The Lacanian Subject: from Mathematics to Jouissance

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The Lacanian Subject: from Mathematics to Jouissance.

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Contents

1. Introduction

At the core of the Lacanian subject's psychic structure is a traumatic kernel: the real. What the subject conceives of as their 'identity' is nothing but an complex organization of imaginary and symbolic structures designed to protect them from its devastating effects. Yet the real is precisely that which refuses representation. An object of both fascination and horror, it taunts the subject with its insistent presence.

Jouissance is the subject's experience of the real. The subject would have an impoverished existence without jouissance: it holds out a promise of a return to the real, a release from the subject's cares and woes. Yet embedded in that promise is a threat: the destruction of the symbolic apparatus in which the subject has invested their identity. Jouissance is a paradox, both pleasure and pain, or pleasure *in* pain. It is simultaneously the subject's means of enjoyment and a harbinger of their annihilation.

Seminar XI (1964) marks Lacan's incorporation of the real into his theory of subjectivity. His previous formulation, in terms of the imaginary and symbolic orders, was necessarily incomplete—the real intrudes into the symbolic and the subject forms in the gap between them (Chiesa, 2007, p105). This holing of the symbolic is encapsulated in the concept of object *a*. Since, in the real, absence and presence are undifferentiated, object *a* is simultaneously the unsymbolizable excess of the real *and* the lack inherent in the symbolic order (*ibid.*, p161-162). It is both the object-cause of desire—the remnant of the real lost in the process of subjectification that the subject tries eternally to regain—and the traumatic flaw in the symbolic from which the subject withdraws. The vacillating relationship between the subject and jouissance, the result of its encounter with object *a*, underpins Lacan's reformulation, in Seminar XI, of subjectivity in terms of alienation and separation.

In alienation/separation, subjectification is revealed as a continuous narrative, in terms of the dialectic between mother and child. The child's developmental trajectory is determined by its relationship with its mother, who it perceives as a source of jouissance, both in terms of the comfort it receives from having its needs met and the anxiety it experiences due to her overbearing presence. Lacan identifies three subjective categories, three distinct ways of managing this jouissance: psychosis, perversion and neurosis (the latter being subdivided into hysteria and obsessional neurosis).

The theory of alienation/separation supercedes Lacan's previous description of subjectivity in terms of the Oedipus complex (Chiesa, 2007, pp60-87). Roughly speaking, alienation corresponds to the entry of the subject into the first Oedipal stage—the dual relation of mother and child—and separation to the second stage, the child's recognition of the mother's lack. The third stage—the assumption of sexed subjectivity—is not adequately described in terms of alienation/separation

and Lacan devotes a considerable portion of his later seminars (XII to XX) towards devising a theory of sexuality.

Lacan turns increasingly to mathematics, e.g. set theory (1968, 27-11-68), logic (1970, 17-3-71) and the algebra of complex numbers (1970, 19-5-71), as a means of systematizing his theory of sexuality, which he refers to as sexuation to distinguish it from biological sex. By Seminar XX, sexuation is described exclusively in terms of Fregean logic which predicts two distinct neurotic structures: masculine and feminine (Lacan, 1972, 13-3-73). These positions are articulated by mathemes (Evans, 1996, p108), algebraic symbols that represent psychoanalytic concepts. Lacan was very clear as to his motive: 'Mathematical formalization is our goal, our ideal' (1972, 15-5-73). Using mathemes to represent psychic structures would be to rid his theory of the 'considerable inertia' (1972, 8-5-73) of language, the excessive meanings and connotations that are attached to terms such as 'castration' and 'phallus'. In this mathematical form, a certain purity of analysis could be brought to bear on the thorny question of sexuality.

Yet mathematization has its negative consequences. Firstly, the narrative of alienation/separation in terms of the mother-child dialectic is replaced by a formalization that is not intuitive. Whilst this was indeed Lacan's aim, mathematization nevertheless hinders understanding of an already complex theory. Secondly, the evolution of the subject and the link between perversion, neurosis and sexed subjectivity is made opaque. Finally, the relationship between obsessional/hysteric and masculine/feminine subjective structures is unclear.

One question that intrigued Lacan is that of the feminine subject's relationship to jouissance (the eternal question of *Was will das Weib?* (1972, 13-3-73)). The result of his enquiry is his *magnum opus* on feminine sexuality: Seminar XX. This seminar is widely celebrated as a 'startling' and 'sophisticated' work (Gallagher, 2010, p8), the apogee of Lacan's theory of jouissance, yet this reputation is not entirely deserved. Its exalted status is largely due to the paucity of other published seminars, especially in English (*ibid.*, p6). Indeed, Lacan's logic of sexuation descends upon Seminar XX as a *deus ex machina*, unless this seminar is read in the context of the preceding ones.

Moreover, in Seminar XX, Lacan theorizes a specifically feminine form of enjoyment—Other jouissance—as 'beyond the phallus' (Lacan, 1972, 20-2-73), which could be misinterpreted as indicative of its transcendence of the symbolic order. Lacan himself promotes this interpretation by linking it to the potentially infinite jouissance of mysticism (*ibid.*). Yet, as pointed out by Chiesa (2014, p178), Lacan's statement that 'there is no Other of the Other' contradicts this interpretation. Prior to Seminar VI, in which this statement first occurs (Chiesa, 2007, p107), the symbolic order was granted consistency by the Name-of-the-Father, an external authority that stops the sliding of signifiers over signifieds and allows language to function. By 1960, the role of the Name-of-the-Father as external guarantor had been replaced by a signifier internal to the symbolic, the phallic signifier (*ibid.*, p115). Without an external reference point, the real beyond the symbolic and its resultant massive jouissance cannot be accessed—indeed, the only real that does exist is that which can be perceived from the symbolic—and Lacan only 'assumes the full consequences' (*ibid.*, p183) of his statement in Seminar XXIII (1975).

It should be clear that tackling such questions by assembling a theory of jouissance from Lacan's writings is a long and tortuous task. Lacan never reworked his seminars into a coherent narrative (a blessing in disguise according to Gallagher (2010)). Therefore one would have to sift through the numerous blind alleys, corrections and irrelevancies with which Lacan taunts his audience. Fink has done just that in his excellent work on the Lacanian subject (1996). Yet

Fink focusses almost exclusively on the masculine subject, referring to the feminine only in the later chapters on sexuation. As a result, the biography of the feminine subject from birth to sexed subjectivity remains opaque.

This dissertation is motivated primarily by the conviction that Lacan is above all a structuralist. Despite his 'reluctance ... to achieve systematicity' (Kollias, 2013, p994), despite the discordance between the formulations of alienation/separation and sexuation, there is an underlying consistency of thought. From such a standpoint, a unified narrative of the relationship between the subject and jouissance could be constructed. This would have several benefits. Firstly, sexuation would no longer be an excessive supplement stuck incongruously onto the end of alienation/separation. The abrupt gap between the theorization of the perverse and the masculine/feminine structures would be dissolved and their interrelation could be more fruitfully explored. Moreover, any perceived privilege accorded the neurotic subject, via a separate (and mathematically more complex) treatment of sexuation, is revoked. Since Lacan considered that subjectivity is constituted after the fact rather than in a logical, time-ordered manner (Fink, 1996, p63), to situate all categories of subject within the same narrative is to diffuse any notion of a subjective hierarchy.

A secondary motivation is my frustration at both Lacan's treatment of femininity and Other jouissance in Seminar XX, and at the reams of commentary from both pro- and anti-Lacanian feminists that it has spawned. The characterization of Other jouissance as transcendent of the symbolic leads some theorists (eg. Freeman (2004)) to claim that it offers women a site of potential resistance to the prevailing order, whilst others (e.g. Moi (2004)) complain that it disempowers women by situating them in a nonsensical realm outside discourse. My aim is not to rehabilitate Lacan as a postmodern feminist—it is impossible to deny the sexist nature of some of his remarks in Seminar XX. Rather, it is to distance Other jouissance from overblown rhetoric (and I consider Lacan and his feminist interlocutors equally guilty in this respect) and to unravel what actually *can* be said about it.

This dissertation is structured as follows. Lacan's theorization of alienation and separation, which provides the backbone of the narrative of subjectivity I aim to devise, is discussed in chapter 2. In chapter 3, I offer a potential reformulation of Lacan's theory of sexuation in terms of a feminine split between imaginary and symbolic orders. In the light of this formulation, the perverse and neurotic structures and their relation to desire and being are discussed in chapter 4. In chapter 5, the consequences of the theory for the jouissance of the neurotic subject are explored; it is found that the structure of jouissance is identical to that formulated by Chiesa (2015) from the standpoint of Lacan's Fregean logic. Finally, issues surrounding the jouissance of the feminine subject are discussed in chapter 6, paying particular attention to Other jouissance and its place in Lacanian subjective structure.

2. Alienation and Separation

Lacan identifies the moment of birth—the lack created by the primordial severance of the child from its mother—as the origin of subjectivity (1964, 27-5-64). Since this lack is the result of sexual reproduction, he argues that it is the origin of sexuality as well. Yet it can only apprehended after the fact: the subject's 'infantile biography' (1968, 21-5-69) is formulated retrospectively from their standpoint in the symbolic. The following description should therefore be considered not as a logically ordered sequence of well-defined events, but as a mythical re-conception from the perspective of the subject.

