firmed (or not) as the subject grows through interaction with the real objects and its fantasies of them, on its complicated road to maturity.

Lacan takes the opposite perspective: the analysand's unconscious reveals a fragmented subject of shifting and uncertain sexual identity. To be human is to be subjected to a law which decentres and divides: sexuality is created in a division, the subject is split; but an ideological world conceals this from the conscious subject who is supposed to feel whole and certain of a sexual identity. Psychoanalysis should aim at a destruction of this concealment and at a reconstruction of the subject's construction in all its splits. This may be an accurate theory, it is certainly a precarious project. It is to this theory and project – the history of the fractured sexual subject – that Lacan dedicates himself.

INTRODUCTION – II
Jacqueline Rose

> Freud argues that there is no libido other than masculine. Meaning what? other than that a whole field, which is hardly negligible, is thereby ignored. This is the field of all those beings who take on the status of the woman – if, indeed, this being takes on anything whatsoever of her fate.
>
> (Lacan, *Encore*, SXX, 1972–3)

The texts we publish here return to and extend the debate which has just been described. They return to it by insisting that its implications for psychoanalysis have still not been understood; they extend it in so far as the issue itself – the question of feminine sexuality – goes beyond psychoanalysis to feminism, as part of its questioning of how that sexuality comes to be defined.

In this sense, these texts bear all the signs of a repetition, a resurfacing of an area of disagreement or disturbance, but one in which the issue at stake has been thrown into starker relief. It is as if the more or less peaceful co-existence which closed the debate of the 1920s and 1930s ('left, in a tacit understanding, to the goodwill of individual interpretation', C, pp. 88–9), and the lull which it produced ('the lull experienced after the breakdown of the debate', C, p. 89), concealed a trouble which was bound to emerge again with renewed urgency. Today, that urgency can be seen explicitly as political, so much so that in the controversy over Lacan's dissolution of his school in 1980, the French newspaper *Le Monde* could point to the debate about femininity as the clearest statement of the political repercussions of psychoanalysis itself (*Le Monde*, 1 June 1980, p. xvi). Psychoanalysis is now recognised as crucial in the discussion of femininity – how it comes into being and what it might mean. Jacques Lacan, who addressed this issue increasingly during the course of his work, has been at the centre of the controversies produced by that recognition.

In this context, the idea of a 'return to Freud' most commonly

associated with Lacan has a very specific meaning. It is not so much a return to the letter of Freud's text as the re-opening of a case, a case which has already been fought, as Juliet Mitchell describes above, and one which, if anything, in relation to feminism, Freud could be said to have lost. In fact the relationship between psychoanalysis and feminism might seem to start at the point where Freud's account of sexual difference was rejected by analysts specifically arguing *for* women ('men analysts have been led to adopt an unduly phallo-centric view', Jones, 1927, p. 459). Most analysts have since agreed on the limitations and difficulties of Freud's account. Those difficulties were fully recognised by Lacan, but he considered that attempts to resolve them within psychoanalysis had systematically fallen into a trap. For they failed to see that the concept of the phallus in Freud's account of human sexuality was part of his awareness of the problematic, if not impossible, nature of sexual identity itself. They answered it, therefore, by reference to a pre-given sexual difference aimed at securing that identity for both sexes. In doing so, they lost sight of Freud's sense that sexual difference is constructed at a price and that it involves subjection to a law which exceeds any natural or biological division. The concept of the phallus stands for that subjection, and for the way in which women are very precisely implicated in its process.

The history of psychoanalysis can in many ways be seen entirely in terms of its engagement with this question of feminine sexuality. Freud himself started with the analysis of the hysterical patient (Freud and Breuer, II, 1893–5) (whom, it should be noted, he insisted could also be male (Freud, I, 1886)). It was then his failure to analyse one such patient – 'Dora' (Freud, VII, 1905) – in terms of a normative concept of what a woman should be, or want, that led him to recognise the fragmented and aberrant nature of sexuality itself. Normal sexuality is, therefore, strictly an *ordering*, one which the hysteric refuses (falls ill). The rest of Freud's work can then be read as a description of how that ordering takes place, which led him back, necessarily, to the question of femininity, because its persistence as a difficulty revealed the cost of that order.

Moreover, Freud returned to this question at the moment when he was reformulating his theory of human subjectivity. Lacan took Freud's concept of the unconscious, as extended and developed by the later texts (specifically *Beyond the Pleasure*

Principle, XVIII, 1920, and the unfinished paper 'Splitting of the Ego in the Process of Defence', XXIII, 1940) as the basis of his own account of femininity (the frequent criticism of Lacan that he disregarded the later works is totally unfounded here). He argued that failure to recognise the interdependency of these two concerns in Freud's work – the theory of subjectivity and femininity together – has led psychoanalysts into an ideologically loaded mistake, that is, an attempt to resolve the difficulties of Freud's account of femininity by aiming to resolve the difficulty of femininity itself. For by restoring the woman to her place and identity (which, they argue, Freud out of 'prejudice' failed to see), they have missed Freud's corresponding stress on the division and precariousness of human subjectivity itself, which was, for Lacan, central to psychoanalysis' most radical insights. Attempts by and for women to answer Freud have tended to relinquish those insights, discarding either the concept of the unconscious (the sign of that division) or that of bisexuality (the sign of that precariousness). And this has been true of positions as diverse as that of Jones (and Horney) in the 1920s and 1930s and that of Nancy Chodorow (1979)[1] speaking from psychoanalysis for feminism today.

Re-opening the debate on feminine sexuality must start, therefore, with the link between sexuality and the unconscious. No account of Lacan's work which attempts to separate the two can make sense. For Lacan, the unconscious undermines the subject from any position of certainty, from any relation of knowledge to his or her psychic processes and history, and *simultaneously* reveals the fictional nature of the sexual category to which every human subject is none the less assigned. In Lacan's account, sexual identity operates as a law – it is something enjoined on the subject. For him, the fact that individuals must line up according to an opposition (having or not having the phallus) makes that clear. But it is the constant difficulty, or even impossibility, of that process which Lacan emphasised, and which each of the texts in this collection in differing ways seeks to address. Exposure of that difficulty within psychoanalysis and for feminism is, therefore, part of one and the same project.

1 See Note 4, p. 37 below.

I

The link between sexuality and the unconscious is one that was constantly stressed by Lacan: 'we should not overlook the fact that sexuality is crucially underlined by Freud as being strictly consubstantial to the dimension of the unconscious' (SXI, p. 133, *p. 146*). Other accounts, such as that of Ernest Jones, described the acquisition of sexual identity in terms of ego development and/or the maturation of the drives. Lacan considered that each of these concepts rests on the myth of a subjective cohesion which the concept of the unconscious properly subverts. For Lacan, the description of sexuality in developmental terms invariably loses sight of Freud's most fundamental discovery – that the unconscious never ceases to challenge our apparent identity as subjects.

Lacan's account of subjectivity was always developed with reference to the idea of a fiction. Thus, in the 1930s he introduced the concept of the 'mirror stage' (*Ecrits*, (1936)), which took the child's mirror image as the model and basis for its future identifications. This image is a fiction because it conceals, or freezes, the infant's lack of motor co-ordination and the fragmentation of its drives. But it is salutary for the child, since it gives it the first sense of a coherent identity in which it can recognise itself. For Lacan, however, this is already a fantasy – the very image which places the child divides its identity into two. Furthermore, that moment only has meaning in relation to the presence and the look of the mother who guarantees its reality for the child. The mother does not (as in D. W. Winnicott's account (Winnicott, 1967)) mirror the child to itself; she grants an image *to* the child, which her presence instantly deflects. Holding the child is, therefore, to be understood not only as a containing, but as a process of referring, which fractures the unity it seems to offer. The mirror image is central to Lacan's account of subjectivity, because its apparent smoothness and totality is a myth. The image in which we first recognise ourselves is a *misrecognition*. Lacan is careful to stress, however, that his point is not restricted to the field of the visible alone: 'the idea of the mirror should be understood as an object which reflects – not just the visible, but also what is heard, touched and willed by the child' (Lacan, 1949, p. 567).

