

## Chapter 8

### *The Signification of the Phallus*

#### OVERVIEW

This essay dates from the same year as the preceding one (1958) and therefore represents a corresponding level of development in Lacan's thought. In fact it complements the former insofar as, for Lacan, the essential function of the phallus is to be the signifier of desire, whose importance in the treatment process we have just seen. Both themes received full discussion in the seminar of 1957–1958 on "The Formations of the Unconscious," and the essays crystallize the results of that effort. As in the previous essay, so here, the available text cries for glosses that only the seminar can give. But such is Lacan's manner, and we simply have to live with that fact, settling for what provisional sense we can make out of what he actually says.

The present essay is mercifully brief (is this because the original lecture was delivered in German?). It begins with a reference to the importance of the castration complex for traditional psychoanalytic theory, both in terms of eventual symptom formation and in terms of the unconscious dimension of sexual identification. For how are we to understand the strange

anomaly by which a human being assumes "the attributes of [his/her] sex only through a threat—the threat, indeed, of their privation" (1977, p. 281/685)? Are we to admit with Freud "a disturbance of human sexuality, not of a contingent, but of an essential kind" (1977, p. 281/685)? This much is certain: the problem is "insoluble by any reduction to biological givens" (1977, p. 282/686). It must be approached in terms of the "clinical facts," and these "reveal a relation of the subject to the phallus that is established without regard to the anatomical difference of the sexes" (1977, p. 282/686).

The interpretation of this relation presents difficulties, of course, especially in the case of women, whether in terms of the little girl's feeling that she has been deprived of a phallus, or in the fantasy of the mother as possessing a phallus, or in terms of the mother's presumably having been deprived of the phallus—for that matter, the whole *raison d'être* of the "phallic stage" in the sexual development of women.

Having thus indicated his own intention to address the issue of the relation of the subject to the phallus "without regard to the anatomical difference of the sexes," Lacan indulges in a polemic section where he pays his contentious respects to other writers who have dealt formally with the phallic stage of development. In particular, "the most eminent" (Helene Deutsch, Karen Horney, and Ernest Jones) receive honorable mention, with Melanie Klein slipping in through the back door. Jones is singled out for special attention—praised for his introduction of the notion of *aphanisis* (the disappearance of sexual desire) into the psychoanalytic debate, since with this he suggests "the relation between castration and desire" (1977, p. 283/687), but criticized for resorting to the notion of part-object (a Kleinian term that "has never been subjected to criticism since Karl Abraham introduced it" [1977, p. 283/687]). The latter notion leaves Jones victimized by a Kleinian perspective. Lacan's whole critique of object relations theory as developed by Melanie Klein is implicit here and must be left for fuller discussion elsewhere. For the moment, we may expect the brunt of that critique to fall

on the failure of this school, with its heavy emphasis on the role of fantasy, to take sufficient account of the function of the symbolic order.

It was Freud's grasp of the functioning of the symbolic order (despite the absence of adequate concepts of linguistics) that Lacan, as we know, sees to be the most significant aspect of Freud's "discovery." This implies not only the distinction between signifier and signified but the conception "that the signifier has an active function in determining certain effects" in what is to be signified (i.e., the "signifiable"). The signifier is determinative to the extent that the signified is accessible only through the signifier, i.e., "appears as submitting to its mark" (1977, p. 284/688) in such fashion that we are forced "to accept the notion of an incessant sliding of the signified under the signifier" (1977, p. 154/502). Moreover, when "the signifier" is concatenated into a chain of signifiers, this chain is governed by the laws of language. Thus we must acknowledge "a new dimension of the human condition in that it is not only man who speaks, but . . . in man and through man *it* speaks (*ça parle*)." The "it" here is to be understood as the "structure of language," that is so woven through man's whole nature as to make it possible for speech "to resound" in him (1977, p. 284/688-689).

