BULLETIN OF THE **NLS**

Nouvelle Ecole Lacanienne de Psychanalyse New Lacanian School of Psychoanalysis

THE BODY AND ITS OBJECTS LACANIAN INTERPRETATION

BULLETIN OF THE NLS

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Éric Laurent

Metamorphosis and Extraction of the Object a in the Pragmatics of the Cure

Talk at the end of the 6th Congress of the NLS in Ghent, March 15 and 16, 2008, on "The Body and its Objects in the Psychoanalytic Clinic"

We have gathered all our European groups in Ghent, as well as those from the United States and Israel, to speak of the body and its objects. There are undoubtedly few places as suitable to examine this subject.

Ghent, the intellectual capital of Flanders, is also the depository of a number of marvels, the traces of the realist tradition of the esthetics of the countries of the North. This tradition is suspicious of the prestige accorded to the "good form" and aims at proclaiming that the deceitful character of the ideal gains when it is thwarted by some trait recalling the effect of the living on the body.

Erwin Panofsky knew how to speak of this in an inimitable way. One text occupies a particular place in his work with respect to this. It is a lecture he had given special status to, since he declined all offers to publish it.

As always, his text is incredibly erudite and, in addition it had the ambition to address all types of audiences, so that it might respond in any circumstance to the most unexpected invitations. It was finally published after the death of its author under the following title: "The Ideological Antecedents of the Rolls-Royce Radiator"². Panofsky begins with English gardens, with Robert Adams's adaptation of the architecture of Palladio and with the first Anglo-Saxon evangelizers or psalters in the proper sense of the term, and he observes that a whole population of strange characters that do not really obey the laws of text composition, proliferate in the margins of the classical

¹ This talk is to be published in French in La Cause freudienne (Autumn 2008).

² Panofsky E., "The Ideological Antecedents of the Rolls-Royce Radiator", in Three essays on style, MIT Press, 1997.

text. Then, he declines the paradigm of the particularities of the English Gothic to get to what is par excellence the object of luxury, albeit industrial, that the Rolls-Royce radiator is. He finds in it the opposition between the straight classical lines of the front of the grill and the swirling "Art-Deco" form that topped it. In all these so English objects, Panofsky discerns the roots of the taste for what the genius of the English language calls "odd": the bizarre and the uneven (impair). English does not trust the even, the pair.

This addition (this "more realism") can be found within the frame of the picture, or challenge the ideal of the form by its preoccupation with detail. For example, in the altarpiece of the Van Eyck brothers that Ghent was able to conserve in its Saint John's Cathedral, now named Saint Bavo, there are no fewer than 48 perfectly identifiable vegetal species, which remind us that the celestial prairies are studded with the most earthly marvels.

This realism can also be produced on the stage, as is testified to by the movement and the influence of the Flemish theater which we were able to verify yesterday thanks to the performance of the *In Vitro* company, accompanied by the excellent musical ensemble *Hermesensemble* and the organist Marc Maes. This theater proposes to expose bodies whose use has been emancipated of the "correct uses" imposed by civilization, which began to be established during the late Middle Ages beginning with the Court Society, as the historian and sociologist Norbert Elias has so clearly shown. It is a question of recuperating a body such as we found before the Court of Burgundy. Given the disagreement between Ghent and Charles the Fifth, it is a most legitimate enterprise.

This movement of returning to a state of the body previous the Court of Burgundy finds here in Ghent its proper name with Jan Fabre. He had his hour of glory when he was invited to Avignon. His movement in fact had taken over the theater itself where the pros and the cons fought it out, while on the stage, bodies and bodily liquids mixed to structure the space in an eminently realist manner.

We were able to perceive here an echo of this movement, but there was no fighting in the amphitheater, perhaps because what we attended yesterday conserved nevertheless a veil, the veil of the correct form. Certainly Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, which supported the argument of the play *Milk*, have already lost their Greek serenity. The bodies Ovid speaks of are constantly transformed in order to continue to account for the youth of the world, particularly in the first book of the *Metamorphoses*, which has been compared to Genesis. On the site of the Université de Louvain, you can find an edition of a most Louvanist erudition concerning the differences and the possible comparisons

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between Genesis and the Book I of the Metamorphoses. The show we saw had for libretto a mixture of Books I and IX, since it is in Book IX that Ovid turns to Hercules's childhood. Hercules is the son of Alcmene, a seductive mortal, mistress of Zeus and pregnant with his child. Zeus enjoyed the object of his wishes disguised as her husband, Amphitryon. Hercules had to suckle on Hera's breast in order to be immortal. But Hera, of course, is Alcmene's worst enemy. To get by this obstacle, Hermes eludes the vigilance of Hera, who is asleep, but whose breast is abundant. Hermes places Hercules on her breast; he takes several drops of precious milk that will render him to his fate. The remainder trickles down onto the world and becomes the Milky Way.