Lacan then takes the mirror image as the model of the ego function itself, the category which enables the subject to operate as 'I'. He supports his argument from linguistics, which designates the pronoun as a 'shifter' (Benveniste, 1956). The 'I' with which we speak stands for our identity as subjects in language, but it is the least stable entity in language, since its meaning is purely a function of the moment of utterance. The 'I' can shift, and change places, because it only ever refers to whoever happens to be using it at the time.

For Lacan the subject is constituted through language – the mirror image represents the moment when the subject is located in an order outside itself to which it will henceforth refer. The subject is the subject *of* speech (Lacan's 'parle-être'), and subject to that order. But if there is division in the image, and instability in the pronoun, there is equally loss, and difficulty, in the word. Language can only operate by designating an object in its absence. Lacan takes this further, and states that symbolisation turns on the object *as* absence. He gives as his reference Freud's early account of the child's hallucinatory cathexis of the object for which it cries (Freud, I, 1895, p. 319), and his later description in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (Freud, XVIII, 1920, p. 14) of the child's symbolisation of the absent mother in play. In the first example, the child hallucinates the object it desires; in the second, it throws a cotton reel out of its cot in order to symbolise the absence and the presence of the mother. Symbolisation starts, therefore, when the child gets its first sense that something could be missing; words stand for objects, because they only have to be spoken at the moment when the first object is lost. For Lacan, the subject can only operate within language by constantly repeating that moment of fundamental and irreducible division. The subject is therefore constituted in language *as* this division or splitting (Freud's *Ichspaltung*, or splitting of the ego).

Lacan termed the order of language the symbolic, that of the ego and its identifications the imaginary (the stress, therefore, is quite deliberately on symbol and image, the idea of something which 'stands in'). The real was then his term for the moment of impossibility onto which both are grafted, the point of that moment's endless return.[2]

Lacan's account of childhood then follows his basic premise

[2] This can be compared with, for example, Melanie Klein's account of symbol-formation (Klein, 1930), and also with Hannah Segal's (1957), where symbolisation is an effect of anxiety and a means of transcending it on the path to

that identity is constructed in language, but only at a cost. Identity shifts, and language speaks the loss which lay behind that first moment of symbolisation. When the child asks something of its mother, that loss will persist over and above anything which she can possibly give, or say, in reply. Demand always 'bears on something other than the satisfaction which it calls for' (MP, p. 80), and each time the demand of the child is answered by the satisfaction of its needs, so this 'something other' is relegated to the place of its original impossibility. Lacan terms this 'desire'. It can be defined as the 'remainder' of the subject, something which is always left over, but which has no content as such. Desire functions much as the zero unit in the numerical chain – its place is both constitutive *and* empty.

The concept of desire is crucial to Lacan's account of sexuality. He considered that the failure to grasp its implications leads inevitably to a reduction of sexuality back into the order of a need (something, therefore, which could be satisfied). Against this, he quoted Freud's statement: 'we must reckon with the possibility that something in the nature of the sexual instinct itself is unfavourable to the realisation of complete satisfaction' (Freud, XI, 1912, pp. 188–9; cit. PP p. 113).

At the same time 'identity' and 'wholeness' remain precisely at the level of fantasy. Subjects in language persist in their belief that somewhere there is a point of certainty, of knowledge and of truth. When the subject addresses its demand outside itself to another, this other becomes the fantasied place of just such a knowledge or certainty. Lacan calls this the Other – the site of language to which the speaking subject necessarily refers. The Other appears to hold the 'truth' of the subject and the power to make good its loss. But this is the ultimate fantasy. Language is the place where meaning circulates – the meaning of each lin-

reality, a path which is increasingly assured by the strengthening of the ego itself. Cf. also Lacan's specific critique of Ernest Jones's famous article on symbolism (Jones, 1916; *Ecrits* (1959)), which he criticised for its definition of language in terms of an increasing mastery or appropriation of reality, and for failing to see, therefore, the structure of metaphor (or substitution) which lies at the root of, and is endlessly repeated within, subjectivity in its relation to the unconscious. It is in this sense also that Lacan's emphasis on language should be differentiated from what he defined as 'culturalism', that is, from any conception of language as a social phenomenon which does not take into account its fundamental instability (language as constantly placing, and *displacing*, the subject).

guistic unit can only be established by reference to another, and it is arbitrarily fixed. Lacan, therefore, draws from Saussure's concept of the arbitrary nature of the linguistic sign (Saussure, 1915 (1974)), the implication that there can be no final guarantee or securing of language. There is, Lacan writes, 'no Other of the Other', and anyone who claims to take up this place is an imposter (the Master and/or psychotic).

Sexuality belongs in this area of instability played out in the register of demand and desire, each sex coming to stand, mythically and exclusively, for that which could satisfy and complete the other. It is when the categories 'male' and 'female' are seen to represent an absolute and complementary division that they fall prey to a mystification in which the difficulty of sexuality instantly disappears: 'to disguise this gap by relying on the virtue of the "genital" to resolve it through the maturation of tenderness . . . , however piously intended, is nonetheless a fraud' (MP, p. 81). Lacan therefore, argued that psychoanalysis should not try to produce 'male' and 'female' as complementary entities, sure of each other and of their own identity, but should expose the fantasy on which this notion rests.

As Juliet Mitchell describes above, there is a tendency, when arguing for the pre-given nature of sexual difference, for the specificity of male and female drives, to lose sight of the more radical aspects of Freud's work on sexuality – his insistence on the disjunction between the sexual object and the sexual aim, his difficult challenge to the concept of perversion, and his demand that heterosexual object-choice be explained and not assumed (Freud, VII, 1905, pp. 144–6, note 1, 1915). For Lacan, the 'vicissitudes' of the instinct ('instinct' was the original English translation for the German word 'trieb') cannot be understood as a deviation, accident or defence on the path to a normal heterosexuality which would ideally be secured. Rather the term 'vicissitude' indicates a fundamental difficulty inherent in human sexuality, which can be seen in the very concept of the drive.

The concept of the drive is crucial to the discussion of sexuality because of the relative ease with which it can be used to collapse psychoanalysis into biology, the dimension from which, for Lacan, it most urgently needed to be retrieved. He rejected the idea of a gradual 'maturation' of the drive, with its associated emphasis on genital identity (the 'virtue' of the genital) because of the way it implies a quasi-biological sequence of sexual life. Instead he stressed the resistance of the drive to any biological

definition.

The drive is not the instinct precisely because it cannot be reduced to the order of need (Freud defined it as an internal stimulus only to distinguish it immediately from hunger and thirst). The drive is divisible into pressure, source, object and aim; and it challenges any straightforward concept of satisfaction – the drive can be sublimated and Freud described its object as 'indifferent'. What matters, therefore, is not what the drive *achieves*, but its *process*. For Lacan, that process reveals all the difficulty which characterises the subject's relationship to the Other. In his account, the drive is something in the nature of an appeal, or searching out, which always goes beyond the actual relationships on which it turns. Although Freud did at times describe the drive in terms of an economy of pleasure (the idea that tension is resolved when the drive achieves its aim), Lacan points to an opposite stress in Freud's work. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, when Freud described the child's game with the cotton reel, what he identified in that game was a process of pure repetition which revolved around the object as lost. Freud termed this the death drive. Analysts since Freud (specifically Melanie Klein) have taken this to refer to a primordial instinct of aggression. For Freud there could be no such instinct, in that all instincts are characterised by their aggression, their tenacity or insistence (exactly their *drive*). It is this very insistence which places the drive outside any register of need, and beyond an economy of pleasure. The drive touches on an area of excess (it is 'too much'). Lacan calls this *jouissance* (literally 'orgasm', but used by Lacan to refer to something more than pleasure which can easily tip into its opposite).

