

*Also by Juliet Mitchell*  
WOMAN'S ESTATE  
PSYCHOANALYSIS AND FEMINISM  
THE RIGHTS AND WRONGS OF WOMEN  
(editor with Anne Oakley)

*Also by Jacqueline Rose*  
THE CASE OF PETER PAN OR THE  
IMPOSSIBILITY OF CHILDREN'S FICTION

# FEMININE SEXUALITY

Jacques Lacan and the  
*école freudienne*

*Edited by*  
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and  
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## Editors' Preface

The articles translated here are a selection put together by us in 1975 from the works of the French psychoanalyst, Jacques Lacan, and the *école freudienne*, the school of psychoanalysis which he directed in Paris between 1964 and 1980. They have never appeared together before, and only one has been translated previously into English. In making this selection our objective has been to show the relevance of Lacan's ideas for the continuing debate on femininity within both psychoanalysis and feminism.

Lacan's relationship to the psychoanalytic institution has always been controversial; his work became controversial for feminism when, in the 1970s, he focused more intensively on the question of feminine sexuality. In the years prior to his death in September 1981 both these controversies intensified.

The basic premise of Lacan's work is a questioning of any certainty or authority in notions of psychic and sexual life. There is a connection between this premise and his repeated breaks with psychoanalytic institutions. In January 1980 Lacan unilaterally dissolved the *école freudienne* in order to stop what he saw as the degradation of his ideas under the weight of his own institution. But this act, like Lacan's presentation of his work, was a challenge to authority yet at the same time authoritarian and patriarchal. It will be clear to the reader in the texts which follow that Lacan was trapped in the circles of this paradox.

The texts are preceded by an Introduction. In the first part, Juliet Mitchell situates Lacan's work in relation to his overall project within psychoanalytic theory, and then gives an account of the earlier psychoanalytic debate on femininity in the 1920s and 1930s of which these texts are in many ways the direct sequel. In the second part, Jacqueline Rose describes the conceptual movement of the texts themselves, and the implications of the debate on femininity in and around the work of Lacan. Although each part can be read separately, the Introduction as a whole

represents a double engagement expressing our shared sense of the importance of Lacan for psychoanalysis, and of psychoanalysis for feminism.

### Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Sally Alexander and George Craig.

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J. M.

J. R.

### List of Abbreviations

- PF *The Pelican Freud Library* (Harmondsworth: Penguin).  
 IJPA *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* (bulletin of the International Psychoanalytical Association, London).  
 PQ *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*.  
 IT 'Intervention on Transference'.  
 MP 'The Meaning of the Phallus'.  
 C 'Guiding Remarks for a Congress on Feminine Sexuality'.  
 PP 'The Phallic Phase and the Subjective Import of the Castration Complex'.  
 FS 'Feminine Sexuality in Psychoanalytic Doctrine'.  
 E 'God and the *Jouissance of The Woman*' } *Encore*.  
 'A Love Letter'  
 O 'Seminar of 21 January 1975'.

References to Freud, by volume number, year of first publication of article and page number, unless otherwise stated are to *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, 24 vols (London: Hogarth, 1953–74). References to works other than Lacan's seminars and *Ecrits* are given by author and date. References to Lacan's seminars are by their seminar number (for example, SXX), and to *Ecrits* as *Ecrits* with the earliest date of publication or presentation of the article in parenthesis; the page number to translations of articles which have already appeared in English is provided in italics after the original page number, although the translations might have been slightly modified. Full bibliographical information is given at the beginning of each translated text and in the general bibliography at the end of the collection.