We find a painting of Rubens at the Prado that treats precisely this subject: "The Birth of the Milky Way". I believe moreover that the director of yesterday's play has seen this painting in which we find Hermes, present on the stage in "The Hermes Ensemble".

We had the milk, the liquid milk, but we had milk that was in excess of the containers for this milk. We had the wedding of Zeus and Hera, the rather drowsy couple at the end of the table, and then the empty bottles that showed the discrepancy between the object and its containers. The bottles brushed off the table at the end of the performance pointed with their splinters of glass to the twinkling stars of the Milky Way.

We must salute the contingency of the actress's pregnancy, which emphasized the ambiguity of the scream that affects the body, the scream of birth, of death, of giving birth. The representation, centered on the body, was not limited to images; its aim was the flesh. At one moment, we saw a butcher preparing his meat from beef offal.

The representation of the operation where the butcher's knife is plunged into the flesh was very special. It was not at all the knife of the butcher of Thouang-Tseu, who only passes his knife by the delicate joints, and throughout his life as a butcher, the blade of his knife was always immaculate, because it always sliced through the hollow. In yesterday's performance, the cutting of the meat as it was filmed plunged straight into the flesh, reminding us that we are born inter fæces et urinas.

These incisions into the flesh remind us of their contrary, which we can now see on Youtube, in the announcement for next season of the series "Nip Tuck", in which the heroes are two plastic surgeons who never stop cutting into breasts and butts. There the ideal of the correct form is very present, it is the "dysneyfication" of the body, against which the text for the presentation of the play protested.

The presentation of the series begins by highlighting the curves of a leg and a breast and just when we are about to get closer, the scar appears, an enormous scar, the condition of possibility for the production of the forms exposed.

During the show, these cuts into the flesh called into question the place of the organs in the body. When the actress proposed a parallel by cutting her hair, a quiver ran through the auditorium. We were anxious. Was it really her hair that was cut?

Of course, hair is a fetishist organ. Maupassant's "The Tress of Hair³" was written at about the same time as psychiatry described the perversion of braid cutters — they were frequently serial cutters — who acted at the time when ladies were exploiting their superb braids in order to attract the gaze of gentlemen⁴.

We also saw how difficult it is for the body to articulate to organs that never cease separating from it; arms fall down too soon, and the transformation of the actress's body into Daphne, into a branch of laurel hooked onto her brooms was most striking. It was in keeping with the choice of the director who connected these transformations of the Metamorphoses to the Christian crucifixion by hanging a sign with the inscription "Judas" on the feminine body thus represented almost as a victim of torture.

The performance ended on the impressive figure of a sort of Minotaur. The staggering steps of this animal-man, a frozen metamorphosis, seemed to be situated between Picasso's bulls and Masson's engraving. It was a kind of mad parade and made us wonder where they were taking the victim, for whom no Arianne would interrupt the immobile and weighty wandering through the labyrinth, supported by the music of Philip Glass and Arvo Part played on the organ in gasping breaths.

The play we saw is connected, in certain ways, to the installation that our Israeli colleague Shirley Sharon-Zisser talked about in the morning. In this installation, we saw an artist transform papiers mâchés into comestible objects, kebabs, etc., passing by a reference to John Donne and his "rags of time". She displayed guite an invention presenting a connection between the jouissance that affects the body (the devouring of paper) and the objects we are offered in fine, in the cultural objects of the kitchen.

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³ G. de Maupassant, a short story written in 1884, which has the form of the personal journal of a mentally deranged man.

⁴ Voisin, Souquet, Motet, "Les coupeurs de nattes", Annales d'hygiène, April 1890. Quoted in Kraft-Ebbing, Psychopathia Sexualis.

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Lieve Billiet's case, that you will hear after my paper, will touch on this particularly interesting point since it brings out how, in the analytic practice, the secret of the actor is connected to the extraction of the object a from his body, since the subject in analysis she speaks about is an actor.

We see thanks to her presentation how the two secrets, that of the theater and that of the analytic operation echo each other. The question in effect can be posed: did we come to Ghent in order to receive our message in an inverted form? Is the practice of psychoanalysis not the other side, the shadow of the realistic practice of the theater or of the installation or of the work of art? Coming to Ghent to receive a message in inverted form would be quite welcome since we find in the "altarpiece of the mystical lamb" a celebrated annunciation, in which the response of the Virgin to the angel Gabriel presents the particularity of being inverted, so that it can only be read by a prophet who, situated above the frame can see it from the right angle.