Prior to the onset of subjectivity, the child experiences itself as a mass of undifferentiated jouissance. It cannot regulate its own jouissance and looks to its primary carer, usually the mother, to fulfil its needs. The mother is never able to attend to its needs promptly, so the child discovers firstly that it is a being separate from its mother, and secondly that in order to be satisfied it has to articulate its needs (e.g. hunger) in some form (cries or words). The mother, from her standpoint in the symbolic, interprets and responds to the child's pre-linguistic attempts at communication, and issues her demands (e.g. to eat) to the child verbally. From birth a child is immersed in the alienating language of another subject.

This first encounter of the child with language precipitates the process of alienation (Lacan, 1964, 27-5-64). The mother's demand is represented by a the signifier[1] S_1 with which a child identifies: it feels helpless in the face of its pressing and unsatisfied needs and gladly accepts the signifier as representative of them. Yet its needs are only imperfectly described by its mother's language. In order not to lose this new-found mastery, the child represses its true urges which pass into the unconscious, represented as the signifier S_2.

Mother and child are thus locked in an imaginary dialectic: from the child's point of view, the mother's desire is seen as a demand requiring a specific object which the child strives to embody, the imaginary phallus ϕ (Lacan, 2006b, p582). The desire of the child to be the phallus thus mirrors the mother's desire for the phallus: this is an imaginary identification of desire, but 'articulated in a symbolic way' (Lacan, 1968, 27-11-68). The mother-child dialectic is illustrated in fig. 2.1, with the child as phallus and the signifiers imposed on it externally, in the field of the (m)Other.

At this stage the child does not regard the mother as lacking anything in a structural sense. The child interprets her words as a demand for jouissance, but she is seen as complete and all-powerful. This renders the child's position precarious. Its emergent subjectivity is threatened

[1] Strictly speaking a proto-signifier. At this stage, the child only understands a rudimentary form of language based on metaphor in which signifiers have a binary relation with signifieds. The full metonymic structure of language, in which signifiers are detached from and can slide over signifieds, is only instated after separation is complete.

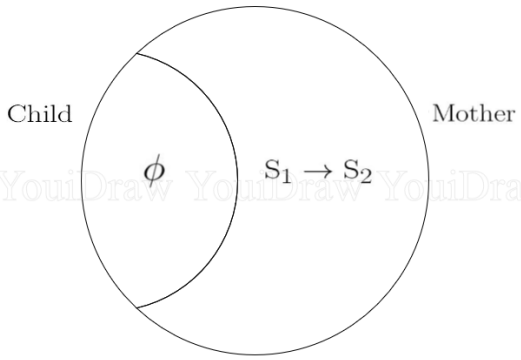


Figure 2.1: Alienation

by the 'aphanistic effect of the binary signifier' (Lacan, 1964, 3-6-64) of the mother's demand. The child experiences jouissance not only as the comfort of having its needs met, but as anxiety in the face of subjective destitution. If anxiety dominates, a further suture—a further regulation of jouissance —must occur in order for the child to attain a stable subjectivity.

This second logical moment in the development of subjectivity is known as separation (1964, 27-5-64). The child comes to realise the futility of satisfying the mother's demands, since they express desires that extend beyond the child. Consequently, the child perceives that its desires—mirrored on those of the mother—also extend beyond her. It relinquishes the task of being the imaginary object, ϕ, for the mother in favour of pursuing symbolic satisfaction. This castration of both mother and child from ϕ is effected by a third term introduced into the mother-child dyad. This term is of course the phallic signifier Φ (Lacan, 2006b, p579).

As Dean points out, the phallus in all its forms 'has been asked to perform an extraordinary amount of theoretical work' (2000, p83) and this is no less true for the role of the phallic signifier in separation. Hook (2006, p68) resolves the action of Φ into four operations based on the Saussurean theory of language: exclusion, substitution, absence and difference. I argue that the first three operations correspond to castration, whilst the last corresponds to sexuation. This distinction allows the narrative of separation in Seminar XI to be reconfigured to include a full treatment of sexuation.

Exclusion refers to the way in which language reinforces certain taboos by forcing a choice between binary oppositions, such as 'black' and 'white'. The taboo that Φ enforces is the prohibition of incest (Evans, 1996, pp101-102). The child's exclusive relationship with its mother cannot last indefinitely or sexual reproduction would cease. In order to achieve sexed subjectivity, the child needs to separate from its mother.

The second operation, substitution, refers to the process by which a signifier can stand in for another signifier. The post-alienation signifier of the mother's demand, S_1—representing metaphorically and exclusively her demands of the child—is substituted by Φ as signifier of desire—which ranges metonymically over a wide variety of objects. Consequently, the child also becomes capable of desiring autonomously and the third operation of Φ ensures that this desire is sustained in the absence of an object. A signifier can stand in for an object that is no longer

there, giving rise to the concept of presence and absence. Φ lays bare the lack that is the cause of desire and stabilizes subjectivity in the presence of this lack.

These three operations—prohibition of incest, substitution of Φ for the mother's desire, and the perception of lack—taken together establish mother and child as castrated: fully autonomous desiring/lacking beings. At this point however, the child has not yet undergone sexuation—adoption of an attitude towards Φ as regards sexual difference. This is the function of the fourth operation of the phallic signifier, i.e. difference.

Language, according to Lacan's interpretation of Saussure (Hook, 2006, p65) is a system of differences. Signifiers only operate by virtue of their difference from all other signifiers. Prior to castration, the child relates to its mother in terms of imaginary identifications, or similarity (Fink, 1996, p84). After castration, the phallic signifier allows the child to judge itself by an external standard: the child no longer needs to conform to its mother's ideals but can make choices of its own. The dominant choice for the child, the difference *par excellence* is that of sexual difference. This process, known as sexuation, will be discussed in detail in chapter 3. First the subjective structures arising from the standard narrative of alienation/separation[2] will be elaborated on.

The child's subjective position after separation is represented schematically in fig. 2.2. Here the castrated subject-child is represented by $\not{S}$. S_1 is the agent of primal repression in alienation, raised to the level of signifier in separation. S_2, the 'treasure trove of signifiers' (Lacan, 2006c, p682), represents the subject's unconscious, initiated by the repressive effects of S_1. As they are imposed on the subject externally through the operation of language, S_1 and S_2 reside in the locus of the Other. Finally, object a, interposed between subject and Other, is the remnant of the real that is forever lost, the metonymic object-cause of desire that 'masks' (Lacan, 1968, 30-4-69) the castration of the imaginary phallus ϕ.

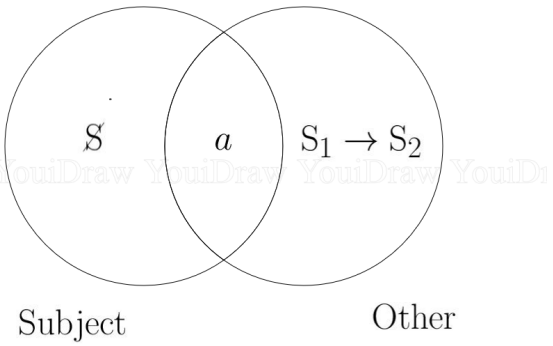


Figure 2.2: Separation

The extent to which the the child has submitted to alienation and/or separation determines its subjective structure. If alienation is unsuccessful then the subject is said to be psychotic. The psychotic, without a signifier S_1 to organize the symbolic, is stuck at the level of imaginary identifications. When these identifications break down, the subject experiences an overwhelming

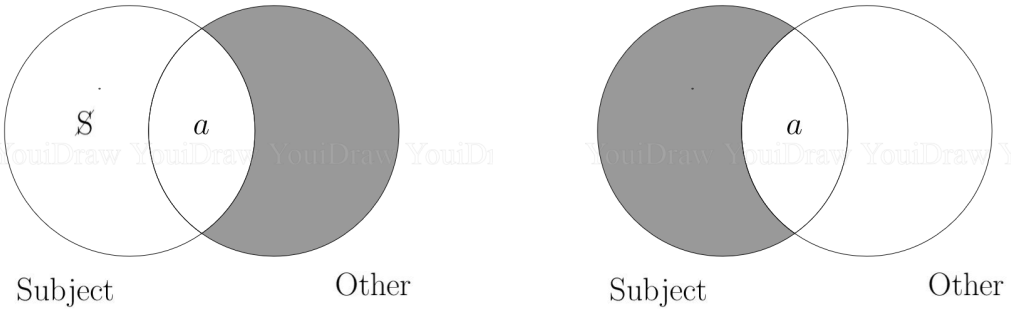
[2] I refer here to Fink (1996, ch5).

jouissance in the form of visual or auditory hallucinations (Fink, 1999, p79 ff.).

Perversion, on the other hand, results when the subject submits to alienation but not separation (Fink, 1999, p165 ff.). Perverts therefore operate at the imaginary-symbolic level in that their desire (a symbolic concept) mirrors the desire of the Other (an imaginary identification). In their relationships with others, they replicate their original bond with the mother: they try become the phallus for the Other. Though jouissance is regulated by the instatement of the master signifier S_1 in alienation, perverts still experience residual anxiety in the presence of the Other since they have not undergone separation. They seek to ameliorate this anxiety by coercing the Other to lay down the law and temporarily strengthen the action of S_1.

