this form of sex was that *he had no responsibility whatsoever for second-guessing what his partner wanted*: his partner simply commanded him to do what the partner wanted him to do, and that was that. With someone Patrick loved, on the other hand, he would get so caught up in trying to ensure his partner's pleasure that he would have little enjoyment himself. In this so-called "S&M" sex, there was no question as to what his partner desired—there was no need for Patrick to rack his brains figuring out what his partner desired above and beyond what he said he wanted. The enigma of what the Other desires—and the attendant anxiety that gives rise to in most of us (Lacan, 2004, pp. 14–18)—was put out of play here, the Other's demand coming to the fore completely.
- Another important proviso about this kind of sex is that while Patrick purportedly played the part of the slave whose only aim was to please his master, the masters he chose seemed especially concerned with seeing to it that Patrick was fully satisfied during their encounters.
- The so-called torture scenes involved no activities that might lead to any sort of permanent mark on the

body or scarring, no enduring pain of any kind at all, not even black and blue marks.
- Finally, so-called torture scenes tended to end with Patrick being tenderly held by his "sadistic" partner.

I mention these things not to suggest that there was *nothing* sadistic about this form of sexual behavior: involved were catheters, butt plugs, nipple clamps, clothespins, and a whole range of paraphernalia, all of which could produce pain of various intensities and durations. But there was little—or so it seemed to me—resembling the more classically Sadean form of sadism (see Chapter 8 of the present volume) in which one's partner might declare that he has every right to use and abuse you as he sees fit (regardless of any sort of pre-existing contract). We seem to have here, instead, a kind of *playing at* sadism on the part of his partners.[11]

According to Patrick, while in these sexual encounters he ostensibly wanted to be punished, what he really wanted was to be loved. He found a number of sexual partners who seemed to realize this and gave him love, comfort, and tenderness after a certain dose of pain. He felt that were he to let someone know how much he wanted to be loved, the person would be scared away, putting an end to the relationship. Thus, he had to keep his desire to be loved carefully hidden. The male Other, faced with Patrick's desire to be loved, would "run the other way," he said.

These "S&M" sexual scenarios can perhaps be understood as hinting at the following fantasy structure, complete with transformations designed to disguise what was really at issue (see Chapter 3 in the present volume, "Fantasies and the Fundamental Fantasy: An Introduction"):

Phase one: I am being shown love by my father.
Phase two: I am being abused by my father.
Phase three: I am being abused by a man.

The term "abuse" here, as in the case of "the Freud Man" (discussed in Chapter 14 of the present volume), allows us to include physical acts involving both sex and punishment.

Discussion and Conclusions

The events we deal with in psychoanalysis that are referred to by our analysands as "traumatic" often would not be considered "traumatic events" by anyone else. The widespread use of terms like "trauma," "traumatic," and "traumatized" are such that a French friend of mine could easily say that he was "traumatized" by the American tendency to add sugar to virtually every kind of savory food, from salad dressing to chicken. The word, in such a usage, means no more than that he was impressed or surprised, and hardly merits further discussion. However, in analysis we need to be aware that events that, in and of themselves, do not seem they could possibly have been traumatic, actually were, due either to a configuration of the actors involved that was particularly significant to the subject and/or to meanings the events *subsequently* took on.

An event takes on the value or status of a trauma against a certain backdrop, owing to a certain life context. Two different people, subjected to similar events, often have very different reactions: what may be experienced as traumatic by one is experienced very differently by the other. In certain instances, we also find that *what does not at the outset seem to be an especially traumatic event draws to itself a whole set of emotions and meanings that inscribe it as a trauma or transform it into a trauma after the fact.* Thus, so many different meanings accrue to it that we are led to refer to it as traumatic simply due to the number of its after-effects.

I am not saying anything new about trauma in saying this, but Patrick's case seems to abundantly illustrate it, especially when we consider the first traumatic event to come to light in his analysis: his initial sexual encounter with his maternal uncle. While Patrick's sexual orientation seemed to grow organically out of his entire childhood (recall his age-ten crush on his father's male friend who looked a lot like his father), the form in which his sexual interests expressed themselves for a number of years seemed to grow fairly clearly out of his experiences with his cousin at age 11. These were experiences in which Patrick felt considerable anxiety—not knowing, at least in the first few, what his cousin was doing or what his cousin wanted from him—and that he seemed to become fixated on thereafter, repeating them in fantasies and much later in more deliberately "controlled" environments. The elements of force and rape began coloring all of his fantasy life starting in adolescence, and colored much of his sex life as an adult as well. The meanings of such fantasies and sexual activities are, I suspect, somewhat different in different cases. In his case they took on aspects of his relationships with his parents since his earliest childhood: the perceived impossibility of expressing anger with either of his parents, and the sense that love could only take the form of criticism and punishment (recall his comment, "I owe my father pain").

Diagnosis

Would it make sense to talk about Patrick as a masochist? Much of his sexual experimentation would be considered masochistic by the layman, and the larger question this raises is whether behavior dictates diagnosis. It seems to me that while certain behaviors engaged in may give us a hint or two as to the subject's clinical structure, they are rarely enough to provide a convincing diagnosis.[12] Many a behavior (whether it be excessive rumination, abuse of alcohol or drugs, cutting, repetitive checking, severe restriction of food, or bulimic-style eating) is engaged in by people with very different clinical structures. Those who would believe that specific incidents can occasionally determine clinical structure would do well, in my view, to keep in mind that Patrick had been developing for 11 years prior to his anxiety-provoking encounters with his cousin, an age beyond which "deep" clinical structure is rarely considered to be subject to change.[13] Some might argue that traumatic events can be sufficient to alter psychical structure at almost any age; but we can at least raise the question whether we are not, in fact, dealing here with a structure that was well established before age 11, upon which traumatic experiences grafted a repetition compulsion that did not fundamentally alter the psychical structure but simply made things appear otherwise than they were.

Let us consider various possible diagnoses here, ruling out psychosis in advance, there seeming to be, to my mind at least, no signs whatsoever of psychosis in Patrick's presentation.