In fact, the last sequence of the morning, in which Luc Vander Vennet and Vlassis Skolidis presented their work, allowed us to see how the psychoanalytic operation is this other side of the realist artistic operation. As Jacques-Alain Miller noted in his presentation, the substance of the objects of the body, in these instances the anal substance of the object, knows a strange fate in the experience of the cure. It passes by its evaporation, its sublimation, its "allusivisation". In the traces of the circuit of the drive, there is something like a movement of "dissubstantification". If the two practices respond to each other, they are not the same, even though they converge at one point, that of the dysfunction of the subject and the ego. The Dutch poet Leo Vroman, quoted by Anne Lysy, said very appropriately:

The longer I live, the more I recognize I am an incomprehensible system of which I am apparently the chauffeur but I make incomprehensible decisions.

Much more than the author of the poem, he feels he is the inhabitant of a text, of an incomprehensible series of decisions.

We can see how, between these two operations that coincide, respond, and articulate to each other, the metamorphoses and extractions of the object a slip in to mark the pragmatics of the cure in the different cases which have been presented.

Take the case of the rabbit, the rabbit of the little child Christiane Ruffieux was following. This case enchanted us because we could follow in detail the diverse metamorphoses of the stuffed rabbit, given to this little boy after an operation of cutting off his foreskin. The red rabbit becomes an imaginary substitute for this. To the red rabbit, named red measles, is soon added a white rabbit named white measles. The two rabbits are then like two signifiers each pointing to the other. One rabbit then leaves a place empty by going into the trashcan. The child then surrounds the other with a metonymic chain of other stuffed animals going from the rabbit to the penguin, from White Measles to White Beak and then Pingu and Igloo, establishing the reign of the signifying connection within which we were caught. The object seemed then to be perfectly articulated to the quotation of the Seminar IV that Geert Hoornaert cited.

We were dealing with the face of the object a that can be connected to the grammar as such.

But at the same time, Geert Hoornaert's and Christiane Ruffieux's papers complemented each other in that they also isolated precisely what it is in the object that resists connection and grammar. Geert Hoornaert was able to find correspondences in the Seminars IV and XVI that show the two aspects of the object a, on the one hand metonymic, on the other corporal consistency. Christiane Ruffieux emphasized that the rabbit had, from the beginning, a contra phobic value, as complex at the outset as the multiform complex phobia. It included the creams that might touch the body, the smells and any demand made by the parents. This "all-purpose" signifier of the phobia then reveals its other side, that is to say the dimension of the object inasmuch as it is not subjected to the law of the signifier and to its logical empire. We have thus passed from the object extracted from the body, the cream and the smell, to the object of exchange, to something that will be able to detach itself and return while remaining articulated to the body, to everything which is separated from the body and can be instrumentalized in the circulation of demands and the economy of exchange.

What the civilization of the object proposes is fake fetishes, (Lacan has said that cars are fake women), those objects proposed pretend to transport into the fetishism of merchandise the same libido that was extracted from it by the work necessary to produce or buy them. The lie concerning jouissance consists in making us forget that the particular circumstances of the extraction can never be found again in these objects that will come accompany the subject in place of the rabbit or the penguin. Just as the worker, according to Marx, never finds the value extracted from his work in the remuneration he is proposed. The lie of civilization can be situated in this exchange between the singularity of the extraction and what is proposed industrially.

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We also heard what happens when the object does not enter into the exchange. Natalie Wulfing presented the case of a subject who suffered from an "attachment disorder". It was the inseparable attachment of a mother to her child as an autistic object a. The child, in this case, enters into no circuit of exchange. The quasi hallucinatory intensity of the demand for a child in the subject she talks about, reminds us of Meynert and Griesinger's cases of Amentia, of hallucinatory psychosis, which Freud talks of in 1894⁵. "The mother who, having fallen ill from the loss of her child, unceasingly rocks a piece of wood in her arms". Freud sees in this the absolute dimension of the object that separates neurosis from psychosis.

Jennifer, who Natalie Wulfing spoke of, is incapable of taking care of her children but she absolutely wants to have them. There is nothing else she wants. They are in no way distinguished from her, which means she can in no case take care of them as she could of something that was separated and related to her. She cannot even enter into the state qualified as post-partum depression. The child is found in the field Lacan calls the zone of malaise in the Seminar IV⁶.

