

Published

The Real Presence and Slipperiness of the Body : By [Catherine Lacaze-Paule](#), 11th October 2020, [LRO 248](#) Lacanian Review Online

See <https://www.thelacanianreviews.com/the-real-presence-and-slipperiness-of-the-body/>

OR

by New Lacanian School of Psychoanalysis – Messenger, as **Subject: [nls-messenger]**
3550.en/ Lacanian Review Online: The Real Presence and Slipperiness of the Body, on
Date: 12 October 2020 at 09:42:57 BST

See <http://www.amp-nls.org/page/gb/49/nls-messenger/0/2020-2021/4325>

Julia Evans' notes on the references at the end

When they poured across the border
I was cautioned to surrender
This I could not do

(Leonard Cohen, *The Partisan*)

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LRO 248
11th October 2020

LACANIAN REVIEW --- ONLINE



The Real Presence and Slipperiness of the Body

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During confinement, we experienced absent bodies from a distance. We experienced that the notions of proximity, distance, and border between self and other were insufficient to account for presence. Near, far, social distancing, blurring (an English term to designate the absence of a border between the private and the professional), FOMO (fear of missing out) [1], fear of missing something on social networks, or FOGO (fear of going out), fear of sticking one's nose outside, which seems to be a nuance of agoraphobia. These are the new phrases that testify to new discomforts related to the presence and effects of relationships with the other, outside, close quarters, intimate and extimate.

To compensate for absence, the digital has imposed itself, inserted itself very deeply into our lives. Two neologisms have become part of the common language to circumscribe this effect: *presential* [2] and *distancial*. With digital technology, we have had access to the possibility of "seeing each other", without being *presential*, "hearing each other", by connecting, getting closer, but *distancial*, at a distance. Each time the object *a* has been touched, 'seeing' imposes itself to the detriment of the gaze, and the specular image becomes the reflection of oneself. The absence of the body no longer hooked on, no longer giving ballast or support to speech, has become lost, emptied of meaning and jouissance, and in return the effects of "fatigue", "weary bodies", even "weariness" are sometimes felt. Our encounters become digital. Our encounters become virtual. Has presence been touched?

Without the presence of the bodies, without the confrontation of the bodies, presence becomes more enigmatic but necessary. Will it always be so? What are the conditions for an encounter to be real, for a presence to be felt, to be experienced? How does the feeling of presence occur?

Analytical sessions have not escaped this phenomenon, which attests to the way analysis is inseparable from a certain relation to the bodies that are present. What the absence of bodies has revealed is the body that slips away. Lacan evokes the slipperiness [*fuyance*][3] of the body in the seminar on transference. Let us grasp the equivocation of flight [*fuite*], of absent bodies and of the body which leaks [*fuit*], in order to question what real presence is. Is it that which is made "in flesh and blood"?

The expression of real presence[4] appears for the first time in the seminar on transference, and on several occasions, notably as a chapter title. It is often through its negativity, its negation, that this notion is grasped. Here, it is in the form of insult. The insult has the real presence that Lacan spots in the clinic of a female obsessive neurosis. Her symptom consists in seeing (without its having to do with hallucinatory phenomena) the male genital organs in the place of the

host [Communion bread]. This insult to the sacredness of Catholic religious dogma is an insult to the Eucharist. Lacan takes it up to evoke the notion of real presence. According to Saint Thomas Aquinas, real presence is substance. It designates not something visible to the “bodily eye,” but the intelligible reality of a being. The real presence names the body of Christ. It is not perceptible by any of the senses, nor by the imagination, even when the wine and the bread (the host) give imaginary form to clothe this substance. Lacan uses this term to give an account of the big Phi function, the function of the phallus, which symbolises absence and presence and which he designates as real presence. The big Phi symbolises both meaning and its beyond, the interval between two signifiers, as empty presence, as non-relation between two signifiers ($S_1//S_2$). “For the sign to be given [by the psychoanalyst] is the sign of the lack of a signifier.”[5]