In Lacan's description of the transformation of the drive (its stages), the emphasis is always on the loss of the object around which it revolves, and hence on the drive itself as a representation. Lacan therefore took one step further Freud's own assertion that the drive can only be understood in terms of the representation to which it is attached, by arguing that the structure of representation is present in the very process of the drive. For Lacan, there is always distance in the drive and always a reference to the Other (he added to the oral and anal drives the scopic and invocatory drives whose objects are the look and the voice). But because of its relation to the question of sexual difference, he made a special case for the genital drive in order to retrieve it

from the residual biologism to which it is so easily assimilated: 'There is no genital drive. It can go and get f... [. . .] on the side of the Other' (SXI, p. 173, *p. 189*). In one of his final statements, Lacan again insisted that Freud had seen this, despite his equation of the genital and the reproductive at certain moments of his work (*Ornicar?*, 20–21, 1980, p. 16).[3]

When Lacan himself did refer to biology, it was in order to remind us of the paradox inherent in reproduction itself, which, as Freud pointed out, represents a victory of the species over the individual. The 'fact' of sexed reproduction marks the subject as '*subject to*' death (SXI, p. 186, *p. 205*). There is a parallel here with the subject's submission to language, just as there is an analogy between the endless circulation of the drive and the structure of meaning itself ('a topological unity of the gaps in play', SXI, p. 165, *p. 181*). At moments, therefore, it looks as if Lacan too is grounding his theory of representation in the biological facts of life. But the significant stress was away from this, to an understanding of how representation determines the limits within which we experience our sexual life. If there is no straightforward biological sequence, and no satisfaction of the drive, then the idea of a complete and assured sexual identity belongs in the realm of fantasy.

The structure of the drive and what Lacan calls the 'nodal point' of desire are the two concepts in his work as a whole which undermine a normative account of human sexuality, and they have repercussions right across the analytic setting. Lacan considered that an emphasis on genital maturation tends to produce a dualism of the analytic relationship which can only reinforce the imaginary identifications of the subject. It is clear from the first article translated here (IT) that the question of feminine sexuality brings with it that of psychoanalytic technique. Thus by insisting to Dora that she was in love with Herr K, Freud was not only defining her in terms of a normative concept of genital heterosexuality, he also failed to see his own place within the analytic relationship, and reduced it to a dual dimension operating on the axes of identification and demand. By asking Dora to realise her 'identity' through Herr K, Freud was simultaneously asking her

3 *Ornicar?*, periodical of the department of psychoanalysis, under Lacan's direction up to 1981, at the University of Paris VIII (Sorbonne) (Lacan, 1975–).

to meet, or reflect, his own demand. On both counts, he was binding her to a dual relationship in which the problem of desire has no place. For Lacan, there was always this risk that psychoanalysis will strengthen for the patient the idea of self completion through another, which was the fantasy behind the earliest mother–child relationship. If the analyst indicates to the patient that he or she 'desires this or that object' (SII, p. 267), this can only block the emergence of desire itself.

Lacan, therefore, defined the objective of analysis as the breaking of any imaginary relationship between patient and analyst through the intervention of a third term which throws them both onto the axis of the symbolic. The intervention of a third term is the precondition of language (the use of the three basic pronouns 'I'/'you'/'he-she-it'), and it can be seen in the structure of the Oedipus complex itself. What matters here, however, is that the symbolic sets a limit to the 'imaginary' of the analytic situation. Both analyst and patient must come to see how they are constituted by an order which goes beyond their interaction as such: 'The imaginary economy only has a meaning and we only have a relation to it in so far as it is inscribed in a symbolic order which imposes a ternary relation' (SII, p. 296).

By focusing on what he calls the symbolic order, Lacan was doing no more than taking to its logical conclusion Freud's preoccupation with an 'historic event' in the determination of human subjectivity, which Juliet Mitchell describes above. But for Lacan this is not some mythical moment of our past, it is the present order in which every individual subject must take up his or her place. His concern to break the duality of the analytic situation was part of his desire to bring this dimension back into the centre of our understanding of psychic life. The subject and the analytic process, must break out of the imaginary dyad which blinds them to what is happening outside. As was the case with Freud, the concept of castration came into Lacan's account of sexuality as the direct effect of this emphasis. For Lacan, the increasing stress on the mother–child relationship in analytic theory, and the rejection of the concept of castration had to be seen as related developments, because the latter only makes sense with reference to the wider symbolic order in which that relationship is played out:

> Taking the experience of psychoanalysis in its development over sixty years, it comes as no surprise to note that whereas the first outcome of its origins was a conception of the castration complex based on paternal repression, it has progressively directed its interests towards the frustrations coming from the mother, not that such a distortion has shed any light on the complex. (C, p. 87)

This was at the heart of Lacan's polemic. He considered that it was the failure to grasp the concept of the symbolic which has led psychoanalysis to concentrate increasingly on the adequacies and inadequacies of the mother-child relationship, an emphasis which tends to be complicit with the idea of a maternal role (the concept of mothering).[4] The concept of castration was central to Lacan because of the reference which it always contains to paternal law.

Addressing Melanie Klein, Lacan makes it clear that the argument for a reintroduction of the concept of desire into the definition of human sexuality is a return to, and a reformulation of, the law and the place of the father as it was originally defined by Freud ('a dimension . . . increasingly evaded since Freud', PP, p. 117):

> Melanie Klein describes the relationship to the mother as a mirrored relationship: the maternal body becomes the receptacle of the drives which the child projects onto it, drives motivated by aggression born of a fundamental disappointment. This is to neglect the fact that the outside is given for the subject as the place where the desire of the Other is situated, and where he or she will encounter the third term, the father. (Lacan, 1957–8, p. 13)

4 Nancy Chodorow's reading of psychoanalysis for feminism (Chodorow, 1979) paradoxically also belongs here, and it touches on all the problems raised so far. The book attempts to use psychoanalysis to account for the acquisition and reproduction of mothering, but it can only do so by displacing the concepts of the unconscious and bisexuality in favour of a notion of gender imprinting ('the establishment of an unambiguous and unquestioned gender identity', p. 158 – the concept comes from Stoller (1965)), which is compatible with a sociological conception of role. Thus the problem needing to be addressed – the acquisition of sexual identity and its difficulty – is sidestepped in the account. The book sets itself to question sexual *roles*, but only within the limits of an assumed sexual *identity*.

