Love in twentieth-century French Thought
Sartre and Lacan

by

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For Serene, with love and gratitude —
there's always tomorrow!

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* * *

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Deleuze

Critique: *Critique et clinique*
AO: *L'Anti-Œdipe* (*with Guattari*)
Île: *L'Île déserte et autres textes: Textes et entretiens* (*1953-1974*)

Fanon

Aliénation: *Écrits sur l'aliénation et la liberté.*

Lacan

Rapports: *De la psychose paranoïaque dans ses rapports avec la personnalité suivi de Premiers écrits sur la paranoïa*

É: *Écrits*
AÉ: *Autres écrits*
Scilicet: *Scilicet n°6/7*
S0: *L'Homme aux loups*
SI: *Les Écrits techniques de Freud*
SIII: *Les Psychoses*
SV: *Les Formations de l'inconscient*
SVI: *Le Désir et son interprétation*
SVII: *L'Éthique de la psychanalyse*
SVIIa: *L'Éthique de la psychanalyse* (transcript)
SVIII: *Le Transfert*
SIX: *L'Identification*
SX: *L'Angoisse*
SXI: *Les Quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse*
SXIV: *La Logique du fantasme*
SXV: *L'Acte psychanalytique*
SXVI: *D'un Autre à l'autre*
SXVII: *L'Envers de la psychanalyse*
SXVIII: *D'un discours qui ne serait pas du semblant*
SXIX: *…Ou pire*
SXIXa: *…Ou pire, le savoir du psychanalyste* (conférences à Saint-Anne)
JPM: *Je parle aux murs: Entretiens de la chapelle de Sainte-Anne*
SXX: *Encore*
SXXa: *Encore* (transcript)
SXXI: *Les Non-dupes errent*
SXXII: *R.S.I*
SXXIII: *Le Sinthome*
SXXV: *Le Moment de conclure*
Troisième: *La Troisième*
SXXVII: *La Dissolution* (*séminaire de Caracas*)

Sartre

TE: *La Transcendance de l'ego*
EN: *L'Être et le néant*
***EH*:** *L'Existentialisme est un humanisme*
B: *Baudelaire*
CPM: *Cahiers pour une morale*

Schelling

Weltalter: *Die Weltalter/ Ages of the World* (second draft, 1813)
PR: *Philosophy and Religion*

Scudéry

Clélie: *Clélie, histoire romaine...*

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements 3

List of Abbreviations 5

Short Abstract 9

Long Abstract 10

Prelude: Encore 16

Introduction: The Necessity of Impossibility 19

i. Sartre's Challenge 20
ii. Lacanian Fables 25

Chapter 1 — Sartre and the Impossible

Part One: En Soi Pour Soi 31

i. Introduction 32
ii. *Être Pour Autrui* and *En Soi Pour Soi* 34
iii. Impossible Love 43
iv. Impossible Desire 47
v. Why love? 50

Part Two: Illusions of the Impossible 53

i. Thinking the Fall 54
ii. Sartre's Atheistic Pause 62

Chapter 2 — Temporary Misunderstanding

Part One: Imaginary, Symbolic, Real 74

i. Introduction: Lacan, *Sujet supposé Savoir* 75
ii. The Problem with Language 80
iii. The Birth of the big Other and the Oedipus Complex 84
iv. Psychosis, Foreclosure, and Sexual Difference 92
v. The Quilting Point 100

Part Two: *Il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel* 105

i. The Absence of the Sexual Relationship 106
ii. The Paradoxes of the not-All, or God's Deception 119
iii. The Decorator Crab 126

Chapter 3 — The Wish to be Loved

Part One: Beyond the Signifier, and into Fantasy 129

i. Introduction 130
ii. The Quilting of Meaning 133
iii The Graph of Desire 135
iv. The big Other and the Ego-ideal 146
v. The Second Mirror Stage 150
vii. Desire is a Trap 158
vii. S(Ⱥ) 166

Part Two: *Carte du Désir* and *Les Non-Dupes Errent* 169

i. Contextualising the Fantasy with Scudéry's *Clélie* 171
ii. *Carte du Desire* 172
iii. The Temporary Detour (*la Folie d'un Moment*) 179
iv. The Mother's trap 190

v. Beyond *la Mère dangereuse* 194
vi. *Qui Perd Gagne* (*Je Sais Bien*) 197
vii. *Oui, Mais Quand Même!* 201

Part Three: the Object of *Jouissance — Objet petit a* 205

i. The Subject of *Jouissance* 206
ii. *das Ding* 207
iii. *das Ding* cont., Courtly Love, and Sublimation 211
iv. Underneath Desire: *Jouissance* and Anxiety 214
v. Kant with Sade 217
vi. Fantasy, *Objet Petit a,* and the Desolation of the Subject 227

Chapter 4 — Encore, l'Amour, and Lacan's Final Heresy

i. R.S.I (*l'hérésie*) 230
ii. *L'*(*a*)*mur / L'Amour* 235
iii. *Plus-de-jouir* on the Cusp of (*a*)*mur* 240
iv. *Jouissance Phallique / Jouissance de l'Autre* 247
v. Object *a*, love, and the One 253
vi. *Le Sinthome*, or How to Hold it Together 261

Conclusion: ~~Erasure~~ *270*

Bibliography *279*

Filmography *289*

SHORT ABSTRACT

Name: Sinan John-Richards
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This thesis investigates the possibility of love in twentieth-century French thought, focusing in particular on Jean-Paul Sartre's early philosophy and Jacques Lacan's psychoanalysis. I explore the philosophical status and metaphysical (im)possibility of love to advance my central argument that Sartre's impossible notion of *en soi pour soi* developed in *L'Être et le néant* (1943) resurfaces in Lacan's later psychoanalysis, notably in *Encore* (1975), as *jouissance féminine*. Sartre argues in *L'Être et le néant* that love is impossible, that in their attempts to love one another, subjects are helplessly trying to become *en soi pour soi*, which is an impossible wish to become God himself. For Sartre, the subject needs to choose between love and freedom, and this choice is a false one since the subject is unquestionably condemned to his/her freedom. We appeal to F.W.J. Schelling's speculative onto-theology to suggest that Sartre's highly original arguments for the contents of *pour soi* rest on unstable metaphysical foundations, thereby allowing us to reinvest love with possibility once again. This move situates our turn to Jacques Lacan's psychoanalysis, which is equally steeped in onto-theology. First, we show that Lacan's intellectual strategy was to highlight the necessary but impossible dualism found in Sartre's concept of *en soi pour soi*. We investigate Lacan's many formulations of this dualism: knowledge and truth, conscious and unconscious, and Symbolic and Real, to show that these pairs are all different names for a similar dualism Schelling identified at the heart of God, qualified by Sartre as impossible. Therefore, we show how Sartre's *en soi pour soi* is a convincing shorthand for Lacan's central object of study. Second, we present and explain aspects of Lacan's philosophical project to show how, for Lacan, the subject is marked by various pathologies. For Lacan, as for Sartre and Schelling before him, the subject is ontologically sick, and, by its very structure, the Oedipus complex produces subjects that are prey to a mental collapse at any moment. As a result, for Lacan, the subject has no choice but to identify with their potential madness that is a constitutive aspect of their subjectivity. Finally, in a similar vein, this thesis argues that love in the Lacanian schema is the subject's mad wish to reunite *en soi* with *pour soi,* which is an always impossible yet necessary aspect of subjectivity.

LONG ABSTRACT

This thesis explores how love has been understood, characterised, and deployed in twentieth-century French thought (1943-1980), focusing chiefly on Jean-Paul Sartre's early philosophy and Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic project. We undertake numerous close readings of both Sartre's and Lacan's published works, but also many of Lacan's unpublished works and seminars to show that, for Lacan, *jouissance féminine* is another word for God, and so, comparable with Sartre's concept of *en soi pour soi.* Although Sartre and Lacan share many philosophical connections that have been substantially investigated by contemporary scholars, we contend that we can highlight Sartre and Lacan's philosophical differences and proximity on the question of love through both thinkers' appeal to God and the Biblical Fall of Man narrative in their respective works, which, thus far, has been under-appreciated. Both Sartre and Lacan negotiate metaphysical, ontological and theological concerns in their considerations of the formation and freedom of the subject, as well as in the resultant impossibility of love. Aspects of Sartre's and Lacan's arguments for the impossibility of love are inherited from dominant trends in post-Kantian philosophy and German Idealism, namely G.W.F. Hegel's Master and Slave dialectic and the onto-theological philosophy of F.W.J. Schelling's middle period. In this thesis, we seek to trace the metaphysical lineage of the concept of love in twentieth-century French writing, to make the original claim that Lacan speculatively developed Sartre's concept of *en soi pour soi* as *jouissance féminine.* By shutting down the possibility of *en soi pour soi*, Sartre demonstrated his atheistic resistance to any metaphysical speculations in *L'Être et le néant*.

Importantly, Sartre's philosophical analysis in *EN* is not identical to his overall philosophy, by which we mean that *EN* represents but one essential stage in the development of Sartre's thought, and, in this thesis, we are chiefly concerned with the position Sartre developed in *EN*. Sartre's early philosophical period, beginning in the mid-1920s upon his entry to the *École normale supérieure* and ending around the end of the Second World War in the mid-1940s, was noted for its philosophical and literary success, culminating with what remains his most famous philosophical text, *L'Être et le néant*. In *EN,* Sartre develops an emotive account of love and desire as useless passions; thus, *EN* is a pertinent starting point for our reconstruction of love in twentieth-century French thought. Sartre's intellectual development grew against the backdrop of dominant changes in French philosophy in the first half of the twentieth-century, away from the

neo-Kantianism of Léon Brunschvicg and the anti-rationalism of Henri Bergson, for example, and towards the German influence of Husserl's phenomenology, Heidegger's focus on existence, and the French re-discovery of German Idealism (see Gardner 2009: 1-2). *EN*, then, is qualified by its robust phenomenological analysis, and Sartre argues in a dynamic and literary style that love and desire are always destined to fail in his phenomenological view.

Sartre's phenomenological analysis in *EN* sought to do away with many of the 'problematic dualisms' that had plagued Western philosophy up until that point, for example, the connection between freedom and identity, with Sartre preferring to privilege the subject's freedom over any fixity or rootedness in the world. However, Sartre did so without entirely eliminating the *finitude* and *infinitude* dualism (see Gutting 2001: 131), and it is at this juncture that Lacan finds his place in our reconstruction of twentieth-century French philosophy. Lacan sought to recast the *finitude* and *infinitude* dualism as the conceptual difference between *Man* and *Woman*. For Lacan, Man is another name for finitude and Woman: infinitude. And, cast in these terms, we can already see how Lacan's task is to show the necessary co-dependence of the two components of this dualism, each reinforcing the other, even if infinitude might be impossible. This philosophical context, then, is the central intellectual background which unites Sartre and Lacan in our thesis. Whereas Sartre sought to approach his analysis in a strictly literary-philosophical analysis of the conscious world of appearances by privileging the subject's finite freedom, Lacan sought to understand the world from the perspective of the finite subject but without eliminating the infinitude that exists outside the subject.

For Lacan, a subject-orientated philosophy necessarily implicates the subject in the abstract philosophical world beyond appearances. In turn, according to Lacan, the co-dependency of the necessary dualism, Man and Woman, is only discernible from the standpoint of his three psychoanalytic realms: the Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary. For Lacan, then, without the concept of the Symbolic Order, any philosophy, Sartre's included, languishes in what he calls the Imaginary realm, and is unable, therefore, to capture the Real that might lie beyond phenomena (See Leguil 2012: 312). Thus, Lacan's view of love begins from these three psychoanalytic realms, and his philosophy attempts to develop a theory of subjectivity which sees the subject as continually searching to (re)unite with the infinite while maintaining their necessary separation. In Lacan's philosophical project, the subject is both marked by a central ontological instability and

characterised by a narrative of continuous movement, in its search for stability and the infinite.

In our **first chapter**, we begin with Sartre's argument that love and desire foment in the subject a mistaken wish to relinquish one's freedom. For Sartre, in *EN*, love and desire necessarily fail since the subject is always condemned to his/her undeniable freedom, and as a result, the subject can never marry freedom and identity in passion (see Howells 2011: 25). Sartre explains that love and desire are impossible for three interrelated reasons; first, love and desire are both impossible attempts to connect *pour soi* with *en soi* as *en soi pour soi*, and for Sartre that amounts to an incomprehensible wish to become God himself by having married freedom and permanence, which is an impossibility. Secondly, in loving another, the subject stakes their subjectivity to serve the subjectivity of the other, necessarily leading to masochism. Finally, in desiring another the subject attempts to objectify the other, and since the other, as a subject themselves, is not an object, their relationship will necessarily lead to sadism. Sartre's tripartite argument is the starting point in our search for a philosophical account of love that could survive this Sartrean challenge; we seek to understand why the subject loves another if this is but a futile passion, destined for failure.