Finally, the neurotic has undergone both separation and alienation and therefore assumes autonomy of desire (Fink, 1999, p112 ff.). Through separation, neurotic subjects become aware of their lack and are thus capable of desiring metonymically. Whilst separation alleviates their anxiety in the presence of the Other, the result is a radical regulation of jouissance, to the point where only a pittance is left.

A neurotic subject can adopt two different orientations with respect to the desire of the Other as represented by the phallic signifier (Fink, 1999, pp118-121). The obsessional, as shown in fig. 2.3a, occupies the position of barred subject ($\not{S}$) and therefore does not relate to the Other directly. Rather he 'negates the Other's desire' (Lacan, 2006c, p698) by relating to the Other as object a and keeping the Other and its oppressive desires at a distance. On the other hand, the hysteric occupies the position of object a in fig. 2.3b: by identifying with the object-cause of the Other's desire, the hysteric ensures the Other's 'lack of satisfaction ... by slipping away as its object' (*ibid.*). Both stances are aimed at avoiding the threat of aphanisis due to the Other's overbearing presence.



(a) Obsessional neurosis

(b) Hysteria

Figure 2.3: The subject positions of neurosis

Whilst Lacan never makes it explicit, the adoption of a stance with respect to the Other's desire in separation is nothing but sexuation. The two subjective stances in fig. 2.3 correspond to two modes of phallic jouissance which arise from the encounter with object a in its guise as the real that tears holes the structure of the symbolic—the lost object ϕ cloaked in phallic fantasies. This picture of sexuation is, however, incomplete: the real also holes the subject's imaginary order leading to a different manifestation of object a and to other forms of jouissance.

Lacan appears to sideline his theory of alienation and separation immediately after Seminar XI and instead concentrates his efforts on a mathematical formalization of sexuation in terms of logic (1972, 13-3-73).[3] In the following chapter, I work towards a different formulation of sexuation in terms of imaginary and symbolic representations of the subject's lack. This formulation aims to reproduce Chiesa's (2015) four forms of neurotic jouissance derived from Lacan's Fregean logic, whilst preserving the spirit of Fink's (1996, ch5) intuitive exposition of alienation and separation.

[3]It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to give a full account of this approach. The reader is referred to chapter 8 of Fink's book (1996).

3. Sexuation

Sexuation (Fink, 1996, pp98-125) is a neologism coined by Lacan to designate a subject's symbolic position with respect to sexual difference and the phallic signifier. According to Lacan, 'every speaking being situates itself on one side or the other' (1972, 13-3-73) of the sexual divide, identifying as either masculine or feminine. Yet, since all subjects regardless of orientation do speak, does this mean that psychotics and perverts, neither of whom have undergone separation, cannot identify themselves as masculine and feminine? Lacan clearly states that it is only thanks to the articulation of lack that a 'speaking being can find its bearings with respect to ... its sexual belonging' (1968, 30-4-69). Therefore only subjects who have undergone castration, i.e. neurotics, can be sexuated and moreover they *must* be sexuated.

Since, as I have argued, obsession and hysteria are also sexuated positions, there remains the question of the relationship of these two subjective categories to the masculine and feminine positions of Seminar XX. Indeed, Lacan never makes an absolutely unambiguous connection between them. Yet, as will become clear later, the obsessional's single mode of jouissance is identical to the masculine subject's mode of enjoyment. For the hysteric, the situation is rather more complicated. Lacan's theory of alienation and separation in Seminar XI allows for only one mode of jouissance and, as pointed out by Chiesa (2015), the feminine subject has three. To complicate things further, Lacan often refers to the hysteric as having two modes of jouissance, the jouissance of imagination where she is 'just as capable as the every man himself' and 'if by chance the phallus interests her' then phallic jouissance also (1970, 19-5-71). The feminine subject also has a 'dual' enjoyment: in addition to phallic jouissance she 'conceals a different enjoyment [that is] properly feminine which in no way depends on it' (Lacan, 1971a, 9-2-72). I suggest that Lacan conceives of the hysteric and the feminine subject as two limits of the feminine topology, each enjoying two of the three forms of feminine jouissance, and having phallic jouissance in common. Yet Lacan acknowledges that the hysteric's truth is 'capable of a subtle enough sliding to be the introduction to a woman', (1970, 9-6-71) which would suggest that the boundary between the hysteric and feminine subjective structures is rather uncertain. In this work, rather than conceive of femininity as normative and hysteria as pathological (see e.g. Ragland (2004, p36)), I will assume that the hysteric and the feminine subject are one and the same.

Finally, it should be made clear that the subjective categories of masculine and feminine bear no relation to biological males and females. Unfortunately, by using 'man' and 'woman' throughout his seminars to indicate a sexuated position, Lacan complicates the distinction between psychic and biological. Yet he is very clear that the subject 'forms without regard to the anatomical distinction between the sexes' (Lacan, 2006b, p576). There is no representation

of biological sex in the psyche (Lacan, 1964, 27-5-64) and one's sexuation is a wholly symbolic stance. Biological males can therefore adopt a feminine/hysterical position and biological females a masculine/obsessional one. In this dissertation, although gendered pronouns have been used when referring to sexuated subjective positions (indeed it is difficult not to do so without making the text unreadable) this does not indicate that a particular position is the sole preserve of one biological sex.

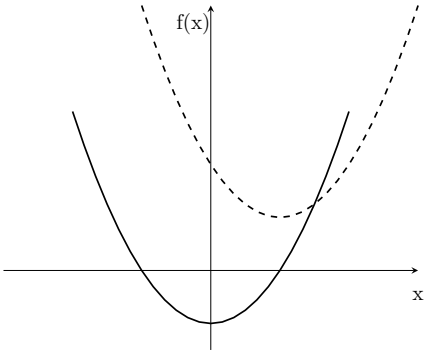
The first role of the phallic signifier, as discussed in the previous chapter, is the suture of the subject (and the Other) from the imaginary phallus ϕ in castration. All neurotic subjects experience castration: 'the woman has to undergo castration neither more nor less than the man' (Lacan, 1974, 21-1-75). The difference between the sexed subjective positions arises not from castration, but from the second role of Φ as the master signifier of sexuation.

The post-castration child is exposed as a desiring subject but its desires have not yet been organized. The second role of the phallic signifier is to 'prop up' (Lacan, 2006c, p697) or provide an interpretation of the child's desires. The child has two choices: either to identify with the cause of it's mother's desire (whomever it perceives as 'having' the phallic signifier, usually referred to in the literature as the father) or to identify with the mother herself. In the masculine position, the child identifies symbolically with the father: it chooses Φ as representative of its lack. Thus the child is compensated for the lack caused by castration with the promise that it might someday overcome this lack by acquiring the attributes deemed valuable by the mother. The feminine position, on the other hand, is more complicated. Here the child identifies with the mother as desiring being: with the mother's lack at the level of the imaginary *and* her desire for the phallic signifier at the level of he symbolic. Yet the phallic signifier 'cannot be negativized' (*ibid.*)—desiring Φ is not the opposite of having Φ. Femininity cannot be represented as the opposite of masculinity: there is no signifier that can account for both the feminine subject's desire and her lack. The female subject cannot adopt the phallic signifier as emblematic of her lack: she is defined by its absence.

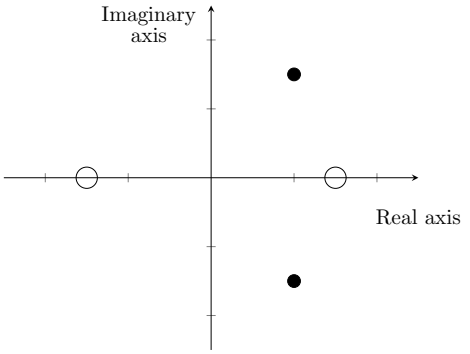
The masculine subject's lack is granted a fully symbolic interpretation by the phallic signifier, while the feminine subject's lack remains at the imaginary-symbolic level. Lacan illustrates this situation with a mathematical metaphor (1970, 19-5-71). A quadratic polynomial—defined by the function $f(x) = ax^2 + bx + c$, where a, b and c are real constants,[1]—has two roots defined by the solutions of the equation $f(x) = 0$. As illustrated in fig. 3.1a, these roots occur at the points that the graph of $f(x)$ crosses the x axis. For a given choice of a, b and c, these roots are not guaranteed to be real: the dashed line indicates a choice of a, b and c that gives complex roots (a mixture of real and imaginary parts). In this case, the graph of $f(x)$ crosses the complex (real-imaginary) plane at $\alpha + \beta i$ (where α and β are real and $i = \sqrt{-1}$ is imaginary) as shown in fig. 3.1b.

Real numbers are used to quantify absence and presence in the 'real world'. In this sense, they function as signifiers of quantity. Imaginary numbers cannot be used in this way: one cannot have $3i$ oranges for example. Yet they affect the real world indirectly in that certain functions of complex numbers can have real results. The mirror image function is an example: multiplying i by $-i$ yields the real number, 1. The domain of imaginary numbers can thus be used to represent Lacan's imaginary order in which signifiers only exist and have effects when coupled to a signified.