Lacan argued, therefore, for a return to the concept of the fathe
but this concept is now defined in relation to that of desire. Wh
matters is that the relationship of the child to the mother is n
simply based on 'frustration and satisfaction' ('the notion
frustration (which was never employed by Freud)', MP, p. 80
but on the recognition of her desire. The mother is refused to t
child in so far as a prohibition falls on the child's desire to be wh
the mother desires (not the same, note, as a desire to possess
enjoy the mother in the sense normally understood):

> What we meet as an accident in the child's development
> linked to the fact that the child does not find himself or herse
> alone in front of the mother, and that the phallus forbids t
> child the satisfaction of his or her own desire, which is t
> desire to be the exclusive desire of the mother. (Lacan, 1957–
> p. 14)

The duality of the relation between mother and chil
must be broken, just as the analytic relation must be throw
onto the axis of desire. In Lacan's account, the phallus stand
for that moment of rupture. It refers mother and child to t
dimension of the symbolic which is figured by the father'
place. The mother is taken to desire the phallus not because sh
contains it (Klein), but precisely because she does not. Th
phallus therefore belongs somewhere else; it breaks the tw
term relation and initiates the order of exchange. For Lacan
it takes on this value as a function of the androcentric natur
of the symbolic order itself (cf. pp. 45–6 below). But its statu
is in itself false, and must be recognised by the child as such
Castration means first of all this – that the child's desire for t
mother does not refer *to* her but *beyond* her, to an object, t
phallus, whose status is first imaginary (the object presumed t
satisfy her desire) and then symbolic (recognition that desi
cannot be satisfied).

The place of the phallus in the account, therefore, follows fro
Lacan's return to the position and law of the father, but th
concept has been reformulated in relation to that of desire. Laca
uses the term 'paternal metaphor', metaphor having a ver
specific meaning here. First, as a reference to the act of substitu
tion (substitution is the very law of metaphoric operation)
whereby the prohibition of the father takes up the plac

originally figured by the absence of the mother. Secondly, as a reference to the status of paternity itself which can only ever logically be *inferred*. And thirdly, as part of an insistence that the father stands for a place and a function which is not reducible to the presence or absence of the real father as such:

> To speak of the Name of the Father is by no means the same thing as invoking paternal deficiency (which is often done). We know today that an Oedipus complex can be constituted perfectly well even if the father is not there, while originally it was the excessive presence of the father which was held responsible for all dramas. But it is not in an environmental perspective that the answer to these questions can be found. So as to make the link between the Name of the Father, in so far as he can at times be missing, and the father whose effective presence is not always necessary for him not to be missing, I will introduce the expression *paternal metaphor*. (Lacan, 1957–8, p. 8)

Finally, the concept is used to separate the father's function from the idealised or imaginary father with which it is so easily confused and which is exactly the figure to be got round, or past: 'Any discourse on the Oedipus complex which fails to bring out this figure will be inscribed within the very effects of the complex' (Safouan, 1974, p. 9).

Thus when Lacan calls for a return to the place of the father he is crucially distinguishing himself from any sociological conception of role. The father is a function and refers to a law, the place outside the imaginary dyad and against which it breaks. To make of him a referent is to fall into an ideological trap: the prejudice which falsifies the conception of the Oedipus complex from the start, by making it define as natural, rather than normative, the predominance of the paternal figure' (IT, p. 69).

There is, therefore, no assumption about the ways in which the places come to be fulfilled (it is this very assumption which is questioned). This is why, in talking of the genetic link between the mother and child, Lacan could refer to the 'vast social connivance' which *makes* of her the 'privileged site of prohibitions' (XXVIII, 6, p. 10).[5] And why Safouan, in an article on the

References to Lacan's Seminars XVIII ('L'envers de la psychanalyse', Lacan, 1969–70) and XXI ('Les non-dupes errent', Lacan, 1973–4) (unpublished typescripts) are given to the week, and the page, of the typescript.

function of the real father, recognises that it is the intervention o the third term which counts, and that nothing of itself require that this should be embodied by the father as such (Safouan 1974, p. 127). Lacan's positon should be read against two alterna tive emphases – on the actual behaviour of the mother alon (adequacy and inadequacy), and on a literally present or absen father (his idealisation and/or deficiency).

The concept of the phallus and the castration complex can onl be understood in terms of this reference to prohibition and th law, just as rejection of these concepts tends to lose sight of thi reference. The phallus needs to be placed on the axis of desir before it can be understood, or questioned, as the differentia mark of sexual identification (boy or girl, having or not havin the phallus). By breaking the imaginary dyad, the phallus rep resents a moment of division (Lacan calls this the subject' 'lack-in-being') which re-enacts the fundamental splitting o subjectivity itself. And by jarring against any naturalist accoun of sexuality ('phallocentrism . . . strictly impossible to deduc from any pre-established harmony of the said psyche to th nature it expresses', *Ecrits* (1955–6), pp. 554–5, *p. 198*), th phallus relegates sexuality to a strictly other dimension – th order of the symbolic outside of which, for Lacan, sexualit cannot be understood. The importance of the phallus is that it status in the development of human sexuality is somethin which nature *cannot* account for.

When Lacan is reproached with phallocentrism at the level o his theory, what is most often missed is that the subject's entr into the symbolic order is equally an exposure of the value of th phallus itself. The subject has to recognise that there is desire, o lack in the place of the Other, that there is no ultimate certainty o truth, and that the status of the phallus is a fraud (this is, fo Lacan, the meaning of castration). The phallus can only take u its place by indicating the precariousness of any identity assume by the subject on the basis of its token. Thus the phallus stand for that moment when prohibition must function, in the sense o whom may be assigned to whom in the triangle made up o mother, father and child, but at that same moment it signals t the subject that 'having' only functions at the price of a loss an 'being' as an effect of division. Only if this is dropped from th account can the phallus be taken to represent an unproblemati assertion of male privilege, or else lead to reformulations in

tended to guarantee the continuity of sexual development for both sexes (Jones).

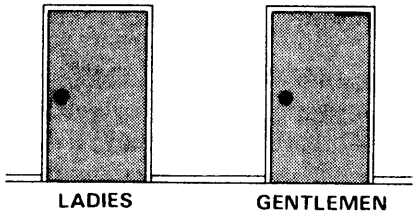
It is that very continuity which is challenged in the account given here. The concept of the phallus and the castration com plex testify above all to the problematic nature of the subject's insertion into his or her sexual identity, to an impossibility writ large over that insertion at the point where it might be taken to coincide with the genital drive. Looking back at Jones's answer to Freud, it is clear that his opposition to Freud's concept of the phallic phase involves a rejection of the dimension of desire, of the loss of the object, of the difficulty inherent in subjectivity itself (the argument of the first article from *Scilicet* translated here PP)).[6] Just as it was Freud's failure to apply the concept of castration literally to the girl child which brought him up against the concept of desire (the argument of the second article (FS)).

The subject then takes up his or her identity with reference to the phallus, but that identity is thereby designated symbolic (it is something enjoined on the subject). Lacan inverts Saussure's formula for the linguistic sign (the opposition between signifier and signified), giving primacy to the signifier over that which it signifies (or rather creates in that act of signification). For it is essential to his argument that sexual difference is a legislative divide which creates and reproduces its categories. Thus Lacan replaces Saussure's model for the arbitrary nature of the linguistic sign:

TREE

which is indeed open to the objection that it seems to reflect a theory of language based on a correspondence between words and things), with this model (*Ecrits* (1957), p. 499, *p. 151*):

6. *Scilicet*, review of Lacan's series, *le champ freudien* (Lacan, 1968–76).



'Any speaking being whatever' (*E*, p. 150) must line up on one or other side of the divide.[7]

Sexual difference is then assigned according to whether individual subjects do or do not possess the phallus, which means not that anatomical difference *is* sexual difference (the one as strictly deducible from the other), but that anatomical difference comes to *figure* sexual difference, that is, it becomes the sole representative of what that difference is allowed to be. It thus covers over the complexity of the child's early sexual life with a crude opposition in which that very complexity is refused or repressed. The phallus thus indicates the reduction of difference to an instance of visible perception, a *seeming* value.

