

Spring awakening

Jacques Lacan*

The circumstances: Brigitte Jacques, whose Elvire/Jouvet 40 is a success on the stage these days, produced at the time Wedekind's Spring awakening. I translated for her a passage from the Minutes of the Wednesday Psychological Society, the meeting of 13 February 1907, dedicated to the play, and I asked Jacques Lacan for a text. He wrote the text that follows, which was initially published as a preface to the program, and then subsequently with the play itself (Gallimard, 1974).
Jacques-Alain Miller

This is how a playwright deals, in 1891, with the issue of what it is for boys to make love to girls, stressing that they would not consider it without the awakening of their dreams.

It is remarkable that this is performed on the stage as such—that is, so as to show that it is not satisfactory for everyone, even to the point of admitting that when it fails, it does so for each of us.

This is tantamount to saying that it is something that has never been seen before.

But it is orthodox in relation to Freud—by which I mean: in relation to what Freud said.

This proves at the same time that even a Hanoverian (since I inferred at once, I must admit, that Wedekind was Jewish), that even a Hanoverian, I say (and isn't that saying a lot?) is capable of observing it. Of observing that there is a relation between sense and enjoyment.

That the enjoyment in question is phallic is attested to by (analytic) experience.

But Wedekind—it is dramaturgy. What place should we give it? The fact is that our (Freudian) Jews are interested in it; we find the proof of that in this program.

It must be pointed out that the Wedekind family had drifted about the world as participants in an idealist Diaspora: they had had to leave their motherland owing to the failure of "revolutionary" activity. Was this what made Wedekind—I am now referring to our dramatist—imagine that he was of Jewish blood? This, at least, is what his best friend claims.

Or is this a concern of the period, since the dramatist, at the date I have mentioned, anticipates Freud, and in a significant manner?

After all, it could be said that at this date Freud was still cogitating the unconscious and that, as to the experience that instituted its regime, he would still not have it on its feet by the time of his death.

That was left for me to do until someone else takes over (perhaps someone who is no more of a Jew than I am).

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The fact that what Freud discovered about what he called sexuality makes a hole in the real is what can be perceived in the fact that, since nobody copes with it well, no one worries about it any more.

It is however an experience within everybody's reach. Modesty designates it as the private (*privé*). Deprived (*privé*) of what? Precisely that the pubis only reaches the public, where it is vaunted as the object of an unveiling.

That the raised veil shows nothing—that is the principle of initiation (at least in society's good manners).

I have indicated the link all this has to the mystery of language and the fact that it is by proposing an enigma that one finds the meaning of meaning.

The meaning of meaning is that it is linked to the boy's enjoyment as prohibited—certainly not so as to prohibit the sexual relation, but to fix it in the non-relation it is equivalent to in the real.

Thus, the fantasy of ordinary reality, which is what is effectively produced, performs the function of the real. Thereby there slides into language what is transported by this: namely, the idea of *all* which is contradicted by the merest encounter with the real.

There is no language that does not attempt—not without moaning about doing whatever it can—to say "without exception" or to reinforce it with a numeral. It is only in our languages that the *all* moves ahead—the all and for you (*le tout et à toi*), if I may say.

Moritz, in our play, manages however to make an exception of himself, which is why Melchior calls him a girl. And he has a good reason: the girl is only one¹ and she wants to stay that way, but this is completely obliterated in the play.

The fact remains that a man becomes Man when he situates himself as One-among-others, by including himself among his fellows (*semblables*).

By making an exception of himself, Moritz excludes himself in a beyond. It is only there that he is counted, not by chance, among the dead, as excluded from the real. The drama makes him survive there—and why not, if the hero is already dead there?

It is in the kingdom of the dead that "the non-duped err" (*les non-dupes errent*), to use a title that I have illustrated.

This is why I will not err any longer in following, in Vienna, in Freud's group, those who decipher back to front the signs traced by Wedekind in his dramaturgy. Except, perhaps, to take them up again over this point that the queen could very well be headless only if the king has deprived her of the normal pair of heads she is entitled to.

Is not the function of the Gentleman called Masked to restore them (with their face hidden, one supposes) to her? He is the one who makes the end of the drama, not only because of the role Wedekind reserves for him, that of saving Melchior from Moritz's grasp, but also because Wedekind dedicates it to his fiction, taken as a proper name.

What I read in it is what I expressly refuse to those who authorise themselves to talk only from among the dead: this is to tell them that among the Names-of-the-Father there is this one of the Masked Gentleman.

¹ "La fille n'est qu'une . . ."

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But the Father has so many, many names that there is not One that suits him, save the Name of the Name of the Name. No Name is his Proper-Name except for the Name as ex-sistence.

That is to say, the semblant par excellence. And "the Masked Gentleman" expresses this quite well.

Since, how can one know what he is if he is masked, and doesn't the actor here carry the mask of a woman?

The mask alone would ex-sist in the empty place in which I place Woman. By which I am not saying that there are no women.

Woman as version of the Father would only appear as Father-version [*Père-version*].

How to know if, as Robert Graves puts it, the Father himself, the eternal father of us all, is not one Name among others of the White Goddess, the one that according to him gets lost in the night of time, because she is the Different one, the forever Other in her enjoyment - like those forms of the infinite whose enumeration we only start when we know that she is the one who will suspend us.

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Translated by Silvia Rodríguez