[1] Real in the mathematical sense should not be confused with the Lacanian real. Simply put, real numbers exist as points on a continuous line stretching from $-\infty$ to ∞.



(a) Quadratic functions with two real roots (solid line) and two complex roots (dashed line).



(b) The complex plane showing solutions of a quadratic equation with real roots (open circles) and complex roots (filled circles).

Figure 3.1: Roots of a quadratic equation.

The roots of a quadratic equation are then a metaphor for the operation of the phallic function $\Phi(x)$. The subject is represented by x, and the roots of $\Phi(x)$ denote the subject's position in the Lacanian imaginary-symbolic plane as a result of castration. For masculine subjects, the result of the operation of $\Phi(x)$ can be 'said or indeed written' (Lacan, 1970, 19-5-71), that is they are purely symbolic and occur along the symbolic axis of fig. 3.2. On the other hand, the phallic function also produces 'discordant' (*ibid.*) feminine subjects, in that they cannot be expressed wholly by the symbolic and are marked diagrammatically in fig. 3.2 by the dashed line.

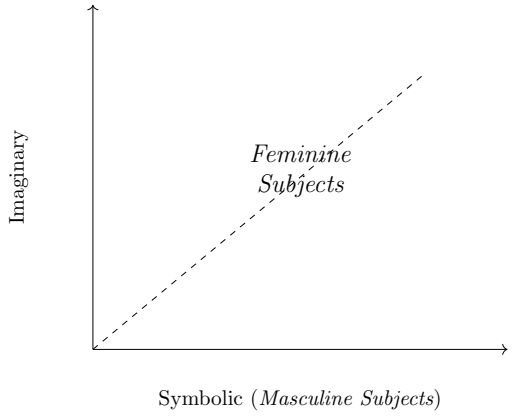


Figure 3.2: The position of neurotic subjects in the imaginary-symbolic plane

The phallic signifier itself is the third term relative to which all subjects are defined, but it is not a 'middle term' (Lacan, 1970, 19-5-71). It is linked to masculine subjects and therefore cannot be linked to feminine subjects. One could define a new signifier of femininity by rotating the axes in fig. 3.2 such that feminine subjects would become aligned with one of the axes, but masculine subjects would then be situated away from the axes. There is only one symbolic register, one privileged frame of reference, and therefore there can be only one signifier to represent what

is lacking in that register. Thus fig. 3.2 illustrates the impossibility of the sexual relationship (Lacan, 1972, 13-3-73). A subject's ideal partner, their complement, is found in a direction orthogonal to their subjective status: for masculine subjects this would mean the imaginary axis and, as can be seen, feminine subjects are elsewhere.

In summary, castration permanently sutures a subject from the imaginary phallus and reveals the lack in their being. A masculine subject receives the positivized signifier Φ to represent his lack, and can therefore be wholly represented in symbolic terms. A feminine subject, however, receives no such signifier: her lack is therefore at the level of the imaginary-symbolic, the imaginary 'marked by the signifier' (Chiesa, 2014, p178)—modified by its encounter with language in alienation. She has undergone castration fully and is no less a neurotic subject than the man, but her lack, and therefore her desire, has a component 'supplementary' (Lacan, 1972, 20-2-73) to the symbolic.

Lacan's statement that the sexual relationship is 'destined to these different forms of failure that are constituted by castration for masculine enjoyment, division for what is involved in feminine enjoyment' (Lacan, 1971b, 4-11-71) can therefore be understood as follows. Castration institutes a gap between the unconscious as represented by the 'battery of signifiers' (Lacan, 2006c, p694) and jouissance as its unsymbolizable remainder: this is the meaning of the bar in the matheme of the subject, $\not{S}$. The feminine subject, however, is exposed to a further division between the imaginary and the symbolic. This is the origin of the bar in the matheme for a feminine subject—$\not{\text{La}}$ or $\not{\textit{Woman}}$ in the English translation—in Lacan's sexuation diagram (Lacan, 1972, 20-2-73). 'Woman does not exist' (Lacan, 1972, 12-12-72), that is woman as *La*, the purely imaginary object of masculine fantasy, cannot be realized by the feminine subject. As a consequence, the myth of complementarity between masculine and feminine subject positions—the sexual relationship—invariably fails.

4. Castration and its Vicissitudes

In the previous chapter, I laid the groundwork for a theory of Lacanian subjective structure that extends Lacan's treatment of alienation and separation in Seminar XI (1964, 27-5-64) to neurotic sexuation. It differs from Lacan's formulation of sexuation in Seminar XX (1972, 13-3-73) in that it uses an intuitive approach based on symbolic and imaginary representations of lack and desire, rather than the abstraction of Fregean logic. Subjective development is revealed as a continuous narrative, in terms of the dialectic between the subject and the Other, between the realm of language and the real of jouissance. Before discussing the modes of neurotic jouissance that my method predicts, I will comment on some issues regarding castration and sexuation in the light of the theory related in the previous chapter.

Castration is a problematic term for certain psychoanalytically-oriented feminist theorists. The majority of objections stem from the mistaken assumption that 'ontological loss is predicated on the assumption of a body that suffers anatomical "loss"' (Campbell, 2004, p63). In other words, the claim is that Lacan's theory would lose its validity if the phallic signifier were not propped up by the real penis. By virtue of this identification 'women somehow come across as more castrated than men' ((Moi, 2004, p843)). That is, the feminine subject position—conflated with biological femininity—is considered inferior to masculinity.

Whilst Moi accuses Lacan of theorizing women as too castrated, some Lacanians[1] appear to consider perverts as not castrated enough. Dean (2008) notes that the pervert's certainty as to his jouissance is viewed as a 'rebuke to analytic know-how' (*ibid.*, p101). The pervert refuses to seek psychoanalytic help because he is perfectly happy as he is and this irks the analyst. Presumably perverts should be made to realize, via psychoanalysis of course, that castration and the consequent neurotic doubt is an improvement over their 'pathological' (*ibid.*) happiness.

The fallacy of these arguments is the association of castration, a psychoanalytic construct, with a code of ethics. Regarding perversion, Miller (1996, p309) adopts an almost puritanical attitude to sexual enjoyment. Neurotics, having undergone castration, have a 'deficit ... concerning sexual gratification' (*ibid.*). Perverts, on the other hand, do not have this problem: they are 'certain' (*ibid.*) of their means of enjoyment and therefore do not come to analysis. The inference is that there is an optimum amount of sexual enjoyment proper to a subject: whilst perverts wilfully transgress this dictum, neurotics keep their sexuality within decent limits.

For Moi, Lacanian theory, rather than describing sexuality in the context of social reality, actively promotes an ethics of femininity that has a 'powerful social normativity embedded into [it]' (Moi, 2004, p858). Subjects are 'formally require[d]' (*ibid.*) to adopt a sexed position and the majority of women are expected to take up the 'doubly castrated' (*ibid.*, p869) feminine

[1] See, e.g. Miller (1996).

position. Yet the inferiority of this position is not what infuriates Moi *per se*, since it merely reflects women's social status. Rather, it is that women are 'exhorted to be, remain, become feminine' (*ibid.*, p843) whereas there is no such obligation for men as regards masculinity. If a woman does not 'conform to [a] particular picture of femininity' (*ibid.*), then it is she, rather than the theory that has the problem.

So is castration a necessary step in the assumption of a 'correct' subjectivity, or a misfortune visited upon women by Lacanian theorists? Neither: viewing castration as an ethical choice or a burden disproportionately bestowed on one sex is mistaken. The child's initiation into language is not a straightforward passage from a pre-lingual helplessness to the utopia of neurotic subjectivity. At every stage, subjectification involves a sacrifice, a loss of jouissance, and the pay-off is increased independence from the mother. Each subjective category comes with its own benefits and limitations. Whether the sacrifice is worth the reward depends on how a child unconsciously responds to its unique circumstances. The pervert does not stubbornly cling to his jouissance simply to avoid the responsibilities of neurotic subjectivity, nor is the hysteric forced to accept her degraded status under the phallic signifier in the name of social cohesion. The subject is constituted as a response to the demands of the Other, and these demands are interpreted at the level of the unconscious (Lacan, 1964, 27-5-64).

Not only is the assumption (or not) of castration an unconscious choice, it is not clear which choice is 'better' and for whom. Yet both Moi and Miller think otherwise. For Moi the feminine subject has been short-changed by Lacanian theory. On the other hand, Miller's (1996, p309) observation that few perverts come to analysis might even suggest that perversion is the optimal subjective category for personal well-being—a happy medium between the disorder of psychosis and the doubts of neurosis, perhaps. Yet to valorize neurosis over perversion, or obsession over hysteria in terms of the well-being of either the subject or society in general is misguided. As I will show, the categories of perversion, obsessional neurosis and hysteria each represent an attempt to solve the twin questions of desire and being. Not only does each subjective category fail to provide an answer to both questions simultaneously, the answers are themselves far from satisfactory.

As discussed in chapter 2, the pervert is in no doubt as to his desire—it mirrors that of his mother. He has not undergone castration and unlike the neurotic, his desire does not range over a wide variety of metonymic objects. Rather his mode of enjoyment replicates the relationship with his first Other, the mother. As regards desire, the pervert is a conservative.