What is at stake here, we know, is not "language as a social phenomenon" but language in the sense of "the laws that govern that other scene" (for Freud, the "unconscious"), operating as they do in the "double play of combination and substitution" on which metonymy and metaphor (those "two aspects that generate the signified") are based (1977, p. 285/689). As such, these laws play a "determining" role in the "institution of the subject" —but we shall return to this later. Let it suffice here to observe that when Lacan says that "*It* speaks in the Other," we take him to mean that the laws of language function in such fashion that it is these that are evoked when two subjects engage in speech, these that permit the signifying process, "by means of a logic anterior to any awakening of the signified" (1977, p. 285/689), to emerge in the first place. To recognize the dimension of the un-

conscious in the subject's speech is to gain some appreciation of the fundamental division in the subject that is ingredient to his very constitution.

This now brings us at last to the role of the phallus in this constitution, and now the waters muddy. For the phallus, according to Lacan, is neither a fantasy, nor an object, nor an organ (whether penis or clitoris), but a signifier — indeed the signifier of all signifiers, "intended to designate as a whole the effects of the signified [we understand: of the whole process of signification], in that the signifier conditions them by its presence [i.e., its function] as a signifier" (1977, p. 285/690). But what precisely is the import of this?

Let us begin by asking: What are the effects of the signifying system? First of all, that the needs of a human being must be channeled through the order of signifiers (i.e., the symbolic order) by the very "fact that he speaks" (1977, p. 286/690). When these needs become articulated through speech and thus take the form of demands, they undergo a certain alienation from the subject, if only because turning them into "signifying form" already submits them to exigencies that belong to "the locus of the Other" (1977, p. 286/690).

Now this "alienation" "constitutes" a form of "repression" in the subject. How? We know that the dynamic thrust that initially took the form of need now must be channeled through the order of signifiers. To the extent that signifiers are able to articulate this thrust, the result is a series of demands. To the extent that they cannot, the dynamic movement remains operative but is now subject to a continual displacement whose pattern is unconsciously structured, and it is in this form that it goes by the name of "desire." Its shunted movement is, of course, governed by the laws of combination and selection, i.e., "the play of displacement and condensation to which [the subject] is doomed in the exercise of his functions" (1977, p. 287/692). If it escapes formulation in demand, it may nonetheless emerge in "the paradoxical, deviant, erratic, eccentric, even scandalous character by which [desire] is distinguished from need" (1977, p. 286/690).

It is the extent to which desire is forced underground and filtered through the symbolic system that we understand it to be “repressed.” And it is the extent to which the process is fundamental to the developmental cycle, constituting initiation into the symbolic order, that this repression legitimately may be called “primal” (*Urverdrängung*) (1977, p. 286/690). It should be noted that repression in this sense also constitutes a “splitting” of the subject between the unconscious signification of desire (i.e., the dynamism submissive to the laws of language) and the above-ground chains of signifiers that operate on the level of conscious signification.

Fair enough, but what has this to do with the phallus? The phallus is the signifier par excellence of desire precisely inasmuch as desire undergoes repression and is henceforth marked with unconscious signification: “The phallus is the privileged signifier of that mark in which the role of the logos [i.e., the order of signifiers—the symbolic order] is joined with the advent of desire” (1977, p. 287/692). But why choose the phallus for this delicate task? Lacan replies that it is “because it is the most tangible element in the real of sexual copulation, and also the most symbolic in the literal (typographical) sense of the term, since it is equivalent there to the (logical) copula” (1977, p. 287/692). The verbal correlation between “copula” and “copulation” is obvious enough, but why sexual copulation is of such central importance in this regard is less obvious. We are left to guess at some vague sense of consummation in it, or perhaps resort to the myriad reasons that attempt to explain the importance of the phallus as a symbol throughout the history of human culture. In any case, the final reason given by Lacan for choosing the phallus as signifier of all signifiers is less problematic: “By virtue of its turgidity, [the phallus] is the image of the vital flow . . . transmitted in generation” (1977, p. 287/692). That much, at least, is clear.

Now the paradox of the phallus as a signifier is that it plays its role as veiled, i.e., insofar as it dis-appears when desire, which it signifies, is repressed. Thus, “the living part of [the] be-

ing [of the subject] in the *urverdrängt* (primally repressed) finds its signifier by receiving the mark of the *Verdrängung* (repression) of the phallus” (1977, p. 288/693). With this the subject is initiated into the symbolic order, and this brings with it the bar between signifier and signified, so that “the subject designates his being only by barring everything he signifies” (1977, p. 288/693).