Since Sartre's ontological account of love and desire rests on the philosophical relationship he formulated in *EN* between *en soi* and *pour soi*, we seek to problematise the underlying premise behind Sartre's original move of endowing the *pour soi* with content, without first having convincingly demonstrated how the *pour soi* emerges from the *en soi.* For Sartre, the subject understands the world through a phenomenological analysis of appearances as they manifest in consciousness. Indeed, Sartre begins *EN* by stating that modern philosophy has made considerable progress by acknowledging that what exists is reducible to the series of appearances that appear to us, and we take issue with Sartre's central phenomenological claim, and rejection of metaphysics, to highlight that Lacan does not follow the same strategy as Sartre. We invoke Schelling's onto-theological speculations in order to complicate Sartre's philosophy. Schelling, whose earlier philosophy faced a similarly unfounded *for-itself* emergent from an *in-itself* as Sartre, decided to account for the *pour soi* as the fallen half of *en soi*, echoing the biblical narrative of the Fall of Man. We argue that Schelling's onto-theological, highly speculative, account of the Fall is more convincing than Sartre's philosophical account, thereby allowing us to reinvest love with potential and possibility once again, paving the

way for our onto-theological reading of *en soi pour soi* as *jouissance féminine* evident in Lacan's later philosophy.

Our turn to Schelling's onto-theology justifies our move to Lacan's philosophy from our **second chapter** onwards since we believe Lacan's account of love to be similarly onto-theological. For Lacan, love is as impossible as it was for Sartre before him. However, through an elaborate and complex psychoanalytic reading of the world, Lacan demonstrates how, though love is impossible, subjects must necessarily try to love. We show this by undertaking a comprehensive analysis of Lacan's practice, thereby introducing the required Lacanian vocabulary. Lacan's philosophy is heavily indebted to Freudian psychoanalysis, and he begins his almost three decades of yearly seminars with what he calls 'the return to Freud,' to develop Freud's position that the subject is somehow defective. Our second chapter, then, seeks to further problematise the premise underlying the Sartrean *en soi* by introducing Lacan's metaphysical speculations. We begin by investigating what we call Lacan's method of *temporary detours* in order to highlight the importance of Lacan's reliance on metaphysical solutions to conceptual problems, for example, we focus on Lacan's analysis of psychosis to trace Lacan's view, first espoused in his doctoral thesis, that psychosis is not somehow outside reason but constitutive of reason itself, in effect, qualifying the subject as 'pre-psychotic.' We discuss the importance of the notion of language to Lacan's conceptual scheme and offer a preliminary account of some of the key philosophical issues with which he wrestles. The aim of our second chapter is to show the validity of the Schellingian-Lacanian underdetermination of *en soi*, and we argue through the metaphor of the decorator crab that *en soi pour soi* is not a concept we can entirely exclude as impossible. *En soi pour soi* haunts Sartre's philosophy, and, we contend that the concept returns as *jouissance féminine* in Lacan's later work.

In our **third chapter**, we investigate aspects of Lacan's clinical philosophy: the mirror stage; subject formation; the graph of desire; identification; the psychoanalytic realms (Real, Symbolic, Imaginary); the master signifier (*Nom-du-Père*); the big Other; symbolic castration; the concomitant renunciation of *jouissance*; the integration of the fantasy in the subject's psyche, and, finally, the formation of the subject. We show how, for Lacan, the subject is governed by a master signifier, the *Nom-du-Père*, and this signifier forms the basis for the subject's entire conscious frame. The master signifier is the regulative principle that the subject cannot contest within the formal constraints of language, and, therefore, the subject is a Symbolic prisoner. To borrow a pertinent cliché,

we show how, according to Lacan, "ignorance is bliss" for the subject, and so long as the subject does not question the symbolic frame, they see no need to demand more from their lives. However, one of the ways subjects recognise the prison-like fences encircling their subjectivity is through the intervention of the Real under the guide of *il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel* in their subjective economy, which is why, according to Lacan, no philosopher, Sartre included, was able to construe the Real because they do not possess the correct tools to do so (Real, Symbolic, Imaginary). It is by way of our many discussions of the *il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel* that we suggest that the subject first gets a sense of what lies beyond the symbolic fantasy: the necessarily impossible aspect of love which is perpetually beyond the subject's reach – identifying with God, or, as Sartre described it: *en soi pour soi* – otherwise known as *jouissance féminine*, for Lacan.

In order to illustrate and develop the more abstract concepts in Lacan's conceptual scheme, we construct an original reading of Madeleine de Scudéry's *Carte de Tendre* alongside Lacan's graph of desire to highlight both the comprehensibility of Lacan's psychoanalysis and to intimate that Scudéry's *Clélie, histoire romaine…*(1654-1660) foreshadows many ideas that resurface in Lacan's philosophy. This comparison lays the groundwork for our argument that love is both necessary and impossible in relation to Lacan's concept of *jouissance féminine*. We contend that Scudéry's *Carte de Tendre*, mentioned by Lacan on many occasions, is visually similar to Lacan's graph of desire. The travellers in the *Carte* are also symbolic prisoners, and these travellers wish to reach the *Terres inconnues,* resembling the desire the subject has in the graph of desire to reach *jouissance.* This comparison highlights that the *il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel* is the moment the subject becomes aware of the Real when they finally realise that they are a symbolic prisoner. However, we suggest that what lies beyond the Real of *il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel* is not necessarily a paradisiacal solution. Instead, we argue that, according to Lacan, what the subject finds in *jouissance* is more emotional and subjective chaos. In order to show this, we highlight the 'impossible but necessary' dimension of Lacan's conceptual strategy by refashioning Sartre's *qui perd gagne* alongside Lacan's *les-non-dupes-errent*. For Lacan, subjects must be dupes to the Symbolic Order to remain within its confines.

Our **<u>final chapter</u>** develops the Lacanian construction we will have outlined, and we align Lacan's distinction between (*a*)*mur* and *Amour* with the difference Lacan drew between the Symbolic and the Real. In turn, we show how this distinction mimics the difference Lacan had drawn between *jouissance phallique* and *jouissance féminine,*

reformulating and advancing the difference between Man and Woman, and finitude and infinitude. We do this in order to develop Lacan's view of *jouissance féminine* as one of the names of God, to highlight the onto-theological connections to Sartre's concept of *en soi pour soi.* We claim that, for Lacan, the subject must identify with *en soi pour soi* at the end of the psychoanalytic process, even though *en soi pour soi* remains impossible, and, therefore, only offering a palliative remedy.

The originality of this thesis, then, is in the way it reads Lacan's philosophy as a direct response to Sartre's challenge of the impossibility of *en soi pour soi,* with Lacan choosing to take the onto-theological step into metaphysical speculations about which Sartre was too cautious in *EN.* For Lacan, the subject's final psychoanalytic realisation is that they must identify with this impossibility: *en soi pour soi,* or God herself, and it is this pre-psychotic desire, we argue, that is the lover's *modus operandi,* which is an impossible but necessary function of human subjectivity. We end by concluding that Sartre was never entirely able to exclude the infinite, since the failed desire for *en soi pour soi* is, in the end, a *necessary* desire for God, herself, which is always *impossible* to erase.

PRELUDE: *ENCORE*

L'amour est un mal agréable,
Dont mon cœur ne saurait guérir:
Mais quand il serait guérissable,
Il est bien plus doux d'en mourir.

Madeleine de Scudéry

It's like when you go to the dentist, and the man's going to take your tooth. You're going to fight him when he starts pulling. So they squirts some stuff in your jaw called novocaine, to make you think they're not doing anything to you. So you sit there, and because you've got all of that novocaine in your jaw, you suffer – peacefully. Blood running all down your jaw, and you don't know what's happening. Because someone has taught you to suffer – peacefully.

Malcolm X

Ça n'empêche pas les surprises et surtout le manque de confiance, il faut toujours et beaucoup lutter. C'est calculé mais ce n'est pas acquis, il faut se battre, il faut insister pour atteindre ce dont on a rêvé, même si je sais très bien que c'est impossible.

Pedro Almodóvar

In the first volume of Madeleine de Scudéry's *Clélie, histoire romaine*… (1654-1660), Scudéry translates and reinterprets a poem fragment by Sappho. Scudéry writes, *l'amour est un mal agréable/ dont mon cœur ne saurait guérir*. Love, it would seem is paradoxical — a *mal agréable*. The opening lines of this verse elegantly capture love's oxymoronic characteristics, and yet, somehow for Scudéry, love remains necessary: *mais quand il serait guérissable/ il est bien plus doux d'en mourir* (*Clélie* 188). We could say that the central argument concerning love which underlies this thesis is neatly condensed in this poem fragment. Scudéry's poem captures an emotional and conceptual deadlock that is characteristic of what love offers the subject according to Lacan, and it describes an impasse that we believe fascinated both Sartre and Lacan. Scudéry's words also encapsulate our contention that love in Lacan's philosophy is as necessary as it is impossible. Love, as it is understood here, is an always already missed task, and one whose handling is continually unfinished. Love both fulfils a necessary aspect of human subjectivity while simultaneously being a task that forever remains open and incomplete, or as Lacan put it in his 1975 seminar, '*encore*.'

To appreciate why love remains fragmented in this way, we contrast Scudéry's concept of a *mal agréable* with an unlikely partner – Malcolm X's notion of 'suffering peacefully' (2003: 124). Malcolm X's similarly oxymoronic conclusion captures the uneasy marriage between necessity and impossibility that we seek to elucidate here — primarily, though by no means exclusively, in a Lacanian key. Malcolm X's intervention, quoted in full in the epigraph, invokes a 'someone' who has 'taught you to suffer peacefully,' and this thesis is as much about the subject's peaceful suffering as it is about the *mal agréable* which we believe love includes.

In our thesis, then, we investigate subjectivity and analyse the subject's relationship with others. Equally, however, we are focused on the subject's relationship with what

Lacan named the *grand Autre* [big Other]. We contend that Malcolm X's 'someone' who has taught us about this peaceful suffering refers to none other than the Lacanian big Other. Moreover, the novocaine Malcolm X introduces depicts the Lacanian fantasy support employed by the big Other to pacify and soothe the subject's loss of unregulated desire in the process of subject formation as outlined by Lacan and the dentist symbolizes nothing other than all those "small others," each one of us, who are mere instruments of the whim and will of this big Other. And, although jargon-laden, through the contrast with Malcolm X's analogy, we might already be able to see that the Lacanian *Weltanschauung* describes an asphyxiating social field, where the subject is cast as a desolate being – one who has been imprisoned by the Other. Or, as Malcolm X had put it, 'blood running all down your jaw, and you don't know what's happening.'

Read together, the excerpts from Scudéry and Malcolm X succinctly capture our position on love, culled from the philosophies of Schelling, Sartre, and (chiefly) Lacan – that love is as violent as it is nourishing, as imagined as it is real, and, as we have already stated, love is as necessary as it is impossible. Love requires no cure, for there is nothing to cure. Love is also not a symptom; instead, we could say, it is the *ceaseless hope for the sinthome*. Cast in this way, for Lacan, love is the task of *keeping it together* in the face of an impossible circumstance, a labour of handling our many pathological symptoms in such a way that they never truly bubble up or materialise, and, strictly speaking, keeping sane in this way is the final power of Sartre's *en soi pour soi* — or, God herself, as we will see. As Pedro Almódovar put it in a recent issue of the *Cahiers du Cinema,* 'il faut insister pour atteindre ce dont on a rêvé, même si je sais très bien que c'est impossible' (2019: 13). For Lacan, the lover's task is necessary – we must insist, even if we know this to be a futile and impossible task.

* * *

INTRODUCTION: THE NECESSITY OF IMPOSSIBILITY

Un fou ne fait jamais que réaliser à sa manière la condition humaine.

Jean-Paul Sartre, in 1943

Loin donc que la folie soit le fait contingent des fragilités de son organisme, elle est la virtualité permanente d'une faille ouverte dans son essence.
Loin qu'elle soit pour la liberté "une insulte," elle est sa plus fidèle compagne, elle suit son mouvement comme une ombre.

Jacques Lacan, in 1946

i. Sartre's Challenge

Our task in this thesis is to demonstrate how and why we imagine love to be both impossible and necessary, and, to do so, we seek to interpret and problematise the notion of love in twentieth-century French writing. Love is an overdetermined concept, and yet it seems that, as subjects, we speak of little else. As Lacan puts it in *SXX, Encore*, 'parler d'amour, en effet, on ne fait que ça dans le discours analytique […] parler d'amour est en soi une jouissance' (77). In a different, but related, discussion Lacan says love '*ne cesse pas de s'écrire*' (86). In concrete terms, it would be imprudent to claim that our research has determinedly clarified anything about the concept of love in formal or abstract terms, nor would we have expected factual answers from such a work on love. Instead of answers, various precise questions have motivated our research, for example, was Sartre right to oppose love to freedom? Do subjects need to love in Lacan's psychoanalysis? Is love a metaphysical concept? And, rather than attempt to define something which resists any quantitative explication, we have worked on elucidating an understanding of love which emerges from the many debates in twentieth-century French philosophy and psychoanalysis, focusing predominantly on the period beginning with the publication of Sartre's *L'Être et le néant* in 1943, and ending, somewhat arbitrarily, with Lacan's death in 1981.

Although Sartre (b. 1905) and Lacan (b. 1901) were virtually contemporaries (their respective deaths are only a year apart 1980 and 1981), for some reason, Sartre and Lacan 'n'ont pas l'air d'avoir le même âge' (Miller 2012: 7). This incongruity between biography and intellectual development is also evident in the way it somehow seems more natural to place the younger Sartre before Lacan when discussing both philosophers together, for example, as Clotilde Leguil does in *Sartre avec Lacan* (2012), or as we do in this thesis. Because, in the twentieth-century history of French philosophy, Lacan only

seems to emerge as a philosophical force from 1966 onwards, upon the publication of his *Écrits* – even though, by 1966, Lacan's seminars would already have been running for fourteen years.[1] Lacan, then, emerges with structuralism, while Sartre's philosophical emergence occurred much earlier, notably in the first phase of his philosophical ascendancy, which occurred well before 1950.