In each interval, the question of the desire of the Other is opened up for the subject, and makes a sign of desire, but nothing that is signifiable. This is why the obsessive devotes himself to warding off this interval between two signifiers each time it presents itself to him. Thus, in the cure, the function that the symbolic phallus occupies in its place “is that it is not simply a sign and a signifier but the presence of desire. It is the real presence [of desire].” [6]

The phallus, beyond its representation of the organ, beyond any representation or possible signification, has a status as sign. But this sign is a real presence that the analyst, in his desire and his body, can incarnate in flesh and in bone.

The objects *a* are housed in the analyst, he incarnates them.

Let us distinguish with Jacques-Alain Miller’s teaching, the beginning of the cure, the moment when idealisation is only the mask of the object *a*, it is the stage of revelation, then the stage of repetition, it is the analysis that lasts. And finally the third stage, that of stagnation, that of the cage of the *sinthome*, its inertia. That of very real *jouissance*. According to the moments, the objects of demand and desire are underlined, accentuated, marked or, on the contrary, reduced to zero, subtracted by the analyst. The handling of the object is what establishes the real hole in language, it is both what symbolises it and covers its lack in various guises. Whether the gaze is supported or diverted, here the subject’s body is first and foremost that of narcissism reduced to the image. Or in the idealization of truth, speech, and meaning, the analyst incarnates the Other as the place of signifiers and truth, but also by his silence indicates the presence of *jouissance*. His silence, or noise, is what summons the object voice. The voice is not sonorous, it is not the voice of vocalisation but the voice that arises each time the signifier breaks on what cannot be said, on what is unspeakable. It is the voice, like that which topples, that which falls from the body, when meaning is lost and flees. The word, to be without the echo produced by the analyst’s silence, is emptied of meaning and *jouissance*.

In the same way, the body of the subject, as a support for the phallic presence, or placed on the couch like a peel, confronts the living body of the analyst, beyond what is, what exists. The real presence of the body of the analyst as a

support is also the one that convokes the present of saying. “The speaking present [*le dire du présent*] and the present speaking [*le présent du dire*]”[7] – Lacan makes this distinction in *The Formations of the Unconscious*. And he specifies that it is not a simple play on words but the here and now of the present making it possible to identify the actuality of the speaker at the level of the message, while the present of saying opens up to the space of metonymy, of what can be heard. Let us add: what is read from what is said, what enjoys itself in saying. When the psychoanalyst is presence, he is both a veiled support of a desire – *Que vuoi?* – and a support of jouissance, through the intermediary of the object *a* in presence.

For when the analyst’s desire becomes the support of a real presence as impossible, he can also incarnate, make interpretation of an event of singular jouissance. If the signifier is not everything, the real presence linked to the desire of the analyst is the index of the real of the jouissance of the body. With the real presence, Lacan puts us on the path of the analytic session as a topological object, a real produced not by the impossible but by the knot, the handling of the knot.

Translated by Janet Haney

Originally published:

<https://www.lacan-universite.fr/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/ironik-42-Habeas-corpus.pdf>

[1] See “Confinement and the FOMO, fear of missing out on social networks”, available online (www.nova.fr).

[2] This adjective qualifies a way of functioning in a real situation, in the present time and without intermediary or media intermediary. As opposed to “virtual” and “remote”. Usually used in a professional setting. (Online: www.linternaute.fr).

[3] Lacan J., *Seminar 8, Transference*, text established by J.-A. Miller, transl. B. Fink, Cambridge, Polity, 2015, p. 230. Fink translates ‘fuyance’ as ‘dissonance’, which has to do with sound. We have used flight/fleeting to evoke more of the body.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 241.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 233.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 246.