Now if the phallus is signifier of desire, and if, as we have seen already (Chapter 7), desire is desire of the Other, then “it is [the] desire of the Other as such that the subject must recognize, that is to say, the other in so far as he is himself a subject divided by the signifying *Spaltung*” (1977, p. 288/693)—victim as well of the primal repression out of which desire emerges, signified by the repressed phallus.

Here the dialectic of desire between subject and Other, in this case the mother, is engaged. Recalling that in Hegelian terms the subject’s quest for recognition becomes the desire to be the desired of the other, we are told again that “if the desire[d] of the mother is the phallus [i.e., signifier of the Other’s desire], the child wishes to be the phallus in order to satisfy that desire” (1977, p. 289/693). But sooner or later the child must be “content to present to the Other what in reality he may *have* that corresponds to this phallus” (1977, p. 289/693)—or not have—and learn to live with the consequences.

Up to this point, “phallus” has been used clearly to designate *not* an organ (whether penis or clitoris) but a signifier. Now Lacan speaks of a “real phallus” rather than a signifier and the sense is the physical organ of the male or the imaginary organ in the female (e.g., the “test of the desire of the Other is decisive not in the sense that the subject learns by it whether or not he has a real phallus, but in the sense that he learns that the mother does not have it” [1977, p. 289/693]). From here, Lacan proceeds to discuss “the structures that will govern the relations between the sexes” “by reference to the function of the phallus” (1977, p. 289/694), but the term “phallus” now assumes a new ambiguity, oscillating as it does between its role as signifier and its role as real or imagined organ.

The issue of relations between the sexes, we are told, turns around either "being" the phallus (signifier of desire) or "having" it. But "having" the phallus is ambiguous: simply "having" it may be opposed to "being" the phallus and thus refer to the struggle with basic human finitude independent of sexual differentiation; or it may refer to having the "real" phallus (the male organ) and thus be distinguished from *not* having it (as a female). This having/not-having polarity, however, soon is replaced by an attitude of seeming-to-have (*paraître*) the organ "in order to protect it on the one side, and to mask its lack on the other" (1977, p. 289/694). It is in terms of this "seeming" that the "typical manifestations of the behaviour of each sex" become apparent and the drama of sexual differentiation is played out.

If all this makes sense, it is conceivable that a subject may "have" the phallus-as-signifier (as opposed to "being" the phallus for the Other) yet "not have" the phallus-as-organ (because female). This suggests a way to avoid dizziness through the following skid:

Paradoxical as this formulation may seem, I am saying that it is in order to be the phallus, that is to say, the signifier of the desire of the Other, that a woman will reject an essential part of femininity, namely all her attributes in the masquerade. It is for that which she is not that she wishes to be desired as well as loved. But she finds the signifier of her own desire in the body of him to whom she addresses her demand for love [1977, pp. 289-290/694].

Note in this passage the slippage between the two senses of "phallus"; note, too, the overlay of the demand-for-love/desire polarity. If we add allusions to certain familiar Freudian themes (e.g., repression), the result is a palimpsest which, on the evidence given in the text, is all but inscrutable. After touching briefly on certain characteristics of male sexuality, then of homosexuality in both male and female, Lacan goes on to say that "these remarks should really be examined in greater detail," and one is all too ready to agree with him. But greater detail is

not forthcoming here, and we must await further elucidation by the publication of the seminar materials.

The essay concludes with a remark that is enormously rich and relatively intelligible. Given all that has been said about the role of the phallus as signifier of desire, "one can glimpse the reason for a characteristic that had never before been elucidated, and which shows once again the depth of Freud's intuition: namely, why he advances the view that there is only one *libido* [grammatically of *feminine* gender in both Latin and German], his text showing that he conceives it as masculine in nature" (1977, p. 291/695). In other words, it is altogether appropriate that the phallus ("masculine in nature") may be taken to signify desire of whatever gender. Lacan adds: "The function of the phallic signifier touches here on its most profound relation," which we take to mean that desire signified by the phallus lies deep within the human subject, deeper than any sexual differentiation between male and female, as deep as that dimension "in which the Ancients embodied the [*Nous*] and the [*Logos*]" (1977, p. 291/695).