In view of preparing a manageable case presentation for a conference explicitly centered on the topic of trauma, I have obviously had to leave out large quantities of the clinical material discussed by Patrick over the course of seven years, but we have nevertheless already seen a number of elements of hysteria in his case (for example, in the forgetting of his early experiences with his cousin and of the details of his encounters with his uncle) and of obsession as well (for instance, in his pursuit of straight men he could not have and of gay men already involved with someone else, seemingly impossible quests). His tendency to blame others for his miserable predicament, failing to see the role he himself played in getting himself into and failing to get himself out of numerous situations, certainly smacked of hysteria. The predominance of guilt and self-recriminations, on the other hand, were more reminiscent of obsession.

Repression could be understood to have shown its face in Patrick's forgetting of numerous life events, fantasies, and dreams, and the return of the repressed in the intrusive thoughts related to his uncle that thrust themselves into his masturbation fantasies. Were there any signs of disavowal, that rather different yet not easily discernible mechanism of negation Freud and Lacan talk about in relation to fetishism, and more generally, to perversion? From a Lacanian standpoint, it is the predominant mechanism of negation that prevails in the establishing of a diagnosis (Fink, 1997, Chapter 6), not any particular sexual or other behavior. It might be postulated, by some, that the equation Patrick made between love and punishment constituted disavowal, in the sense of a maintenance of two contradictory ideas at the same time in the same psychical agency (the ego, in this case). However, the fact that such an equation is made to at least some degree by virtually everyone makes this rather unconvincing to my mind.[14] I was never able to confirm that Patrick, like Freud's (1963b) fetishists, simultaneously believed both that women had penises and that they did not. Nor do I recall having encountered in our work together what I subsequently came to formulate as the both/and logic characteristic of perversion (see Fink, 2003, also included as Chapter 9 in Volume 1 of the present collection). What then could constitute a structural diagnosis of perversion in his case?

I mentioned earlier that the partners he most often sought out for his "S&M" activities seemed more to play at sadism than to act sadistically with no holds barred. Their sex games (usually involving Patrick

and a couple, one member of which he would have liked to steal from the other) were highly ritualized, for the most part, and verbally rehearsed in detail in advance; in addition, there were clear signals Patrick was to give if, for any reason whatsoever, he became uncomfortable with what was happening. Moreover, his preferred partners would lovingly hold and caress Patrick once the physical punishment was over. Hardly the kind of behavior one associates with genuine sadism!

I am going into this in some detail for a couple of reasons. First of all, there seems to have been a true explosion of this kind of sexual activity over the past five or ten years—which is being catered to by a growing paraphernalia industry and a whole slew of Internet chat rooms and news groups—and it is important to understand something about the nature of the activities being engaged in (which in 2013 seem to have almost become "the new normal," leading one to wonder why so many now feel they are so bad and need to be punished!).[15] In certain cases, these activities are probably *not* preceded by anything like a symbolic pact; but my sense is that in a great many cases, they are. In theory at least, the pact rules out anxiety in the "victim's" experience, and anxiety is generally considered to be crucial to the sadist (one could nevertheless postulate that, even when there is a pact, the "tormentor" can always imagine that the "victim" will be anxiously wondering whether his tormentor will truly abide by it or not).

A pact seems to simultaneously rule out anxiety in the "tormentor," insofar as the "victim" has specified what he is willing to undergo in advance, there being little or no question in the tormentor's mind about the victim desiring or demanding to go further than the tormentor can stand. The masochist, at least insofar as I have been able to formulate what he seeks most assiduously, generally feels a need to go so far in his self-abasement or abjection that his tormentor cannot bear it anymore and puts a stop to the victim's will to self-degradation and/or self-destruction (see Fink, 1997, Chapter 9). Again, I could see little or nothing of this kind in Patrick's "S&M" sex games (although one could, in theory, postulate that even when there is a pact, the victim can always imagine that the tormentor will be anxiously wondering whether his victim will abide by it).

In short, there was nothing in either the sexual activities Patrick engaged in or in his fantasies (at least as reported to me) that suggested that it was somehow important to him to induce anxiety in his partner or that it was important to his partner to arouse anxiety in him. In his concrete sexual activities, everything unfolded in accordance with ground rules laid down at the outset, and Patrick described this kind of sex as satisfying, calming, and relieving.

In other words, the ruling out of anxiety in the partner by means of a pact agreed to in advance seems to suggest something more along the lines of a playing at sadism and masochism than structural sadism and masochism (and yet one might argue that the very concern with having a pact suggests that anxiety is implicitly, that is, unconsciously, recognized by both partners to be key and as thus having to be explicitly, that is, consciously, excluded). Patrick's move from cybersex and phone sex to so-called dungeons and torture chambers certainly gave me pause for thought; he talked about such things for a very long time before ever doing anything, and I was concerned in some respects that I had missed something, seeing hysteria instead of masochism. A certain modicum of masochism can be found in virtually all clinical structures—and indeed, Lacan might be understood to view something about all human subjectivity as fundamentally masochistic, insofar as there is a sense in which the subject must die in order to come to life in a world of language shared with others. Freud (1961c, p. 164) goes so far as to say that "the death [drive] which is operative in the organism [...] is identical with masochism," suggesting thereby that all human beings are masochistic to a greater or lesser degree (indeed, it is not clear whether any of the types of masochism Freud enumerates—"erotogenic," "feminine," or "moral"—can be automatically equated with clinical structures or diagnostic categories in the Lacanian sense). The

question to my mind was whether Patrick went at some point beyond merely playing at masochism, and should be understood as a masochist, structurally speaking.

Freud and Lacan seem to agree that, generally speaking, neurotics merely dream or fantasize about what perverts actually do. Patrick once recounted to me a fantasy he had had in which *the symbolic pact was violated*, Patrick being drugged and forced to have unsafe sex with numerous men. This seemed to me to indicate which side of the watershed between neurosis and perversion Patrick fell on, insofar as it was precisely that—a fantasy. If fantasy can, in certain cases, be understood as the staging of a transgression of the law, as a transgression of the symbolic pact, we see that the law was clearly in place here.

Were Patrick to be understood as a masochist, diagnostically speaking, it seems to me that we would have had to see something like a will to self-debasement on his part that went so far that his sadistic partners would feel they had to put a stop to his punishment, setting certain limits. We would expect to see a will or drive to be punished (*se faire punir*) that would go so far that the partner would finally refuse to go any further, would establish limits to punishment, lay down or enunciate the law for Patrick. The limits normally would not be there at the outset, but would only be set in the course of the masochistic scenario and due to its going "too far," beyond all limits "acceptable" to the partner.

