

Hurty-Burly inarius and New Lacanian School

Daniel Matet,

Reginald Blanchet, adan Wolf

· - Veronique Voruz,

..... Scott Wilson, marre, Philip Metz, - > : Véronique Eydoux, Miller: Pascale Fari

Licric-Charles Baitinger, · Alasdair Duncan, Grammatopoulos, equemin, Azeen Khan,

-ce. Julia Richards,

Lasdair Duncan, John Mäki, Sheila Power

∵егда. Santanu Biswas, Can. Russel Grigg, Eagland, Renata Salecl, Henry Staten, ``stalic Wülfing

- : Barbara Kowalow, intina Aguirre, Sharon Zvili, · · · Argyris Tsakos,

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The Lacanian Review Hurly-Burly

FAMILY DRAMAS FAMILY TRAUMAS



CONTENTS

EDITORIAL

7 Marie-Hélène Brousse, Family Games

THEMATIC SECTION: FAMILY DRAMAS, FAMILY TRAUMAS

GROWING PAINS

- 13 Jacques Lacan, Note on the Child
- 15 Daniel Roy, Introduction to "Note on the Child"
- 17 Véronique Eydoux, Destiny of the Emblem of the Intrusion Complex
- 23 Jacques-Alain Miller, In the Direction of Adolescence
- 34 Jacques-Alain Miller, Violent Children
- 43 Philippe Lacadée, How Do We Understand the Phenomena of Violence in Young People?
- 56 Anne Edan, "We do not Choose our Family" Some Orientations for Plural Practice in an Institution

THE DIALOGUE

61 Eva Illouz, The Dialogue: "Family Investments"

NEW KNOTTINGS OF KITH AND KIN

- 73 Jacques-Alain Miller, Affairs of the Family in the Unconscious
- 78 Laura Sokolowsky, Freud, His Daughter, and the Other Woman
- 81 Christel Simler, Delphine Porcheron and Eugenia Caracciolo di Torella, What's a Family in the Eyes of the Law?
- 98 Cyrus Saint Amand Poliakoff, Surrogate Mother(!)
- 101 François Ansermet, An Observatory Looking Out onto the Future of the Family

NEW PUBLICATIONS IN OUR FIELD

- 105 François Ansermet, The Art of Making Children
- 108 Stijn Vanheule, A Lacanian Response to Issues in Psychiatric Diagnosis: An Interview with Stijn Vanheule

ARCHIVE: GLATT

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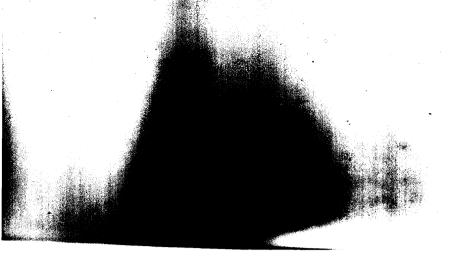
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OUR CONGRESSES

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FAMILY TRAUMAS

reput of Violence in Young People?

nconscious Control Woman Cana Caracciolo di Torella,

: :ne Future of the Family

-:- Diagnosis: An Interview

ARCHIVE: GUATTARI ON DOLTO

- 113 Gary Genosko, Introduction to Félix Guattari, A Game of Scrabble with Lacan
- 117 Laura Sokolowsky, "You Do What I Theorise"
- 18 Félix Guattari, A Game of Scrabble with Lacan

FORMATIONS OF THE ANALYST

- 124 Chantal Bonneau, The AMS: Partner-Symptom?
- 128 Dalila Arpin, Analytic Wings and Social Feet

REDUCTIONS

132 Caroline Doucet, The Recipe – 134 Fabian Fajnwaks, The Meanders of Jouissance – 136 Hélène Guilbaud, Losing a Child – 137 Jérôme Lecaux, Hatred Does Not Dissolve – 139 Dalila Arpin, A Slip of the Signature – 141 Laurent Dupont, Dream and Interpretation – An Experience in Solitude – 143 Dominique Holvoet, Explicit Signs of the End of an Analysis – 146 Daniel Pasqualin, Love and Mammography ... Tracking Shot – 147 Véronique Voruz, "Shallow Tongue" – 149 Éric Laurent, The Outside Meaning: Between Sublimation and Corporisation