This calls for some explanation. We take "embodied" (*incarnant*: "give flesh to") literally to suggest that desire corresponds to the deepest strivings of the human being where *Nous* and *Logos* permeate human flesh. As to these two Greek terms themselves, both have a rich and complex history among the "Ancients." Long before either was located in a concrete individual to designate specific human functions (e.g., *nous*: "mind"; *logos*: "thought," "speech"), both *Nous* and *Logos* referred to something more like cosmic forces: *Nous* (e.g., Anaxagoras) as an organizing principle of the essentially material universe; *Logos* (e.g., Heraclitus) as a gathering principle that brings beings together, giving them cohesion within themselves and relatedness to one another. Thus, either may be thought of as Other than a human being, yet permeating him. Indeed, it is on the deepest level of penetration that these principles permeate human "flesh" and become one with the striving of desire. But this adds up to saying again that desire is "desire of the Other."

## MAP OF THE TEXT

- I. Clinical introduction.
  - A. The castration complex functions as a knot:
    - 1. by structuring symptoms;
    - 2. by regulating unconscious sexual identity.
  - B. One's sex, therefore, is assumed in the face of threatened deprivation.
    - 1. This shows the radical disturbance in human sexuality.
    - 2. and repudiates any notion of sex as a biological given.
  - C. Clinical findings reveal a relation of the subject to the phallus that transcends sexual difference:
    - 1. the little girl considers herself deprived of the phallus, first by her mother, then by her father;
    - 2. both sexes see the mother as provided with a phallus;
    - 3. castration becomes significant for symptom formation only after its discovery as castration of the mother;
    - 4. the phallic stage in both sexes is dominated by the imaginary phallus and masturbation, with no marking of the vagina for genital penetration.
  - D. Some authors therefore conclude that the phallic stage is the effect of a repression,
    - 1. in which the phallic object functions as a symptom.
      - a. This symptom is variously called a fetish or a phobia, or viewed as a part-object.
  - E. The abandoned debate on the phallic stage by Deutsch, Horney, and Jones makes for refreshing reading.
    - 1. Jones's notion of *aphanisis* correctly poses the relation of castration to desire,
      - a. but this only highlights his failure in falling back on biological distinctions,
      - b. and on a notion of part-object that is Kleinian.

- II. Freud's discovery deals with the relationship between the signifier and the signified.
  - A. Because of the signifier, man is structured by language.
    - 1. The theoretical and practical import of this is not yet glimpsed.
      - a. It has nothing to do with cultural, social, or even psycho-ideological positions stressing the role of affect.
  - B. Freud shows that what is at stake are the laws governing the unconscious.
    - 1. These are the laws governing the combination and selection of phonemes to generate metonymy and metaphor,
      - a. whereby the subject is instituted,
      - b. and the symptom is structured.
  - C. Thus we can say "*It* speaks in the Other,"
    - 1. for it is there that the subject finds his signifying place
    - 2. and is characterized by a splitting (*Spaltung*).
  - D. In this context "the phallus is a signifier" (not a fantasy, object, or organ),
    - 1. designating the effects of the signified in their entirety,
    - 2. and conditioning them by its presence as signifier.
- III. The effects of the presence of the phallus as signifier stem from a deviation.
  - A. Insofar as man speaks, he must subject his needs to the articulation of a demand,
    - 1. whereby they become alienated,
    - 2. since his message must be emitted from the locus of the Other.
  - B. What is in this way alienated in needs constitutes a primary repression (*Urverdrängung*)
    - 1. and, by hypothesis, cannot be articulated in demand,
    - 2. but appears in an offshoot, namely, desire,