Lacan was an engaged reader of Sartre's philosophy, and one of our tasks in this thesis is to show the philosophical connections and differences between these two thinkers. As Jacques-Alain Miller explained, 'Lacan avait donc sans coup férir adopté, adapté à ses fins, la fine pointe de la pensée de Sartre' (2012: 9). According to Miller, Lacan even identified and borrowed a concept originally found in Sartre's *L'Être et le néant*. Miller highlights Sartre's final sentence in a note on page 442, 'un fou ne fait jamais que réaliser à sa manière la condition humaine' (Sartre in ibid; see also *EN* 442), and, somewhat remarkably, as our thesis hopes to show, Sartre's seemingly insignificant passing remark in *EN* prophetically reveals the cardinal insight of Lacan's overall philosophy.[2] As Miller points out, Lacan says in "Propos sur la causalité psychique" published in *Les Temps Modernes* in 1946, before being republished in the *Écrits*:

> Loin donc que la folie soit le fait contingent des fragilités de son organisme, elle est la virtualité permanente d'une faille ouverte dans son essence.
> Loin qu'elle soit pour la liberté "une insulte," elle est sa plus fidèle compagne, elle suit son mouvement comme une ombre (*É* 176).

Our thesis, then, aims to show how, according to Sartre and Lacan, 'madness' manifests itself, in its own way, in the human condition, and how this relates to our understanding of love in Lacan's psychoanalysis. Furthermore, why does Lacan see madness as

[1] 1966 was also the year Michel Foucault's *Les Mots et les choses* was first published, followed by three of Jacques Derrida's most famous texts in 1967: *De la grammatologie*, *L'Écriture et la différence*, and *La Voix et le phénomène, introduction au problème du signe dans la phénoménologie de Husserl.*

[2] It is unclear from Miller's words if this reference comes directly from Lacan's annotated copy of *EN* or if Miller discovered this connection himself, and although it would be fascinating to investigate this firsthand, "the Lacan archive" has, regretfully, not been made public.

constituted by a permanent rupture? And, why does he see madness as freedom's most loyal companion, perpetually in liberty's shadow? To put it crudely, we will argue that, for Lacan, love is a form of madness that is central to human subjectivity, that the 'virtualité permanente d'une faille ouverte dans son essence' is central to understanding love as it relates to human subjectivity. Sartre and Lacan's view that being human is closely related to madness is similar to the argument that F.W.J. Schelling makes in *Die Weltalter* (1813); for Schelling, being is something that God *contracts*, and, as we show in this thesis, Schelling's fragmentary 1813 text lays some of the groundwork for Lacan's view of human subjectivity as irremediably marked by madness.

For Sartre, as well as for Lacan, love demands ontological and intellectual enquiry. Love is a concept as deserving as the notions of freedom or finitude of philosophical study, and, therefore, in this thesis, we take love to be a philosophical notion akin to freedom, demanding careful examination. Thus, I begin with Sartre who offered a powerful, though to my mind somewhat flawed, theory of love in *EN.* Sartre's main philosophical preoccupation in the first phase of his philosophy, roughly up until the mid-to-late 1940s, was the concept of freedom. As Christina Howells puts it in *Sartre: The Necessity of Freedom* (1988)*,* 'freedom […] is the pivot of Sartre's writings' (1), and we can glean Sartre's fascination with the unrooted and unfixed qualities of the subject as early as the publication of Sartre's *La Transcendance de l'ego* published in 1936 (2).

Sartre adopts the phenomenological method, which, as Howells explains, is a means of offering 'a description of transcendental consciousness investigated through an intuition of essence' (7), and crucially 'the object of phenomenology is *transcendental,* not in any mystical sense but rather in so far as it is not identified with any particular individual' (ibid). Therefore, 'the phenomenological method is intuition – not in the general sense of insight, but in the philosophical sense of what is apprehended by the

mind as immediate evidence' (8). Indeed, by 1943, and the publication of *EN*, Sartre's strong phenomenology will have developed to being primarily focused on 'being as it appears, *le phénomène d'être*' (14). Howells continues: 'Sartre is in full agreement with phenomenology in so far as it attempts to avoid dualism, to refuse any notion of an unknowable essence (the Kantian noumenon) underlying appearances' (ibid). However, Sartre's steadfast adherence to the phenomenological method is not to say that he was a naïve realist:

> Sartre's analysis of consciousness reveals it to be spontaneous, uncaused, neither acting *on* phenomena, nor yet acted on *by* phenomena. The task Sartre has set himself is that of elaborating an ontology which will go beyond both realism and idealism (ibid).

Therefore, Sartre sought to highlight the radical contingency of consciousness, and he set up a sophisticated and original philosophical framework within which he claimed love is impossible for the subject.

Sartre pitted love against freedom, and by extension, permanence against contingency, and it is for this reason that love is impossible. As Howells puts it:

> If consciousness is *pour soi* that is to say that it is always striving to be *soi*. This does not mean that consciousness desires to abdicate its liberty but rather that it wants the best of both worlds – the freedom of the *pour soi* and the identity of the *en soi;* the two are necessarily incompatible. The mode of being suggested in the paradoxical formulation *en soi pour soi* is impossible: it provides an existential definition of the Being of God (16).

According to Sartre's dialectic of self and other, and, as a result of his ontological account of *pour soi* and *en soi,* love falls on the side of permanence and fixity and is both an impossible and futile passion. As we intimated above, the early Sartre was an exemplary philosopher of contingency. For Sartre, the subject is destined to choose between his radical freedom and any rooted stability or permanence, and it was for this reason that Sartre rejected the concept of love so forcefully. Because love is a quasi-metaphysical force that only weighs the subject down, slows them, and roots them in the

world, and, although our analysis of Sartre's philosophy of love might sometimes appear truculent, this is not the case. We are not unsympathetic to Sartre's early philosophy, and we believe, as we outline early in our first chapter, Sartre's account of love in *EN* is pivotal to the birth and development of Lacanian psychoanalysis. Moreover, many twentieth-century philosophers owe Sartre a great debt, notably Lacan and Deleuze; the latter's debt we touch upon briefly in our first chapter. However, it is our contention throughout this thesis that Sartre's account of love did not take into account the metaphysical malleability of the concept in quite the same way as Lacan had, for example. Sartre did not sufficiently complicate his philosophy of love.

From chapter two onwards, then, we turn to Lacan as a result of the metaphysical insufficiency of Sartre's treatment of the concept of love. For Lacan, love signifies many things at different times, and this makes any discussion of love in Lacan's philosophy quite complicated — as we will see.[3] If Sartre did not sufficiently complicate love, Lacan sought to overcomplicate it, but, as I suggested above, Sartre and Lacan are not as far apart as is sometimes suggested. As Leguil details, there are many connections between these two thinkers (2012: 17). Indeed, as Howells argued in *Mortal Subjects* (2011), Lacan shares Sartre's view of love and desire to some extent – with important differences (131). Therefore, I contend that it is not an unusual move to read these two thinkers together, and, for my part, I show a possible connection between these two by appealing to Schelling's middle philosophy in order to draw onto-theological connections between both thinkers. Schelling's highly speculative, onto-theological reading of God both connects the metaphysical aspect of love with the Sartrean fascination with freedom, as well as opening a possible path to Lacan's onto-theological view of love.

[3] In *L'Amour Lacan* (2009), Jean Allouch attempts to chronicle all the different Lacanian interpretations of love. In the present thesis, we do not follow Allouch's strategy; instead, we try and focus on one interpretation of love.

ii. Lacanian Fables

Lacanian psychoanalysis is not a science, nor does it claim to be one. At a 1975 conference held at Yale University, Lacan, taking questions from students, stated:

> Je ne m'imagine pas faire de la science quand je fais de la littérature. Néanmoins, c'est de la littérature puisque c'est écrit et que ça se vend; et c'est de la littérature parce que ça a des effets, et des effets sur la littérature (*Scilicet* 32).

Lacan was a fabulist, a fantastical storyteller, and a master of language, as we will see, and, unlike Sigmund Freud, Lacan did not seek to understand the biological world, nor did he attempt to discover verifiable, falsifiable, or quantifiable claims about mental processes. None of Lacan's theories are empirically true, but they could be said to resonate as philosophically convincing. Furthermore, Lacanian psychoanalysis is not a branch of cultural studies in the sense that its focus is not solely on a socio-historical analysis of the world. Equally, Lacan's work is not a work of pure philosophy: if anything, as Lacan famously suggested, he produced a kind of anti-philosophy (*AÉ* 314).[4] As Jean-Michel Rabaté succinctly puts it: '[Lacan] continued to criticise philosophy for an original sin that consisted in placing consciousness as the origin of meaning' (2001: 15), and so, as we will see, Lacan is interested in meaning and its connections to knowledge, and Lacan's method often swerves into metaphysical speculations in order to

[4] As Colette Soler remarks in "*Lacan en antiphilosophe*," the term '*antiphilosophe'* was a popular slur in the eighteenth-century, deployed predominantly against non-Enlightenment philosophers (2006: 121). Anti-philosophy, then, is a pertinent description of Lacan's philosophical project, since Lacan's ideas are opposed to the Enlightenment. The differences between Lacan and the Enlightenment are most evident in the many parallels between Lacan's philosophy and F.W.J. Schelling's onto-theology and speculative metaphysics, as well as in the anti-Enlightenment themes of Lacan's "Kant avec Sade," as we show in chapter three. Therefore, we contend that Lacan's 'anti-philosophy' is undoubtedly a work of philosophy, and in *SXXV*, *Le Moment de conclure,* Lacan clearly refers to his psychoanalytic practice as a work of philosophy:

> Ce que je fais là (comme l'a remarqué […] Althusser) c'est de la philosophie. Mais la philosophie, c'est tout ce que nous savons faire. Mes nœuds borroméens, c'est de la philosophie aussi. C'est de la philosophie que j'ai maniée comme j'ai pu en suivant le courant, si je puis dire, le courant qui résulte de la philosophie de Freud (28).

assert transcendental claims. For Lacan, following Freud, consciousness is not even the site of subjective self-understanding. It is our contention that Lacan concocted a psychoanalytic discipline that sought to posit a set of *transcendental* (this time, in the fully mystical sense) markers to define subjectivity and its pitfalls, and Lacan's intellectual strategy engages with all the disciplines mentioned above.

One of Lacan's central contributions to the history of French philosophy was his introduction of the three psychoanalytic realms: the Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary (R.S.I.). According to Lacan, the Imaginary contains and contextualises the ego. The Symbolic is the realm of the subject, intersubjective relationships, and the subject's relationship with the big Other. And, the Real describes that which exists outside symbolisation (for example, the unconscious). For Lacan, without these three interrelated concepts, philosophy mistakenly remains in the Imaginary realm, unable to capture the transcendental Real which may lie beyond mere phenomena of appearances – 'sans la reconnaissance de l'ordre symbolique, on se prend dans l'imaginaire' (Leguil 2012: 312). Importantly, the concept of the Imaginary is not shorthand for the imagination, the Symbolic is not social constructivism, and the Real is not another word for reality, nor is it the underlying "reality of reality," or some hidden wisdom that underscores our existing world.

At its heart, Lacanian psychoanalysis's primary concern is to conceptualise the relationship between knowledge [*savoir*] and truth, and Lacan proceeds to treat this relationship at different times from many different angles. For example, the distinction Lacan draws between the Symbolic and the Real is one way he treats the problem of the relationship between knowledge and truth. Another way Lacan handles this relationship is through his conceptualisation of sexual difference, or *sexuation*. Crucially, however, sexual difference does not aim to uncover the 'essence' of sexuality, and Lacan's theory

of sexual difference does not refer to anatomy, physiology, or biology. As Ankhi Mukherjee put it in her introduction to *After Lacan* (2018), 'for Lacan, sexuality is indissociable from language and linguistic processes and is a matter of speech and discourse, not biology' (10). Lacan's intellectual background is in linguistics, namely through the works of Ferdinand de Saussure and Roman Jakobson, and it should, therefore, come as no surprise that Lacan's treatment of sexual difference refers to problems in language, to elucidate the ontological and epistemological consequences of the Symbolic and the Real, for example, the effect of *il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel* on the subject.

It might seem an obvious point, but it is essential to mention that Lacan worked in the French language, and this fact played a significant role in the way that Lacan's psychoanalysis developed. Lacan recognised the importance of the French language to his philosophy in *SXXIII, Le Sinthome*, when he stated: '*lalangue* mienne, à savoir le français' (*SXXIII* 11). For Lacan, recognising the centrality of the French language to his philosophy is not to privilege one language over another, for example, he is not seeking to build a hierarchal system of languages where some languages are intrinsically more privileged in accessing the Real, but instead, Lacan wished to highlight the centrality of the subject's mother tongue in their relationship to the inaccessible *lalangue. Lalangue* is one word that Lacan employs to designate those moments in our subjective experience that exist beyond the subject's conscious recognition of them, or we could say outside symbolisation, others include the unconscious, *La femme*, and *l'Amour,* as we will see.