Nevertheless, perhaps all of this discussion has been seeking to locate the partner in the wrong place. I say this because at a certain point about six years into the therapy, Patrick began telling me about occasions on which things went so far with certain sexual partners that I myself became very concerned (that is, anxious) about his safety. We can obviously wonder whether he was simply pursuing his own sexual interests at the time and recounting them to me in sessions, or whether his pursuit of apparently dangerous satisfactions was at least in part motivated by a wish to tell me about them in order to get some sort of reaction or rise out of me. Many clinicians would have immediately assumed his behavior was directed at me or a message of some kind to me—indeed, an acting out—but this did not seem so clear to me at the outset. If he had been trying to gauge my degree of anxiety regarding his accounts of his sexual activities, it remained quite subtle, leaving me unsure as to whether this was something addressed to me (as Other) or not. This assessment was further complicated by the fact that we were only talking twice a month at that particular moment in time; I more often have the impression that I am at least one of the addressees of analysands' activities when we are meeting more regularly.[16]

The decision I made was to tell him—feeling that his commitment to the therapy was strong enough by then for this to have an impact—that I was making the continuation of the therapy conditional upon the cessation of the "S&M" activities. Much to my surprise, he readily agreed to put a stop to such activities and even turned his amorous attentions elsewhere. When the analysand's drives begin to tend in the direction of death—and, as Lacan (2006a, p. 848) tells us, "every drive is virtually a death drive" insofar as all drives are compulsive, "acephalous" (Lacan, 1973, p. 165, or "headless" as rendered in Lacan, 1978a, p. 181), and have no internal limits (see Chapter 4, "Compulsive Eating and the Death Drive," in Volume 1 of the present collection)—we analysts must use whatever leverage we have to counter their lethal tendencies, allying with the analysand's attachment to life. Making the continuation of the therapy contingent upon the cessation of certain activities is a card we cannot play until it has become clear that the analysand is more attached to the therapy and the therapist than to certain of his forms of enjoyment and can often only be played once.

I have occasionally played this card with self-destructive patients, but it is hardly clear to me that my sense that I needed to do so was always based on anything more than the kind of masochistic tendencies that can be found in virtually all of us, at one time or another. In certain cases, I believe I have played this card more out of annoyance with patients' refusal to take even minimal care of themselves and their

repetitive breach of professional ethics in their own fields; but, were I to play devil's advocate with myself, I might have to conclude that in each of those cases the patient's own apparently willful neglect of self and of the rules protecting those they work with was, at least in part, motivated by a wish to force me to take some kind of action or lay down some kind of law. Can the analyst, then, at times be the partner in whom the masochist seeks, unbeknown to himself, to arouse anxiety so that just such a law will be imposed upon him? This certainly seems possible.

But why would the one-time expression of such a limit by the analyst put a stop to all masochistic activity when, theoretically speaking at least, it is a failing at the level of the law in the masochist's childhood (Fink, 1997, Chapter 9) that gives rise to a repetitive and indeed never-ending search for such limit setting? I would be at a loss to explain this, which is why I am more inclined to see Patrick not as masochistic, structurally speaking, but rather as a neurotic caught up in a repetition compulsion set in motion by his first sexual encounters with his cousin at age 11. Rather than somehow resolving a structural problem, my intervention perhaps simply helped him put a stop to a quite compelling jouissance. Patrick may have felt that, unlike his mother, I heard his cry for help, and showed care, concern, and love, which was enough for him to begin to care for himself.

Follow-up

The so-called S&M form of sexuality Patrick had begun to engage in during the course of his analysis was by no means a final configuration of his libido. While there may have been a certain sense in which sadism was initially the "truth" of Patrick's masochistic behavior, subsequent developments suggested that hurting or being hurt were no longer the only possible ways for Patrick to love or be loved. I obviously would not suggest that he arrived at some sort of perfect, harmonious love configuration as the outcome of his analytic work—does such a thing even exist?—but my sense was that his love and sexual relations shifted considerably over the course of the year following my intervention. They no doubt continued to shift thereafter in ways whose direction I could not possibly predict.

Whether it was ultimately a case of neurosis (hysteria?) or of masochism, the solution found looked a lot more to me like the former than the latter. (I cannot argue here with conviction for hysteria as opposed to obsession, as I did not feel that Patrick's fundamental fantasy came clearly into view in the course of our work together.) The stakes involved in diagnosis in this case seem to me to revolve around the question of how early in the treatment an intervention could have been made. It was only in the fifth year of Patrick's analysis that he began experimenting with actual (as opposed to virtual) "S&M" sex, but perhaps a better read on the situation would have allowed me to "nip it in the bud," so to speak, instead of allowing it to go as far as it did. Unfortunately, one never necessarily knows until after the fact whether one had at the time the necessary leverage with the analysand for such an intervention to have the desired effect. Such is one of the many difficulties in psychoanalytic work calculating the most effective timing of interpretations and other interventions.

An earlier version of this paper, presenting what was at the time an ongoing case, was given at a conference on "Psychoanalysis and Trauma" held at Cornell University March 27–29, 1998, sponsored by the Society for the Humanities (where I was a fellow during the 1997–98 academic year).

Notes

1 He was promised, if he was good, a kind of lollipop; he could not remember what kind, but said "it was *not* a blow pop." Note that performing oral sex on a man is one of his favorite sexual activities and fantasies, and that pop is a common term for father in America.

2 Something similar occurred once while he was kissing a girl in a closet at home: his mother came in unexpectedly, told his father, and got him spanked. This may have been out of prudery, but may well have been still more out of jealousy, the mother wanting all of Patrick's attention and affection for herself.

3 Obviously, something need not legally qualify as molestation to have a traumatic effect on someone, and vice versa: what legally qualifies as molestation need not necessarily have a traumatic effect on someone.

4 The main reason Lacan seems to have put the words *trou* (hole) and trauma together in that context has to do with the fact that "there is no such thing as a sexual relationship."

5 If I did not end a session when he felt he had nothing further to say, he believed I was deliberately torturing him.

6 The attempt to legislate conditions, especially at early stages of many forms of psychotherapeutic treatment, usually have the unintended effect of chasing the analysand away altogether. Consider the inevitably ineffective use of "contracts" with suicidal patients in many contemporary forms of psychotherapy: the contract is only good until the patient feels bad enough to kill him- or herself, and it is rarely the fact of having signed some piece of paper with a therapist that stops him or her. The analyst needs, instead, to express his or her desire that analysis be conducted in such and such a way. To tell a patient, "Either you give up drugs (alcohol, tobacco, some specific form of sex, or whatever gets the patient off), or there is no point coming back to analysis" seems to defeat the very purpose of the analysis: the fact that the analysand has sought out the analyst precisely to figure out how to get off drugs or stop drinking, and does not yet know how to do so.