Freud gave the moment when boy and girl child saw that they were different the status of a trauma in which the girl is seen to be lacking (the objections often start here). But something can only be *seen* to be missing according to a pre-existing hierarchy of values ('there is nothing missing in the real', PP, p. 113). What counts is not the perception but its already assigned meaning – the moment therefore belongs in the symbolic. And if Lacan states that the symbolic usage of the phallus stems from its visibility (something for which he was often criticised), it is only in so far as the order of the visible, the apparent, the seeming is the object of his attack. In fact he constantly refused any crude identification of the phallus with the order of the visible or real ('one might say that this signifier is chosen as what stands out as most easily seized upon in the real of sexual copulation', MP, p. 82), and he referred it instead to that function of 'veiling' in which he locates the fundamental duplicity of the linguistic sign:

7. It is not, therefore, a question of philology and *then* the phallus, as John Forrester argues, but of sexuality/the phallus *as* language (John Forrester, 'Philology and the phallus', in MacCabe (1981)).

> All these propositions merely veil over the fact that the phallus can only play its role as veiled, that is, as in itself the sign of the latency with which everything signifiable is struck as soon as it is raised to the function of signifier. (MP, p. 82)

Meaning is only ever erected, it is set up and fixed. The phallus symbolises the effects of the signifier in that having no value in itself, it can represent that to which value *accrues*.

Lacan's statements on language need to be taken in two directions – towards the fixing of meaning itself (that which is enjoined on the subject), and away from that very fixing to the point of its constant slippage, the risk or vanishing-point which it always contains (the unconscious). Sexuality is placed on both these dimensions at once. The difficulty is to hold these two emphases together – sexuality in the symbolic (an ordering), sexuality as that which constantly fails. Once the relationship between these two aspects of psychoanalysis can be seen, then the terms in which feminine sexuality can be described undergo a radical shift. The concept of the symbolic states that the woman's sexuality is inseparable from the representations through which it is produced ('images and symbols *for* the woman cannot be isolated from images and symbols *of* the woman . . . it is the representation of sexuality which conditions how it comes into play', C, p. 90), but those very representations will reveal the splitting through which they are constituted as such. The question of what a woman is in this account always stalls on the crucial acknowledgement that there is absolutely no guarantee that she *is* at all (cf. below pp. 48–50). But if she takes up her place according to the process described, then her sexuality will betray, necessarily, the impasses of its history.

Sexuality belongs for Lacan in the realm of masquerade. The term comes from Joan Rivière (Rivière, 1929) for whom it indicated a failed femininity. For Lacan, masquerade is the very definition of 'femininity' precisely because it is constructed with reference to a male sign. The question of frigidity (on which, Lacan recognised, psychoanalysis 'gave up', C, p. 89) also belongs here, and it is described in 'The Meaning of the Phallus' (MP) as the effect of the status of the phallic term. But this does not imply that there is a physiology to which women could somehow be returned, or into which they could be freed. Rather the term 'frigidity' stands, on the side of the woman, for the

difficulty inherent in sexuality itself, the disjunction laid over the body by desire, at the point where it is inscribed into the genital relation. Psychoanalysis now recognises that any simple criterion of femininity in terms of a shift of pleasure from clitoris to vagina is a travesty, but what matters is the fantasies implicated in either (or both). For both sexes, sexuality will necessarily touch on the duplicity which underpins its fundamental divide. As for 'normal' vaginal femininity, which might be taken as the recognition of the value of the male sign (a 'coming to' that recognition), it will always evoke the splitting on which its value is erected ('why not acknowledge that if there is no virility which castration does not consecrate, then for the woman it is a castrated lover or a dead man . . . who hides behind the veil where he calls on her adoration', C, p. 95).

The description of feminine sexuality is, therefore, an exposure of the terms of its definition, the very opposite of a demand as to what that sexuality should be. Where such a definition is given – 'identification with her mother as desiring and a recognition of the phallus in the real father' (Safouan, 1976, p. 110), it involves precisely a collapse of the phallus into the real and of desire into recognition – giving the lie, we could say, to the whole problem outlined.[8]

II

Three points emerge from what has been described so far:

1. anatomy is what figures in the account: 'for me "anatomy is not destiny", but that does not mean that anatomy does not figure' (Safouan, 1976, p. 131), but it *only figures* (it is a sham);
2. the phallus stands at its own expense and any male privilege erected upon it is an imposture 'what might be called a man, the male speaking being, strictly disappears as an effect of discourse, . . . by being inscribed within it solely as castration' (SXVIII, 12, p. 4);
3. woman is not inferior, she is *subjected*:

8. The difficulty of these terms is recognised by Safouan, but the problem remains; cf. also Eugénie Lemoine-Luccioni, *Partage des femmes* (1976), where there is the same collapse between the Other to be recognised by the woman in her advent to desire, and the real man whom, ideally, she comes to accept

> That the woman should be inscribed in an order of exchange of which she is the object, is what makes for the fundamentally conflictual, and, I would say, insoluble, character of her position: the symbolic order literally submits her, it transcends her . . . . There is for her something insurmountable, something unacceptable, in the fact of being placed as an object in a symbolic order to which, at the same time, she is subjected just as much as the man. (SII, pp. 304–5)

It is the strength of the concept of the symbolic that it systematically repudiates any account of sexuality which assumes the pre-given nature of sexual difference – the polemic within psychoanalysis and the challenge to any such 'nature' by feminism appear at their closest here. But a problem remains. Lacan's use of the symbolic at this stage relied heavily on Lévi-Strauss's notion of kinship in which women are defined as objects of exchange. As such it is open to the same objections as Lévi-Strauss's account in that it presupposes the subordination which it is intended to explain.[9] Thus while at first glance these remarks by Lacan seem most critical of the order described, they are in another sense complicit with that order and any argument constructed on their basis is likely to be circular.[10]

I think it is crucial that at the point where Lacan made these remarks he had a concept of full speech, of access to the symbolic order whose subjective equivalent is a successful linguistic

('the Other, the man', p. 83; 'the Other, the man as subject', p. 87). There seems to be a constant tendency to literalise the terms of Lacan's account and it is when this happens that the definitions most easily recognised as reactionary tend to appear. We can see this in such apparently different areas as Maude Mannoni's translation of the Name of the Father into a therapeutic practice which seeks to establish the paternal genealogy of the psychotic child (Mannoni, 1967), and in Lemoine-Luccioni's account of the real Other who ensures castration to the woman otherwise condemned to pure narcissism. Lemoine-Luccioni's account is in many ways reminiscent of that of Helene Deutsch (1930) who described the transition to femininity in terms of a desire for castration which is produced across the woman's body by the man.

9. See Elizabeth Cowie, 'Woman as Sign' (1978).

10. Cf. for example, Gayle Rubin, 'The Traffic in Women' in R. M. Reiter (1975), which describes psychoanalysis as a 'theory about the reproduction of kinship', losing sight, again, of the concept of the unconscious and the whole problem of sexual identity, reducing the relations described to a quite literal set of acts of exchange.

exchange (*Ecrits*, (1953)). But his work underwent a shift, which totally undercut any such conception of language as mediation, in favour of an increasing stress on its fundamental division, and the effects of that division on the level of sexuality itself.

'There is no sexual relation' – this became the emphasis of his account. 'There is no sexual relation' because the unconscious divides subjects to and from each other, and because it is the myth of that relation which acts as a barrier against the division, setting up a unity through which this division is persistently disavowed. Hence the related and opposite formula 'There is something of One' (the two formulas should be taken together) which refers to that fantasied unity of relation '*We are as one*. Of course everyone knows that it has never happened for two to make one, but still *we are as one*. That's what the idea of love starts out from . . . the problem then being how on earth there could be love for another', (SXX, p. 46), to its suppression of division and difference ('Love your neighbour as yourself . . . the commandment lays down the abolition of sexual difference', SXXI, 4, p. 3), to the very ideology of oneness and completion which, for Lacan, closes off the gap of human desire.