The child for her has not really been extracted. He remains in her body as an object of total strangeness. Her children must then be taken away from her, which had been done with a certain brutality, since one of them had been put up for adoption. Once this withdrawal has been made, Jennifer can only think of recuperating them. She is admitted to the hospital and it is there that Natalie Wulfing meets her. She is able to leave the hospital soon, but a miscarriage will then provoke a breakdown. Her husband offers her a rabbit. But the rabbit does not function like the rabbit of the little boy, it takes part in no process of substitution, here the rabbit is the child. Since she is incapable of taking care of it, the rabbit is devoured by the dog of the house. This is just about what would have happened to her children if she had not taken care of them. We see what happens when the body does not manage to fabricate organs that can take on the value of signifiers.

In his presentation of the theme of the Study Days of the École de la Cause freudienne, Jacques-Alain Miller noted that it is through

⁵ S.Freud, "The Neuro-Psychoses of Defence", Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Freud, vol. III, London, Hogarth Press, pp. 58-59.

⁶ J.Lacan, Le Séminaire, livre IV, La relation d'objet, p. 395 : "C'est un objet qui est à un stade fondateur et formateur des objets. Très différent des objets réels puisqu'il est extrait du malaise." ("It is an object that is at a founding and forming stage of the objects. Very different from the real objects since it is extracted from the

the signifier, and more precisely by "the practice of a language" that organs come to light. Signifiers and pragmatics must be distinguished from what the functioning of a language is for a subject⁷. Jennifer is capable of using the signifiers of the language such as child and rabbit, but in no case the children or the rabbit are for her signifiers that can enter into a chain of substitution that would separate them from her body. She finds herself in face of them without the support of any established discourse. The functioning of the signifier does not engender an ideal machine, without a remainder, it always implies a hold on the body that contains the entire speech-being. "It is not man's rags, but his very being that takes up its position among the scraps in which his first frolics found their cortege, inasmuch as the law of symbolization, in which his desire must become engaged, catches him in its net by the position of part-object in which he offers himself on coming into the world...8."

Lacan takes this point up again in the Seminar X and specifies: "We always find in the body because of this engagement in the dialectic of the signifier, something separated, something sacrificed, something inert, which is the pound of flesh⁹."

The extraction of the objects of the body supposes passages between the inside and the outside of the body, admirably illustrated by the choice of Escher's engraving for the cover of this Seminar. These relations between the inside and the outside are questioned by the clinic, by art and by science. Gil Caroz, in his introductory paper evoked how the body as science conceives and apprehends it comes to be "detailed for exchange" and supplemented by pieces. This is also the case when science is realized in an object as complex as medicine. Medicine, François Dagognet noted, is something inside the body that passes outside. "It is body substance functioning of the body. It places it outside in something that can be returned to it. It is the reintegration within the body of an object that feigns to function as a living thing. The body will look for it outside in order to make of it an instrument with which it can find jouissance in itself (se jouir). In this sense, the

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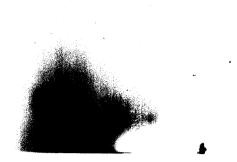
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⁷ J.-A.Miller, "L'avenir de Mycroplasma laboratorium", Lettre Mensuelle, 267, p. 14: "Chez le parlêtre, le rapport sexuel est constitué par le langage, ou, plus précisément, par la pratique de lalangue. Il s'ensuit qu'il distingue, dans son corps, des organes qui prennent valeur de signifiant. (...) Ces objets ont valeur de signifiants imaginaires." l"For the speech-being, the sexual relation is constituted by language, or more precisely by the practice of lalangue. It follows from this that he distinguishes, within his body, organs that take on the value of signifiers. [...] These objects have the value of imaginary signifiers.")

J. Lacan, "On a Question Prior to Any Possible Treatment of Psychosis", Écrits, Seuil, 1966, p.582n. Translation Bruce Fink, Norton, 1999, p. 488, note 35.

⁹ J.Lacan, Le Séminaire, livre X, L'Angoisse, Seuil, 2004, p. 254.



medicine is presented as an object par excellence, that is to say an object that has the structure of an instrument of jouissance, which is that of the object a. "There is a knowledge of psychoanalysis. It really did discover something, something mythic which is the formula...of means of production... of a satisfaction... of mountains... an instrument functioning, an transferred outside and that we then use to help a disturbed inside 10." The functioning of medicine mimes the organic... some organs of the body, in fact diversely ambiguous and difficult to grasp, since it is too clear that some are only scraps, find themselves

In this perspective of ambiguous body organs that are difficult to grasp in their function of instruments of jouissance, the two cases presented by Lieven Jonckheere and Despina Andropoulou are exemplary. These two subjects have a special use for drug addiction. As soon as they came into the world and were inscribed in the Other, there was a leftover. This leftover is called for one of them "the taste in the mouth", for the other a sensation in the body, a "gut feeling". One and the other then try to recuperate it outside of their bodies, by different stagings, for which in both cases they have recourse to toxic substances.

placed in a function of instrumental support¹¹."