7 A number of analysands I have worked with over the years have even begun their analyses with requests that I forbid them certain activities and pleasures. In one case (see Chapter 10 in Volume 1 of the present collection), a new potential analysand wanted me to tell him to stop looking at pornography, and in another case, stop cheating on his wife.

8 Except for those associated with the superego itself.

9 There was also one dream in which it seemed he was going to have sex with me.

10 We perhaps see here an example of the masochist who dictates the law to be enunciated to the Other, as discussed in Chapter 8 of the present volume; an example of such a pact can be found in Sacher-Masoch (1991).

11 Freud (1961c) characterizes "masochistic perverts" as engaging in "a carrying-out of [punishment] phantasies *in play*" (emphasis added), suggesting that "it is far more rare for mutilations to be included in the content, and then only subject to strict limitations. […] The masochist wants to be treated like a small and helpless child, but, particularly, like a naughty child" (p. 162). Patrick would thus likely qualify as a "masochistic pervert," according to Freud's criteria, but we shall see what might be thought of this from a Lacanian standpoint further on.

12 Voyeuristic and exhibitionist scenarios that continually escalate to the point of virtually demanding the intervention of legal authorities may be exceptions to this.

13 Compare my comments on this topic with those I made in Chapter 11 of the present volume.

14 Consider the comment made by one of my clearly obsessive analysands to the effect that one must "care enough about a kid to punish him."

15 Freud (1961c) refers to a "need for punishment," which apparently grows out of an unresolved Oedipus complex, leading to what he had formerly called (using a "psychologically incorrect" term) an "unconscious sense of guilt" (p. 166). He might also, or alternatively, have viewed the fact that more and more people today seem to feel a need for punishment as owing to the ever greater suppression of the aggressive drives (i.e., the "death instinct") in our culture.

16 We should certainly recall that, in the course of my work with Patrick, he one day had the thought, "I can't wait to tell Dr. Fink," after playing the master ("top") in phone sex, and very much enjoying being sadistic, which suggests that I was at least to some degree fantasmatically included in his sexual activities. He also acted as though he was involved with a woman at a seminar I gave, but that particular incident occurred some four years before his going to extremes.

CRITIQUE

15

LACAN IN AMERICA

Bruce Fink interviewed by Loren Dent

How did you end up becoming a psychologist and analyst? What led you to Lacan?

I'm not a psychologist, even if I teach in a department of psychology. I took a few psychology courses as an undergraduate at Cornell and quickly realized that I was primarily interested in psychoanalysis; but already in the 1970s, most of the professors studying psychoanalysis at a university like Cornell were in anthropology, political theory, and comparative literature. I actually came across Lacan via critical theory and was very quickly intrigued by his approach, which I realized was far more Freudian than the approach adopted by the analysts with whom I had had contact in the United States.

One of the most significant differences between Lacanian psychoanalysis and British/American psychotherapy is the emphasis the latter places on empirical research. Why is there such a hesitation by Lacanians to engage in such research? Can psychoanalysis survive as a legitimate therapeutic technique without it?

I would suggest that psychoanalysis—genuine psychoanalysis—can survive *only* by refusing to engage in such research. There is a movement afoot in the American psychoanalytic community to attempt to reduce psychoanalytic practice to something that can be quantified so as to try to satisfy the American demand for outcome studies. The latter is part and parcel of the demand for quality control studies and quality assurance studies in absolutely every component of the economy, and in academia as well, where everything is now expected to be reviewed and assessed all the time through customer satisfaction surveys. To comply with contemporary demands to furnish proof that psychoanalysis is an "empirically based" or "evidence-based" practice by conducting outcome studies would be to implicitly endorse the master's discourse, which currently takes the form of capitalist discourse. (And to provide proof that psychoanalysis changes brain chemistry and/or brain functioning would be to implicitly endorse the absurd notion that nothing has changed for a person unless it can be *visualized* in a brain scan or *quantified* in before and after measures of neurotransmitter levels—which is part of the dominant medical discourse today, which is also increasingly being subsumed under capitalist discourse.)

Graduates of academic programs are constantly being barraged with questionnaires asking whether they feel they got enough value for their tuition dollars, the assumption being that the customer is always right: an educational institution is doing the right thing if the students are happy with it, even if they learn precious little.

Students have been learning less and less as the rigor of educational systems has been declining, but grade inflation is a serious problem, primarily because the new business orientation in education requires

that consumers come away satisfied—with both the individual teacher and the institution as a whole—and it is far easier to satisfy, at least in the short run, with high grades than with heavy workloads and challenging assignments. To my mind, this is an attempt to straightforwardly apply business practices to the academy, where they aren't applicable unless all one really cares about is increasing student enrollments. Psychoanalysis and education have other goals than simply to keep the customers satisfied!

If we believe that business principles should be adopted by psychotherapy, then the therapist will be considered to be practicing suitably as long as the client is happy and goes on to recommend the therapist to other potential therapy customers. While there's a certain amount of business sense in that, it's problematic from a therapeutic standpoint.

A certain number of analysts are preparing outcome studies for psychoanalysis and psychoanalytically-oriented psychotherapy in Germany, the US, and elsewhere. They implicitly assume that 1) the infinitely complex psychoanalytic process can be reduced to a set of variables that can be easily explicated and quantified, and 2) that people consciously know whether they have been helped or haven't been helped by a certain process. The unconscious is immediately ruled out in the very construction of such studies because in most outcome studies I've heard of, you give a survey to people or interview people about what they *believe* has happened in their therapy. Freud indicates that a big transformation often takes place over the course of the first few weeks or months after patients end psychoanalytic treatment; their symptoms sometimes persist for a little while and then dissolve, and this probably has a good deal to do with the liquidation of the "transference neurosis."