3. which cannot be reduced to need.
- C. A demand always calls for something other than need satisfaction.
  1. The demand is for a presence or an absence,
    - a. primordially with reference to the mother who also is subject to the Other,
    - b. and who is thus constituted as having the "privilege" of satisfying needs through love.
  2. Demand goes beyond the particularity of every object,
    - a. insofar as the object becomes proof of love.
  3. The satisfaction demand obtains for needs crushes the demand for love.
- D. But particularity reappears beyond demand in desire.
  1. The unconditionality of the demand for love becomes the "absolute" condition of desire,
    - a. so that desire cannot be reduced to an appetite for satisfaction,
    - b. nor is it equivalent to a demand for love,
    - c. but it is the result of their splitting, the subtraction of the appetite for satisfaction from demand.
- IV. Sexual relationships function within this field of desire.
  - A. The sexual relation arouses and signifies an enigma for both partners.
    1. Each demands a proof of love from the other,
      - a. which goes beyond the satisfaction of a need.
    2. But each desires to be recognized by the other.
    3. This gap basic to desire is only camouflaged by referring to genitality.
    4. Marked by his relation as a subject to the signifier, the human being can never be whole.
  - B. The phallus signifies this mark where language is joined to desire.
    1. This signifier is chosen for several reasons:
      - a. it is the most salient element in sexual copulation;

- b. it literally functions as a copula;
- c. in its tumescence it is the image of the vital flux that passes in generation.
2. As a veiled and disappearing signifier, the phallus is a sign of the latency of the signifiable,
  - a. and functions as the bar creating the signified,
  - b. as well as producing a complementary split in the subject.
    - i. The signifying subject is barred from himself as signified,
      - (a) thus making unrealizable his demand to be loved for himself.
    - ii. The primary repression of the phallus as signifier necessitates substitute signifiers,
      - (a) thereby structuring the unconscious as language.
3. The phallus as signifier modulates desire,
  - a. but the subject has access to it in the Other (the unconscious).
  - b. The phallus is a veiled signifier of the Other's desire,
    - i. which must be recognized,
    - ii. but the other subject is also divided by the signifying splitting.
- C. The function of the phallus is confirmed by psychological development.
  1. This enables us to formulate more correctly the Kleinian thesis that the child perceives the mother as "containing" the phallus.
  2. The child's development is subject to the dialectical relationship between the demand for love and the experience of desire.
    - a. If the mother desires the phallus, the child wishes to *be* the phallus for the mother,
      - i. whether or not the child *has* the phallus.
    - b. Yet the child demands to be loved for himself and as the phallus.

3. Upon learning that the mother does not have a real phallus, the castration complex has its effect,
    - a. in symptom or structure in the child.
  4. The law of the father introduces the outcome of this development.
- D. The function of the phallus structures the relations between the sexes.
1. These relations pivot around a *to be* and a *to have*,
    - a. where the attempt *to be* the phallus gives the subject a signifying reality,
    - b. while *having* or *not having* it is masked by idealized sex-role posturing,
      - i. wherein the demand for love reduces desire to demand.
  2. As the woman desires to be the phallus, she must reject aspects of her femininity,
    - a. for she wishes to be desired and loved for what she is not.
    - b. Yet she finds the signifier of her desire in the man,
      - i. and so has less difficulty tolerating the lack of satisfaction of her sexual need,
      - ii. and her desire is less repressed.
  3. To meet the man's desire for the phallus, no woman is adequate,
    - a. since the phallus as signifier constitutes her as giving what she does not have.
      - i. He therefore tolerates impotence less well,
      - ii. but the repression of his desire is more important in his case than the woman's.
    - b. However, neither is the man adequate to the phallus which substitutes for him in his relations with the woman.
  4. Male homosexuality proceeds from repressed desire (to be or to receive the phallus).
    - a. Disappointment is central to female homosexuality by reinforcing the demand for love.

5. Femininity is protected by a mask stemming from phallic repression.
  - a. Therefore (by analogy) the unmasking in virile display appears feminine.
6. For Freud there is only one libido, and it is masculine for both sexes.
  - a. At a radical level it precedes the distinction between thought and word.