In the earlier texts, the unity was assigned to the imaginary, the symbolic was at least potentially its break. In the later texts Lacan located the fantasy of 'sameness' within language and the sexual relation at one and the same time. 'There is no sexual relation' because subjects relate through what makes sense in *lalangue*.[11] This 'making sense' is a supplement, a making good of the lack of subjectivity and language, of the subject *in* language against which lack it is set. Psychoanalysis states meaning to be sexual but it has left behind any notion of a repressed sexuality which it would somehow allow to speak. Meaning can only be described as sexual by taking the limits of meaning into account for meaning in itself operates *at* the limit, the limits of its own failing: 'Meaning indicates the direction in which it fails', *E*, p. 150. The stress, therefore, is on the constant failing within

11. Lacan's term for Saussure's *langue* (language) from the latter's distinction between *langue* (the formal organisation of language) and *parole* (speech), the individual utterance. Lacan's term displaces this opposition in so far as, for him, the organisation of language can only be understood in terms of the subject's relationship to it. *Lalangue* indicates that part of language which reflects the laws of unconscious processes, but whose effects go beyond that reflection, and escape the grasp of the subject (see SXX, pp. 126–7).

language and sexuality, which meaning attempts to supplement or conceal: 'Everything implied by the analytic engagement with human behaviour indicates not that meaning reflects the sexual but that it makes up for it' (SXXI, 15, p. 9). Sexuality is the vanishing-point of meaning. Love, on the other hand, belongs to the *Lust-Ich* or pleasure-ego which disguises that failing in the reflection of like to like (love as the ultimate form of self-recognition).

We could say that Lacan has taken the relationship between the unconscious and sexuality and has pushed it to its furthest extreme, producing an account of sexuality solely in terms of its divisions – the division *of* the subject, division *between* subjects (as opposed to relation). Hence the increasing focus on enunciation,[12] on language's internal division (see the graph on p. 132), and also the deliberate formalisation of the account – sexual difference as a divide, something to be laid out (exactly a formality, a question of form (the graph of *Encore*, SXX, *E*, p. 149)). The challenge to the unity of the subject, its seeming coherence, is then addressed to the discourse of sexuality itself: 'instead of one signifier we need to interrogate, we should interrogate the signifier *One*' (SXX, p. 23). Thus there is no longer imaginary 'unity' and then symbolic difference or exchange, but rather an indictment of the symbolic for the imaginary unity which its most persistent myths continue to promote.

Within this process, woman is constructed as an absolute category (excluded and elevated at one and the same time), a category which serves to guarantee that unity on the side of the man. The man places the woman at the basis of his fantasy, or constitutes fantasy through the woman. Lacan moved away, therefore, from the idea of a problematic but socially assured process of exchange (women as objects) to the construction of woman as a category within language (woman as *the* object, the fantasy of her definition). What is now exposed in the account is 'a carrying over onto the woman of the difficulty inherent in sexuality' itself (PP, p. 118).

12. The term comes from Benveniste (Benveniste, 1958), his distinction between *énoncé* and *énonciation*, between the subject of the statement and the subject of the utterance itself. Lacan sites the unconscious at the radical division of these instances, seen at its most transparent in the statement 'I am lying' where there are clearly two subjects, one who is lying and one who is not.

The last two texts translated here (*E* and O) belong to this development. They go further than, and can be seen as an attempt to take up the problems raised by, those that precede them. For whereas in the earlier texts the emphasis was on the circulation of the phallus in the process of sexual exchange, in these texts it is effectively stated that if it is the phallus that circulates then there is no exchange (or relation). The question then becomes not so much the 'difficulty' of feminine sexuality consequent on phallic division, as what it means, given that division, to speak of the 'woman' at all. It is, as the author of the first article from *Scilicet* hints at the end of the argument, in many ways a more fundamental or 'radical' enquiry:

> whatever can be stated about the constitution of the feminine position in the Oedipus complex or in the sexual 'relation' concerns only a second stage, one in which the rules governing a certain type of exchange based on a common value have already been established. It is at a more radical stage, constitutive of those very rules themselves, that Freud points to one last question by indicating that it is the woman who comes to act as their support. (PP, p. 118–19)

In the later texts, the central term is the *object small a [objet a]*, Lacan's formula for the lost object which underpins symbolisation, cause of and 'stand in' for desire. What the man relates to is this object and the 'whole of his realisation in the sexual relation comes down to fantasy' (*E*, p. 157). As the place onto which lack is projected, and through which it is simultaneously disavowed, woman is a 'symptom' for the man.

Defined as such, reduced to being nothing other than this fantasmatic place, the woman does not exist. Lacan's statement '~~The~~ woman does not exist' is, therefore, the corollary of his accusation, or charge, against sexual fantasy. It means, not that women do not exist, but that her status as an absolute category and guarantor of fantasy (exactly *The* woman) is false (~~The~~). Lacan sees courtly love as the elevation of the woman into the place where her absence or inaccessibility stands in for male lack ('For the man, whose lady was entirely, in the most servile sense of the term, his female subject, courtly love is the only way of coming off elegantly from the absence of sexual relation', *E*, p. 141), just as he sees her denigration as the precondition for

man's belief in his own soul ('For the soul to come into being, she, the woman, is differentiated from it . . . called woman and defamed', *E*, p. 156). In relation to the man, woman comes to stand for both difference and loss: 'On the one hand, the woman becomes, or is produced, precisely as what he is not, that is, sexual difference, and on the other, as what he has to renounce, that is, *jouissance*' (SXVIII, 6, pp. 9–10).[13]

Within the phallic definition, the woman is constituted as 'not all', in so far as the phallic function rests on an exception (the 'not') which is assigned to her. Woman is excluded *by* the nature of words, meaning that the definition poses her as exclusion. Note that this is not the same thing as saying that woman is excluded *from* the nature of words, a misreading which leads to the recasting of the whole problem in terms of woman's place outside language, the idea that women might have of themselves an entirely different speech.

For Lacan, men and women are only ever in language ('Men and women are signifiers bound to the common usage of language', SXX, p. 36). All speaking beings must line themselves up on one side or the other of this division, but anyone can cross over and inscribe themselves on the opposite side from that to which they are anatomically destined.[14] It is, we could say, an either/or situation, but one whose fantasmatic nature was endlessly reiterated by Lacan: 'these are not positions able to satisfy us, so much so that we can state the unconscious to be defined by the fact that it has a much clearer idea of what is going on than the truth that man is not woman' (SXXI, 6, p. 9).

The woman, therefore, is *not*, because she is defined purely against the man (she is the negative of that definition – 'man is *not* woman'), and because this very definition is designated fantasy, a set which may well be empty (the reference to set theory in the seminar from *Ornicar?* translated here (O)). If woman is 'not all',

13. See Otto Fenichel, in a paper to which Lacan often referred, on the refusal of difference which underpins the girl = phallus equation frequently located as a male fantasy: 'the differentness of women is denied in both cases; in the one case, in the attempt to repress women altogether, in the other, in denying their individuality' (Fenichel, 1949, p. 13).

14. Note how this simultaneously shifts the concept of bisexuality – not an undifferentiated sexual nature prior to symbolic difference (Freud's earlier sense), but the availability to all subjects of both positions in relation to that difference itself.

writes Lacan, then 'she' can hardly refer to all women.