This statement may seem counterintuitive, given the unfortunate association of 'perversion' with non-normative sexual acts, yet it should be remembered that perversion in Lacanian theory is a subjective category and not a set of behaviours (Swales, 2012, i). As Dean (2000, pp240-247) argues convincingly, desire is impersonal. Lacan theorizes the structure of subjectivity and jouissance, not the peculiarities of a particular subject's sexual practices and object choices. Perverts can potentially practice the most mundane sex, or they can explore the extremes of masochism. The perverse act itself is not distinguished by its peculiarity but by repetition (Swales, 2012, p123): the same form, over and over again. That is not to say that they cannot be creative: indeed that they are restricted to one mode of enjoyment affords them the opportunity of exploring it in its most baroque forms, either sexually or via sublimation.[2]

It is with respect to the question of being—what one is for the Other—that the pervert's

[2]Miller (1996, p312) notes the pervert's great capacity for sublimation.

problems arise. The pervert's relationships are dyadic: in a sense, he is always at the mercy of the Other, unable to defend against the anxiety arising from the threat of aphanisis. Indeed, much of the motivation behind the perverse act is to coerce the Other into temporarily 'propping up the paternal function' (Swales, 2012, p125) and maintaining a distance between subject and Other.

The pervert's refusal to come under the jurisdiction of the phallic signifier has ambivalent results. In terms of being, the pervert has to cope with the excessive jouissance that results from an incomplete suture from the Other. The pay-off is that he does not have to submit his desires to the intervention of the phallic signifier. As regards desire, the pervert is self-certifying. The irony is that, though the pervert is dependent on the Other to regulate his jouissance, in pursuing his desires he is the ultimate individual.

Neurotic subjects, on the other hand, upon realizing that the Other has desires that they cannot satisfy, are compelled to accept castration. Neurotics makes a sacrifice of their jouissance in return for independence of desire. In doing so, they transfer their allegiance from their first Other to an external law, the law of the symbolic. In other words, they exchange submission to the arbitrary whims of a particular Other for subjection to the supposedly neutral dictates of the phallic signifier. Yet this signifier, in forcing them to adopt either a masculine or a feminine position, requires of them a further sacrifice. Neurotics, as will now be shown, are forced either to betray their desire or their being.

The masculine subject position is defined by 'having' the phallic signifier to stand in for the lack caused by castration, whilst the feminine is defined by the absence of this signifier. This has lead to the misconception that masculine subjectivity is superior since it is associated with agency whilst the feminine position is associated with passivity (Irigaray, 1985, p65). The implication is that possession of the phallic signifier is desirable and that the masculine subject as its anointed representative is in some way privileged. In other words, a man is somehow 'more' of a subject whilst a woman is merely subjected. Yet, as the pervert's satisfaction shows, one can do perfectly well without the phallic signifier.

Through castration, neurotics are aware of their lack, but doubtful as to their desire. To alleviate this doubt, the masculine subject allows the phallic signifier to represent his desires for him, and to hold out the possibility that his castration could be overcome if he achieves phallic recognition. Moreover, the phallic signifier protects him from assuming the object position, the position of being subjected to the Other's demands that prior to separation provoked so much anxiety. Yet in allowing the phallic signifier to speak for him, he has betrayed his desire. He actively pursues his objects whilst passively ceding his desires to the control of the phallic signifier. The masculine subject is then always-already 'guilty is of having given ground relative to [his] desire' (Lacan, 1959, 6-7-60). The irony is that the objects he pursues will never be sufficient to satisfy him—desire is always a 'desire for something else' (Lacan, 2006a, p431).

The feminine subject, on the other hand, does not accept the phallic signifier as representative of her desires. With no signifier to qualify her lack, she is uncertain as to what she desires, but this gives her greater freedom than the masculine subject. She can choose to pursue the signifier through phallic jouissance and therefore align her desires with the phallic order, but she also (as will be expanded on later) has recourse to other forms of jouissance. The price that the feminine subject pays for this freedom is with her being. In relation to the Other she adopts the position of object and demands of them a signifier. The feminine position is then characterized by agency with respect to desire but passivity with respect to being.

5. The Jouissance of the Neurotic Subject

In chapter 3, a preliminary investigation of neurotic subjectivity demonstrated that castration and sexuation precipitate two forms of division. The first division of castration exposes the subject's lack as the real that holes the symbolic. The subject can then take two positions with respect to this divide: the 'subject' and 'object' positions as illustrated in fig. 2.3, corresponding to whether or not the subject possesses a master signifier of desire.[1] These positions will be referred to as S_1^+ and S_1^- respectively, to avoid confusion between the position of 'subject' (a subject possessing a master signifier, or S_1^+) and the neurotic subject position (which can be either S_1^+ or S_1^-).

The second division pertains solely to feminine subjects. In the absence of Φ, the feminine subject does not have a symbolic interpretation of desire, and therefore she is represented by both the symbolic and imaginary registers. Taken together, these two forms of division result in four modes of enjoyment for the neurotic subject.[2]

The masculine subject has just one mode of jouissance, which corresponds to adopting the position of 'subject' in the symbolic, i.e. S_1^+, with the phallic signifier standing in for S_1. His jouissance revolves around object a—the object-cause of desire which substitutes for the privileged object ϕ lost in the process of castration—cloaked by the phallic signifier in a swathe of meanings, appropriate forms that his satisfaction can take within the symbolic. Masculine jouissance (and phallic jouissance in general) operates according to the laws of language: it is metaphorical in that the original object of satisfaction prior to alienation, the mother's breast, has been usurped, and metonymic in that any number of objects can be called on to substitute for it.

Masculine phallic jouissance is 'totalizing' (Chiesa, 2014, p169) in that the subject qua signifier invests in the 'myth of primitive unity' (Lacan, 1968, 26-3-69), a fusion with the lost object that would return the subject to the full enjoyment of a pre-linguistic real before division. This is necessarily a fantasy: the real can only be grasped from a standpoint in the symbolic, and the symbolic is always-already flawed by the intrusion of the real as object a.

The feminine position is rather more complicated. Her castration indicates that she has accepted the symbolic order 'in full [*à plein*]' (Lacan, 1972, 20-2-73), yet she is lacking a signifier to orient her jouissance. This grants her a 'very great freedom' (Lacan, 1970, 20-1-71) in that three modes of jouissance, three ways of obtaining a signifier of desire, can be conceived for her.

Firstly, she can assume an object position, S_1^-, from the standpoint of the symbolic. That is, she can seek out a sexual partner who can grant her the lacking phallic signifier. This is her

[1] In phallic jouissance, this signifier is Φ, but for other forms it need not be.

[2] The four forms of jouissance correspond to the four logical expressions in Lacan's theory of sexuation as explained in appendix 8.1.

own version of phallic jouissance, (corresponding to the hysteric's mode of jouissance illustrated in fig. 2.3b) where she plays the part of object *a* in the masculine fantasy. This jouissance is also subject to the law of metonymy: the Other is approached 'qua signifier' (Lacan, 1972, 9-1-73) and not as an individual.

Yet this jouissance is doubly disappointing. A return to the total enjoyment of the mythical pre-symbolic is unattainable. Moreover, the signifier she receives from the Other does not account for her true lack. For this reason, Lacan characterizes feminine phallic jouissance as 'strange [*étrange*]' (Lacan, 1972, 12-12-72). This jouissance does not aim at the 'One of universal fusion' but the 'not-One' (Chiesa, 2014, pp170-171)—rather than aiming at a totalizing masculine fantasy, it is the 'non-totalization *inherent* to and mutually dependent on the thwarted process of totalizing jouissance' (Chiesa, 2014, p169). The process of symbolization is never complete—there is always a remainder of the real that resists it—and this is evidenced by the very structure of the feminine subject's jouissance.

Secondly, the feminine subject can assume an object position, S_1^-, with respect to the imaginary, which corresponds to the famous Other jouissance of Seminar XX (Lacan, 1972, 20-2-73). Rather than approaching her partner qua object-cause of symbolic desire, she presents herself as object *a* in raw form without the veil of phallic fantasy. She approaches the Other from the perspective of her own lack—as castrated but without phallic signification, or 'marked by the signifier' (Chiesa, 2014, p178). The signifier that she receives from the Other is not Φ, but one that could name her individual lack, a signifier that Lacan designates $S(\not{A})$ (1972, 13-3-73).

The matheme $S(\not{A})$ is used throughout Lacan's work and is often interpreted as the signifier of the Other's lack: as such it could be equated to the phallic signifier.[3] In the context of Other jouissance, however, it is not properly speaking a signifier. Rather, it is an entity that stands in for the feminine subject's particular lack, i.e. its action is metaphorical rather than metonymic. Unlike Φ which supplies the phallic window-dressing that masks the feminine subject's real lack, $S(\not{A})$ substitutes a representation of that lack which is of the order of the imaginary marked by the signifier—the image of the signifier. In other words, the traumatic real of the feminine subject's lack is disguised, not by a symbolic interpretation, but by an imaginary representation. I would venture that, if Φ is the 'pure non-sense' (Lacan, 1964, 17-6-64) signifier with no signified that legitimizes the symbolic but conveys no meaning in and of itself, then $S(\not{A})$ is the signified with no signifier, pure unambiguous representation without signification, or as Lacan puts it 'the being of signifierness [*l'être de la signifiance*]' (1972, 20-2-73).

