

## The Clinic of Detail and Hysteria

In clinical practice, one necessarily has recourse to differential clinical diagnosis, – this is my thesis\*. There is an advantage in speaking of hysteria relative to obsessional neurosis and speaking of obsessional neurosis relative to hysteria. Indeed, there is a dialectic between hysteria and obsessional neurosis that allows us to see that, for Lacan, there is a dialectic man/woman. There where Hegel invented the master slave dialectic, Freud added something new in considering that the dialectic must be re-thought, reformulated, re-conceptualized, from what I call the man/woman dialectic. This is what I would like to bring to the fore today, speaking more particularly about hysteria.

### *The clinical position*

From the moment one draws support from a clinical case, on fragments of clinical cases, a question arises which concerns the way in which one speaks about it. When a psychoanalyst speaks of a clinical case, of fragments of a clinical case, the right way to speak about it is to put his own clinical position into question. In other words, an ethical problem is posed from the moment that one speaks about clinical aspects. And this ethical problem must be dealt with from the following – that the referent of the comments on these clinical aspects is not the patient, but the analyst.

In order to show what I wish to make patent, – that is to say, that Lacan chose to speak about hysteria from the point of view of the dialectic – and to say that *hysteria is a dialectic*, I will be taking as point of departure two clinical case fragments. I will then comment on the chapter in Seminar XVII, *L'envers de la psychanalyse*, in which Lacan speaks about the hysteric in relation to the man, of taking advantage of the man in some way, as if he were saying that it's not possible to speak about the position of a feminine subject except by means of the man, except with this tool. For Lacan, if hysteria corresponds to a dialectic, in other words to a contradiction, well, then the hysterical contradiction is not the same thing as the feminine contradiction. To make this patent, I will refer not only to the Seminar *L'envers de la psychanalyse* but also to a passage in "Radiophonie".

So, I am going to evoke, bring to the fore the problem that is posed, according to me, as soon as one speaks of clinical practice with the hysteric. In his text "The Signification of the Phallus"<sup>1</sup>, Lacan, evoking, in his way, the war between men and women, highlights an essential difference between men and women when he affirms that for women there is a convergence on the same object between love and desire, whereas for men there is a divergence.

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\* Original French text established by Zoé Verhame-Bouillin and Marie-Hélène Doguet-Dziomba from P. Naveau's intervention at the E.C.F. on 7 February 2002. The original French text was re-read by the author.

1 J. Lacan, "The Signification of the Phallus", *Écrits: A Selection*, Trans. Bruce Fink, Norton, New York, 2002, p. 279-280.

I propose to present two fragments of cases of feminine hysteria that are characterized, on the contrary, by the fact that there is a divergence between love and desire. This divergence can, relative to the masculine partner, be articulated in this way: “I love him but I don’t desire him”. I will show, as Lacan indicates in his “Introduction à l’édition allemande des *Écrits*”<sup>2</sup>, that there is no meaning common [*sens commun*] to hysteria. We are concerned here with feminine subjects who both complain about their husband. They do not desire him, they question themselves about what they themselves call their frigidity and, at the same time, put in question the love they have for him. In this way, these two women both have the feeling of being enclosed in an impasse from which there is no way out. They live this disagreeable situation, one in war, and the other in betrayal.

## I

### *The war between love and desire*

The first patient goes as far as saying that this absence of desire for her husband constitutes, for her, a veritable torture both physical and psychic. She does not desire him, but she does not think about anything else. “This point of non-desire that I have come to”, she says, “is at the same time a point of non-return”. “A limit has really been reached”, she insists, “I can’t force myself to make love to him if I don’t feel like it”. She emphasizes this expression that carries a negation: “I don’t feel like it!” Her husband criticizes her for this – she does not desire him. But the criticisms that they address to each other are not situated on the same level. He criticizes her for not desiring him, she criticizes him for not loving her. They had a child together and they would really like to have another. This second child would be, were he to give it to her, the proof of love that she expects from him. It would be thanks to this child that she would be sure, she says, that he loves her. The proof of love is, she pointed out, the condition of love. In this respect, this is her torment, she is not sure that her husband loves her.