[7] Lacan J., *Seminar 5, Formations of the Unconscious*, text established by J.-A. Miller, transl. R. Grigg, Cambridge, Polity, 2017, p. 53. "It is the opposition between what I will call the speaking present [*le dire du présent*] and the present speaking [*le présent du dire*]. This looks like a play on words. It's nothing of the sort."

Notes on availability of the references Julia Evans

[3] Lacan J., *Seminar 8, Transference*, text established by J.-A. Miller, transl. B. Fink, Cambridge, Polity, 2015, p. 230. Fink translates 'fuyance' as 'dissonance', which has to do with sound. We have used flight/fleeting to evoke more of the body.

See [Seminar VIII : Transference : 1960-1961 : Begins 16th November 1960 : Jacques Lacan](http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=6124) or [here http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=6124](http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=6124)

Seminar VIII : 12th April 1961 : ch16 p199-200 of Cormac Gallagher's translation also uses fleeting : The fact is that, far from the desire of the Other, in so far as it is approached at the level of the genital phase, being able to be, be in fact ever accepted in what I would call its rhythm which is at the same time its fleetingness (as regards the child, namely that it is still a fragile desire, that it is an uncertain, premature, anticipated desire) this masks from us when all is said and done what is in question, that it is quite simply the reality at whatever level it may be of sexual desire to which, as one might say, the psychical organisation is not adapted in so far as it is psychical; the fact is that the organ (10) is not taken up, brought, approached, except as transformed into a signifier and that, because it is transformed into a signifier, it is in this that it is cut off.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 241. real presence

See [Seminar VIII : Transference : 1960-1961 : Begins 16th November 1960 : Jacques Lacan](http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=6124) or [here http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=6124](http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=6124)

: Seminar VIII : 19th April 1961 : ch 17 p213 of Cormac Gallagher's translation : But before writing it I must give you a certain number of touches, of points, of indications which will put you on the path. We know the difficulty of handling the (phi) symbol in its unveiled form. It is, as I told you above, what is intolerable in it which is nothing other than the following: it is that it is not simply sign and signifier, but presence of desire. It is the **real presence** of desire.

& p214 *ibid* : I can only leave here as an indication in order to take it up the next time - it is that at the basis of phantasies, of symptoms, of these points of emergence where we might see the hysterical labyrinth in a way lowering its mask, we will encounter something which I would call the insult to the **real presence**. The obsessional, for his part also has to deal with the G> (big phi) mystery of the signifier phallus and for him also it is a question of making it manageable. ...

& We will remember the phantasy of the Ratman, imagining in the middle of the night his dead father resurrected, coming to knock on his door, and that he shows himself to him while he is masturbating: an insult here also to the **real presence**.

What we will call aggressivity in the obsession is always present as an aggression precisely against this form of apparition of the Other which I called at another time phallophanie - the Other in so far as precisely as he may present himself as phallus.

& p223 *ibid* & Seminar VIII : 26th April 1961 : I already began to articulate the last time this ^ (big phi) function of the phallus by formulating a term which is that of the **real presence**. This term, I think your ear is sensitive enough for you to see that I am putting quotation marks around it. Moreover I did not introduce it by itself, and I spoke about "the insult to the

real presence" so that already no one could be mistaken, and we are not at all dealing here with a neutral reality.

It would be quite strange that if this **real presence** fulfilled the function which is the radical one that I am trying here to make you approach, had not already been located somewhere. And naturally I think that you have already perceived its homonymy, its identity with what religious dogma (the one to which we have access, I mean this name from our birth, in our cultural context) calls by this name. The **real presence**, this couple of words in so far as . it constitutes a signifier, we are habituated, in a near or distant way, to hear it being murmured for a long time into our ears in connection with the Roman Catholic and Apostolic dogma of the Eucharist.