In Other jouissance, the feminine subject relates to the Other as a (barred) image, the 'other of the body' (1974, 17-12-74). This jouissance is then not a sexual jouissance: the image is of a castrated body and Φ is not present as a mediating element. Nevertheless, it is an encounter with the real of the Other and therefore not asexual—Chiesa's term 'non-sexual' (2014, p199) is an appropriate designation. The feminine subject, rather than approaching the Other qua universalizing phallic signifier, encounters the Other as represented in its singularity by $S(\not{A})$.

The third form of jouissance available to a feminine subject corresponds to her adopting the masculinized subject position S_1^+ at the level of the imaginary. Rather than relying on the Other to provide her with a signifier of desire, the feminine subject takes herself as object and makes an imaginary identification with the phallic signifier. This jouissance is then neither sexual (involving the Other qua metonymic object), nor non-sexual (involving the Other qua

[3] Fink (1996, p114) notes that Lacan indeed uses $S(\not{A})$ throughout his seminars to refer to many different concepts including phallic signification.

singularity), but the asexual jouissance of '*être-ange*', or 'being-an-angel', (Lacan, 1972, 12-12-72).

This jouissance is the counterpart of masculine phallic jouissance, in that both involve the subject qua signifier and both aim at a fantasy of totalization. It is 'realized' by the hysteric when she 'pretend[s] to be the man' (Chiesa, 2015)—by embodying the phallus both as symbolic signifier and imaginary object she attempts to circumvent castration. Yet this jouissance is necessarily a failure. In evading the question of her real lack she has merely created a 'structural illusion originating from a being-One of a chimerical body' (Chiesa, 2014, p168).

The feminine subject's three modes of jouissance are a consequence of the phallic signifier's inability to define both poles of the masculine-feminine binary simultaneously. There is no universal representation of her desire—it cannot be represented by a signifier—and therefore her phallic fantasy is not totalizing. Rather, she embodies the notion of the '*papludun*' (Lacan, 1970, 9-6-71), or '*pas plus d'un*' (not more than one). She 'situates herself between the One and the Zero' (Lacan, 1971b, VII), that is between the two registers of the imaginary and the symbolic. Hence she is 'not whole [*pas-tout*] with respect to phallic jouissance' (Lacan, 1972, 13-3-73), and correspondingly 'not-whole' with respect to Other jouissance as well. Her vision of fusion is a fantasy in triplicate: the not-One of the symbolic accessed through the phallic signifier, the not-One of the imaginary-symbolic via Other jouissance, and the One of fusion with object a in *être-ange*.

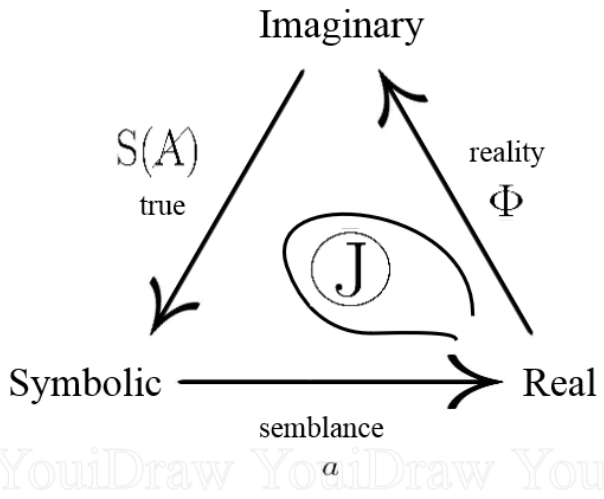


Figure 5.1: Diagrammatic representation of the three orders from Seminar XX.

Further evidence for my reading of Lacan's description of jouissance can be found in the enigmatic diagram at the beginning of the eighth lesson of Seminar XX (fig. 5.1). This illustrates the relationship of the three orders—real, symbolic and imaginary—to the three mathemes S(Ⱥ), Φ and a. Lacan elaborates on the meaning of the mathemes (1972, 10-4-73), but does not explain their relationship to the three orders, or the meaning and direction of the arrows. I propose that this diagram represents the three feminine modes of jouissance and that the orientation of the

arrows establishes the relation of each mode of jouissance to the three orders, which I will now demonstrate.

In seminar XXI, Lacan (1973, 13-11-73) introduces a novel discourse theory, articulated in terms of the three orders – the real, symbolic and imaginary—denoted by the abbreviations R, S and I respectively. There are six distinct ways in which these three letters can be arranged, each of which corresponds to a discourse. Figure 5.2 shows diagrammatically how the discourses are constructed: starting from any letter, say R, one can follow the circle clockwise to obtain the discourse RSI, and anticlockwise to obtain RIS. Lacan designates these two categories as dextrogyratory (right-oriented or clockwise) and laevogyratory (left-oriented or anticlockwise). The six discourses thus produced are shown in tables 5.1a and 5.1b.

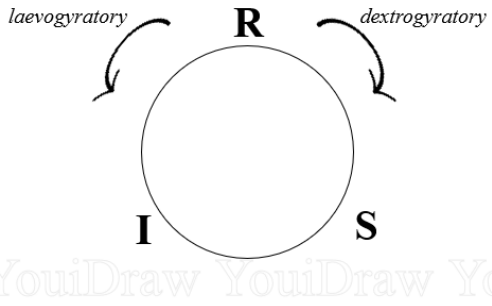


Figure 5.2: Construction of the dextro- and laevogyratory discourses, after Fink (1996, p143).

R	S	I
I	R	S
S	I	R

(a) Dextrogyratory

R	I	S
S	R	I
I	S	R

(b) Laevogyratory

Table 5.1: The two categories of polarized discourse.

Lacan gives an interpretation of two of the dextrogyratory discourses. Religion is represented by RSI, as 'what produces [*réalise*] the symbolic from the imaginary' (Lacan, 1973, 13-11-73). Religious discourse formulates symbolic representations in order to shore up gaps in meaning (the imaginary), thus providing answers to esoteric questions such as 'what is the purpose of life?'. Mathematics and psychoanalysis, on the other hand, are represented by IRS, or 'imagining the real from the symbolic' (*ibid.*). The mathematician, when faced with a lack in knowledge (the real that holes the symbolic order), uses his intuition (imaginary) to come up with answers.[4]

I propose that diagram 5.1 illustrates the laevogyratory discourses. The discourses can be extracted by following the direction of the arrows between the three orders. Starting from $S(\not{A})$, the arrows trace out the path symbolic→real →imaginary: the SRI discourse. Φ and a produce

[4]For a fuller discussion of the dextrogyratory discourses, and psychoanalysis as represented by IRS see Fink (1996, pp142-144).

ISR and RIS respectively. Since S(Ⱥ), Φ and a represent a feminine subject's three partners in Other, phallic and *être-ange* jouissance respectively, the laevogyratory discourses represent the three modes of feminine jouissance.

Feminine phallic jouissance is described by the discourse ISR, or 'imagining the symbolic from the real'. The 'symbolic from the real' is that part of the real which is lacking and is supplemented by the symbolic. This lack in the real is traumatic; the feminine subject sugar-coats it with fantasy (or 'imagines' it) to make it palatable. The symbolic object that fills in for the lack is of course the phallic signifier Φ. The ISR discourse therefore corresponds to a phallic jouissance: a real lack satisfied by a symbolic object, supported by the imaginary.

The SRI discourse ('symbolizing the real from the imaginary') refers to Other jouissance. Here, the 'real from the imaginary'—imaginary lack of a real object—refers to the primordial lack of alienation. The child perceives that a real object, e.g. the mother's breast, is missing and constructs a substitute in its imagination to alleviate its anxiety. Following castration, the protective effects of the imaginary image can be bolstered by the symbolic. The imaginary lack (of real object) overwritten by the symbolic is of course S(Ⱥ) —the signifying image.

The final discourse, RIS ('realizing the imaginary from the symbolic') is the only laevogyratory discourse that Lacan refers to, albeit obliquely. In Seminar XXIV, he discusses the 'symbolically imaginary' , or the imaginary 'connoted' inside the symbolic, which he describes as 'the geometry of angels' (Lacan, 1976, 15-3-77). This is clearly the jouissance of *être-ange*, a lack in the symbolic that is plugged up by an imaginary object—an imaginary identification with the phallic signifier. The Other is not involved directly in this jouissance, either as a real lack or an real object. Rather the hysteric 'realizes' this jouissance by attempting to embody object a.

This discursive formulation of feminine jouissance sheds new light on Lacan's seemingly paradoxical statements, that although the feminine subject is 'not-wholly in the phallic function' she is there 'in full', or even '*not* not at all there' (Lacan, 1972, 20-2-73). Whilst phallic jouissance is only one of three discourses available to her, it is clear that the symbolic order is involved in *all* of her jouissances. It is the lack in the symbolic that precipitates *être-ange*, the symbolic object that is demanded in phallic jouissance, and the symbolic inscription of the real object that supports Other jouissance. This underlines that the feminine subject is castrated no more nor less than the masculine: the symbolic is ever-present, setting limits to all her jouissances just as it does for a masculine subject.