A dream comes to tell her that this child that she desires is, in fact, the child that her father didn’t give her. It is the child her father gave to his wife and not to her, his daughter. For in this dream, she takes the place of this other woman to whom her father gave a child. In this way, she usurps the envied place. She comments on this usurpation, affirming that the obstacle is the father, for it is he who, by not giving her what she demands, stands in the way of the satisfaction of her desire. Thus, the important thing for her is not that she wants to take the place of the other woman, but that it is to this other woman that the father gives something precious. It is by means of this shift of emphasis, which allows a kind of lie to be heard that she expresses her wish. The symptom of her life as a woman, that is to say, the bedrock that lies across her path, is the father that satisfies the other woman’s desire. Indeed, she describes her father as having the traits of a powerful man, a man who has had many women in his life and who, she knows this because he has confided in her on this point, is concerned about his virility.

From this, she draws the consequence that, in the eyes of her father, a woman is a woman only in the sexual act. A woman is only worth something for her father, she says, in so far as she is an object of possession, only if she reassures him of his virility, which he is not sure about. This rivalry between her and other women became even stronger from the moment when her father, getting carried away, said to her one day, she was then eighteen, “If you weren’t my daughter, you could’ve been my wife.” So the analyst intervened to make her notice that, having pronounced these surprising words, her father had given her a privileged place. She immediately retorted that these inappropriate words of her father showed that, for him, a woman is necessarily lowered to the rank of a pure sexual object, whether it be accessible or inaccessible.

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2 J. Lacan, “Introduction à l’édition l’allemande des *Écrits*”, *Autres écrits*, Seuil, Paris, 2001, p. 557.

One day, however, her father is anxious and calls her on the telephone. He had just learnt that he was suffering from a serious illness and that this illness threatened to make him impotent. She exclaimed to herself that she at last had her revenge. Her father had fallen from high and had bitten the dust. His telephone call bothered her. He was asking her to reassure him. She replied to him that she couldn't do anything for him. This event, her father's illness, gave rise to a radical change for her. When her father was powerful and arrogant she hated him. But now that he was weak and impotent, touched right to the core of his virility, she loves him, as, for her, there is no alternative. It is she who says it like this, "It is either submission or domination." Either one is the master or one is the slave. The war between men and women takes, in this case, the form of a war between love and desire.

To accept to be an object of desire for a man is equivalent, for this patient, to submission. Thus, she refuses to be an object that one throws in the dustbin once one has made use of it. Her hatred of men drives her to refuse her husband. She fights with her body. Her body, she says, is the only weapon she has at her disposal. To refuse is to escape from her husband, to separate herself from him by making herself absolutely inaccessible. She says that she does not admire this man, that she is no longer attracted by him. What he is has no more value for her than what he has. She holds him in contempt. As she notes, his image has been smashed into a thousand pieces.

Thus, she puts her finger on the sore point of the inevitable misunderstanding, "He doesn't understand me, I don't understand him, we don't understand each other." The conflict between them is permanent, and she doesn't hesitate to provoke him. Here the analyst intervenes, "This is going to finish badly." She recognizes that she tries to corner her husband. Being such a coward, will he have the courage to leave her? Her husband, finding himself in this situation with no way out, should leave her. If he doesn't leave her, she says, it is because he loves her, that he is not ready to break the link between them. The paradox of this position of warrior is that she hates men all the more since she would like to have been one of them and have their attributes. She wants to deprive the man's desire for satisfaction because it is impossible for him to satisfy her own desire. She has revenge; it is an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. She does not obtain jouissance by means of man's desire, since she refuses to go via this path, for she risks satisfying it. But she obtains jouissance from the negation of this desire.

The analyst intervenes, "For you, in fact, it is fundamentally a question of being a man." And between the lines: you want to be a man. The only thing that matters, indeed, for you is to be a warrior, to be the dominant male who seizes women by force like an object, who uses it, and who, after having used it, abandons it, like a piece of rubbish. "I don't want to be a man, I want to be a woman", she protests. She then reveals that the idea that she could write a letter to her father had come to mind, to tell him that she is unhappy because of him, because of what he is, because of what he said to her. The fact of having thought about writing this letter produced an effect on her. She said to her husband, "After all, I make you pay for someone else, you pay for my father, but you're not my father." To which her husband replied, "It's time you noticed, I'm happy to hear you say it."

At this juncture, their son left to go on holiday. She considers this an important point, since until then, her husband had always refused for their son to go on holiday without his parents. Here the analyst intervenes to say to the patient, "You're the father and your husband is the mother, that's why he doesn't manage to separate his son from his mother." This intervention of the analyst led to a violent reaction on the part of the patient. She threatened her husband, "If I happen to come across a man who attracts me, I'll leave you without a moment's hesitation."