## NOTES TO THE TEXT

- 281/685 The precise nuance implied in the word "signification" in the title, transliterating the French, is not self-evident. Both English and French translate the German *Bedeutung* of the original text as orally delivered. Lacan may be alluding here to the use of this term by Frege in his famous distinction between *Sinn* ("sense") and *Bedeutung*, which normally would be translated by "meaning." However, since "meaning" in the ordinary English often answers to Frege's *Sinn*, his English translators translate *Bedeutung* as "reference" (1960, pp. ix, 56-78). The point may seem pedantic, since Frege's distinction was not maintained by Freud, Lacan's author of predilection, but Lacan's own shifting use of the word "signification" in his later writings makes us wary of taking this use of the word here for granted.
- 281d/685 The meaning of *ratio* broadly includes the notions of reason, measure, plan, order, principle, and ground. The sense would be that the castration complex regulates development in such a way (by the installation of an unconscious position) that it accounts for or grounds the first role mentioned, namely, the structuring of symptoms.
- 281e/685 In the previous essay Lacan has already alluded to Freud's difficulty with the endless analysis of the se-

quelae of the castration complex and penis envy. Referring to the phallus, Lacan writes:

Are we going to have to spell out the role of the signifier only to find that we have the castration complex and penis envy—which, God knows, we could be well rid of—on our hands? When Freud reached that particular juncture, he found himself at a loss as to how to extricate himself, seeing ahead of him merely the desert of analysis [1977, p. 263/627].

Lacan goes on to offer the signifying phallus as the key to the solution: “The function of this signifier as such in the quest of desire is, as Freud mapped it out, the key to what we need to know in order to terminate his analyses: and no artifice can take its place if we are to achieve that end” (1977, p. 265/630).

- 282a/686 The presence of the myth of Oedipus itself indicates that we are dealing with the symbolic order, not with biological givens.
- 282b/686 The French has *artifice* for “trickery,” suggesting that the resort to genetic memory is a contrived or expedient argument. What remains unsolved by it is the institution of the symbolic order, as enacted in Freud’s myth of the primal horde in *Totem and Taboo* (1913) and the Oedipus myth.
- 282c/686 Because of its awkwardness, “from this ‘why’ ” for *de ce pourquoi* can be better rendered as “in terms of the reason why.”
- 283a/687 The text of Longus (2nd–3rd c. A.D.) describes the woman, Lycaenon, as “young and pretty and by country standards rather elegant” (p. 79). She seduces Daphnis under the premise of teaching him about making love, the procedures of which the two pastoral teenagers have been shyly struggling to discover—they were uncertain about what should follow kiss-

ing, embracing, and being naked with one another.

The English translation of the French *vieille* (“old”) might better read “older,” i.e., more experienced.

- 283e/687 In his 1964 seminar, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, Lacan writes:

What must be stressed at the outset is that a signifier is that which represents a subject for another signifier.

The signifier, producing itself in the field of the Other, makes manifest the subject of its signification. But it functions as a signifier only to reduce the subject in question to being no more than a signifier, to petrify the subject in the same movement in which it calls the subject to function, to speak, as subject. . . .

One analyst felt this at another level and tried to signify it in a term that was new, and which has never been exploited since in the field of analysis—*aphanisis*, disappearance. Ernest Jones, who invented it, mistook it for something rather absurd, the fear of seeing desire disappear. Now, *aphanisis* is to be situated in a more radical way at the level at which the subject manifests himself in this movement of disappearance that I have described as lethal. In a quite different way, I have called this movement the *fading* of the subject [pp. 207–208].

This fading of the subject will be echoed later in the notion of the subject “barring” himself in designating himself (1977, p. 288d–e/686) and in the next essay.

- 283f/688 The position is contrary to him (*lui*), that is, to Freud, not “contrary to it.” Lacan is apparently referring to a text in which Jones states:

Turning now to the corresponding problem in



girls, we may begin by noting that the distinction mentioned earlier between the proto- and the deuterio-phallic phase is if anything more prominent with girls than with boys. So much so that when I made the suggestion that the phallic phase in girls represents a secondary solution of conflict I was under the impression that by the phallic phase was meant what I now see to be only the second half of it, a misapprehension Professor Freud corrected in recent correspondence; incidentally, his condemnation of my suggestion was partly based on the same misunderstanding, since on his part he naturally thought I was referring to the whole phase [1933, p. 467].

Jones argues that the proto-phallic phase is marked by an awareness that the vagina is for penetration by the penis; the fear of castration (and awareness of sex difference) leads to the deuterio-phallic phase, a period of neurotic compromise in boys, who must renounce the incest wish, and of a secondary defensive reaction in girls, who react to the absent penis with disappointment, resentment, or denial.