As negative to the man, woman becomes a total object o fantasy (or an object of total fantasy), elevated into the place o the Other and made to stand for its truth. Since the place of th Other is also the place of God, this is the ultimate form of mysti fication ('the more man may ascribe to the woman in confusio with God . . . the less he is', *E*, p. 160). In so far as God 'has n made his exit' (*E*, p. 154), so the woman becomes the support o his symbolic place. In his later work Lacan defined the objectiv of psychoanalysis as breaking the confusion behind this mystifi cation, a rupture between the *object a* and the Other, whos conflation he saw as the elevation of fantasy into the order o truth. The *object a*, cause of desire and support of male fantas gets transposed onto the image of the woman as Other who the acts as its guarantee. The absolute 'Otherness' of the woman, therefore, serves to secure for the man his own self-knowledg and truth. Remember that for Lacan there can be no suc guarantee – there is no 'Other of the Other' (cf. p. 33 above). Hi rejection of the category 'Woman', therefore, belonged to hi assault on any unqualified belief in the Other as such: 'This Th [of the woman] crossed through . . . relates to the signifier when it is crossed through ($\not{\Phi}$)' (*E*, p. 151).

Increasingly this led Lacan to challenge the notions of 'know ledge' and 'belief', and the myths on which they necessarily rely All Lacan's statements in the last two translated texts agains belief in the woman, against her status as knowing, problemati as they are, can only be understood as part of this constan undercutting of the terms on which they rest. In these later texts Lacan continually returns to the 'subject supposed to know', th claim of a subject to know (the claim to know oneself as subject) and the different forms of discourse which can be organise around this position (see note 6. p. 161).[15] 'Knowing' is onl

15. Much of the difficulty of Lacan's work stemmed from his attempt t subvert that position from within his own utterance, to rejoin the place o 'non-knowledge' which he designated the unconscious, by the constant slip page or escape of his speech, and thereby to undercut the very mastery whic his own position as speaker (master and analyst) necessarily constructs. I fact one can carry out the same operation on the statement 'I do not know' a Lacan performed on the utterance 'I am lying' (cf. note 12, p. 47 above) – for, if I do not know, then how come I know enough to know that I do no know and if I do know that I do not know, then it is not true that I do no know. Lacan was undoubtedly trapped in this paradox of his own utterance.

over such a claim, just as 'belief' rests entirely on the supposition of what is false. To believe in The Woman is simply a way of closing off the division or uncertainty which also underpins conviction as such. And when Lacan says that women do not know, while, at one level, he relegates women outside, and against, the very mastery of his own statement, he was also recognising the binding, or restricting, of the parameters of knowledge itself ('masculine knowledge irredeemably an error', SXXI, 6, p. 11).

The Other crossed through ($\not{\Phi}$) stands against this knowledge as the place of division where meaning falters, where it slips and shifts. It is the place of *signifiance*, Lacan's term for this very movement in language against, or away from, the positions of coherence which language simultaneously constructs. The Other therefore stands against the phallus – its pretence to meaning and false consistency. It is from the Other that the phallus seeks authority and is refused.

The woman belongs on the side of the Other in this second sense, for in so far as *jouissance* is defined as phallic so she might be said to belong somewhere else. The woman is implicated, of necessity, in phallic sexuality, but at the same time it is 'elsewhere that she upholds the question of her own *jouissance*' (PP, p. 121), that is, the question of her status as desiring subject. Lacan designates this *jouissance* supplementary so as to avoid any notion of complement, of woman as a complement to man's phallic nature (which is precisely the fantasy). But it is also a recognition of the 'something more', the 'more than *jouisssance*',[16] which Lacan locates in the Freudian concept of repetition – what escapes or is left over from the phallic function, and exceeds it. Woman is, therefore, placed *beyond* (beyond the phallus). That 'beyond' refers at once to her most total mystification as absolute Other (and hence nothing other than other), and to a *question*, the question of her own *jouissance*, of her greater or lesser access to the residue of the dialectic to which she is constantly subjected. The problem is that once the notion of 'woman' has been so relentlessly exposed as a fantasy, then any such question becomes an almost impossible one to pose.

Lacan's reference to woman as Other needs, therefore, to be

16. At times *jouissance* is opposed to the idea of pleasure as the site of this excess, but where *jouissance* is defined as phallic, Lacan introduces the concept of the supplement ('more than') with which to oppose it.

seen as an attempt to hold apart two moments which are i
constant danger of collapsing into each other – that which assign
woman to the negative place of its own (phallic) system, and tha
which asks the question as to whether women might, as a ver
effect of that assignation, break against and beyond that syste
itself. For Lacan, that break is always within language, it is th
break of the subject *in* language. The concept of *jouissance* (wha
escapes in sexuality) and the concept of *signifiance* (what shift
within language) are inseparable.

Only when this is seen can we properly locate the tensio
which runs right through the chapters translated here fro
Lacan's Seminar XX, *Encore* (*E*), between his critique of th
forms of mystification latent to the category Woman, and th
repeated question as to what her 'otherness' might be. A tensio
which can be recognised in the very query 'What does a woma
want?' on which Freud stalled and to which Lacan returned. Tha
tension is clearest in Lacan's appeal to St Theresa, whose statu
by Bernini in Rome[17] he took as the model for an-other *jouissanc*
– the woman therefore as 'mystical' but, he insisted, this is no
'not political' (*E*, p. 146), in so far as mysticism is one of th
available forms of expression where such 'otherness' in sexualit
utters its most forceful complaint. And if we cut across for
moment from Lacan's appeal to her image as executed by th
man, to St Theresa's own writings, to her commentary on 'Th
Song of Songs', we find its sexuality in the form of a disturbanc
which, crucially, she locates not on the level of the sexual conte
of the song, but on the level of its enunciation, in the instability o
its pronouns – a precariousness in language which reveals tha
neither the subject nor God can be placed ('speaking with on
person, asking for peace from another, and then speaking to th
person in whose presence she is' (Saint Theresa, 1946, p. 359)).
Sexuality belongs, therefore, on the level of its, and the subject's
shifting.

17. 'What is her *jouissance*, her *coming* from?' (*E*, p. 147) – a question mad
apparently redundant by the angel with arrow poised above her (th
'piercing' of Saint Theresa), and one whose problematic nature is be
illustrated by the cardinals and doges, in the gallery on either side of th
'proscenium' – *witnesses* to the staging of an act which, because of th
perspective lines, they cannot actually *see* (Bernini, 'The Ecstasy of Sai
Theresa', Santa Maria della Vittoria, Rome).

18. Commentary on the line from the 'Song of Songs' – 'Let the Lord kiss m
with the kiss of his mouth, for thy breasts are sweeter than wine'.

Towards the end of his work, Lacan talked of woman's 'anti-phallic' nature, as leaving her open to that 'which of the uncon-scious cannot be spoken' (*Ornicar?*, 20–1, p. 12) (a reference to women analysts in which we can recognise, ironically, the echo of Freud's conviction that they would have access to a different strata of psychic life).[19] In relation to the earlier texts we could say that woman no longer masquerades, she *defaults*: 'the *jouissance* of the woman does not go without saying, that is, without the saying of truth', whereas for the man 'his *jouissance* suffices which is precisely why he understands nothing' (SXXI, 7, p. 16). There is a risk, here, of giving back to the woman a status as truth (the very mythology denounced). But for Lacan, this 'truth' of the unconscious is only ever that moment of fundamental division through which the subject entered into language and sexuality, and the constant failing of position within both.