### *The ungraspable object*

Her husband then, in his own way, gets his own back. He says to her, to see what effect it would have, that he would like to have another child. She understood this to be a strategy that her husband had assembled to get around the problem of his impotence. She replied to him that she no longer considered the child he would give her as a gift, a sign of love, and that she had mourned this desired child. But she took her husband's clumsy maneuver as a declaration of love, "He loves me, I no longer doubt it."

However, she can only notice the damage the war between love and desire has provoked. She distanced herself from him, she is far from him, and their desires no longer meet. When he wants to, she doesn't, and when she wants to, he doesn't. She feels guilty for this missed encounter between their desires. Here the analyst intervenes, "If you feel guilty, it's because there is something you're not saying. If you're not happy, why don't you tell him? You speak about yourself like a *belle endormie*. You have to put your cards on the table. What are you waiting for to lay out frankly the problem of desire between you?" The patient replied to the analyst's intervention by saying, "So, what's he waiting for, to catch me?" Doesn't this astonishing reaction of the patient indicate how the *jouissance* of privation is linked to that drive which consists, for a subject, of slipping away, of making itself the ungraspable object? It would seem that the feminine subject is, hence, divided between two *jouissances* articulated to two variations of the position of precious object, one that consists in offering oneself and one that amounts to, in fact, refusing oneself. That which one would like to have and doesn't have, the inaccessible object, it is she, the patient.

## II

### *The betrayal or the unpunished fault of the father*

I am proposing a second clinical case fragment, this time placed, not under the sign of war, but of betrayal. This other feminine subject cheats on her husband, she has a lover who is younger than she. She thus discovers that she is not frigid, that she is able to obtain *jouissance* from the sexual act. It took a long time before she accepted to reveal to the analyst the existence of this affair. The analyst had to insist. She wanted to hide it from him.

The analyst had the feeling that the patient was keeping him at a distance, that she was not telling him what she was thinking. He told her, "What's not working is that you keep the analyst at a distance by not telling him what comes to mind." When she makes love with her husband, she says, she does not experience any *jouissance* and, because of this, she holds a grudge against him. He deprives her of this *jouissance*. After intercourse, she is obliged to masturbate and, in order to do so, has recourse to masturbatory fantasies. She gives two versions: in some, she is passive, in others she is active.

In the first version, she gives herself over to the caprice of many men, she is thus nothing more than a "piece of flesh." The formula of the fantasy is articulated in this way, "They get off on me, they do what they want to me." In the second version it is she who is active and takes charge.. She is there to give pleasure to men according to their wishes. The common trait between these two versions of the fantasy is that there is a man who orders what is to be done and who watches. The "gaze" plays a central role in her fantasies. The man who watches in this way satisfies the function of being the master of desire. The patient admits that her fantasies, which she cannot manage to do without, disgust her. She would like to be able to do without them, but she cannot. These fantasies, in which she is maltreated, beaten and lowered to the rank of servant of the master of desire, are thus linked to her husband's incapacity to make her orgasm. The

sexual partner's impotence is, henceforth, the condition of fantasmatic jouissance. In fact, she stages fantasies of staging.

The analyst interprets this solitude of jouissance that she wonders about, "In these fantasies, you lend your body to this staging, to the extent that", said the analyst, "the voice of a *Thy will be done* resonates." She loves her husband, she says, but she doesn't desire him. She would like to find peace at last, but she recognizes that she looks for war. She would like him to speak, but, as soon as he speaks, she cuts him off. What he says is not what she would like him to say to her. The misunderstanding is radical, the situation is cruel, they do not speak to each other any longer. She says the link between them is breaking up. So, she cheats on him.

### *The master of desire*

She herself realizes that her lover is a poor young man who gets the satisfaction of stealing from her husband what is most precious to him – his wife. She says that she desires the virility of this young man. But, at the same time, the fact that he is stealing reveals that he cheats in the game played by three players. The fact that the patient herself asks the question of the lie with regard to her betrayal – What does this hide? Is she not lying to herself? Where can all this be leading? – and this has, as a consequence, that the analyst does not encourage her to pursue this path. She feels it and says to him, "In fact, you're asking me not to leave my husband." This "You're asking me not to leave my husband" must be emphasized. It is a demand for a demand, for she adds, "And me, I'm wondering what I have to do, leave him or not." In fact, she would like the analyst to make the decision for her, and that, in so doing, there would be nothing left for her but to submit to this decision.