As Jean-Claude Milner explained in *L'Amour de la langue* (1978), *'lalangue,* c'est donc une langue entre autres, en tant que, de se poser, elle empêche par incommensurabilité de construire une classe des langues qui l'incluse; sa figuration la plus directe est bien la langue maternelle' (2009: 20). Therefore, all subjects get a sense

of *lalangue* in their maternal language, and Lacan is notoriously tricky to understand because he manipulates the French language for a French audience in order to illustrate the French 'bits of' *lalangue*.[5] The bifurcation of the French language at Lacan's hand resembles a strategy that, according to Lacan, Joyce managed to pursue in the English language, 'Joyce […] a écrit en anglais d'une telle façon que la langue anglaise n'existe plus' (*SXXIII* 11). Concomitantly, we could say that manipulating language in this way is Lacan's means of dissolving *le langage,* and a method of appreciating *lalangue* for his French auditors. As we approach the Lacanian corpus, we bear in mind the particularly enigmatic manner by which Lacan handles and deploys his mother tongue.

One of our tasks in this thesis is to demonstrate the asymmetric relationship Lacan builds between knowledge and truth, a task which, as we have said, Lacan describes as the relationship between the Symbolic and the Real. We do so in order to situate the concept of love in Lacan's philosophical project and extrapolate a Lacanian theory of love as it responds to the challenge laid down by Sartre. Lacan also treats the problem of the incongruity of knowledge and truth in terms of the uneasy relationship between necessity and impossibility, and this formulation will be the angle through which we will predominantly tackle the question in our thesis. We will focus on the relationship between necessity and impossibility from the frame of 'love' and 'La femme,' rather than from the angle of the 'unconscious,' for example. Our chief claim will be that Lacan agrees with Sartre, love is an attempt to become *en soi pour soi*, except that Lacan discusses this in terms of ~~*La*~~ *femme* and argues that the subject must identify with 'her' as a necessary by-product of the impossibility of love. For Sartre, attempting to become *en soi pour soi* is to try and become God himself, as he put it in *EN,* 'l'en soi pour soi, la

[5] We write "bits of" because when Lacan discusses the Real, which is to say those bits of subjective experiences that exist outside symbolisation, Lacan specifically says 'bouts de réel.' Because, for Lacan, we can only access the Real in a piecemeal way. See *SXXIII* p. 123.

conscience devenue substance, la substance devenue cause de soi, l'Homme-Dieu' (*EN* 664). Whereas in Lacan's philosophy, the subject must identify with God herself, we could say *Femme-Dieu*, and our task is to investigate why we believe identifying with her is the necessary impossibility we call love.

As we enter the Lacanian frame, we do so with an awareness that, for Lacan, love is not redemptive or optimistic; as Howells explained, for Lacan:

> Love is doomed to disappoint us, for it can never measure up to the demands of unconditionality we make of it. It makes promises of union and permanence that it can never keep, and is ultimately a *tromperie,* a deception (2011: 131).

We contend the entirety of Lacan's philosophy lies in these lines by Howells, and, as we will see, for Lacan, love is the necessary deception of reuniting with ~~*La*~~ *femme,* and the modest addition we make in this thesis is to suggest that this *tromperie* is a necessary one for any subjective insight. Simultaneously, we will explore Lacan's notions of *jouissance* and *il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel,* and we explain these concepts by continuous reference to subject formation.

Our first chapter, then, sets the scene with Sartre's concomitant view of love and desire as impossible and futile passions, as well as highlighting his view that the subject's wish to become *en soi pour soi* is doomed. Later in chapter one, we compare Sartre with Schelling to show the relevance of onto-theological speculation concerning Sartre's philosophical account of the world in *EN*, since Schelling's earlier philosophy was similarly faced with an insurmountable problem concerning an ungrounded *for-itself.* We compare these philosophers to suggest that Schelling's philosophical reinterpretation of the Fall of Man might be an appealing solution to Sartre's challenge about love, desire, and the possibility of *en soi pour soi*. Our second chapter directly emerges from the conclusions from our first chapter, and it seeks to further problematise the premise underlying the Sartrean *en soi* by introducing Lacan's metaphysical speculations. We

begin by investigating what we call Lacan's method of *temporary detours* in order to highlight the importance of Lacan's reliance on metaphysical solutions to conceptual problems. We discuss the importance of the notion of language to Lacan's conceptual scheme and offer a preliminary account of some of the key philosophical issues with which he wrestles. The aim of our second chapter is to show the validity of the Schellingian-Lacanian underdetermination of *en-soi*, and we argue through the metaphor of the decorator crab that *en soi pour soi* is not a concept we can entirely exclude as impossible. *En soi pour soi* haunts Sartre's philosophy, and, we contend that the concept returns as *jouissance féminine* in Lacan's later work.

Our third chapter investigates the Lacanian corpus in greater detail and offers a reconstruction of Lacanian psychoanalysis as it relates to the formation of the subject in the Symbolic Order. We also compare Scudéry's *Carte de Tendre* with Lacan's graph of desire*,* and Sartre's *qui perd gagne* with Lacan's concept of *les-non-dupes-errent*, in order to show the relevance and comprehensibility of the Lacanian paradigm. Indeed, in our thesis, we will at various points explore both works of literature and cinema, for example, Shakespeare's Sonnet 138 or Almodóvar's *Mujeres al borde de un ataque de nervios* (1988), as well as more traditional philosophical examples, in order to clarify or illustrate the more abstract concepts in Lacan's psychoanalysis.

Finally, our fourth chapter sees our argument come together as we reconnect Lacan's onto-theological turn with its roots in Sartre's fascination with passion, notably love. By the end, our thesis hopes to explain Lacan's view that the lover's task is a necessary one — paraphrasing Almodóvar from an altogether different context, we contend that we must insist on loving, even if we know this to be a futile and impossible task.

CHAPTER 1 — SARTRE AND THE IMPOSSIBLE

Part One: En Soi Pour Soi

> Le *pour soi* tente d'échapper à son existence de fait, c'est-à-dire à son être-là, comme *en soi* dont il n'est aucunement le fondement, et que cette fuite a lieu vers un avenir impossible et toujours poursuivi où le *pour soi* serait *en soi pour soi*, c'est-à-dire un en-soi qui serait à lui-même son propre fondement.
>
> Sartre, *EN*

i. Introduction

Gilles Deleuze, in a short but compelling piece on Jean-Paul Sartre's influence on French post-war thought "Il a été mon maître" (1964), places Sartre at the heart of the more radical developments of French philosophy after the Liberation. For Deleuze, Sartre was '[un des maîtres] qui nous frappent d'une radicale nouveauté. […] Qui, alors, sut dire quelque chose de nouveau, sinon Sartre? Qui nous apprit de nouvelles façons de penser?' (*Île* 109). For Deleuze, Sartre's philosophy ushered in a new way of thinking about freedom, and a new way to think in general; to think *with* literature, to blur the boundaries of classical philosophy and related disciplines. Sartre, Deleuze argues, forced philosophy ('proper') to change its place: 'la philosophie changeait de lieu, quittait la sphère du jugement' (*Île* 110-1). Deleuze is right of course, Sartre's influence stretches far beyond the confines of philosophy and literature, and into all aspects of French thought and culture.

Sartre's method of focusing on particular instances of human interaction — such as the look [*regard*] of another — or of attempting to determine what the movements of certain beings say about their ontological identity — as with the café waiter — demonstrates his unique ability to extend the abstract into an imaginative reading of the human, which amounts to an attempt to try and uncover the origins of the *pour soi*. According to Deleuze, these novel interventions in the history of philosophy motivated future thinkers to work within Sartre's more representative, less abstract framework, Deleuze says, 'et chaque fois, l'essence et l'exemple entraient dans des rapports complexes qui donnaient un nouveau style à la philosophie' (*Île* 112). Jacques Lacan's focus on the gaze, intersubjectivity, and shame in *SI, Les Écrits techniques de Freud*, owes a substantial debt to Sartre's *regard* — as Lacan acknowledged: 'je ne peux pas ici ne pas me référer à l'auteur [Sartre] qui a décrit ce jeu de la façon la plus magistrale' (*SI*

240).[6] We appreciate the continued importance of Sartre's philosophy to the developments of twentieth-century French thought, and it is fitting that we should begin with *L'Être et le néant*, to retrace an account of love that heavily influenced Lacan, which he enlisted and refashioned.

Our first task in this chapter, then, is to elucidate Sartre's account of love and desire and ask whether his claim that love is impossible is justified. Sartre makes an original and complex argument to demonstrate how these two forces are 'voué à l'échec' (*EN* 466). Overall, Sartre maintains that love and desire are impossible, and that they end in failure. For Sartre in *EN,* love and desire are impossible for three interconnected reasons:

1) Love and desire are impossible by virtue of being two examples of the alienation we feel as a result of being-for-others; Sartre's insight is that love and desire are merely two attempts to try and achieve the impossible as *en soi pour soi.* In effect, this amounts to the impossibility of love and desire at an ontological level. As we will see in our final chapter, we contend that Lacan's assertion that ~~*La*~~ *femme* does not exist is closely related to this ontological deadlock described by Sartre in *EN*.
2) For Sartre, in loving another, while attempting to achieve the ideal as *en soi pour soi,* the subject ends up renouncing their subjectivity to serve the subjectivity of their lover, which leads to masochism.
3) Desiring another objectifies the other, and since what the subject desires is the free subjectivity of the other that is perpetually beyond their reach, their touch immediately makes the other an object for them, which leads to sadism.

[6] Moreover, Jean-Michel Rabaté explains in *Psychoanalysis and the Subject of Literature* (2001) that 'Lacan names three authors he has used at various points of his career in order to invent and refine notions: Poe, […], Racine, […]; and Sartre's political plays' (4).

We engage with these three arguments in part one, sections ii, iii, and iv, respectively, and in section v we question whether we are content for love and desire to carry the negative hue bestowed onto them by Sartre.

In order to analyse Sartre's account of love and desire, we recognise that a general account of his philosophical project must also be considered, with an emphasis on the relationship between *en soi* and *pour soi* explored in *EN*'s introduction and conclusion. Sartre splits being into two regions, *en soi* and *pour soi*, and we will investigate how Sartre relates being to freedom. We reconstruct some of the core arguments in *EN* in order to suggest in part two of this chapter that Sartre has not managed to make both regions communicate in quite the way in which he had hoped. Sartre's ideal of *en soi pour soi* is pivotal to our reconstruction of the (im)possibility of love, and in the second half of this chapter, we will also contrast *en soi pour soi*, as well as Sartre's broader ontological scheme*,* with F.W.J. Schelling's split in being from his second draft of *Die Weltalter.* This comparison will show how both Sartre and Schelling are investigating similar philosophical themes. However, in juxtaposing both philosophers' arguments in relation to being I will suggest that what underpins Sartre's ontological account of *en soi* and *pour soi* — and the resultant impossibility of *être-pour-autrui,* love, and desire — leaves Sartre vulnerable to the charge that everything outside his account of *en soi* is the product of an illusion. This philosophical challenge addressed to Sartre will prepare our turn to Lacan's psychoanalysis to consider his arguments about the (im)possibility of love.

ii. *Être Pour Autrui* and *En Soi Pour Soi*

Towards the end of "Il a été mon maître," Deleuze, somewhat surprisingly, chooses to focus on Sartre's (fictitious) friendship with Pierre, Deleuze says, 'et surtout

mon ami-Pierre-qui-n'était-jamais-là […] toujours à l'ami Pierre-qui-n'est-jamais-là' (*Île* 112-3). Pierre is a mysterious figure in the context of Sartre's *EN,* he is never really there, in a sense he is absent — or lacking. References to Pierre are always mounted when Sartre needs to illustrate some of the more abstract ontological concepts in *EN,* to illuminate these *through* Pierre. The figure of Pierre is constantly referred to as the reader and Sartre's mutual friend — a feeling that Deleuze seems to share: 'et surtout *mon* ami-Pierre' (*Île* 112: my emphasis).[7] Deleuze's repeated references to Pierre in "Il a été mon maître" suggests that the role he plays is more than merely that of an illustrative figure in *EN.* Pierre is, in a sense, the perfect synecdoche for Sartre's whole project of *l'être-pour-autrui. L'être-pour-autrui* is characterised by its impossible dimension, as we will see; love and desire are vital movements in the *pour soi*'s coming-to-be, or realisation, for-others, but these end in failure. And so, allegorically, Deleuze's example of Pierre shows how our mutual friend is always 'almost,' in *becoming,* our relationship with Pierre is in the process of realisation, yet, in effect, governed by the very same impossibility. Sartre's Pierre is the perfect other; other than Sartre, and other than us. However, Pierre is also us, we are Pierre, in the sense that we could be the figure of Pierre in relation to Sartre within the confines of *L'Être et le néant,* or indeed, that Pierre could be an *être-pour soi* in his own right, in the same way that we are, or that Sartre is. The tension between each of our differing being(s)-for-other(s) is fundamental to the famously conflictual descriptions of love and desire in *EN.* In short, conflicts arise because *pour soi*(*s*) clash against one another*,* to preserve their being in the face of adversity. Even Sartre's relationship with Pierre is characterised by a certain uneasiness — a feeling of never really knowing what constitutes Pierre's *autre-sujet*, only his *autre-objet dans-le-monde.* Sartre says:

[7] Throughout this thesis, all emphases are reproduced as they appear in the original texts unless stated to the contrary.

> Lorsque Pierre me regarde, je sais sans doute qu'il me regarde, ses yeux — choses du monde — sont fixés sur mon corps — chose du monde: voilà le fait objectif dont je puis dire: il *est*. Mais c'est aussi un fait du monde. Le sens de ce regard n'est point et c'est ce qui me gêne: quoi que je fasse, sourires, promesses, menaces — rien ne peut décrocher l'approbation, le libre jugement que je quête, je sais qu'il est toujours au-delà (*EN* 101).