CLINICAL WORK

- 156 Philippe Carpentier, The Weight of Words "Berck"
- 160 Angelina Harari, Grandmothers Today

OUR CONGRESSES

- 164 Lilia Mahjoub, In a State of Transference Wild, Political, Psychoanalytic
- 174 Anna Aromí and Xavier Esqué, The Ordinary Psychoses and the Others, Under Transference

ADIEU

- 182 Serge Cottet, The Learning Years of Psychoanalysis
- 186 Christiane Alberti, Judith, The Cause Incarnate



GROWING PAINS

This issue on family opens with Jacques Lacan's "Note on the Child", a text which combines two short notes written by Lacan at the request of Jenny Aubry. It is followed by Daniel Roy's formalisation of the axes that the Note offers for child analysis in the Lacanian Orientation. Véronique Eydoux then takes us through the successive stages of the logical construction which Lacan makes of the Augustinian vignette of the child seeing his little rival suspended to the mother's breast to elicit the structural stakes of the intrusion complex.

Note on the Child

Jacques Lacan

t seems that if we look at the failure of utopian communities, Lacan's position evokes the following dimension.

The function of residue that the conjugal family supports (and thereby maintains) in the evolution of societies highlights the irreducibility of a form of transmission – one that is of a different order than that of life considered as the satisfaction of needs – but one that has a subjective constitution, implying a relationship to a desire that is not anonymous.

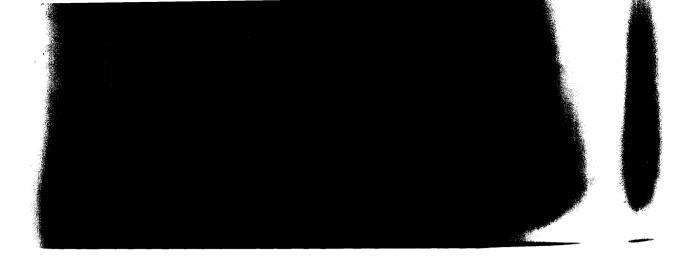
The functions of the mother and the father are to be judged on the basis of such a requirement. For the mother: insofar as her care bears the mark of an individualised interest, even if via her own lacks. For the father: insofar as his name is the vector of the embodiment of the Law in desire.

In the conception of it developed by Jacques Lacan, the child's symptom is located in the position of a response to what is symptomatic in the family structure.

In this context, a symptom, which is the fundamental fact of analytic experience, can be defined as representing the truth.

A symptom may represent the truth of the family couple. This is the most complex case, but it is also the one that is most open to our intervention.

Originally published as "Deux notes sur l'Enfant", *Ornicar*? No. 37 (1986), pp.13-14, and as "Note sur l'enfant", *Autres écrits*, Seuil, Paris, 2001, pp. 373-375. First published in English in *Analysis*, No. 2, Melbourne Centre for Psychoanalytic Research, Australia, 1990.



Growing Pains

The articulation is much more limited when the symptom that comes to dominate arises from the subjectivity of the mother. In this case the child is directly concerned as the correlate of a fantasy.

If the gap between the identification with the ego ideal and the piece taken from the mother's desire lacks the mediation that is normally provided by the father's function, it leaves the child susceptible to every kind of fantasmatic capture. He becomes the mother's 'object' and his sole function is to reveal the truth of this object.

The child realises the presence of what Jacques Lacan designates as *objet a* in fantasy.

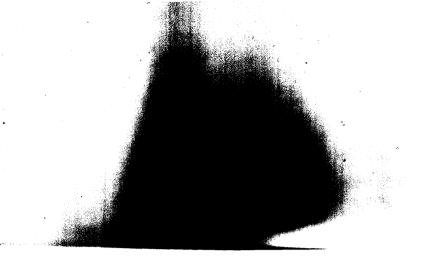
By substituting himself for this object, the child saturates the mode of lack whereby (the mother's) desire is particularised, whatever her specific structure – neurotic, perverse or psychotic.