Here, we find again the mode of jouissance according to which the demand of the Other is questioned in fantasies. Hence, the analyst intervenes, "You're asking the analyst to be the master of desire who occupies a privileged place in these fantasies." She complains about this husband who does not desire her as she is and desires her only in so far as she would be other than she is. For example, he would like her to allow herself to partake in his erotic fantasies, but she does not consent to it. Her husband disgusts her. She notices that they are both unhappy and that they are condemned, each one on his own side, to obtain jouissance from their own fantasies.

All conversation has become impossible between them. Their bond is thus really on the point of rupture. She says it in these terms, "I have the impression that I've already left him and at the same time that I haven't yet left him." The analyst intervenes, "Has she spoken to her husband? Has she questioned him on his desire?" She and her husband no longer have sexual intercourse. She asked him how he could bear this abstinence. He replied to her that he got by without her. She did not want to know what he was alluding to, the misunderstanding seems thus irreversible. She then speaks of her betrayal, saying that to escape this conjugal hell she has decided to take the plunge. She notes that, in spite of this, the sky has not fallen in on her head and that the gods have not punished her for this adultery.

Her father cheated on her mother with numerous women. She thinks that her mother would have wanted him to be punished for this betrayal. Yet, this fault has remained unpunished. The patient then realizes that by means of this hazardous affair, she is identifying with her father. She cheats on her husband with a younger man, just like her father had wanted to cheat on her mother by trying to seduce younger women. The analyst interprets this acting out, the affair in question, by saying to her, "It's as if you wanted to say to your father: *Father, can't you see I'm burning? I too am burning, I burn from this fault that I'm committing like you.*" The patient then added that she had also wanted to challenge her father. Then she

insisted on the fact that she wanted to show her father that she also had the audacity to go to the limits of her desire. Here the analyst intervened, “There is a decision to take. This isn’t the moment to do just anything.”

### III

#### *The hysteric’s impasse*

It seems to me that these two clinical case fragments of feminine hysteria are similar. And yet, they are very far from each other. To a certain extent, one could say that there is no relation between them, that one has nothing to do with the other. With regards to this, I recall the way in which Lacan approached the question of clinical practice. He affirms that there is clinical practice and from this perspective, he evokes hysteria, saying that precisely there is no meaning common to all clinical practice. In order to support this thesis, he opposes hysteria to obsessional neurosis. In this context of differential clinical diagnosis, Lacan proposes that, when it is a question of hysteria, the emphasis must be placed on identification. These two feminine subjects are both carried and transported, one could say, by the identification with man and, more particularly, with the father. Both denounce the imposture of the father and the impotence of their husband. But, at the same time, they say they refuse him. Here, there is a contradiction.

The two patients identify with the *jouissance* that is excluded from the game that is played between their husbands and themselves. They identify, in fact, with a *jouissance* that consists, as Lacan says in *L’envers de la psychanalyse*<sup>3</sup>, in being deprived of the use of the partner’s sexual organ and, in the same way, of phallic *jouissance*. The fathers of these two patients are men that have had many women during their lives and who have not hesitated to be unfaithful, to betray. The first feminine subject that I spoke of says that her life changed when she learnt that her father had become impotent and that he was worried about his sexual potency. It had become impossible for him to approach women in the way he had been used to up until then, that is to say, as an object of conquest with the approach of the warrior. The second feminine subject reveals that she no longer saw her father in the same way from the moment that he confessed to her, in a letter that he wrote to her, that it was true that he had tried to seduce young girls. Her father had thus been caught red handed, he had been caught in the wrong.