So when should you administer outcome surveys or conduct interviews? If you do so at some predetermined period while treatment is ongoing, you may end up catching people in the midst of a negative transference, leading them to give very negative responses, and yet that rough patch may have been a necessary step along the way to a successful outcome. There's no particular time of the unconscious. An analysis may last five years for one person and 12 years for another and they could both be very successful. But if you give both analysands a survey to fill out exactly four years into the process, you might receive extremely skewed responses. Similarly, administering surveys at the end of the last session of an analysis is likely to lead to very different results than doing so six months or a year after the analysis ends. And one will, of course, obtain different results from those who leave analysis after a year or two out of cowardice, purported poverty, frustration, or any number of other reasons, than from those who leave feeling they've gotten pretty much everything they wanted from it.

These are just a few of the reasons why even just the timing of outcome studies is problematic—I haven't even touched on the kinds of questions asked in the studies themselves and their ability or lack thereof to capture the kind of *subjective* transformation psychoanalysis aims at, which goes far beyond "symptom removal."

Lacanians have resisted the temptation to simply give in and comply with the demand to reduce the psychoanalytic process to a set of quantifiable variables that can be studied using people's conscious beliefs about how the work is going or how it went.

Can you imagine an outcome study that could more fully capture the complexity of the psychoanalytic process?

Many Lacanians endorse a far more complicated kind of outcome study, which they refer to as "the pass." It involves having analysands who believe that they have completed their analyses describe in detail what has happened to them over the course of their analyses to fellow analysands who are close to the end of their own analyses. These fellow analysands (known as *passeurs)* then report on what they were

told to a committee, without mentioning any names or identifying information of course, and the committee is able to assess what kind of analytic work is being done in their institute and the kind of results it is having. It is a sort of feedback loop that allows specific institutes to grapple with the possible hiatus between their theory of psychoanalytic practice and what they are actually able to achieve with patients on the couch. What they learn about what has been achieved through "the pass" informs their ongoing theorization of the analytic process, which then affects their future practice.

What do you believe is behind the growing emphasis on and demand for such outcome studies?

Much of the demand for outcome studies in psychotherapy stems from insurance companies, who are primarily interested in their bottom line. Insurance companies are generally only willing to pay for once- or twice-a-week psychotherapy and few health insurance companies will reimburse weekly sessions for even one whole year. Most of them halt payment after ten or 20 sessions, unless of course you give your patient a particularly damning DSM diagnosis—then they may allow another 30 sessions or so. If they ever allowed 200 sessions it would be unbelievable! But even 200 sessions merely amounts, more or less, to the first year of an analysis!

This means that psychoanalysis and insurance are a bit like oil and water—they don't mix. Confirming which, insurance companies generally will not reimburse psychoanalysts per se unless the psychoanalysts are also licensed clinical psychologists or psychiatrists.

Virtually any analyst who wishes to see patients three, four, or five times a week is obliged to forgo insurance, and it is perhaps better that way, ultimately. It's a good thing that Lacanians and other analysts remain somewhat outside of the current healthcare system, stand apart from some of the demands of the broader culture. I have had a lot of patients who, prior to beginning psychoanalysis with me, have been in every kind of therapy they could find that was reimbursed by their insurance companies and got little or no relief from those therapies. Many contemporary insurance-reimbursed therapies involve a sort of handholding and the attempt to reduce anxiety; although those therapies ostensibly aim at very concrete goals such as symptom reduction, the patients remain profoundly unhappy and continue to suffer from the same symptoms they began with.

Perhaps this is a good transition to discuss what Lacanian psychoanalysis does offer patients if not simply alleviation from their symptoms. In fact, Lacan speaks of "identifying with the symptom," a notion that may seem rather perplexing to many therapists.

Although psychoanalysis can't explicitly promise happiness, it can often promise something that is not utterly and completely un-American: it can promise to alleviate certain forms of unhappiness. Every analyst would, I suspect, agree that symptom reduction occurs in the course of psychoanalytic treatment, but we analysts don't want to promise anything overly specific. Should somebody come to see us complaining of migraines, we don't want to say we're absolutely convinced we're going to be able to eliminate all of the migraines. Late in his life, Lacan proposed a counterintuitive notion of how a successful analysis could end, in certain cases, as "identification with the symptom." If you mentioned that at the outset of treatment, most patients would run the other way! Nevertheless, there are very important transformations that occur in the process of analysis, and Lacan's notion of "identification with the symptom" does not mean that the symptom remains untouched by the analytic process. Rather, it is usually radically altered.

When someone asks me something like "what can I hope for?" in the first session or two, my answer depends on what they've complained of prior to asking that question. If, as is very often the case, they

have complained of their relationships with their significant others, I feel confident that I can promise that they can hope for serious change in their relationships with others. I usually find that suffices—potential patients are rarely asking for total bliss when they begin therapy!

As helpful as rapid symptom reduction may be to the patient, it may lead the patient to prematurely leave the therapy, exposing the patient to the risk that the symptom will return quite quickly. When symptoms get cleared up in a very short period of time, which sometimes happens even in psychoanalysis, those symptoms stop providing the patient with the necessary motivation to go further. It is often necessary to go further so that a year later he or she won't have any new panic attacks, for example, because something has been worked through once and for all.

Symptom reduction is often taken to be the sole criterion of therapeutic success, and it is obviously of importance to the patient. I suspect that it is so often taken to be the sole criterion of success simply because it is thought to be the easiest to assess: you ask the patient, "have you had fewer panic attacks since your therapy began?" and he or she says yes or no; you ask the patient, "have your panic attacks been less severe since your therapy began?" and he or she says yes or no. Note first of all that here, as elsewhere, the researcher assumes that the patient has actually kept track of the frequency and severity of his or her panic attacks, which is rarely the case. But it is the seemingly definitive, "clean," binary nature of the answer that is seductive to researchers: yes or no. Nevertheless, patients may feel that their therapy has helped them in myriad ways, even though their panic attacks have yet to abate in either frequency or severity. Which means that just because a question yields a clear, binary answer—yes or no—it does not necessarily capture the whole of a patient's experience. Nor does simply adding more questions that yield similarly clear, binary answers.

Lacan has been often reproached by analysts on both sides of the Atlantic for ignoring affects and emotions in the clinical process. What role, if any, do affects play in Lacanian psychoanalysis? Is affect related to Lacan's conception of enjoyment (jouissance)?