283g/688 Jones (1933) ends his essay with the words: "Lastly I think we should do well to remind ourselves of a piece of wisdom whose source is more ancient than Plato: 'In the beginning... male and female created He them' " (p. 484).

284c/688 For a discussion of Saussure's notion of the signifier and the signified, see the Introduction and Chapter 5. The "signifiable" in this context would seem to be "reality" insofar as it can be talked about. The "mark" appears again later (1977, p. 287/692) and suggests the bar dividing the signifier from the signified. The word "passion" here and in the next paragraph connotes the submission of the real as signifiable to the

laws of language which structure the unconscious expression of desire.

284e/689 Rather than "if only," the French *même* allows for "even in the form of effects of retreat," that is, even in deviations of technique.

285b/689 As before, "the two aspects" (*les deux versants*) are rendered as "slopes" down which a previous signifier slips to become the signified. A misprint omits "that it is impossible" (italics added).

285c/689 The sense is that speech presupposes the symbolic order, largely unconscious (Other), as the foundation of the signifying subject. This reading would then achieve consistency by translating "it articulates," for *il articule*, as "he articulates" (that is, the subject) and "he [not "it"] has thus been constituted" for *il s'est ainsi constitué*, that is, the subject as split.

285d/690 The phallus has a long history spanning diverse cultures. Laplanche and Pontalis (1967) write that in Freud's presentation of the castration complex the phallus has a symbolic function "in so far as its absence or presence transforms an anatomical distinction into a major yardstick for the categorisation of human beings, and in so far as, for each individual subject, this absence or presence is not taken for granted and remains irreducible to a mere *datum*" (p. 313). They go on to discuss the many Greco-Roman figurations of the phallus in sculpture and painting.

Hermes stands out as the most significant Western phallic figure, and Róheim (1952), drawing on classical research, writes:

What is the origin of this god? . . . 'The oldest form in which the god was presented was the phallos.' In Kyllene, Pausanias says there is a temple dedicated to Asklepios, one to Aphrodite. Hermes is also one of their gods. They represent him as an erect phallos. The stone piles or pillars called

*hermai* in Greek are a second form in which the god appears. Finally, we have wooden or stone pillars with a phallos added to them—the ithyphallic Hermes. Eros appears as a herm ‘very near akin to the rude Pelasgian Hermes himself, own brother to the Priapos of the Hellespont and Asia Minor’ [p. 151].

As the “messenger of the gods,” Hermes is intimately linked with language. One inscription even refers to him as “the giver of discourse” (*Sermonis dator*), as Kerényi (1944) explains:

It is not without good reason that Hermes was supposed to be the inventor of language. It belongs to the Hermetic wisdom of the Greek language itself, to one of its most ingenious chance hits, that the word for the simplest mute stone monument, *herma*, from which the name of the God stems, corresponds phonetically to the Latin *sermo*, ‘speech’ or any verbal ‘exposition.’ The word *herma*, which in the Greek does not have this meaning, does however form the basic verbal root for *hermēneia*, ‘explanation.’ Hermes is *hermēneus* (‘interpreter’), a linguistic mediator, and this not merely on verbal grounds. By nature he is the begetter and bringer of something light-like, a clarifier, God of ex-position and interpretation (of the kind also that we are engaged in) which seeks and in his spirit—the spirit of the shameless ex-position of his parents’ love affair—is led forward to the deepest mystery.

For the great mystery, which remains a mystery even after all our discussing and explaining, is this: the appearance of a speaking figure, the very embodiment as it were in a hu-

man-divine form of clear, articulated, play-related and therefore enchanting, language—the appearance in that deep primordial darkness where one expects only animal muteness, wordless silence, or cries of pleasure and pain. Hermes the ‘Whisperer’ (*psithyristēs*) inspires the warmest animal darkness [p. 88].

Jung (whose concern for language [see Kugler, 1978, 1981] seems overlooked by Lacan) attempts to establish numerous etymological links among the roots of phallus, tree, speech, and light in Indo-European languages (1912, p. 163, 219, 220).

An additional correlation exists between the phallus and one of the oldest cross-cultural figures, that of the Trickster, a figure especially prominent among American Indians (Radin, 1956).