I assure you that there is no need to search very far in order to perceive that this is really on the same level as in the phenomenology of the obsessional.

p224 *ibid.* : It is in the same [case] observation that, further on, we borrowed the last time the sacrilegious phantasies which consist precisely, not simply in superimposing in such a clear fashion the masculine genital organs - here it is specified for us "without there being a question of hallucinatory phenomena", namely well and truly as such in a signifying form - to superimpose them for that which is also for us, in the most precise symbolic fashion, identifiable to the **real presence**.

..... what it is a question of is to reduce in a way this **real presence**, to break it, to pulverise it in the mechanism of desire, this is what the subsequent phantasies, those that I already quoted the last time, will be enough to underline.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 233.

See [Seminar VIII : Transference : 1960-1961 : Begins 16th November 1960 : Jacques Lacan](http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=6124) or [here http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=6124](http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=6124)

Seminar VIII : 12th April 1961 : p202 of Cormac Gallagher : So that you see being initiated here what I am trying to show you and to trace as a path towards that which ought to be the desire (12) of the analyst. In order that the analyst should have what the other lacks he must have nescience qua nescience, he must be in the mode of having, that he must also be also without having it, that he must be lacking in nothing for him to be as nescient as his subject. In fact, he also is not without having an unconscious. No doubt it is always beyond anything the subject knows, without being able to say it to him. He can only give him a sign, to be that which represents something for someone is the definition of the sign. Having here in short nothing other which prevents him from being this desire of the subject, except precisely knowledge, the analyst .is condemned to a false surprise. But you can be sure that he is only efficacious by offering himself to the true which untransmissible, of which he can only give a sign. To represent something for someone, is precisely here what is to be stopped, because the sign that is to be given, is the sign of the lack of the signifier. It is, as you know, the only sign which is not tolerated because it is the one which provokes the unspeakable anguish. It is nevertheless the only one which can allow the other to gain access to what is the nature of the unconscious, this "knowledge without consciousness" which you will understand perhaps today before this image in what sense, not negative but positive, Rabelais says that it is "the ruin of the soul".

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 246. :

See [Seminar VIII : Transference : 1960-1961 : Begins 16th November 1960 : Jacques Lacan](#) or [here http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=6124](http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=6124)

Seminar VIII : 19th April 1961 : ch 17 p213 of Cormac Gallagher's translation : There is another, that of the obsessional, who, as everyone knows, is much more intelligent in his way of operating. If the formula of the hysterical phantasy can be written thus: [Not transferred] the substitutive or metaphorical object, over something which is hidden, namely-d) (minus phi), his own imaginary castration in his relationship with the Other, today I will only introduce and (11) begin for you the different formula of the obsessional phantasy.

But before writing it I must give you a certain number of touches, of points, of indications which will put you on the path. We know the difficulty of handling the (phi) symbol in its unveiled form. It is, as I told you above, what is intolerable in it which is nothing other than the following: it is that it is not simply sign and signifier, but presence of desire. It is the real presence of desire.

[7] Lacan J., *Seminar 5, Formations of the Unconscious*, text established by J.-A. Miller, transl. R. Grigg, Cambridge, Polity, 2017, p. 53. "It is the opposition between what I will call the speaking present [*le dire du présent*] and the present speaking [*le présent du dire*]. This looks like a play on words. It's nothing of the sort."

See [Seminar V : The Formations of the Unconscious : 1957-1958 : begins 6th November 1957 : Jacques Lacan](#) or [here http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=12054](http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=12054)

Seminar V : 20th November 1957 : p40-41 of Cormac Gallagher : Let us come back once again to our witticism, and to what we must make of it. I would like to introduce you to another sort of distinction that brings us back in a way to that with which we began, namely the question of the subject.

The question of the subject, what does that mean? If what I told you a little while ago is true, if it is in so far as thought always tends to make of the subject the one who designates himself as such in the discourse, I would like you to notice that what distinguishes, what isolates, what opposes it, is something that we can define as the opposition between what I can call the Statement of the present and the present of the statement.

This looks like a play on words, it is not at all a play on words.