People have accused Lacan of not talking about affect, but the fact is that most analysts in France were constantly talking about affect already in his time and he was attempting to do something that, in effect, counterbalanced their obsession with it. I think that Lacan made a significant contribution by talking about enjoyment and satisfaction (jouissance), which was and still is largely neglected. I supervise a great many analysts, psychologists, and psychiatrists in their clinical work, and if there's one thing they're not trained to do it is to consider in what way the patient is enjoying the very thing of which he or she complains. The very thing that seems to be the most problematic to the analysand, the most painful—that is where satisfaction (that is, jouissance) lies. This is overlooked, in my experience, by the vast majority of clinicians who, instead, take patients' complaints at face value, as referring to emotions to be gotten rid of.

This brings us back to the misguided idea of symptom reduction. If you fail to realize that patients complain of the very things that bring them the most enjoyment in life and that they are the most attached to, albeit secretly, you'll be tempted to alleviate their complaints, which will then deprive them of the only jouissance they currently know how to obtain in life! This is a dangerous direction to take, but it is taken every day by medical doctors who prescribe medications purportedly designed to calm anxiety, alleviate depression, and so on.

The reasons for depression are multifarious and it's hard to say that one depression really resembles another in its psychical causality. People become obsessed with looking at specific symptoms like anorexia or bulimia, they become obsessed with sadness, or they become obsessed with melancholy. That

has a tendency to make us think that we can group patients into clinical categories on the basis of a major behavior or their presenting affect, which is a lure and really doesn't help us discover better treatment methodologies.

The prevalence of depression in our times is perhaps a result of developments in our culture. However, the fact that people are increasingly diagnosed as depressed may also, or indeed alternatively, reflect the simple fact that pharmaceutical companies have concocted ever more antidepressants, and when you have a "cure" you have to find a "disease" that can be treated with it—this is a widely known and well-documented problem in modern American culture, where drug companies are allowed to pitch their wares directly to consumers (cf. Whitaker, 2010).

If doctors are convinced by pharmaceutical company representatives that they can cure depression with a pill, then doctors will be more inclined to label patients as depressed than as totally conflicted within themselves about love and hate they feel for one and the same parent, for example. Such a conflict seems quite clearly to be the cause of "depression" in one of my own analysands, who was given antidepressants for decades even though they provided him with very little relief and had a serious effect on his libido. But drug companies have no pill for "intrapsychic conflict," so it isn't likely doctors would be tempted to list it as a diagnosis, even if they could get it included in the DSM-V.

I see plenty of patients who come to me after having been diagnosed with depression and placed on a half-dozen different medications. They usually get off the majority of the medications fairly quickly without any intervention on my part. The depression begins to lift in fairly short order and it becomes clear that the depression is the effect of longstanding neurotic conflicts. It is the neurotic conflicts that treatment needs to focus on, not the affect, which may even at times be a cover or smokescreen of sorts behind which the conflicts disappear from sight. *Affect is an effect, not a cause*. This tends to get obscured when people focus so intently on affect.[1]

Lacan followed Freud in understanding anxiety as the most important affect for psychoanalysis. While most therapists aim at reducing anxiety as quickly as possible, Lacan proposed that the analyst should use anxiety "in small doses" to further subjective change in the patient. How do you conceive of anxiety as a therapeutic tool in the analytic process?

Anxiety is the universal currency of affect: enjoyment can be converted into it, pain, guilt, and sadness can be too. When anxiety arises you don't necessarily know the meaning of it but you know that there's something important going on, some kind of jouissance at play.

A number of the analysts I work with who have been educated in the United States have told me that in their training they are told that if they make the patient anxious, they are doing something wrong. The goal of the treatment, as they are taught it, is to bring about the least anxiety possible. Even though American analysts constantly talk about affect (most often their own!), their approach to treatment seems to be designed to minimize its appearance, at least in its most universal form.

Anxiety plays a role in clinical work in that when it manifests itself it signals to the clinician that he or she is getting close to something and that interpretation could really have a truly significant effect at that moment. It indicates something about object *a*, that it is operating at that point, that there's a concern with loss, a question of castration. A treatment in which anxiety doesn't present itself is almost unthinkable; if you never arouse any anxiety in your patients, you probably will never get anywhere.

Freud initially believed that patients could, under the right conditions, remember everything necessary to unravel all of their neurotic conflicts; they could, he felt, remember everything they had ever repressed, via the transference relationship with the analyst, and could eventually speak it all. But the

longer he worked with patients, the more he realized that there is also a quantitative, libidinal factor that must be taken into account—Lacan invents various terms for it such as object *a* and jouissance. There are certain obstacles to remembering one's past and to one's ability to articulate what has been repressed. Anxiety always appears at the moment where there's something repressed—the repressed is about to appear in some way or is in play, being touched upon in some way.

My sense about the contemporary psychoanalytic field in the United States is that—as Russell Jacoby said already in the mid-1970s—the unconscious has been forgotten. There's a kind of social amnesia at work: many of Freud's most important initial insights about the repressed have been thrown out the window. Many a clinician I've spoken with seems to have no idea what I mean when I talk about the repressed!

British and American psychoanalysts and therapists, especially those coming from an object relations background, put a special emphasis on the role of the maternal, pre-oedipal experiences of the child. Lacan, following Freud, emphasized rather the effects on the individual of losing that maternal experience to attain a separate, symbolic identity. Can you elucidate Lacan's critique of the overemphasis on mothering?

A lot of contemporary psychoanalysis seems to be engaged in an attempt to repair the fundamental loss that we must all undergo: the loss owing to our separation from our mothers as we grow up. Rather than accepting that such a loss is necessary—Freudian analysts know this loss as "castration"—and helping patients get beyond the loss, get over the loss, or come to grips with the loss, many analysts have transposed this into a different problem altogether: our mothers were inadequate and the analyst must serve patients as a belatedly "good enough mother." The problem then is not one of coming to grips with castration but rather of making good the patient's loss, trying to make up for a loss that was necessary.

This strikes me as a chimera and it leads to a kind of therapy that is all about mothering and trying to reparent the child. It perhaps even leads to endless analysis, because if the analyst becomes your new mommy and there's no attempt to get you to come to grips with loss, why would you ever want to stop seeing your analyst? The focus on object *a* and the fundamental fantasy in Lacanian psychoanalysis has to do with reconfiguring the subject's relation to loss. It centers treatment on a different question: "Okay, I was forced to give up all kinds of things as a child, and I don't feel like I was adequately compensated for it—how can I get beyond that, without being endlessly compensated for it now?"