In both cases, the father is described as a man who abuses, who renders himself guilty of an abuse. But, being that it’s a question of the operation of identification, it is the detail that counts and makes the difference. In the first case, the warrior, carried away by his fault, stumbles. In the second case, the guilty one confesses his fault. In these identifications, it is not a matter of the same type of humiliated and castrated father. The father’s castration is thus relative to the precise moment in which it was unveiled. In one case, the avowal of a concern by telephone. In the other, the avowal of a fault by letter. The father of the first feminine subject is forced to stop seducing women. The father of the second feminine subject did not dare to go as far as he could regarding his attempts at seducing young girls. The important point in the Œdipus is that the stake of identification, in the framework of the structure of the hysteric, is a *jouissance*, but it is a *jouissance* that aims not at a plus, a positivity, but at a minus, a negativity. Not the acquisition of something but rather what Lacan named *a privation*<sup>4</sup>. The two case fragments converge, one and the other, towards this point. We are able, from this point, to explain the impulse behind this divergence between love and desire by the identification with the phallus. But it is this identification with a subtracted *jouissance* that is the impulse behind the divergence between love and desire.

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3 J.Lacan, *Le Séminaire Livre XVII, L’envers de la psychanalyse*, Seuil, Paris, 1991, p. 112.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 110.

### *The differential clinical approach*

To clarify things, I therefore propose that we refer to Chapter VI of the Seminar *L'envers de la psychanalyse*, in which we find the expression— *the identification with a jouissance*, a jouissance that is made up of a subtraction and not an addition, of a loss and not a gain. What is enlightening in this chapter that Lacan dedicates to hysteria, is the fact that he says that here there is something structural regarding the position of a hysterical subject. From this point of view, the condition of the hysteric subject and the feminine position cannot be confounded.

The impasse, that characterizes this structure, and which the mathema of the discourse of the hysteric, such as Lacan proposes to write it, is made to render legible, leads one not to be fascinated by the subjective drama. Lacan says that the history of a subject is objectified by means of the signifier and that it's because of this that there is clinical practice. Jacques-Alain Miller has pointed out that making counter transference play a central role leads to the destruction, the negation of the clinical approach, since what counts is the subjectivity of the analyst. What is important is this expression: *There is something objectifiable*. This is the point of view that allows us to say that there is a clinical practice and to pinpoint, in this practice insofar as it is differential, the detail that creates the particularity.

The pivotal sentence of chapter VI, that shows the difference between the clinical approach of a Lacanian psychoanalyst and that of an IPA psychoanalyst, is the following, “The subjective configuration has, through the signifying link, a perfectly traceable objectivity, which founds the very possibility of the aid that we bring in the form of interpretation”<sup>5</sup>. For Lacan, the existence of a clinical approach, which I am qualifying as “differential”, is the condition that allows for the position of the analyst to be determined. This means that he interprets at the same time that he is likely to accomplish an act. In this chapter, Lacan explains that the impasse, which I brought out in these two cases concerning the feminine subject, is structural.

### *The identification with a subtracted jouissance*

Lacan considers that it is only possible to speak of the discourse of the hysteric with reference to the discourse of the master. Lacan's demonstration in chapter VI of *L'envers de la psychanalyse* consists in saying that one cannot speak about the master without speaking of the hysteric and vice versa. The point of impasse, as articulated by Lacan, is that the hysteric subject tends to identify with a position of jouissance consisting in a loss of jouissance, of a privation of jouissance. This is why I propose to write the jouissance of the Other,  $J(\bar{A})$ , with the barred A, because the jouissance in question is a jouissance whose substance is the minus sign.

Beyond the problem of the divergence or convergence between love and desire, we have this point on the horizon that concerns jouissance. What seems to be enlightening to me in Lacan is that there is a direct relation between hysteria and clinical practice. It is for this reason that I think it is very impoverishing to speak of obsessional neurosis without speaking of hysteria, to speak of men without speaking of women. When Lacan articulates this sentence, he immediately adds, “It is in this point of the link, namely the very first one between  $S_1$  and  $S_2$ , there it is possible for this gap that is called the subject to open”. What is fundamental here is what he calls “the signifying link between  $S_1$  and  $S_2$ ”.

I'm not focusing on the fact that Lacan says, in this chapter, that what is legible in the discourse of the master is the dialectic of the master and the slave according to Hegel. I'm not focusing on this, but one

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5 *Ibid.*, p. 101.

cannot understand the way in which he approaches hysteria, if one does not have in mind the Hegelian development on the dialectic of the master and the slave. Lacan reads Hegel with Freud. What he says is that in the discourse of the master an operation is carried out in which a signifier is separated from another. To be able to write this, it is necessary for a subtraction be effected in the discourse of the master. He says it this way, “This activation of discourse (understood as the master’s discourse) is defined by a division”<sup>6</sup>. What does that mean? Lacan takes things to the level of what I am going to call the signifier  $S_2$ . The condition of the dialectic of the master and slave is, in fact, that knowledge [*savoir*] is divided. The departure point is that knowledge,  $S_2$ , is divided relative to the signifier  $S_1$ . The knowledge put into question by the discourse of the master is a repressed knowledge. This has a consequence, that, in fact, the mind and the body separate. The body in question is the body in so far as it is minus. The hysteric is a subject who, in her way, takes this stake under her control.