What can this discourse theory then say about masculine jouissance? Of the three dextrogyratory discourses in table 5.1a, it is clear that IRS, 'imagining the real from the symbolic', can be identified as phallic jouissance. The masculine subject has a lack in the symbolic of a real object, a, which is supported by fantasy. Yet since his desire is entirely under the hegemony of the phallic signifier, this is the only jouissance he has access to and the only discourse available to him. This leaves open the tantalizing question of the nature of the two remaining discourses, RSI and SIR, and whether they can be experienced as jouissance.

6. Other Jouissance: Desire, Drive and Difference

Other jouissance has been subject to numerous misconceptions by Lacanian feminists: that it is 'transcendental', 'beyond the phallus' and allows the woman a privileged relation with the divine (Chiesa, 2014, p166). As discussed in chapter 1, these misconceptions are in part due to the theorists' focus on Seminar XX. Lacan, in identifying Other jouissance with a mystical experience of a primordial real beyond symbolization, had not fully accounted for the ramifications of his statement 'there is no Other of the Other' (Lacan, 1972, 13-3-73).

Feminist readings of Seminar XX have fallen broadly into two camps regarding Other jouissance. Some (e.g. Moi (2004)) claim that in placing the feminine experience 'beyond the phallus' (Lacan, 1972, 20-2-73), Lacan relegates women to an extra-symbolic realm of anarchy. Others (e.g. Freeman (2004)) embrace Other jouissance as able to articulate a 'desire both language and the law would disallow' (*ibid.*, p119). I argue that both stances are misguided. As was demonstrated in the previous chapter, Other jouissance occupies a well-defined place in the topology of neurotic jouissance, relying on the symbolic order of law and language for its articulation. Moreover, this specifically feminine jouissance does not offer a 'resist[ance to] the binary thinking Lacanian theory' (Freeman, 2004, p129), as it owes its existence to the phallic signifier's support of those very binaries.

Both theorists mentioned above agree that the experience of Other jouissance lies outside language, in a realm of 'meaninglessness and chaos' (Moi, 2004, p861), and indeed a reading of the provocatively titled "God and ~~Woman~~'s Jouissance" (Lacan, 1972, 20-2-73) would seem to support that view. Though Other jouissance depends upon the presence of the symbolic, it is nevertheless *not* symbolically mediated. Does this then mean that 'its experience bars any avenue to articulation' (Freeman, 2004, p125)? Surely the jouissances of the pervert and the psychotic—neither of which are symbolically mediated but about which much has been written—should also be categorized as incomprehensible? I would claim that in comparison with its phallic counterpart, Other jouissance is more difficult to put into words. It is mediated by $S(\not{A})$, the metaphorical image of the signifier, and as such does not have recourse to the wealth of metonymic associations of phallic jouissance. Freeman asks why Lacan use the 'realm of the visual' (Freeman, 2004, p127) (Bernini's statue of Teresa of Avila) to explain feminine jouissance. I would answer that Other jouissance, mediated by a signifying image, is far better illustrated than explained.

Equally, Other jouissance is not short-cut to the divine. For Lacan, God is simply a name for the 'paradoxical status of the symbolic order ... suspended as it is between its making One and its being not-One' (Chiesa, 2014, p185). In other words, the signifier creates the semblance of unity and the fantasy of totalization, yet insisting on the One of the signifier institutes a

symbolic order that is necessarily flawed, or not-One. God, as the ultimate Other, is found both in the a, the imaginary Other that escapes the signifier and in $S(\not{A})$, the Other of the symbolic order itself, always-already barred by the mark of the signifier. All forms of neurotic jouissance aim at fusion with the divine, either as the masculine fantasy of the One or the feminine fantasy of the not-One.

Other jouissance does not then present a challenge to the symbolic order—it is merely the symptom of the phallic signifier. The phallic signifier's role in sexuation is to organize jouissance into sexual (phallic), non-sexual (Other) and asexual (*être-ange*) forms. Each form represents the inconsistency of the symbolic order in a different way: as the impossibility of a return to the real (masculine phallic), as the structural failure of totalization (feminine phallic and Other) and as the futility of experiencing jouissance through solely imaginary and symbolic means (*être-ange*). Other jouissance is no different to other means of enjoyment in that it is a consequence of the imposition of the symbolic order whilst simultaneously pointing to its deficiency.

Claiming that Other jouissance affords the feminine subject a privileged relationship with God or that through it a woman has access to a primordial infinite jouissance, is not only incorrect but also serves to reinforce the existing system of meaning. As more and more meanings cluster around the terms 'masculine' and 'feminine', as specific masculine and feminine ways of being are increasingly entrenched in discourse, the greater is the temptation to view the phallic division as somehow 'right' or 'natural', confirming the primacy of the phallic signifier. Worse, to mythologise women as the mystical Other is to align them with La, the object of masculine fantasy.

Thus far I have focussed on what Other jouissance is emphatically *not*—a transcendent route to a massive jouissance of the pre-symbolic real—rather than how it *is* actually experienced. Unfortunately psychoanalysis has not uncovered any clinical cases of Other jouissance and Lacanian literature focusses almost exclusively on its putative mystical aspects. Nevertheless, a preliminary understanding of Other jouissance can be formed from a comparison to what I claim is its closest structural counterpart—the jouissance of the pervert.

Žižek (1998, pp80-81) points out that perversion and the drive are linked to the analyst's discourse. This discourse, one of four presented in Seminar XVII (Lacan, 1969), articulates a relationship between the subject and the Other in terms of the mathemes for object a, knowledge (S_2), the master signifier (S_1) and the split subject ($\not{S}$):

$$\frac{a}{S_2} \rightarrow \frac{\not{S}}{S_1}$$

Here, the subject is represented by the mathemes to the left of the arrow, the Other by those on the right. I argue that this discourse also represents the feminine subject's Other jouissance.

The subject position in the analyst's discourse is occupied by object a, supported by knowledge S_2. Object a here is in naked form—unmediated by the signifier S_1 which appears on the side of the Other—and represents the 'desubjectivized subject', an 'acephalous being of pure drive' (Žižek, 1998, p81). This is precisely the position of the pervert in that he acts from a conscious knowledge of what the Other desires. Equally, it is the position of the feminine subject in Other jouissance, but acting from an unconscious knowledge of her true lack.

The Other is approached as $\not{S}$, and the product of this interaction is a master signifier S_1, which the pervert uses as a supplement of the law to prop up his own unstable symbolic order. For the feminine subject, however, this signifier is $S(\not{A})$, an individualized representation of lack

that stands in for the absent signifier of desire. Both forms of jouissance can then be said to be 'at odds with desire' (Kollias, 2013, p1001) in that the Other is approached directly without the mediation of the phallic signifier or the interposition of object *a* as object cause of desire. Rather, the feminine subject, like the pervert, assumes a 'disturbing self-objectification' (*ibid.*, p1005) in offering herself up to the Other as object *a* in raw form.

The difference between the feminine subject and the pervert—and their relation to the drive—lies in the precise nature of object *a* in this interaction. As discussed in chapter 1, object *a* as remnant of the real from the standpoint of the symbolic, can take on the form of lack or excess. The pervert, for whom the symbolic order is not an absolute, external law, 'ambiguously "offer[s]" object *a* *both* as an object of real plenitude *and* as an object of real lack' (Kollias, 2013, p1006). The feminine subject however cannot equivocate. Phallic jouissance or, as Chiesa (2014) dubs it *jouis-sans*—the enjoyment of lack—is her way of giving what she does not have, of appearing in the guise of the lost object and maintaining the Other's desire in its 'state of non-satisfaction' (Žižek, 2000, p297). In Other jouissance, however, the feminine subject appears as the lack itself. She is caught in the 'closed circle of auto-affection' (*ibid.*, p304): the Other as $S(\not{A})$ simply reflects her own lack back at her and she finds satisfaction in this reflexive and repetitive circulation of the drive.

If perversion, as Kollias (2013, p1003) claims, is the anti-normative 'flip' that both reverses the 'normal' path of desire and 'institutes normativity as that which it flips', then the feminine subject is structurally capable of both sides of the normative coin. Unlike the obsessional neurotic for whom desire with its totalizing fantasy of phallic jouissance eclipses the operation of the drive, the feminine subject's ambivalent position as regards the phallic signifier allows her access to both. She can choose phallic jouissance and the neurotic path of desire, yet equally through Other jouissance she can seek satisfaction through the drive. She therefore epitomizes both the normalizing tendency of the symbolic order and the anti-normative obverse that supports it.

Given that Other jouissance supports normativity through its very perversity, one might ask if Lacan's theory of sexuation is useful to feminists at all. If it offers no subversive potential and merely reflects the status quo, then surely it is only, as Moi points out, a 'machine that churns out gender labels' (Moi, 2004, p875)? I would argue that the labels produced by the Lacanian machine are entirely dependent on the interpretation accorded it. Lacan's exposition of sexuation in Seminar XX is, to use a colloquialism common in internet circles, 'click-bait'—otherwise straightforward content couched in provocative terms in order to generate interest. Yet the underlying theory does not in my opinion deserve the condemnation it receives.