Sartre argues that we must forever keep in mind that all attempts to love or to desire are basic attempts to overcome the original alienation in our being. In short, *l'être pour soi* is characterised by a radical disunity of (not)knowing itself — there is a *manque* in the *pour soi.* A lack of self-identity/ self-coincidence is precisely what the *en soi* does not suffer from, since it is instead characterised by a fullness of being. According to Sartre, love and desire force the *pour soi* to attempt to fill this lack — projecting itself towards something which would give the *pour soi* the characteristics that are usually held by the *en soi,* which is to say the features of stability and wholeness. To achieve this ideal (otherwise known as the metaphysical impossibility that is *en soi pour soi*) would be to become God himself, to have achieved the unachievable. Sartre says in *EN :*

> Le *pour soi* comme néantisation de l'*en soi* se temporalise comme *fuite vers*. Il dépasse, en effet, sa facticité — ou être *donné* ou passé ou corps — vers l'*en soi* qu'il serait s'il pouvait être son propre fondement. C'est ce que l'on traduira en termes déjà psychologiques — et, de ce fait, impropres quoique plus clairs peut-être — en disant que le *pour soi* tente d'échapper à son existence de fait, c'est-à-dire à son être-là, comme *en soi* dont il n'est aucunement le fondement, et que cette fuite a lieu vers un avenir impossible et toujours poursuivi où le *pour soi* serait *en soi pour soi*, c'est-à-dire un *en soi* qui serait à lui-même son propre fondement (428-9).

Attempting to achieve the impossible as *en soi pour soi* would be unintelligible; it is, as we have mentioned, the perfect coincidence that is reserved for God himself. Sartre argues that the *pour soi* is haunted by its inability to become this totalised ideal:

> La fusion idéale de ce qui manque avec ce à quoi manque ce qui manque, comme totalité irréalisable, hante le *pour soi* et le constitue dans son être même comme néant d'être. C'est, disions-nous, l'*en soi pour soi*, ou la valeur. […] L'*en soi pour soi* n'est une possibilité propre du *pour soi*. Il hante le monde comme un irréalisable (*EN* 244-5).

It is in the context of the ideal of *en soi pour soi* that we first appreciate that love and desire are impossible since love and desire are two forms of attempting to reconcile *pour soi* with *en soi* as *en soi pour soi*. Put simply, achieving *en soi pour soi* would be to have successfully married freedom and identity, which is, for Sartre, the original ontological impossibility. In other words, love and desire are the impossible off-shoots of the original impossibility of the *pour soi*'s trying to become *en soi pour soi.* Though impossible, *en soi pour soi* remains crucial since it is what Sartre claims is of value ['*valeur*'] for *pour soi,* or so the *pour soi* mistakenly imagines (*EN* 244). *En soi pour soi* is the totalised value that in love can never be achieved, and this un-realisability always haunts the *pour soi*. Sartre again makes plain the importance of *en soi pour soi* in the *Cahiers pour une morale*:

> L'acte historique par quoi l'être se néantise en Pour-soi est chute et souvenir de Paradis Perdu. Mythe de la faute dans toutes les religions et le folklore. Il ne faut ici voir ni une nécessité dialectique comme chez Hegel, où la première relation individuelle est *nécessairement* celle du maître et de l'esclave, ni un caprice totalement incompréhensible. Mais une faute originelle qu'on peut *éclairer* par la considération de l'événement originel. L'apparition du Pour-soi est à proprement parler l'irruption de l'Histoire dans le monde. Le mouvement spontané du Pour Soi comme manque (sur le plan irréfléchi) est de chercher l'En Soi Pour Soi (*CPM* 17-8).

For Sartre, we must clarify the *pour soi*'s original mistake, the Fall of Man, by considering the *événement originel.* Somehow, being *se néantise* and is transformed into *pour soi*, and according to Sartre, the *pour soi* searches to reconnect with *en soi* as *en soi pour soi.* We contend that this *faute originelle* is central to Sartre's philosophy in relation to 'the impossible.' Moreover, Sartre's task of investigating the original events following the 'faute originelle' resembles the task that Schelling had previously attempted in the early nineteenth-century, except that Schelling had tried to think the original event at the level of *en soi* rather than at the level of *pour soi,* and I return to this in part two of this chapter. Lacan, too, picks up the theme of examining the ways that being is affected by a

'faute originelle;' Lacan says 'première faute,' and we discuss this in greater detail in our final chapter to tie together our claim that Schelling, Sartre, and Lacan are investigating similar concepts in their work (*SXIII* 13).[8]

Sartre argues in *EN* that the fusion of *en soi* with *pour soi*, though ontologically impossible, is nevertheless pursued by beings attempting to achieve the union of *en soi pour soi*. Sartre claims that desire is an absence of being, 'le désir est manque d'être' (*EN* 664), that in desiring another, the *pour soi* tears itself away from *en soi*, and latches onto another in order to grasp for wholeness, to square the circle of one's identification with oneself. For Sartre, 'en tant que tel, il est directement *porté sur* l'être dont il est manque. Cet être […] c'est l'*en soi pour soi*, la conscience devenue substance, la substance devenue cause de soi, l'Homme-Dieu' (*EN* 664). The *pour soi* ultimately desires to be both whole and free, all the while attempting to secure its grip on what constitutes the *en soi* — stability and permanence. The implication is that it is evident from the beginning that, framed in this way, the *pour soi*'s attempt to become *en soi pour soi* is impossible.

Sartre explains in his discussion concerning *l'être-pour-autrui* that the impossible union of freedom and fixed identity, as *en soi pour soi,* is problematic by virtue of the difficulties we encounter in our relationship with others. Sartre complicates our relationship with the other by granting the other a privileged position over the subject. The other, in directing their look towards the subject, alienates the subject from their being — so that the subject's *être-objet* only exists in the safety of its being seen by another. This means that the other holds a privileged position with regards to the subject's being and knows something about the subject which is perpetually beyond their reach.

> Autrui me *regarde* et, comme tel, il détient le secret de mon être, il sait ce que je *suis;* ainsi, le sens profond de mon être est hors de moi, emprisonné dans une absence; autrui a barre sur moi (*EN* 430).

[8] cf: chapter 4 section vi.

In *EN*, Sartre often casts intersubjective relationships in confrontational terms, whereby encountering the other evokes a fear of the other in the subject. Sartre highlights the limitations others can place on the subject's freedom. The other's freedom is precisely what limits my freedom (*EN* 319-20). Dealings with another can yield many pitfalls, wherein the relationship is always characterised by a certain precarity, as though Pierre, as well as being our mutual friend, can also enslave us through his freedom (*EN* 326-7). The relations between beings, then, for Sartre, as it is for Hegel, is primarily focused around conquest and power.

The intersubjective relationships formed with another brought to the fore by the look, yield in the *pour soi* an uncomfortable option between two incompatible modes of being. The look is a moment which places the *pour soi* on the back foot — the argument is that I am caught out in a compromised position in-the-world. In Sartre's example, while succumbing to my desire to be a voyeur, and so spying on lovers through a keyhole in an act of non-thetic self-consciousness, utterly unaware of myself as a voyeur (*EN* 316-7), I am thwarted the moment I hear footsteps in the hall. At that moment, even if the footsteps were to continue up the stairs, and so never to catch me in the act (*EN* 335), the mere threat of being caught triggers a chain of events which leads me to recognise my shame. Feeling shame, according to Sartre, is the *pour soi* recognising that it has knelt before the other, and realising that it has lost ground. The freedom of the *pour soi* has been captured, and the impulse now is that it desperately needs back what has been taken away. Indeed, Sartre stresses shame is a fundamental human attitude which can exist only in relation to others: 'la honte pure n'est pas sentiment d'être tel ou tel objet répréhensible mais, en général, d'être *un objet,* c'est-à-dire de me *reconnaître* dans cet être dégradé, dépendant et figé que je suis pour autrui' (*EN* 349). If the other catches (or threatens to catch) the subject in a compromised position in the world, the conflict and shame elicited

in the subject will force the subject to confront their being-for-others. Sartre summarises in *Baudelaire* (1947): 'voilà la véritable prostitution: on appartient à tous' (*B* 138). In other words, Pierre belongs to me, and I belong to Pierre. In many ways, there are similarities between Sartre's conceptualisation of others as they bear on the subject and Lacan's formulation of the big Other. For Lacan, as we will see in the next chapter, those feelings of shame felt by the mere threat of being caught, is the power of the big Other par excellence.

The result of such a conflictual situation leads the *pour soi* to react in one of two ways; firstly, the *pour soi* could try and return the look, this is done in order to override the other's freedom exercised in their look, and Sartre's argument here is that in the returned look we are attempting to bend the *être-objet* that the other has attempted to reduce me to, back onto them. In effect, we are attempting to force the other to be seen by me as *être-objet*, in turn. Sartre shows how this conflictual strategy manifests itself in attitudes such as pride and vanity; the *pour soi* in these instances wants to regain some of its subjectivity and diminish the *autre-sujet* into *autre-objet* (*EN* 351). Secondly, the *pour soi* can react to intersubjective conflicts by trying to assimilate itself into the freedom of the other, through love. Love is an attempt to square the circle — to be absolutely free whilst being the foundation of such freedom. Put another way, love is an attempt to become *en soi pour soi.* Sartre makes clear that the *pour soi* as a *néantisation* of the *en soi* is a *fuite* towards another *en soi* that could be its own foundation (*EN* 429). Therefore, loving the other, in an attempt to achieve *en soi pour soi,* is the second way the *pour soi* can react to the conflict elicited by the look of the other who puts the subject's freedom in jeopardy.

Establishing the *pour soi*'s freedom is central to Sartre's entire ontological scheme. Sartre claims that freedom is the very 'stuff' of existence: 'ma liberté […] est

très exactement l'étoffe de mon être' (*EN* 514). So, Sartre claims that to be is to exist, and existing is necessarily to exist freely. However, somewhat paradoxically, for Sartre, freedom itself is not free to be unfree, nor can unfreedom exist: 'la liberté n'est pas libre de ne pas être libre et qu'elle n'est pas libre de ne pas exister' (556), and here Sartre is attempting to sidestep a metaphysical problem that necessarily arises in trying to define freedom: how can freedom not be free not to exist if it were truly free?[9] In a highly original move, Sartre develops what he calls the *recul néantisant* to preserve freedom's pure contingency, 'par son recul néantisant, la liberté fait qu'un système de relations s'établisse,' Sartre says (567). Therefore, the *recul néantisant* is the process whereby consciousness withdraws from being, and it is this process of withdrawal that Sartre attaches to freedom, thereby attempting to preserve freedom's quality of pure contingency. Sartre says, 'cela ne signifie pas que la réalité-humaine existe *d'abord* pour être libre *en suite*' (566). Consciousness can recede and withdraw from the self — in effect the *pour soi* choosing to withdraw from the *en soi*: 'être, pour le *pour soi*, c'est néantiser l'*en soi* qu'il est' (515). In practical terms, this means that the *pour soi* is always free to constitute itself differently, to create new meaning for itself, and it is this radical conception of freedom, at the heart of consciousness, that always engenders with it an awareness of the freedom of self. For Sartre, the self is an object of consciousness, and so when I reflect on it, I am inadvertently reflecting on my freedom, too — this is why Sartre claims that 'ma liberté […] est très exactement l'étoffe de mon être' (514). However, crucially, this freedom resides in *pour soi* which is also characterised by a radical incompatibility of (not)knowing itself, as a result of the *recul néantisant* from the *en soi,* and, as we will see shortly, Sartre is careful not to explain this mechanism of withdrawal – leaving him vulnerable to the charge that the *pour soi* is ungrounded. Sartre

[9] See: Heidegger 1985 p. 48; see also our discussion p. 47.

says, ‘chaque réalité-humaine est à la fois projet direct de métamorphoser son propre *pour soi* en *en soi pour soi* et projet d’appropriation du monde comme totalité d’être-*en soi*, sous les espèces d’une qualité fondamentale’ (*EN* 707-8). And so, it is precisely this very freedom, that is at the core of the *pour soi*, that needs to be protected from the *autre-sujet* that stares so ferociously, attempting to make the *pour soi* merely an *être-objet*. The constriction of freedom felt by the *pour soi* puts the subject’s freedom in jeopardy in their relationships with others, and the subject’s freedom must be protected or re-established at all costs as a result.

The *pour soi* pursues a twofold strategy in its attempt to achieve the impossible goal of *en soi pour soi,* and, for Sartre, both are destined to fail. On the one hand, as already noted, the *pour soi*’s tactic is a flight away from an *en soi* that could not be its own foundation, in a sense the *pour soi* is attempting to out-run its past, its facticity; and, on the other hand, the *pour soi*’s strategy is also a pursuit towards the *en soi* which falsely promises to be its own grounding – transcendence. So, the *pour soi* is caught in this double dance of both flight and pursuit, never to be reconciled, unable to close the circle. Sartre says:

> Le *pour soi* tente d’échapper à son existence de fait, c’est-à-dire à son être-là, comme *en soi* dont il n’est aucunement le fondement, […] cette fuite a lieu vers un avenir impossible et toujours poursuivi où le *pour soi* serait *en soi pour soi*, c’est-à-dire un *en soi* qui serait à lui-même son propre fondement. Ainsi, le *pour soi* est fuite et poursuite à la fois; à la fois, il fuit l’*en soi* et il le poursuit; le *pour soi* est poursuivant-poursuivi (*EN* 429).