### *The body of jouissance is repressed*

For Lacan, the Freudian interpretation of the Hegelian dialectic of the master and slave is the following: the slave is the incarnation of the fact that there is someone who has lost his body, in the sense that what counts, from the moment that a separation between signifiers is operated, is to separate one signifier from the others. This is a logical constraint that is introduced by language. Whatever the collection of elements, you distinguish one and, at the same moment, the others are constituted as being separate from this one. For Lacan, the utility of the slave is that he comes to situate himself here, in  $S_2$ , as the support of the other signifiers, by leaving his body to one side, which means that there are two bodies. The slave is the one who comes to render that present. There is a separation that is carried out between the body as a place of inscription of the other signifiers and the body of jouissance<sup>7</sup>. The slave, contrary to what one might think, doesn’t represent the body of jouissance at all. It is the opposite. He is someone who is there to say that from the moment that one separates one element from the others, there must be a surface of inscription that comes to receive the other signifiers. Therefore, from the moment one speaks of the other signifiers the subtraction of a body is implied – the body understood as living, in so far as it is subject to jouissance. For Lacan, there is thus a coincidence between the body, jouissance and knowledge. Here, by the intermediary of Lacan’s Freudian reading of the Hegelian dialectic of the master and slave,  $S_2$  is at once the body, in so far as lost, jouissance, in so far as subtracted, and knowledge, in so far as repressed.

### *The refusal to give body to the master signifier*

This allows us to understand chapter VII where Lacan says that knowledge – knowledge in so far as it is repressed – and jouissance are the same thing. In fact, the body, in so far as it partakes of jouissance is repressed. Repression affects the body in so far as it experiences jouissance, and this here is the knowledge that is repressed. In other words, knowledge is made of this substance, a denied jouissance, prohibited, barred, a subtracted jouissance. One needs to make these detours to make what Lacan is saying, this time, about the position of the hysteric, more legible, “The hysteric subject is the one who refuses to become its body [*celui qui se refuse à s’en faire le corps*]”<sup>8</sup>. This appears clearly: the hysteric is the subject who refuses to become the body of jouissance. The refusal in question is already introduced at this level. It could

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6 *Ibid.*, p. 105.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 102.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 110.



be said that there is, in the very nature of the slave, a structural effect, – the fact that the body in so far as repressed is separated from the signifier. From the moment the signifier is brought to light, there is no body that could come to give body to this signifier. It is this refusal that the hysteric takes for herself in the very movement that is hers.

This allows us to understand, retroactively, why, from the start, as soon as Lacan began to speak about the hysteric, he was able to write that another woman is indispensable to her so that she may find a body, for a body to be given to her. We find here another way to write this separation that involves the refusal of the body. This also allows us to understand what the  $S_2$  is. For me, the thread which must not be lost, is that which concerns the enjoyment of a jouissance of privation of jouissance, that is to say of a lost jouissance. One finds it, at the level of  $S_2$ , this barred jouissance, this lost jouissance, this repressed body, this divided body, the knowledge that is carried by the divided body. But it is clear that the difference between the positions of master and hysteric is absolutely essential. One must not conclude from this that the hysteric is the slave. It is quite the contrary, “In following the effect of the master signifier”, Lacan says, “the hysteric is not a slave”. The hysteric is the master.

Lacan speaks of the difference between these two positions, that of the master and that of the slave. At the level of the bar, which is that of repression, it is necessary to read what is explicitly manifest in this disjunction between one signifier and the others: *refusal*. This is what allows Lacan to say that the refusal is structural in the discourse of the hysteric. The refusal plays a central role. I will reread the sentence, “The discourse of the hysteric reveals the relation of the discourse of the master to jouissance, in that knowledge comes here to the place of jouissance”<sup>9</sup>. There is, for the hysteric, a refusal to incarnate the signifier  $S_1$ . We see clearly that there is a correspondence between knowledge, the body and jouissance in so far as they are marked by the sign minus. The hysteric subject is the one who, relative to the master-signifier, refuses to become its body, to give it a body, such that Lacan adds that he is not in agreement with the somatic compliance that is spoken of with respect to the hysteric, even if it is Freud who used this expression. With regards to the hysteric, says Lacan, “it is rather a question of the refusal of the body”<sup>10</sup>.