Lacan comes to understand the end of analysis as also involving the drives, which seems to imply the patient allowing impulsive, partial, temporary satisfactions rather than getting caught up in fantasies and speculations about what others want of him or her. But does this subject of the drives lead to some kind of anti-social, reckless person who disregards everyone else? Aren't there ethical questions here?

Lacan believes we can have a profound effect on the neurotic's drives, a kind of freedom being given to the drives through analysis. This conception suggests there are ideally far less restrictions on the neurotic's drives, far less inhibition of the drives, at the logical endpoint of an analysis. Lacan thus certainly believes, already in the 1960s, that the subject can have a different relationship to jouissance at the end of his or her analysis.

This is definitely something other than *Looking Out for Number One*, if you've heard of that book from the 1970s. It isn't about learning to be selfish and to ignore other people. The idea is that most of us are so hung up on what we think other people want and what we think they want from us, that we are

incredibly inhibited and rarely say what we want and how we feel.

When Lacan speaks of a freer pursuit of the drives at the end of analysis, he's talking about neurotics, not psychopaths, who, when they're angry, take out guns and shoot people. He's talking about neurotics who find it extremely difficult to express lust or hatred to others, and to admit to and own their own desires. Lacan is not proposing some sort of totally irresponsible subject at the end of analysis, but a subject who has somehow worked his or her way past the Other. Separation from the Other's ideals, values, desires, and demands doesn't mean that the subject begins to think only of his or her own interests and steps on everybody else, but that the subject begins to have a different relationship to social conventions and to the moral principles that have been foisted upon him or her in the course of his or her upbringing—principles that he or she has accepted or not accepted in certain ways, or only partially accepted—finally coming to grips with them and making some of them his or her own instead of always seeing them as imposed from the outside, imposed by others.

This seems to echo Lacan's definition of love as allowing desire and the drives to co-exist. Is the end of analysis related to love?

You are referring no doubt to his comment in Seminar X on anxiety (Lacan, 2004, p. 209) that "Only love allows jouissance to condescend to desire." I don't believe that Lacan ever formulated the logical endpoint of an analysis in terms of love, but it might be a fruitful avenue for research!

This interview, which took place in the summer of 2008, appeared under the title "Lacan in the United States: An Interview with Bruce Fink" in *Contemporary Psychoanalysis, 47*(4) (2011), 549–57.

Note

1 See Colette Soler's (2011) recent book *Les affects lacaniens*.

16

A FEW WORDS WITH THE EDITORS OF *MONOKL*

What does "The Return to Freud" mean in the context of Lacanian discourse? What are the similarities and differences between Freud and Lacan?

Lacan's return to Freud means a great many things, but perhaps first and foremost a return to the interest in the *unconscious* as explored through *language*. Already in Lacan's time, the *relationship* between analyst and analysand had begun to take precedence in many clinicians' minds over the investigation of the unconscious, and that trend has gone so far that certain analysts today declare that "the relationship is everything" and that the content of the analysis is of trivial importance compared to it. To their minds, it doesn't matter what the analysand says or what the analyst responds, as long as they have a supportive "therapeutic alliance." This turn away from Freud went hand-in-hand with the conviction that affect was the Holy Grail: that every manifestation of affect in the course of a session was proof that the analysis was headed in the right direction. Freud and Lacan are both justly suspicious of the veracity of affect, for affect may well lie even as it points to jouissance.

There are too many similarities and differences between Freud and Lacan to answer your question in any detail here, but it is clear that both Freud and Lacan staunchly defended the need to do far more than scratch the surface in an analysis if one is to get at the symptom and reconfigure the analysand's fundamental fantasy. The majority of the other contemporary psychoanalytic approaches seem content to linger on the surface, in the sense that they seem content to work with whatever the analysand spontaneously discusses rather than bring the analysand to discuss what he or she is most loath to go into.

What kinds of links does Lacanian psychoanalysis have with other post-Freudian psychoanalytic approaches such as object relations and ego psychology?

Almost none. Object relations and ego psychology approaches function almost entirely at the *imaginary* level, in Lacanian terms, whereas Lacan requires us to work at the *symbolic and real* levels. Note too that contemporary forms of object relations and ego psychology rarely distinguish between neurosis and psychosis, using the exact same techniques in virtually all diagnostic groups ("deep interpretation," holding, etc.), whereas Lacanians have developed very different approaches to the treatment of neurosis and psychosis, even if the distinction between the two diagnostic categories is understood to be more complex today than it was in Lacan's work in the 1960s.

In *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance*, you say that analysands should

come to terms with the Other's desire and take the cause (object *a*) upon themselves, so that they can subjectify the cause of their own existence and become the subject of their own fate. What is the role of the analyst here in helping the analysand move from complaining, "All of these horrible things happened to me," to "I heard, I saw … "?

The analyst must always keep an eye out for the analysand's subjective position, which implies, at least in part, deciphering the coordinates of the position the analysand keeps putting him- or herself into and what he or she is getting out of it in terms of jouissance. Rather than view an analysand's dream as a curious story that isn't really about the subject, the analyst must home in on what seems to be desired in the dream and what is being enjoyed in the dream. The analysand must be encouraged to come into being as the subject of the desires and jouissance in the dream. As long as the analyst keeps the focus on unconscious wishes and on enjoyment that the analysand would rather not know about, subjectification will eventually come about. If, however, the analyst neglects unconscious desire and neglects jouissance, the analysand will never be confronted with what needs to be subjectified.

You recently translated the complete *Écrits* into English. Thanks to your translation and books, especially those on the clinical applications of Lacanian theory, there is increasing interest in Lacanian psychoanalysis in America. However, few universities or training institutes teach Lacanian clinical approaches. Why is there so little interest in Lacanian psychoanalysis in clinical fields of psychology?

Lacan is a terribly difficult writer, and the early translations of his work into English made his writings even more obscure, full as they were of inaccuracies and Gallicisms. Even though clinicians in America are rarely trained in the philosophical and literary texts that form so much of the backdrop of Lacan's work, more of them are now willing and able to grapple with Lacan's work due to better introductory texts and more accessible translations. Many clinicians are, in my experience, also increasingly motivated to delve into Lacan's work since they are so frustrated with the poor results they obtain with their patients when they employ the techniques they have been trained to use.