He alienates in himself all possible access by the mother to her own truth through giving it body, existence and even the requirement to be protected.

The somatic symptom gives the greatest possible guarantee to this misrecognition [méconnaissance]; it is the inexhaustible resource that, depending on the case, may testify to guilt, serve as a fetish, or incarnate a primordial refusal.

In short, in the dyadic relationship with the mother the child gives her, in immediately accessible form, what the masculine subject lacks: the very object of his existence appearing in the real. As a consequence, the child is open to greater subornation in fantasy in a manner commensurate with what is real in what he presents.

Translated by Russell Grigg



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Introduction to "Note on the Child"

Daniel Roy

acques Lacan wrote the "Note on the Child" in 1969 at the request of Jenny Aubry, a paediatrician who headed a hospital unit in paediatrics, and a psychoanalyst member of the École Freudienne de Paris. This fundamental text lays the foundations for child analysis in the Lacanian orientation. It was first known to French readers as two separate notes, before being brought together, as they are in the English version here, when Jacques-Alain Miller edited the *Autres écrits* collection in 2001. Prior to Jacques-Alain Miller's careful revision, these two texts, taken as distinct from each other, produced a disjunction between two elements that precisely need to be considered together in the analytic practice with children: on the one hand, the family structure; and on the other, the child's symptom.

What are the main axes of the "Note"?

- 1. Lacan does not shy away from placing the family in a category that precludes all forms of idealisation. It has a "function of residue" in the evolution of societies. This gives psychoanalysts a lot of freedom when it comes to accepting the most diverse family configurations.
- 2. For it is on this residue that rests a necessary function that is "irreducible" to any subjective constitution: transmission. To the question of what is passed on in a family, Lacan's answer is an embodied desire, not an anonymous one.
- 3. This is what gives way to a diffraction into two avenues for this embodied desire: the path of lack, and the path of the name. The distinction made here by Lacan between the function of the mother and the function of the father makes no claims as to the gendered identity of whoever comes to embody these functions.
- 4. The only truth that a family can give a child is a transmission operating on the vectors of lack and name. It is an enigmatic, "symptomatic" truth, always falling short of a response that would say what the transmission of life is.

The author is an AMS (Analyst Member of the School), and member of the ECF, and NLS.



Growing Pains

- 5. In this respect, Lacan takes a decisive step, which I earlier said was foundational for child analysis: the child's symptom is a response to the symptomatic truth at the heart of the family structure. To understand the symptom as the child's subjective response to the enigmatic opacity harboured by his or her family is far from the genetic, biological, or even psychological causality this symptom is sometimes said to stem from!
- 6. The distinction that Lacan develops in the rest of the "Note" remains extremely rich and fertile from a clinical point of view, as has often been commented upon: on the one hand, the symptom represents "the truth of the family couple"; on the other hand, the symptom "arises from the subjectivity of the mother". Let's note one particular aspect here: the "family couple" appears like one of the possible modalities for the incarnation of desire in its double function of lack and law. The other modality designates the fact that it is the child him/herself who incarnates the object of the fantasy: "the child saturates the mode of lack whereby (the mother's) desire is particularised." If there is no longer any transmission of lack, what remains of desire? There remains a capricious law against which the child's symptom is essentially a defence.
- 6. Following the thread of his deciphering of what I call "embodied structure"; at the end of the text Lacan emphasises the "somatic symptom" insofar as it comes to augment, for a mother or father, the child's "requirement to be protected". Lacan underlines that here lies an open road for a mother or a father to misrecognise the truth of her or his desire, and for the child, to incarnate the place of an object. The everexpanding category of "children with special needs" requires that psychoanalysts and mental health practitioners in the analytic orientation should not shy away from the two faces of the truth of the child's symptom: a vocal response to the truth of the family couple, and a mute response to the place of object that every subject occupies when they come into the world.

Translated by Nicolas Boileau

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