This is the force of Lacan's account – his insistence that femi-ninity can only be understood in terms of its construction, an insistence which produced in reply the same reinstatement of women, the same argument for *her* sexual nature as was seen in the 1920s and 1930s in response to Freud. This time the question of symbolisation, which, we have argued, was latent to the earlier debate, has been at the centre of that response. This is all the more clear in that the specificity of feminine sexuality in the more recent discussion[20] has explicitly become the issue of women's relationship to language. In so far as it is the order of

19. At the time of writing Lacan had just dissolved his school in Paris, rejoining in the utterance through which he represented that act – 'Je père-sévère' ('I persevere' – the pun is on 'per' and 'père' (father)) – the whole problem of mastery and paternity which has cut across the institutional history of his work. From the early stand against a context which he (and others) considered authoritarian, and the cancellation, as its effect, of his seminar on the Name of the Father in 1953, to the question of mastery and transference which lay behind the further break in 1964, and which so clearly surfaces in the dissolution here. It has been the endless paradox of Lacan's position that he has provided the most systematic critique of forms of identification and transference which, by dint of this very fact, he has come most totally to represent. That a number of women analysts (cf. note 20 p. 54) have found their position in relation to this to be an impossible one, only confirms the close relation between the question of feminine sexuality and the institutional divisions and difficulties of psychoanalysis itself.

20. In this last section I will be referring predominately to the work of Michèle Montrelay and Luce Irigaray, the former a member of Lacan's school prior to its dissolution in January 1980 when she dissociated herself from him, the

language which structures sexuality around the male term, or the privileging of that term which shows sexuality to be constructed within language, so this raises the issue of women's relationship to that language and that sexuality simultaneously. The question of the body of the girl child (what she may or may not know of that body) as posed in the earlier debate, becomes the question of the woman's body as language (what, of that body, can achieve symbolisation). The objective is to retrieve the woman from the dominance of the phallic term and from language at one and the same time. What this means is that femininity is assigned to a point of origin prior to the mark of symbolic difference and the law. The privileged relationship of women to that origin gives them access to an archaic form of expressivity outside the circuit of linguistic exchange.

This point of origin is the maternal body, an undifferentiated space, and yet one in which the girl child recognises herself. The girl then has to suppress or devalue that fullness of recognition in order to line up within the order of the phallic term. In the argument for a primordial femininity, it is clear that the relation between the mother and child is conceived of as dyadic and simply reflective (one to one – the girl child fully *knows* herself in the mother) which once again precludes the concept of desire. Feminine specificity is, therefore, predicated directly onto the concept of an unmediated and unproblematic relation to origin.

The positions taken up have not been identical, but they have a shared stress on the specificity of the feminine drives, a stress which was at the basis of the earlier response to Freud. They take a number of their concepts directly from that debate (the concept of concentric feminine drives in Montrelay comes directly from Jones and Klein). But the effects of the position are different. Thus whereas for Jones, for example, those drives ideally

latter working within his school up to 1974 when she was dismissed from the newly reorganised department of psychoanalysis at the University of Paris VIII (Vincennes) on publication of her book, *Speculum de l'autre femme* (1974). Both are practising psychoanalysts. Montrelay takes up the Freud–Jones controversy specifically in terms of women's access to language in her article 'Inquiry into Femininity' (1970 (1978)). Irigaray's book *Speculum* contained a critique of Freud's papers on femininity; her later *Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un* (1977) contains a chapter ('Cosi fan tutti') directly addressed to Lacan's SXX, *Encore*.

anticipated and ensured the heterosexual identity of the girl child, now those same drives put at risk her access to any object at all (Montrelay)[21] or else they secure the woman to herself and, through that, to other women (Irigaray). Women are *returned*, therefore, in the account and to each other – against the phallic term but also against the loss of origin which Lacan's account is seen to imply. It is therefore a refusal of division which gives the woman access to a different strata of language, where words and things are not differentiated, and the real of the maternal body threatens or holds off woman's access to prohibition and the law.

There is a strength in this account, which has been recognised by feminism. At its most forceful it expresses a protest engendered by the very cogency of what Freud and then Lacan describe (it is the *effect* of that description).[22] And something of its position was certainly present in Lacan's earlier texts ('feminine sexuality ... as the effort of a *jouissance* wrapped in its own contiguity', C, p. 97). But Lacan came back to this response in the later texts, which can therefore be seen as a sort of reply, much as Freud's 1931 and 1933 papers on femininity addressed some of the criticisms which he had received.

For Lacan, as we have seen, there is no pre-discursive reality ('How return, other than by means of a special discourse, to a pre-discursive reality?', SXX, p. 33), no place prior to the law which is available and can be retrieved. And there is no feminine outside language. First, because the unconscious severs the subject from any unmediated relation to the body as such ('there is nothing in the unconscious which accords with the body', O, p. 165), and secondly because the 'feminine' is constituted as a division in language, a division which produces the feminine as its negative term. If woman is defined as other it is because the

21. Montrelay attempts to resolve the 'Freud–Jones' controversy by making the two different accounts of femininity equal to *stages* in the girl's psychosexual development, femininity being defined as the passage from a concentric psychic economy to one in which symbolic castration has come into play. Access to symbolisation depends on the transition, and it is where it fails that the woman remains bound to a primordial cathexis of language as the extension of the undifferentiated maternal body. Montrelay should, therefore, be crucially distinguished from Irigaray at this point, since for her such a failure is precipitant of anxiety and is in no sense a concept of femininity which she is intending to promote.

22. Note too the easy slippage from Irigaray's title *Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un*, 'This sex which isn't one', to Lacan's formula, 'This sex which isn't *one*'.

definition produces her as other, and not because she has anothe essence. Lacan does not refuse difference ('if there was no di ference how could I say there was no sexual relation', SXXI, p. 18), but for him what is to be questioned is the seemin 'consistency' of that difference – of the body or anything else the division it enjoins, the definitions of the woman it produce

For Lacan, to say that difference is 'phallic' difference is t expose the symbolic and arbitrary nature of its division as such. is crucial – and it is something which can be seen even mo clearly in the response to the texts translated here – that refusal the phallic term brings with it an attempt to reconstitute a for of subjectivity free of division, and hence a refusal of the notio of symbolisation itself. If the status of the phallus is to be cha lenged, it cannot, therefore, be directly from the feminine bod but must be by means of a different symbolic term (in which ca the relation to the body is immediately thrown into crisis), or el by an entirely different logic altogether (in which case one is n longer in the order of symbolisation at all).

The demands against Lacan therefore collapse two differe levels of objection – that the body should be mediated by la guage and that the privileged term of that mediation be mal The fact that refusal of the phallus turns out once again to be refusal of the symbolic does not close, but leaves open as st unanswered, the question as to why that necessary symbolisatio and the privileged status of the phallus appear as interdepende in the structuring and securing (never secure) of human su jectivity.

There is, therefore, no question of denying here that Lacan w implicated in the phallocentrism he described, just as his ow utterance constantly rejoins the mastery which he sought undermine. The question of the unconscious and of sexualit the movement towards and against them, operated at exactly th level of his own speech. But for Lacan they function as t question of that speech, and cannot be referred back to a bo outside language, a place to which the 'feminine', and throu that, women, might escape. In the response to Lacan, therefo the 'feminine' has returned as it did in the 1920s and 1930s in rep to Freud, but this time with the added meaning of a resistance to phallic organisation of sexuality which is recognised as such. Th 'feminine' stands for a refusal of that organisation, its orderin its identity. For Lacan, on the other hand, interrogating th

time organisation undermines any absolute definition of the feminine' at all.

Psychoanalysis does not produce that definition. It gives an account of how that definition is produced. While the objection to its dominant term must be recognised, it cannot be answered by an account which returns to a concept of the feminine as pre-given, nor by a mandatory appeal to an androcentrism in the symbolic which the phallus would simply reflect. The former relegates women outside language and history, the latter simply subordinates them to both.

In these texts Lacan gives an account of how the status of the phallus in human sexuality enjoins on the woman a definition in which she is simultaneously symptom and myth. As long as we continue to feel the effects of that definition we cannot afford to ignore this description of the fundamental imposture which sustains it.