It is hard to know whether it is a good thing or a bad thing that Lacan is not taught in many university programs—perhaps it is not such a bad thing that Lacan remains an alternative that clinicians trained in other approaches can turn to once they have encountered the limits of their own training …

This brief "interview" occurred by email exchange with the editors of the huge special issue on Lacan (Lacan Özel Sayisi) published in Turkish in *MonoKL*, *6–7*(2009), 740–41.

17

VIOLENCE IN PSYCHOANALYSIS

The theme of this seminar is violence, and in contemplating what I could contribute, from my perspective as a clinician, I debated a number of things.

First of all, there is the question of the treatment of violence in the clinical setting; for the clinician often has to deal with the consequences of inter- and intra-familial violence, whether physical or emotional, and in certain cases violence in a person's family history can make it such that the entire treatment is experienced by the analysand as a repetition of that violence. Moreover, if the analysand does not readily find violence in the treatment, or the kind of violence with which he or she is familiar, the analysand may solicit it, try to provoke the analyst to it.

This underscores a more widespread fact: the experience of the Other's desire and the Other's jouissance can virtually always be understood as a violent, wrenching, distasteful, and yet compelling experience. Insofar as the Other's desire is mobilized in analysis, insofar as the desires of those around the analy-sand who have come to represent the Other for him or her—usually parents and other close relatives—are activated in the transference by being projected onto the analyst, the violence inherent in the Other's desire is part and parcel of analysis. The analyst is felt—in the very tangible here and now of the analytic setting—to want the same things from the analysand as the parental Other did, and to be obtaining the same disgusting jouissance from subjecting the analysand to the analyst's will as the parents did. Thus, the violence inherent in the Other's jouissance is also part and parcel of analysis.

An analysand with whom I had been working for barely two months declared that I seemed to him like a priest and a whore: while expecting and, indeed, requiring him to confess all of his sins and unseemly fantasies, unlike a priest who simply listens to such things as part of his job, I exacted payment even as I "got off" on his illness. I was profiting from his sickness—just as his mother had, as it turned out. Lest it be thought that this was just a "simple transferential moment," let me add that the analysand's experience of me as both priest and whore was such as to incline him to leave analysis when he had barely begun; such was the violence of his revulsion when faced with what he perceived to be my jouissance. ("A real whore," he said, "would be cheaper and better.")

I should also mention the way in which analysis itself introduces a certain kind of violence. As Freud (1963a, p. 463) says, providing a surgical metaphor, "if a knife does not cut, it cannot be used for healing either"; certain analytic techniques, such as scanding sessions, can and do cut. Scansion, when used in the context of the variable-length session, constitutes a temporal cut or break, an interruption of the analysand's speech, a rupture of an intentional meaning-making process—in other words, of the point the analysand was trying to make, which the analyst may cause to seem beside the point by his or her intervention—and a disruption of continuity in the analyst's presence.

Interpretation too may have disruptive, wrenching effects, disturbing a train of thought, a whole way of seeing one's relations to others, or a particular take on why one has done things the way one has in one's life. Analysands sometimes experience even what seems to be the most well-prepared-for interpretation as a punch in the gut, as having a visceral effect on them. Analysts are usually taught to avoid wild interpretation—the kind of instant interpretations certain psychotherapists and psychiatrists are apt to make after speaking with a patient for a mere 15 minutes. However, I have talked with enough people to know that certain "analysts" too go in for instant, wild interpretations, with little attention to their possible consequences. In theory, interpretations that are likely to be disruptive should only be proffered once trust between analyst and analysand has been established, so that the impact of the interpretation can be worked through. The theory also instructs us to mitigate whatever violence there may be in an interpretation by preparing the ground for it, not making it until the analysand is on the verge of making it him- or herself, being but one short step from it. And the theory instructs us to simply let the analysand do the interpreting, when possible. Nevertheless, many clinicians ignore these elementary principles.

It is thus clear that violence is endemic to analytic work—whether the violence in people's lives that leads them to therapy or the violence that seems to be inextricably involved in the treatment process itself, which can never be completely mitigated.

Another topic I considered taking up here has to do with the violence that has been done to Freud's theory and praxis by subsequent generations of analysts and psychotherapists. Lacan spent years criticizing the multifarious ways in which, in the name of supposed progress beyond Freud, analysts have, in their ignorance, returned to pre-Freudian positions.

Whereas Freud's praxis shifted from suggestion to transference—from hypnotic treatment based on suggestion to a form of treatment in which pure suggestion is minimized—analysts after Freud reverted to suggestion in droves. Analytic techniques promulgating the analysand's identification with the analyst and the reduction of the analysand's "irrational desires" to the "rationality" of the demands of the "real world," represented by the analyst's demands, all involve reducing transference to suggestion, according to Lacan.

Whereas Freud shifted in the 1890s from an emphasis on the patient's supposed "real world context"—recall that Freud would interview a patient's family members to check the veracity of certain of the patient's statements and verify dates of events—to an emphasis on the patient's psychical reality, contemporary analysts have reverted to the naive belief that they themselves see reality more clearly than their patients do and take it upon themselves to teach these poor, misguided souls to see things as their analysts see them. In other words, once again, a shift has occurred in more recent analytic thinking back to a pre-Freudian position in which psychical reality is discounted and "the real world" is taken to be readily known and transparent, at least to the analyst.

These arguments are by no means out of date, though the protagonists have changed. Everywhere in the US we see "reality therapy," "cognitive-behavioral therapy" that seeks to correct the patient's irrational beliefs, and "neurolinguistic programming," which seeks to correct the patient's inaccurate thoughts. The real is not rational, to these newfangled therapists; in other words, the patient's beliefs do not make sense, they are not there for a good reason—they are simply inaccurate, irrational, and need to be changed. The patient's world is not considered to include desires and fantasies—none of that counts because it is all irrational. What is real are thoughts, and you either have the right ones or the wrong ones! If any of you doubt that such naive views could be driving contemporary forms of psychotherapy, I will be happy to show you a series of tapes of sessions of cognitive-behavioral therapy a colleague of

mine has collected.

Nevertheless, I cannot expect such strictly clinical issues to be of much relevance to your work in the humanities here. So today I will discuss instead something that is perhaps closer to your hearts: the translation of theory.

The remainder of this talk—given under the title "The Politics of Translation" at the International Institute of the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor in December 1998, at the invitation of Slavoj Zizek—can be found in "Lacan in 'Translation'" in the *Journal for Lacanian Studies*, *2*(2) (2004), 264–81.

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