However, as noted, this double dance of both flight and pursuit is always haunted by the spectre of the impossible. In short, the whole strategy of running after *en soi* involves making a grave and fundamental error, for the circle can never be closed. One cannot be one’s own foundation according to Sartre; indeed, he shows how the second of these strategies, to take up an attitude of love, to grasp for transcendence as it were, is a futile passion — an attempt to grasp a wholeness that is available only to God. Nevertheless,

Sartre argues, we pursue and engage with love and desire because as soon as another body exists in the world, these attitudes simply manifest themselves: 'dès qu'il "y a" le corps et qu'il "y a" l'*autre,* nous réagissons par le désir, par l'amour et par les attitudes dérivées que nous avons mentionnées' (*EN* 477). We will return to this metaphysical question of why we love and desire others in section iv. In Sartre's earlier philosophy, the impossible dimension of love is originally found in the *pour soi*'s wanting to become *en soi pour soi,* the original unrealisable ideal. Concomitantly, Sartre argues that the impossibility of love is also a direct result of the impossibility of being-for-others. The examples of love and desire, while given their own original arguments by Sartre (explored in section iii and iv, respectively), are impossible from the start by virtue of their ontological articulations in the *pour soi's* relationship with *être-pour-autrui,* and the futile wish to become *en soi pour soi*. It is at this ontological level that a systemic problem arises with Sartre's account of the impossible. We suggest that the accounts that Sartre gives with regards to the foundations of *pour soi* are perhaps unstable, and we return to this argument in more detail, by way of a comparison with Schelling, in part two of this chapter.

iii. Impossible Love

For Sartre, love is doomed from the start, and it emerges from a situation of conflict with one's lover. Sartre says, 'les descriptions qui vont suivre [in relation to love] doivent donc être envisagées dans la perspective du *conflit*' (*EN* 431). In what follows, we take our *amant* to be Pierre — in our case, to err towards both stretching the opening analogy too far, and to play with the figure of Pierre, whom we know quite intimately. When Pierre confronts me with his love, our necessary conflict emerges, to borrow language from Baudelaire's "À une passante;" '*Un éclair... puis la nuit! – Fugitive*

beauté/ Dont le regard m'a fait soudainement renaître' (1868: 270). However, this rebirth, the first encounter with the other's love, Sartre argues, has taken me by surprise: 'mais que tout à coup un de ces passants relève la tête et l'observateur est observé à son tour, *le chasseur chassé*' (*B* 138: my emphasis). Pierre attracts me towards his freedom, but, I too, pull him towards mine. Conflict is inescapable — *le chasseur chassé*. We both recognise that in order to experience our respective being-for-others, we must seize the other as possession (*EN* 431):

> Je suis possédé par autrui; le regard d'autrui façonne mon corps dans sa nudité, le fait naître, le sculpte, le produit comme il *est*, le voit comme je ne le verrai jamais. Autrui détient un secret: le secret de ce que je suis. Il me fait être et, par cela même, me possède, et cette possession n'est rien autre que la conscience de me posséder. Et moi, dans la reconnaissance de mon objectivité, j'éprouve qu'il a cette conscience. A titre de conscience, autrui est pour moi à la fois ce qui m'a volé mon être et ce qui fait "qu'il y a" un être qui est mon être. […] Je suis responsable de mon être-pour-autrui, mais je n'en suis pas le fondement (*EN* 431).

Love and desire are not synonymous for Sartre; instead, these two concepts are radically incompatible — though, they do end up in the same place. Desire is closely aligned with the need to reduce the other to *autre-objet* that we briefly noted earlier, which we return in section iii.

In love, the subject pursues an intersubjective strategy that attempts to assimilate itself into the other's freedom, which involves an attempt to preserve one's freedom while simultaneously choosing its foundation, in order to control, possess and direct it. For Sartre, this means to assimilate oneself into the alterity of the other — the subject wholly identifying themselves a subject being-seen by Pierre, while Pierre maintains his freedom through the look he gives the subject. Since the only intersubjective link we share in this allegedly loving relationship is Pierre's look confronting my *être-objet* it is necessarily unstable, 'c'est cet être-objet seul qui peut me servir d'instrument pour opérer l'assimilation à moi de *l'autre liberté*' (*EN* 432). In trying to assimilate myself into

Pierre's freedom, in effect, attempting to take on features of *en soi* by anchoring my subjectivity in another subject, I am forgetting that this is merely an ideal (*en soi pour soi*), which is impossible because I am simultaneously sacrificing my freedom, and I am turning myself into an inert being, an *en soi,* since I am foregoing my *pour soi* in exchange for my lover's gaze. The subject is unable to surmount the original problem, that there is no internal, symmetrical relation between two subjects in love: 'par la négation par quoi autrui se fait autre que moi et la négation par quoi je me fais autre que l'autre' (*EN* 433). In short, I am unable to renounce my subjectivity, my freedom, and allow my being to be degraded to the being-seen of the other, as an *object* for his *subjectivity*. In the event of love, the two parts are not in harmony, they do not, together in love, form a complementary or coherent whole.[10] The parts attempting to be unified are asymmetrical; two rugged pieces that do not fit neatly together. For Sartre, the individual parts (the two *pour soi*'s attempting to fuse together) are not malleable, and the loved subject is unable to diminish, mould, or renounce their freedom to accommodate Pierre's gaze. Pierre, in his love for me, would like me to bend my freedom towards his, to be at the service of his freedom. Sartre says, 'il serait donc nécessaire — puisque l'être pour autrui comporte une double négation interne — d'agir sur la négation interne par quoi autrui transcende ma transcendance et me fait exister pour l'autre, c'est-à-dire *d'agir sur la liberté d'autrui*' (*EN* 433). Therefore, according to Sartre, love is necessarily a descent into masochism because one has to accept to become the other's slave. Sartre explains the subjective conflict that emerges in the loving relationship thus: 'la fameuse description hégélienne des rapports du maître et de l'esclave. Ce que le maître hégélien est pour l'esclave, l'amant veut l'être pour l'aimé' (*EN* 438). However, Sartre is keen to stress that the analogy ought not be stretched too far. Love's necessarily conflictual

[10] As Aristophanes argued in Plato's *Symposium,* for example Plato 2008 p. 24 (§ 191a; § 191d).

relationship, then, is how Pierre wants to enslave me through his love for me. Pierre wants nothing more than to capture my freedom; attracting it, luring and stealing it from me. However, Pierre is equally misguided since in love, Pierre is pursuing nothing other than the subject's *perceived* objectivity to be captured by his subjectivity, and the subject's freedom to be assimilated into his, yet the subject is unable to renounce their freedom, which exists necessarily, and, therefore, the end of such unions, for Sartre, 'se fige en morte-possibilité' (*EN* 445). When a couple are in love, then, each is trying to become an object in the eyes of the other, at the service of the other's freedom. Each carries forward an alienation within themselves, and they are pursuing contradictory ideals – one which contradicts the freedom their *pour soi* necessarily contains.

Furthermore, according to Sartre, the problem of being-for-others cannot be solved with more love. Love is problematic for three reasons:

> En premier lieu il est, par essence une duperie et un renvoi à l'infini […] Plus on m'aime, plus je perds mon *être*, plus je suis remis à mes propres responsabilités, à mon propre pouvoir être. En second lieu, le réveil de l'autre est toujours possible, il peut d'un moment à l'autre me faire comparaître comme objet: de là la perpétuelle insécurité de l'amant. En troisième lieu l'amour est un absolu perpétuellement *relativisé* par les autres. Il faudrait être seul au monde avec l'aimé pour que l'amour conserve son caractère d'axe de référence absolu. De là la perpétuelle honte (ou fierté - ce qui revient au même ici) de l'amant (*EN* 445).

According to Sartre, the only coherent outcome of a loving relationship is that it must end up 'en morte-possibilité' (*EN* 445). Love is an attempt by the other to beguile the subject's freedom and render it inoperable, 'plus on m'aime, plus je perds mon *être,*' Sartre says. Love is a dead-end, characterised by constant insecurity, a precarity which cannot be assuaged in-the-world, it is impossible. I contend that we should approach Sartre's pessimistic account of love with some scepticism. Although Sartre's primary aim was to expose our ontological insecurities towards the other in love, Sartre's tripartite

account of love winds up looking quite bleak [‘se fige en morte-possibilité’ (*EN* 445)].[11] Moreover, I contend that Sartre leaves unsettled the central metaphysical question implied by his account of love: *why* does the subject pursue a futile goal? It is this metaphysical question which foregrounds our investigations of Lacan’s psychoanalysis in the following chapters. Sartre, having demonstrated love’s ultimate failure, believes that he has given an account of the world in which love is impossible. Can this satisfy us? I return to these trepidations in section v.

Of course, Sartre is not claiming that love does not serve a purpose in the subject’s everyday life. However, we are more concerned with Sartre’s own teleological discussion of the endpoint of love. Sartre claims that love fails *in the end.* Love’s final destination is, Sartre says, *en soi pour soi* — the impossible. By being part of being-for-others, ‘il en résulte que l’amour comme mode fondamental de l’être-pour-autrui a dans son être-pour-autrui la racine de sa destruction’ (*EN* 445). So, since Sartre is engaging with the articulation of the final destination of love, I contend that we are justified in taking Sartre on his own terms in our analysis concerning love’s final meaning and destination. We follow, and naively ask: why pursue love if it fails in the end? Why does love haunt ‘le monde comme un irréalisable’ (*EN* 245)? Sartre does not convincingly answer these concerns, and, as we will see in part two of this chapter, it is the ungrounded ontological foundations of *être-pour soi* and *être-pour-autrui* that render Sartre’s account of love unstable.

iv. Impossible Desire

Sartre’s account of desire is different from his account of love, but it ends up in the same place — in impossibility. As Howells puts it, ‘desire is *trouble,* it disturbs both

[11] As Sartre himself recognised, see Sartre 1981 p. 13.

body and consciousness' (Howells 2011: 32). Sartre stresses that love does not take precedence over desire, that desire is not secondary to love simply by virtue of its being treated second in *EN*. Rather, they are both put in motion as a result of being-for-others (*EN* 446-7). However, while love, in a sense, may follow a more "optimistic" path to destruction, desire follows an antithetical one. According to Sartre, I cannot both love and desire Pierre at the same time, these two drives are separate. Furthermore, I choose to desire: 'la conscience se choisit désir. Pour cela, certes, il convient qu'elle ait un motif: je ne désire pas n'importe qui, n'importe quand' (*EN* 460). For Sartre, the subject is not automatically considered a sexual being by mere virtue of possessing sexual organs, instead sexual desire is intentional in the Husserlian sense (*EN* 454-5). For example, a penis might mean that a man can act on a desire in a particular way, Sartre says: 'jamais d'ailleurs la turgescence du pénis ni aucun autre phénoméne physiologique ne peuvent expliquer ni provoquer le désir sexuel' (*EN* 452). Sartre is taking aim at both the empirical psychologists and the 'existential philosophers,' Heidegger included, who would have it that sexual desire is instinctual (Howells 2000: 87). For Sartre, sexual desire falls firmly into the realm of philosophy. Moreover, desire occurs not as a result of another's particular bodily attributes, but as a result of the 'forme totale,' Sartre goes on: 'mieux: à une forme *en situation*' (*EN* 454). And it is *I* who desires, 'sans aucun doute, celui qui désire *c'est moi* et le désir est un mode singulier de ma subjectivité' (*EN* 454-5). This desire manifests itself in consciousness, and we feel it bodily, according to Sartre, 'comme empâtée.' Desire is to consent to an impulse or drive; there is a choice to be made (*EN* 457). And yet, somehow, if I dare to resist desire, I begin to feel myself heavier, 'on se sentira lucide mais avec la tête lourde et le cœur battant,' my consciousness becoming corporeal (*EN* 457). As Howells argues, 'desire compromises the *pour soi*, and is a fall into complicity with the body […]. In a word, consciousness

becomes bodily' (Howells 2011: 31), and this also highlights that desire is not simply the pursuit of the other's body, but also the revelation of my own body:

> Dans le désir, le corps, au lieu d'être seulement la contingence qui fuit le *pour soi* vers des possibles qui lui sont propres, devient en même temps le possible le plus immédiat du *pour soi*; le désir n'est pas seulement désir du corps d'autrui; il est, dans l'unité d'un même acte, le pro-jet non thétiquement vécu de s'enliser dans le corps […] C'est en fait un appétit *vers* le corps d'autrui qui est vécu comme vertige du *pour soi* devant son propre corps; et l'être qui désire, c'est la conscience *se faisant corps* (*EN* 458).

The other becomes flesh for me, through my touch, which is more than simple contact, it is an incarnation of the other whom I desire (*EN* 458). But not just for the pleasure of climax, that would be nonsensical, since simple egocentric pleasure could be abated in masturbation. For Sartre, to satisfy one's desire for another with the other is an attempt to grasp both body *and* soul.

> La chair d'autrui n'existait pas explicitement pour moi, puisque je saisissais le corps d'autrui en situation […] la caresse fait naître autrui comme chair pour moi et pour lui-même (*EN* 459-60).

> Le désir est une conduite d'envoûtement […] de fair engluer sa liberté dans cette facticité […] et qu'en touchant ce corps, je touche enfin la libre subjectivité de l'autre. C'est là le vrai sens du mot de *possession* (*EN* 463).