For one of these subjects, placing himself in danger by the abuse of alcohol provokes a constant recourse to hospital emergency rooms where the subject never stops having the body that escapes him sewed up. He never stops sewing himself up. For the other, his recourse to heroin and cocaine provoke interminable nights during which the subject writes. This writing is addressed to no one. It is written. It is a writing that has become "autistic", detached from any communication. writing like the thread a spider spins that would not stop spinning outside itself. Analysis manages to bring it back not into the system of communication, but at least into a mechanism of address. It made it possible to find a function for the organ stemming from the body. just as well for the subject who kept being sewn up under anesthesia in order to find the lost organ, as for the other, who found a function for language through endless writing. It was their manner to invent, between body and organs, a montage.

All along these two days, our Congress really took us "From an Other to the other", so far as touching the point of Lacan's last teaching where the logical consistency of the object a is questioned. This is a

. the practice of a language" that and pragmatics must be distinguished anguage is for a subject⁷. Jennifer rs of the language such as child and renior the rabbit are for her signifiers upst tution that would separate them in face of them without the support ie functioning of the signifier does not thout a remainder, it always implies a e entire speech-being. "It is not man's es up its position among the scraps he hispitege, inasmuch as the law of s re must become engaged, catches part-object in which he offers himself

n the Seminar X and specifies: "We sin s engagement in the dialectic of ted something sacrificed, something

ne cody supposes passages between e body, admirably illustrated by the or the cover of this Seminar. These to the outside are questioned by the ardz, in his introductory paper evoked .es and apprehends it comes to be stemented by pieces. This is also the an object as complex as medicine. ted, is something inside the body that ance functioning of the body. It places e returned to it. It is the reintegration tife gns to function as a living thing. n order to make of it an instrument a tself (se jouir). In this sense, the

actifator um", Lettre Mensuelle, 267, p. 14: anstitue par le langage, ou, plus précisément, ರ stingue, dans son corps, des organes qui clets antivaleur de signifiants imaginaires." eation is constituted by language, or more . This from this that he distinguishes, within ा ६ वृत्त fiers. [...] These objects have the value

as the Treatment of Psychosis", Écrits, Seuil, 🐪 : -- : - 1999, p. 488, note 35.

⁴⁴ Seul. 2004, p. 254.

¹⁰ Mental n°19, Mai 2007, Revue Internationale de Santé Mentale et Psychanalyse Appliquée, Entretien avec François Dagognet, un philosophe du médicament, p.24. (Interview with François Dagognet, a philosopher of medicine.)

¹¹ J.Lacan, Le Séminaire, livre XVI, D'un Autre à l'autre, Seuil, 2006, p. 206.

point that was underlined by Anne Lysy at the beginning of this Congress and that I would like to take up again. She gave all its weight to Lacan's formula such as it was commented by Jacques-Alain Miller, according to which "The speech-being adores his body, because he believes he has it. In reality, he does not have it, but his body is the only consistence — mental consistence, of course, because his body is constantly falling apart."

The equivalence between logical consistence and bodily organon rocks towards the side of the consistence of the body under two species: that of the rags, of the form and that of the object. Confronted by the body that eludes him, like the sense, the speech-being turns into an idolizer of form, he tries to lodge the lost object within it. We find this adoration or according to Lacan, this "adorption" (adoration and adoption) of the body on the one hand and on the other Joyce's system in which there is no adoration of his body since he has lost it, which is manifested during the famous beating he received. The loss of rags gave him another relation to his body, the body as an idea of self¹². The situation of the "speech'being" (parl'être) results in his having no other path but to install a relation with the body that eludes him. There is the neurotic path, which makes of the body a trap of desire for the hysterical subject, or an instrument of response to the demand for the obsessional subjection; there is the more narcissistic "adorption" and there is the Joycian path. We could say that the discourse of analysis aims at obtaining a relation to the body that is new. It is neither that of idolatry, nor that of Joyce. It passes by the designation of the place of the object as being an obstacle to the law of the signifier. This is why in the experience of analysis, what is important, as Pierre-Gilles Guéguen pointed out, is that the analyst, in his act, make the distinction between the unconscious and his place as an object. "Act in such a way that the maxim of your act is not to position yourself in the place of the unconscious." That is how he will be able to incarnate the adequate instrument for the different modes of extraction of the object a.

Translated from the French by Thelma Sowley

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¹² J.-A. Miller, course of January 17, 2007.