The operator of refusal is absolutely essential. But it is a logical operation, this refusal is implied by the fact that one speaks. This is why hysteria and clinical practice are the same thing. The hysterical position gives an indication to the subject of the position of the subject relative to language. The refusal of the body is implied by the separation between these two terms,  $S_1 // S_2$ . It is simply that the hysteric stages this in a different way to the master.

#### *The dialectic between the jewel and the jewelry box*

Further on, Lacan evokes the case of Dora. He does not agree with Freud regarding the dialectic between the jewel and the jewelry box. He explains this disagreement in terms of structure, saying that, if Freud was right, that would mean that what Dora demands is that the jewel take up its place in the jewelry box. Whereas Lacan affirms the contrary. What Dora wants, above all, is for the jewelry not to take up its place in the jewelry box. She obtains her jouissance from the jewelry box, but empty. This is a fundamental disagreement between Lacan and Freud. Dora, he says, does not want the jouissance that Herr. K wishes to give her. She does not want him to become her lover, but the contrary. What she values is the jewelry box in so far as it is empty. It is here that Lacan says that this position of Dora's is “the mark of an

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9 *Ibid.*

10 *Ibid.*

identification with a jouissance in so far as it is that of the master's"<sup>11</sup>. This is the first time, in this chapter, that Lacan uses this expression of "identification with a jouissance".

Lacan then specifies that her identification goes by way of this question of the jewel and of the jewelry box and by way of the relation between her father and Frau. K. Freud demonstrates that Dora's father compensates for his impotence by the gift that he gives to his mistress. What is essential is that the gift in question be conditioned by the father's impotence. Freud chose the relation between the jewelry box and the jewel as a metaphor for the sexual act. In other words, Dora identifies with the condition of the gift given by the father. Her father is a generous person who uses his fortune to make gifts, but it is the veil that hides his impotence. What Lacan says on this page is that Dora identifies with this position.

### *The contingent father*

Lacan, with the aid of what he calls the discourse of the hysteric, tries to make legible something indecipherable, – that is to say that here, in  $S_1$ , the father is found, but in so far as his potency is negativised. He is a contingent father. This father is caught just as he is in the process of giving a gift to a woman to mask his impotence. He is thus the father in so far as his potency is denied. But he is an historic father, or, according to Lacan's word *historicised* – relative to the moment in which he turned out to be an impotent father. If we do not locate this moment, which carries the mark of contingency, in the history of a hysteric subject, we get lost. What gives an indication of this is the word "mark", – Lacan evokes "the mark of the identification with a jouissance". It is necessary for the subject to have been marked by an event, that is to say, that something happened at a given moment. Concerning Dora's case, this relation is legible relative to what happens between the jewel and the jewelry box. The father, who gives jewelry to his mistress so that the jewelry becomes the hidden counterpart of his impotence, is placed in opposition to Herr. K. who gives a jewelry box to Dora. What  $S_2$  writes is the non-rapport between the jewel and the jewelry box. The history of the hysteric is written with what I call elements of dramatization. But what is essential is to bring out the impasse that is written here by Lacan.

Lacan makes a further step concerning the hysteric in saying that it is a question of "the jouissance of being deprived"<sup>12</sup>. This can only be understood if one has in mind that  $S_2$  is the means by which Lacan writes something that is detached, that is subtracted, that diverges, that is separated – all these terms are equivalent. What Lacan says is that for the hysteric, the signifier  $S_2$  coincides with the lost body. In this identification with a jouissance of privation, it is a matter of putting the body in play in so far as it is lost. This is only graspable if one has understood, beforehand, this history of the body that is lost in the dialectic of the master and the slave.