And it is precisely here, that we can see that desire fails, that it falls irremediably into the abyss of the impossible. I want to possess the other's body, in the sense outlined above. I want to possess a body that is itself possessed, a body which is itself conscious of others, and identified by its own freedom. In short, to possess the free transcendence of the other as pure transcendence and yet still in bodily form, which would amount to: 'réduire l'autre à sa simple *facticité*, parce qu'il est alors au milieu de mon monde' (*EN* 463). However, a body in my world apprehended in its simple facticity would be to radically modify my own being to accommodate them: 'dès que je me jette vers la facticité de l'autre, dès que je veux écarter ses actes et ses fonctions pour l'atteindre dans sa chair, je m'incarne moi-même' (*EN* 465). Desire ends in failure, 'le désir est lui-même voué à

l'échec' (*EN* 466), because the desire to appropriate the embodied consciousness of the other incarnated in the touch, quickly loses its subjectivity — it becomes object (*EN* 468):

> Le corps d'autrui, dépassé vers ses potentialités, tombe du rang de chair au rang de pur objet. Cette situation implique la rupture de la réciprocité d'incarnation qui était précisément le but propre du désir: l'autre […] c'est une chair que je ne saisis plus par ma chair, une chair qui n'est plus que la *propriété* d'un autre-objet et non l'incarnation d'une autre-conscience (*EN* 468).

The other that I desire becomes an object through my touch, they become pure object and lose their subjectivity, the objectivity of the body has taken over. 'Desire, for Sartre, is of course intentional: it is a mode of consciousness […] it is a primary ['*originelle*'] mode […] fundamental not contingent' (Howells 2011: 31). Which is why desire ultimately fails to overcome the need for the *pour soi* to be its own foundation. Desire is an illusory attempt to really possess and sublimate the freedom of the other into my own. Pierre is by nature unseizable, he defies possession: 'il me fuit quand je le cherche et me possède quand je le fuis' (*EN* 479). As Judith Butler put it, the 'desire to be,' is ultimately to be 'forced to desire the impossible' (1987: 98).

v. Why love?

Earlier we intimated our potential dissatisfaction with Sartre's contention that we love and desire one another simply because we can; 'dès qu'il "y a" le corps et qu'il "y a" l'*autre,* nous réagissons par le désir, par l'amour et par les attitudes dérivées que nous avons mentionnées' (*EN* 477). Sartre does not much allow for metaphysical discussions as to *why* we engage with certain phenomena, preferring to focus on ontological descriptions. Indeed, at various points in *EN,* Sartre avoids metaphysical questions altogether. However, in the conclusion to *EN,* Sartre does engage with certain 'aperçus métaphysiques' (*EN* 711). Though, here, once again, Sartre only critiques Hegel and Heidegger's forays into metaphysics, and does not engage in much metaphysical

speculation himself. 'Tous les "pourquoi",' Sartre says, 'en effet, sont postérieurs à l'être et le supposent. L'être est, sans raison, sans cause et *sans nécessité*' (*EN* 713: my emphasis). It is clear that Sartre is unwilling to negotiate the minefield that is metaphysical speculation. Nevertheless, the question as to *why* we love and desire is a pertinent concern for us here, we are not content for love to be an impossibility which, by the end of *EN,* Sartre has clarified as being a perpetual attempt at an ultimate failure. In other words, love is the thwarted attempt to try and effectuate the impossible, actioned simply because *we can try to fail*. To achieve the impossible in love and become *en soi pour soi* would be to attempt to diminish the radical freedom with which we are condemned to live, it is *because* we are condemned to freedom that we cannot love. I argue that this is an unsatisfactory conception of why subjects love, and, it is evident that Sartre, too, shared this anxiety:

> **R:** *Then do you think you deserved to be reproached for idealism, as has rather frequently been charged?*
> **Sartre:** No, not idealism but rather, bad realism. That part of *L'Être et le néant* failed.
> **P:** *One often has great difficulty with your analyses of love, of the "for-others." You yourself have said that in L'Être et le néant you depicted above all negative love.*
> **Sartre:** Yes, certainly. Beginning with *Saint Genet* I changed my position a bit, and I now see more positivity in love.
> **P:** *Sadism and masochism are quite normal aspects of human love*:
> **Sartre:** Yes, that was what I wanted to say. I would still maintain the idea that many acts of human love are tainted with sadism and masochism, and what must be shown is what transcends them. I wrote *Saint Genet* to try to present a love that goes beyond the sadism in which Genet is steeped and the masochism that he suffered as it were, in spite of himself (Sartre 1981: 13).[12]

Sartre agrees, as it were, that he has portrayed a predominantly negative view of love in *EN.*[13] Our task is to attempt to supply a view of love which takes into account its

[12] This is an excerpt from an interview Sartre conducted for publication in the series *Library of Living Philosophers,* towards the end of his life. The interview, though conducted in French, was translated for publication into English as *The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre* (1981) – I quote in English since the original is not available.
[13] The development of Sartre's view of love from *Saint Genet* onwards is, regretfully, beyond the scope of our current investigation.

metaphysical underpinnings — why do we love? We contend that love is both as necessary as it is impossible, describing an always unfinished task that we could qualify as a form of cruel optimism.[14] This oxymoronic conclusion, typical of Lacan's psychoanalysis, will become more evident as we develop our understanding of his philosophy. If, as it is for Sartre in *EN,* love and desire are key movements in the *pour soi*'s coming-to-be, or realisation, then, the concepts of love and desire form a relatively substantial part of human subjectivity and the subject's relationship with others. Therefore, 's'il est vrai que la réalité-humaine, comme nous avons tenté de l'établir, s'annonce et se définit par les fins qu'elle poursuit' (*EN* 643), then, we contend, it is worthwhile to investigate why subjects pursue love as one of their subjective goals. Furthermore, we are concerned with the ways in which the concept of love as Sartre developed it in *EN* emerges in Lacan's psychoanalysis.

The second part of this chapter investigates the many connections between Sartre and Schelling. The intuition for this comparison is twofold; firstly, Schelling's critique of Hegel, and later philosophy more generally, anticipates a manifold of themes that are to plague and inform French philosophy throughout the twentieth century.[15] Secondly, Schelling's speculative middle philosophy offers us a creative solution to the problems we have encountered in Sartre's account of love and desire in *EN*. In what follows, our central argument will be to suggest that Sartre's view of the impossibility of love in *EN* is only an illusory impossibility. Furthermore, it is the exploration of Schelling's insights that will anticipate some of the themes we explore in our later chapters on Lacan's psychoanalysis.

[14] I borrow this term from Lauren Berlant (2011), who argues that 'a relation of cruel optimism exists when something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing' (1).
[15] See Butler 1987 for more on the reception of Hegel in twentieth-century French thought.

Part Two: Illusions of the Impossible

Our knowledge is incomplete,
that is, it must be produced
piecemeal in sections and
degrees.

Schelling, *Weltalter*

i. Thinking the Fall

Little has been written on Sartre's relationship to Schelling, though their works share similarities (Frank 2004: 151; Gardner 2006: 271),[16] and in order to put pressure on Sartre's account of the impossible, we consider Sartre alongside Schelling. This comparison is not designed to minimise Sartre's original contributions to the history of philosophy but is instead envisaged to resurrect the metaphysical reflections that were unconvincingly buried by Sartre in *EN*. Moreover, the highly speculative aspects of Schelling's middle philosophy echo the late Lacan's onto-theological arguments from around *SXX*, *Encore,* onwards.

Schelling's highly speculative discussion concerning the origins of God in *Die Weltalter/ Ages of the World* (1813), informs our reading of Sartre, and this reading enables us to challenge the confines of Sartre's closed philosophical system. Strikingly, Sartre often alludes to the Fall in *EN*, and this comparison makes more sense than it ought for a thinker who consistently considered himself an atheist. The atheistic dimension of Sartre's humanistic philosophy needs to be re-oriented towards an onto-theological reading of his notorious condemnation to freedom.[17] Schelling, like Sartre, separates being into two regions, and for Schelling freedom is found at the heart of *en soi*; thereby allowing Schelling to invest freedom with ontological primacy. Whereas by investing freedom in the *pour soi,* Sartre has left himself open to the charge that everything contained outside *en soi* is the product of a systematic illusion (Gardner 2006: 261), including Sartre's highly creative solution for the pure contingency of freedom, the *recul*

[16] Further notable exceptions are: Frank 1990, Frank 1992 — neither *op cit* are available in English, though some excerpts from Frank 1992 have been translated in *The New Schelling*, Norman and Welchman 2004 on which I rely — and Gardner 2005, Gardner 2006, Gardner in Webber 2011.

[17] Onto-theology to be understood as 'a philosophical position that regards the intelligibility of our and the world's being as bound up metaphysically with the concept of a highest being (God) conceived as having at least some attributes of personality, mind, or subjectivity, in some sense and to some degree. Onto-theology therefore does not coincide with (classical) theism' (Gardner 2006: 268).

néantisant, since the relationship between *en soi* and *pour soi* has not been properly accounted for. Furthermore, since this dilemma underpins Sartre's account of love, as it was outlined in our previous section, we claim that Sartre's account of love is unstable at a primary ontological level.

Many studies have highlighted Sartre's philosophical connections to Hegel,[18] and these works unavoidably open up a discussion on Sartre's relationship to Hegel.[19] However, we are less interested in revisiting the Hegelian debt that Sartre may or may not owe, and instead suggest that Sartre is replying, in part, to questions that motivated both Hegel and Schelling. And, since Schelling had also formulated an earlier critique of Hegel, we are justified in comparing the two philosophers.

According to Paul Tillich, Schelling can be considered to be the 'first great existentialist' philosopher of the modern period (1972: 437). For Tillich, Schelling's reconfiguration of German Romanticism pushed it onto surer existential ground (438). Furthermore, Schelling's Berlin lectures were so important that Tillich claims: 'there is hardly one category in twentieth-century existentialist poetry, literature, philosophy, and indirectly the visual arts, which you cannot find in these lectures' (446). Indeed, Sartre's notion of freedom from his earlier philosophy is comparable to Schelling's notion of the

[18] See: Hartmann 1966 and Seel 1995, for a concise but comprehensive discussion on Hegel and Sartre see also: Verstraeten in Howells 1992.

[19] Ronald Hayman claims that according to the library register at the *École normale supérieure*, Sartre read Fichte and Hegel during his third year at the École (1986: 55). Bruce Baugh's *French Hegel* makes a more complete assessment, though he does say: 'despite what Sartre and others have claimed, even during the ascendancy of neo-Kantianism, Hegel's philosophy did not pass into complete obscurity. There were Alain's courses on Hegel at the Lycée Henri IV from 1923-1928 which were attended by Hyppolite and students of the *École Normale* [*sic*], including perhaps Sartre' (2003: 14). Though Baugh also states that the often-asserted claim that Sartre learnt all he knew of Hegel by attending the Kojève lectures on Hegel is characterised by having 'no good evidence' (2003: 98). Nonetheless, we take it as given that Hegel was very important to Sartre: 'the great importance of Hegel for Sartre is manifest in the terminology and on almost every page of *Being and Nothingness*, throughout which Sartre is engaged in an extended argument with Hegel – not of course with Hegel alone, but it is Hegel, rather than Husserl or Heidegger, whose general metaphysical views Sartre is most keen to contest' (Gardner 2006: 264-5).

absolute (Gardner 2006: 261).[20] And so Manfred Frank is able to deploy Sartre's language to explicate and reinterpret Schelling in light of *L'Être et le néant* (Frank 2004: 151). Therefore, in adopting Frank's method, we compare Sartre with Schelling to force open the possibility of love. However, before further attempting to link Schelling to Sartre we will contextualise Schelling's thought and development.

Schelling developed his philosophy of freedom in an attempt to replace his earlier identity philosophy — his account of absolute rational idealistic monism — which he considered to be a total failure.[21] By the turn of the nineteenth-century, Schelling had recognised that his identity system lacked an adequate epistemology, and was, therefore, fundamentally weak. Schelling attempts (and fails) to resolve these questions in the *Weltalter*. In this ambitious text, Schelling attempts to build a philosophical account of the nature of time and creation (Norman: in *Weltalter* 107), and as Judith Norman notes, Schelling's three drafts of *Weltalter* are all unfinished fragments: 'Schelling barely got further than book I, which treated the first "age of the world," the past. [And] he would eventually abandon the project' (ibid). This historical context shows the hesitant nature of Schelling's endeavour. As Jean-François Marquet put it in *Liberté et existence, études sur la formation de la philosophie de Schelling* (1973), 'l'histoire des *Ages du monde* est celle du chef-d'œuvre inconnu — l'histoire d'un enthousiasme, d'un désespoir, enfin un sacrifice' (449). Schelling's task was to inaugurate a philosophical revolution which would in turn provoke a theological revolution, as Marquet argues:

> Schelling n'avait considéré la révolution philosophique que comme le prélude à une révolution religieuse […] dans tous les cas, l'ambition est restée la même — dépasser l'unilatéralité du vocabulaire philosophique et traduire la vérité dans un

[20] Schelling's philosophy is notoriously schismatic, and he assigns similar concepts different names in the various phases of his thought. For our limited purposes here, with the aim of no great reconstruction of Schelling's philosophy, it is enough to signal that Schelling's 'Absolute' denotes roughly what Sartre means by 'Freedom.' However, the Absolute is also God, for Schelling.

[21] Parts of this chapter were published in Richards 2018. For a more detailed account of Schelling's abandonment of his identity philosophy see pp. 172-173.