As mentioned in chapter 1, Lacan turned to mathematical logic in order to rid his theory of the linguistic baggage—misunderstandings and unconscious prejudices—that accrue to a descriptive approach. This was not entirely successful. Lacan admitted that mathemes 'are not transmitted without the help of language, and that's what makes the whole thing shaky' (1972, 15-5-73). Unfortunately, the language he chose to explain his ideas to his audience continues to be an insurmountable barrier to some theorists. Some of the concerns are justified. Whilst it is perfectly logical to refer to the master-signifier of the symbolic order as the phallic signifier given the propensity of most societies to value the masculine, it is disingenuous at the very least of Lacan to hint that it was chosen 'by virtue of its turgidity' (Lacan, 2006b, p581). Moreover, referring to the neurotic subjective categories as 'masculine' and 'feminine' and to subjects as 'men' and 'women' is discordant with a theory of sexuation that claims to make no reference to biology. The unfortunate consequence is that all Lacanian literature (this dissertation included) is obliged to

use Lacan's language in order to make itself understood, and at the same stroke misunderstood.

Yet Lacan's theory of sexuation, when stripped of all gendered language and considered as a structure, is not a theory about the difference between the sexes. Desire (of object a) is not gendered. Sexuation can say nothing about the sexual identities and object choices of the two neurotic categories it predicts. More radically, it is a theory of difference *tout court*. It assumes that the unconscious is structured according to a linguistic system adapted by Lacan from the work of Saussure and Jakobson (Evans, 1996, p101-2), within which one signifier is uniquely privileged. Subjectivity is configured around this privileged signifier, with subjects divided into those whose desires are wholly congruent with the signifier and those who are necessarily disenfranchised by it. The actual ideals and values that the master-signifier promotes are irrelevant: the same two subjective categories will persist.

There is a case, then, for ceasing to think about 'sexuation' in terms of creating sexual difference. Rather, it could be thought of as 'neurotization': the organization of desire with respect to a master signifier producing the subjective categories of obsessional neurosis and hysteria.[1] The confusion that exists between the concepts of sexuality and sexuation, biological sex and the sexuated subject, could thus be resolved—Lacan's statement that sexuated positions are taken up 'without regard to the anatomical distinction between the sexes' (2006, p576) could be taken at face value, rather than be subjected to endless scrutiny (see e.g. Moi (2004)). Moreover, 'masculine' and 'feminine' would no longer be subjective categories that exclude the psychotic and the pervert, but descriptive categories potentially accessible to all—toppling neurosis from its position as the exemplar of sexual maturation. Oedipus, as one of psychoanalysis' great 'normalizers' (Kollias, 2013, p995), would be usurped.

Of course, certain Lacanian aphorisms would lose their capacity to shock: 'There's no such thing as the sexual relationship' (Lacan, 1972, 12-12-72) would have to be recast more clumsily as 'the fantasies of two subjects, even those of the hysteric and the obsessive, are structurally incompatible'. Critiquing Lacan from a feminist perspective would suddenly become far less interesting—indeed, there would be little left to critique. A structural theory of difference can say nothing about the particularities of femininity. When Moi (2004, p875) claims that psychoanalysis does not need a femininity theory, psychoanalysis can answer that indeed it does not have one.

[1] Although hysteria especially still carries a great deal of gendered associations.

7. Conclusion

In this dissertation, I have presented a reworking of Lacan's theory of the subject. This formulation consists of a continuous narrative which treats the three clinical categories of subject—psychosis, perversion and neurosis—on an equal footing. In particular, neurotic sexuation is treated as one of the natural consequences of a child's subjective development rather than as a theoretical adjunct. With this approach, I have attempted to address some of the misconceptions surrounding Lacanian subjectivity: that neurosis is the apogee of subjectivity, that within neurosis feminine subjectivity is inferior to the masculine and that Other jouissance represents either a direct route to the divine or a descent into chaos. Moreover, in taking a structural approach to Lacanian theory—in focussing not so much on what Lacan said but on the architecture of his ideas—Lacan's theory of sexuation is revealed not as a theory of femininity, but of difference *tout court*.

Other jouissance, the feminine subject's mode of enjoyment supplemental to phallic jouissance, is exposed as a structural necessity—a symptom of the phallic signifier's inability to unambiguously distinguish sexuated positions. This jouissanceis a manifestation of the drive and as such can usefully be compared to the pervert's jouissance and the analytic discourse. This could be a productive avenue by which to explore feminine subjectivity—for example the relationship of Other jouissance to sublimation of which the pervert is a master, and the link between the drive, the *sinthome* and the individualisation of the feminine subject's lack as represented by $S(\not{A})$. Moreover, it is suggestive of a link between the four neurotic modes of jouissance and the four discourses.

The consequences of this theory for the masculine subject are yet to be fully explored. In particular, the two extra modes of masculine jouissance that are predicted by dextrogyratory discourse theory have not yet been accounted for. I am of the opinion that they relate to the drive (as the masculine counterpart of Other jouissance) and to identification (as the counterpart of *être-ange*) respectively. It is not however clear whether the masculine subject has access to them, and if so, why they are excluded from Lacan's formulation of sexuation in terms of logic.

According to one of Lacan's prominent interpreters in the English-speaking world, reading Lacan is an 'infuriating experience' (Fink, 1996, p149). Lacan's 'antisystem' (*ibid.*, p148)—the haphazard structure of his seminars, the impossibly dense prose of his formal written work, his delight in wordplay, ambiguity and polysemy—confounds attempts to construct a systematic theory from his oeuvre. And this is precisely what Lacan intended: the inscrutable quality of his work reflects the shifting nature of the Lacanian subject itself. Yet Lacan has one great gift for his interpreters: mathematical formalization. Whilst language deceives and interpretations

abound, Lacan's use of mathematics creates a firm foundation from which to approach his work. Working from this foundation, my hope has been to cast some light on Lacan's work, or at least, in the words of J-A. Miller, 'some light and some shadow' (Lacan, 1964, 13-5-64).

8. Appendices

8.1 Comparison with Lacan's Formulae of Sexuation

Lacan's formulation of masculinity and femininity in terms of logic is the idiom most commonly found in the literature.[1] It consists of four logical expressions which can be linked to the four forms of neurotic jouissance as set out in chapter 5.

Lacan expresses the two positions that a subject x can adopt with respect to the phallic function $\Phi(x)$ as:

Masculine	Feminine
$\forall x\ \Phi x$	$\overline{\forall x}\ \Phi x$
$\exists x\ \overline{\Phi x}$	$\overline{\exists x}\ \overline{\Phi x}$

Here, x represents a neurotic subject and $\Phi(x)$ is the functional form of the phallic signifier. The formulation uses the universal and existential quantifiers, $\forall$ and $\exists$, of predicate logic, but Lacan subverts their usual meaning and introduces the concept of negation denoted by the overbar (Lacan, 2009, p18).

On the masculine side, the first formula $\forall x\ \Phi x$, denotes that 'man as a whole acquires his inscription' (Lacan, 1972, 13-3-73) from the phallic function. Masculine subjects are entirely defined by Φ and and can only 'get off' in the ways prescribed by the symbolic order. $\forall x\ \Phi x$, therefore describes masculine phallic jouissance.

Also on the masculine side, $\exists x\ \overline{\Phi x}$ reads 'there must be one who says no to phallic enjoyment' (Lacan, 1973, 11-6-74), that is at least one man is not subject to the phallic function as castration (or indeed sexuation). This subject represents 'the exception posited as the end point' (Lacan, 1972, 13-3-73)—the limit that legitimizes the universal subjugation of masculine subjects to the phallic function—and has access to infinite jouissance, unbridled by castration. Yet Lacan also states that '$\exists x\ \overline{\Phi x}$ is the locus of enjoyment of the woman who is much more linked to the saying than is imagined' (Lacan, 1973, 11-6-74) and that it is the 'link of the enjoyment of the woman to the impudence of the saying' (*ibid.*). In other words, $\exists x\ \overline{\Phi x}$ represents *être-ange*, the masculinized jouissance of the hysteric when she has the impudence to imagine that she can do without phallic jouissance.

On the feminine side, $\overline{\forall x}\ \Phi x$ represents Other jouissance . The matheme $\overline{\forall x}$ represents the the not-allness' (Lacan, 1973, 11-6-74) of the feminine subject— that there is 'not only one enjoyment' (*ibid.*) and 'there remains a bit for herself, for her corporal enjoyment' (*ibid.*). Finally, $\overline{\exists x}\ \overline{\Phi x}$ is interpreted as 'there does not exist an x to deny the function of $\Phi(x)$' (Lacan, 1973, 21-5-74) and

[1] A full discussion of this formulation can be found in e.g. Fink (1996, p98 ff.).

is interpreted as 'the way in which *the woman* does not exist, namely the way that her enjoyment cannot be grounded on her own impudence' (1973, 11-6-74). $\overline{\exists x}\,\overline{\Phi x}$ indicates that all women are castrated and therefore the woman who embodies the male fantasy cannot exist. Without exception, all women may experience the phallic jouissance that $\overline{\exists x}\,\overline{\Phi x}$ represents.

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