285e/690 We can understand “the effects of the signified” as a whole in terms of all the consequences of the institution of the bar (the condition for the signifier-signified relationship), which consequences the phallus conditions by its presence below the bar as the primarily repressed signifier.

286a/690 Instead of “its message,” we read “his message” (*son message*), referring to man. Lacan here echoes what he said in the previous essay about needs being subordinated to the structure of language (1977, p. 255/618).

286b/690 In German *begehren* can mean “want, desire, demand, long for, hanker after, crave (for), covet” (Betteridge, 1958, p. 61).

286c/690 That is, it is wrong to define demand simply in terms of that which must be frustrated in analysis.

286d/691 Rather than “situated *within* the needs,” *en deçà* is better translated as “on this side of,” or “short of.” The sense seems to be that the primordial relation to the mother comports the Other (language, the uncon-

scious) in such a way that simple need satisfaction is not possible. Yet in demanding the mother's love the child approaches her (the Other) as if she *could* meet his demand for need satisfaction through her love; she herself suffers from a basic want (*manque*) from which her love proceeds. In the previous essay the same point is made (1977, p. 263/627).

287b/691 The sense of this dense paragraph seems to be that the sexual relation produces an enigmatic reciprocal relation: each partner seeks both love and sexual satisfaction from the other, but furthermore the very demand puts the other in a position to desire recognition as the one who can meet the demand.

287c/692 Rather than "to disguise the gap it creates," the French says *et camoufler sa béance* ("to camouflage its gaping abyss"), the abyss of desire basic to the (un)happiness of the subject. The notion of oblativity appeared in the previous essay (1977, p. 253/615) and suggests self-donation, yielding to the other.

288a-f/  
692-693 For the sake of a provisional clarity (but at the risk of misunderstanding through oversimplification) we can attempt to paraphrase this section. The real phallus, now a repressed (veiled or disappearing) signifier, is a sign of how the real as signifiable becomes latent in words (latent insofar as a bar separates signifier from signified). This bar, in turn, splits the speaking subject from himself as spoken-about, and this split is evinced in the split between conscious (speech) and unconscious (desire, structured by the laws of metaphor and metonymy). Lacan seems to be saying that primary repression occurs when the child must "cut off" his desire to be the mother's phallus (the signifier of her desire). This cutting off constitutes symbolic castration and primary repression, establishing the unconscious as the other scene wherein the phallus, as unconscious signifier, con-

tinues to structure desire through metaphoric and metonymic chains of associated secondary signifiers. The phallus as unconscious signifier provides the anchor-point for the chain and makes possible all the richness of associations by which language serves to cover the original gap and at the same time signify substitute objects. It would be wrong to conclude that the unconscious is the condition for language. Lacan states the opposite: "Now, what I say is that language is the condition for the unconscious" (1970, p. xiii).

289a/693 It is in terms of the symbolic order that the Kleinian formula can be corrected.

289c/693 The child's demand is to be loved for himself *and* as the phallus.

289g-h  
694 The line of argument goes from the subject's *being* the phallus, and thereby given a new signifying reality, to the subject's *seeming* (replacing the *having* or *not having*), whereby the sexual relationship is derealized, that is, is subject to the imaginary captations of sex-role posturing.

290a/694 The woman sees the signifier of her desire before her and receives it into her body; therefore, Lacan seems to argue, her desire is less repressed and she can tolerate unsatisfied sexual needs.

290c/695 The sense here seems to be that the man must avoid impotence if he is to remain busy being the phallus for women, but he must repress his own desire that the woman be the phallus for him in his never-ending quest for the impossible woman-as-phallus.

290d/695 The "redoubling" seems to refer to the issue of being versus having the phallus in each sex. We prefer to translate "the Other of love . . . in so far as it [not "he"] is deprived of what it [not "he"] gives, is poorly perceived [*s'aperçoit mal*] in the retreat in which it [not "he"] is substituted." One reading is that the man

cannot measure up to the idealized phallus precisely in the moment of detumescence in the woman's body.

291c/695 Grammatically speaking *libido* is always feminine for Freud (*die libido*). His ascription to it of a masculine character occurs in *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905c, p. 219).