The hysteric reconstructs the master, she is in the position of the master. She reconstructs a kind of master made of bits and pieces, a master that Lacan qualifies as castrated, a master at once castrated and humiliated, a father who is there to support the stake of the negation of the body of the girl. Lacan concludes by saying that the hysteric tells her story with the father, this is her way of making use of him. The story that she tells is what Freud pinpoints as *Penisneid*<sup>13</sup>. What is very interesting is that there are three dimensions: an imaginary dimension, that of frustration, a symbolic dimension, that of castration and a real dimension which is that of privation. The castration here is that of the father's in so far as he is

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11 *Ibid.*, p. 110.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 112.

13 *Ibid.*

marked historically by castration, the castrated and humiliated father. Historically, thus – because it is at a precise moment that this revealed itself. The real privation is found to be designated by the bodyless hysteric. Regarding frustration, Lacan alludes to the relation to the mother, to what he called *ravage*, – that is to say to the reproach that the girl addresses to the mother for not having made her a boy. What unites these two terms is the *ravage*.

### *The language of the castrated father*

The essence of Lacan's demonstration is that there is an identification between the girl and the father, between the girl who is in *Penisneid* and the castrated father. To express her wish the girl makes use of the castrated father, the language she speaks is the language of the castrated father. The vocabulary she uses is the castrated and humiliated father's vocabulary. To tell her story she tells the story of a castrated and humiliated father. She cannot directly bear witness to her own castration. If she could bear witness to it directly, this would mean she had a body, but as she does not have a body, she has to take somebody else as a support to tell her story – precisely to tell that story that implies she does not have a body.

The question that will then be posed, because there is another stage, which is that of the feminine dialectic, will be, for the hysteric subject, to find a body and to know in what way a body is given to her. This is the question of femininity and of its beyond, in such a way that one can understand why, in his "Radiophonie", Lacan can say that the relation between  $S_1$  and  $S_2$ , is Man. It is Man in so far as a Woman asks him to be one – which does not mean, for all that, that he is one. At the same time that she identifies with Man, she asks that he be one. This means that, if he was one, he would recognize what she is, that is to say, the jewel, what is most precious, the most precious jewel, little *a*. What she says is that, unfortunately, concerning the question of knowing what corresponds to her value, her price, well, this knowledge is repressed. She says that the impotence of Man, which is not so much his sexual impotence but rather his incapacity to say to what extent a woman, his partner, is a precious object. As the man fails at this, Lacan interprets this impotence in "Radiophonie", by saying that there is a gap between knowledge and the object little *a*.

### *A master who handles the negative*

At the beginning, there is no knowledge for Man. When the hysteric asks him to be a man, this means, "Be animated by this desire to know, which is going to drive you to make this extraordinary find, that is to say to what extent I'm a precious object". However, he fails. By the same token, the only solution that the man finds is to place himself in the position of the master, to make the slave work – so that he, the slave, might find the knowledge in question. This is the construction that Lacan proposes in "Radiophonie". The phrase which I am referring to is this, "Thus, the discourse of the master finds its reason for being from the discourse of the hysteric (that is to say, that the discourse of the hysteric retroactively enlightens the discourse of the master). By making himself the agent of the all-powerful, he gives up replying as man to what he was called on to be, the hysteric obtaining nothing but knowledge. Henceforth, he relies on the knowledge of the slave to produce the *surplus jouissance*, from which, from his own (his own knowledge), he did not succeed in making the woman the cause of his desire (I did not say object)."<sup>14</sup>

This sentence of Lacan's shows that the discourses are articulated to each other. What is fundamental is the dialectic between the master and the hysteric. The identification concerns being. According to Lacan, this

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14 J. Lacan, "Radiophonie", *Autres écrits*, Seuil, Paris, 2001, p. 445.

way of following a certain logical path is done to show at the same time that the hysteric is the master and that she is the master in the sense that she is a master who can handle the negative.

This negativity concerns the phallus, jouissance, as well as, according to the way Lacan interprets *Penisneid*, the object little *a*. This leads to re-interpreting ravage by showing that the *Neid* is situated, not only in relation to the phallus, but above all in relation to the object little *a*. Finally, what a girl demands from her mother, is the precious object that her mother contains, the *agalma* that she contains in so far as she is woman. Ravage is structural, due to this process, due to this gap, which clearly shows that the position the hysteric identifies with is a position that condenses frustration, castration and privation. This is to say, a position that is legible in the three dimensions of the imaginary, the symbolic and the real. The discourse of the hysteric writes a particular kind of knot, that of hysterical identification.

*Translated by Victoria Woollard and Marc Thomas*