> seul élément où elle soit vraiment chez elle, celui du langage populaire, ce langage immémorial qui n'est celui de personne (1973: 449).

This explains why Schelling's language beyond 1809 became increasingly theosophical, as he employs 'la seule langue éternelle, la "langue du peuple," qui est aussi celle de la Bible de Dieu' (ibid 450).

Schelling contended that in his earlier identity philosophy, the principle of freedom had not been substantiated convincingly. As Martin Heidegger summarises in his essay *Schelling's Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom* (1985), Schelling's dilemma was that he had not adequately accounted for freedom; for the German Idealists a 'system' consisted of 'the totality of Being in the totality of its truth and the history of the truth' (48), and yet with such strong requirements, how could a fluid concept like 'freedom' be integrated into, or form the central part of, a constricting 'system'? In effect, Heidegger contends, if 'freedom, [...] is groundless and breaks out of every connection, [how could it be] the centre of [a] system?' (ibid). Therefore, Heidegger formalises Schelling's major dilemma thus: 'a system of freedom appears to be impossible from both sides. There are two fundamental difficulties: (1) either "system" is retained, then freedom must be relinquished; or (2) freedom is retained, which means renunciation of "system"' (49). Schelling's motivation was to try and achieve real freedom without constricting it within the shackles of a system, and this moment marks the beginning of Schelling's philosophy of freedom, the seeds of which are present from *Philosophy and Religion* (1804). By the time Schelling begins work on the first draft of his freedom text from 1809 – *Die Weltalter/ Ages of the World* – Schelling has completely shifted focus towards concepts of 'eternity,' 'freedom,' and 'God' (Tillich 1972: 444). Schelling intended this fragmentary text to correct the failures of his earlier identity philosophy, and, concomitantly, they form part of Schelling's critique of Hegel, which as Heidegger

put it, are 'the treatise which shatters Hegel's *Logic before* it was even published!' (1985: 97).[22]

The problem of human freedom, as outlined above, forms only one part of a tripartite problem that Schelling recognised had emerged from his earlier work, the aforementioned anxiety that his identity philosophy lacked an adequate epistemology. The two other variants of this problem are: how to derive the finite from the infinite and the problem of evil. In brief, the former being the idea that if everything is to be contained within God, and God cannot create something outside himself, God may exist but how does there come to be a world? And, the latter, why is it that evil exists? Heidegger says, 'the question of the nature of human freedom becomes the question of the possibility of evil' (1985: 97). At its core, the premise of the problem states that in order for human beings to have real freedom, it must be that evil has reality (Snow 1996: 157). Schelling's philosophical motivation was that unless evil has reality, there is nothing to choose between, and freedom becomes meaningless. Together this tripartite problem is considered to be Schelling's riddle of human freedom which he believed was solvable in one stroke. For Schelling, the only freedom that is important is the freedom that is exercised by subjects in moral choices; Schelling contends that a morally significant choice between alternatives means that there must be at least two choices for the subject — a good one and an evil one.

In *Philosophy and Religion*, Schelling attempts to resolve the problem of freedom under the guise of the problem of deriving the finite from the infinite, which is to say deriving *pour soi* from *en soi*. Schelling argues that since God, the Absolute, created the world in his image, following Christian doctrine, the image that he has created, which Schelling calls the *Gegenbild,* becomes a counter-image of God himself. Schelling argues

[22] *PR* and *Weltalter* will be the texts to which I limit myself in the discussion on Sartre with Schelling.

that God, or the absolute, has to share its absolute freedom with something that is not itself — the *Gegenbild,* or counter-image. Therefore, there is a split at the heart of the absolute, so Schelling says:

> The exclusive particularity of the Absolute lies in the fact that when it *bestows its essentiality upon its counter-image*, it also *bestows upon it its self-dependence*. This being-in-and-for-itself, this particular and true reality of the first-intuited, is *freedom*, and from that first self-dependence outflows what in the phenomenal world appears as freedom, which represents the last trace and the seal [*Siegel*], as it were, of divinity in the fallen-away world (*PR* 27-8: my emphasis).

Schelling has effectively split God into two halves ['bestows its essentiality upon its counter-image']. However, an important problem arises when God, who now wants to verify the *Gegenbild*, finds that he can only do so from the position of the counter-image itself — which is to say that the view God desires needs to be immanent to the image itself. And so, in a flash, God *falls* from himself — he falls from the seat of the absolute, into the abyss of the counter-image. God *becomes human* in the fall into the *Gegenbild.* Recall Sartre's description in *EN* concerning the *pour soi*'s desire to become *en soi pour soi,* Sartre said : 'cet être […] c'est l'*en soi pour soi*, la conscience devenue substance, la substance devenue cause de soi, l'Homme-Dieu' (*EN* 664), Schelling is, in effect, giving a theosophical account of Sartre's impossible *en soi pour soi.* Whereas the early Schelling had argued that all finite things in the world remained within God, the middle Schelling now argues that the world, in becoming conscious of itself as something distinct from the absolute, falls from God:

> The counter-image, as an absolute entity and having all its attributes in common with the originary [*sic*] image, would not truly be in itself and absolute if it could not grasp itself in its selfhood [*Selbstheit*], in order to have true being as the *other* absolute. But it cannot be as the *other* absolute unless it separates itself or falls away from the true Absolute (*PR* 28).

For Schelling, the split at the heart of the Absolute describes the need to separate *ground* from *existence.* Importantly, this intuition, as we have seen, employs theosophical language and ideas; the split at the heart of the Absolute has a clear echo to the beginning

of the biblical story, the Fall. For Schelling, God created Adam and Eve, and they remained within him. However, God also had to invest them with some of his own freedom which enabled them to re-exercise their freedom to think themselves apart from God, and according to Schelling's metaphysical depiction of the Fall, *that* is the condition of the world. The created world has thought itself apart from God and has, therefore, fallen from the seat of God. As Gardner argues, this narrative of the fallen world closely resembles Sartre's account of the subject, '[Sartre] encouraged us to think of human being[s] as a "fallen," negated form of being-in-itself' (Gardner 2006: 254). Recall the passage we quoted earlier from the *Cahiers pour une morale* (1983), in which Sartre made explicit the importance of the narrative of the Fall:

> L'acte historique par quoi l'être se néantise en Pour-soi est chute et souvenir de Paradis Perdu. Mythe de la faute dans toutes les religions et le folklore […] Une faute originelle qu'on peut *éclairer* par la considération de l'événement originel. L'apparition du Pour-soi est à proprement parler l'irruption de l'Histoire dans le monde. Le mouvement spontané du Pour soi comme manque (sur le plan irréfléchi) est de chercher l'En Soi Pour Soi (*CPM* 17-8).

Sartre is clear about the need to investigate the original sin at the heart of being, and that we should do so by considering the original (pre-ontological) events. Sartre also employs the language of the Fall on several occasions in *EN* to explain the alienation felt at the heart of our being. Earlier, in our discussion concerning being-for-others, the look and the shame that it could engender, we argued that for Sartre, our being was being stolen by another in shame, a theft from which I desperately needed to recover. However, in the same passage, Sartre had also put it thus:

> La honte est sentiment de *chute originelle*, non du fait que j'aurais commis telle ou telle faute, mais simplement du fait que je suis "tombé" dans le monde, au milieu des choses, et que j'ai besoin de la médiation d'autrui pour être ce que je suis (*EN* 328).

Shame is the *chute originelle*, the sudden realisation that I, in shame, have fallen into the world, in the middle of the situation and at the mercy of the other; the similarity in

metaphorical language between Sartre and Schelling is inescapable. Moreover, both Sartre and Schelling characterise being in ominous terms; Sartre sought to characterise our human condition as '*une maladie*' (*EN* 669), which resonates with Schelling's consistent use of the word 'contraction' in describing the split between *ground* and *existence*. For Schelling, God *contracts* Being, as Marquet explains:

> La liberté une fois pensée dans son "inapprochable pureté" ne pouvait y demeurer retenue, elle passait inévitablement dans l'existence — inévitablement, c'est-à-dire d'une manière aveugle et involontaire. Comme le dit très bien le terme allemand (*anziehen*) employé par Schelling, elle "attirait" ou "contractait" l'être, comme on contracte une maladie ou comme on s'attire un désagrément. (1973: 541).

Slavoj Žižek develops Marquet's reading and states:

> God unavoidably, of blind necessity that characterises the workings of fate, "contracts" Being, that is, a firm, impenetrable Ground. (Schelling, of course, plays upon the double meaning of the term *contraction*: to tighten-compress-condense *and* to catch, to be afflicted with, to go down with [an illness]; the primordial Freedom "contracts" Being as a painful burden that ties it down) (1997: 16).

The metaphor that both Sartre and Schelling are grasping for is a similar one; being is a *maladie* to be *contracted* — our human condition truly governed by a *condition.* The ultimate account of the human subject is catastrophic for them both, something must have "gone wrong" here – pre-ontologically – at the very heart of being itself. Sartre is unambiguous on this point, we must try to *illuminate* this condition, 'une faute originelle qu'on peut *éclairer* par la consideration de l'événement originel' (*CPM* 18). Schelling agrees with Sartre, and the aspect of Schelling's philosophy under consideration here deals with his attempts to think 'l'événement originel.'

Schelling has evidently distanced himself from his earlier identity philosophy, and instead argues that 'the ultimate goal of the universe and its history is nothing other than the complete reconciliation [*Versohnung*] with and reabsorption [*Wiederaufladung*] into the Absolute' (*PR* 31). This reconciliation ought to be understood as the conditions for

our redemption, our finding a cure for our *condition/ maladie,* and it is Schelling's attempts to speculate on the absolute origins of *pour soi* and *en soi* that we are most concerned with elucidating in this thesis. Schelling clearly demonstrates the mechanism by which the *pour soi* comes to exist from *en soi.* The freedom contained within God is shared with the *Gegenbild* [counter-image], and freedom is therefore granted the ontological primacy that is crucial to Schelling's account of freedom. In the next section, we further investigate how Sartre's reluctance to give a metaphysical account of how and why the *pour soi* is a nihilation found at the heart of *en soi* leaves him open to the charge that the examples he gives of love and desire, as well as of *pour soi* and *être-pour-autrui* more generally, rest on unstable foundations. In effect, this means that Sartre's arguments do not properly account for everything outside *en soi*, and, therefore, Sartre's philosophy in *EN* could be said to be the expression of a vast illusion (Gardner 2006: 261). I extend this critique to explicitly encompass love and desire, therefore reopening the possibility of love.

ii. Sartre's Atheistic Pause

For Sartre, as we have seen, love and desire are the mistaken attempts to reconcile the *pour soi* with features of stability and permanence that are available only to the *en soi*. Indeed, we stressed, as Sartre himself does in *EN,* that achieving this self-coincidence, that Sartre called the *en soi pour soi*, is a futile attempt to become God himself. However, this is precisely where the later Schelling found his place in our reconstruction, since Schelling attempted to think the impossible in the Sartrean sense. For Schelling, the primordial wound at the heart of being is greater than with Sartre, because it is precisely God himself who is irremediably lost to himself, he has fallen from the seat of the absolute. For Schelling, to achieve the impossible as *en soi pour soi* would be, in a sense,

to be back to square one, to be lost once again, this time *as* God himself – there is no self-coincidence in Schelling's version of pure *en soi pour soi*, God is nothing but a fragmented vessel.[23] Schelling takes a speculative leap from where Sartre has taken pause, he leaps into the abyss of trying to think pre-ontologically. No doubt, this sounds paradoxical and, perhaps, even nonsensical, yet what Schelling has created is a profoundly original, and completely innovative set of new metaphysical reflections that could be said to chime in step with Sartre's own radical originality. However, Schelling's is a leap in the direction of the onto-theological, as opposed to Sartre's atheistic pause (Gardner 2006: 260).

To see how this comparison makes sense, let us consider Sartre's discussion in *L'Existentialisme est un humanisme* of atheism:

> Si en effet, l'existence précède l'essence, on ne pourra jamais expliquer par référence à une nature humaine donnée et figée; autrement dit, il n'y a pas de déterminisme, l'homme est libre, l'homme est liberté. Si, d'autre part, Dieu n'existe pas, nous ne trouvons pas en face de nous des valeurs ou des ordres qui légitimeront notre conduite. Ainsi, nous n'avons ni derrière nous, ni devant nous, dans le domaine lumineux des valeurs, des justifications ou des excuses. *Nous sommes seuls, sans excuses*. C'est ce que j'exprimerai en disant que l'homme est condamné à être libre (39: my emphasis).
> […]
>
> L'existentialisme n'est pas tellement un athéisme au sens où il s'épuiserait à démontrer que Dieu n'existe pas. Il déclare plutôt: *même si Dieu existait, ça ne changerait rien*; voilà notre point de vue. Non pas que nous croyions que Dieu existe, mais nous pensons que le problème n'est pas celui de son existence; il faut que l'homme se retrouve lui-même et se persuade que rien ne peut le sauver de lui-même, fût-ce une preuve valable de l'existence de Dieu (77-8: my emphasis).

Sartre describes our ontological condition as characterised by alienation. Sartre says 'nous sommes seuls, sans excuse,' and concludes the chosen extract with his existential slogan: 'l'homme est condamné à être libre.' Though, what is arguably more interesting is the way that Sartre seems to sketch God as only tangentially, or better, parenthetically,

[23] I borrow this phrasing from Walter Benjamin (1999: 79).

relevant to ‘la réalité humaine;’ ‘même si Dieu existait, ça ne changerait rien,’ he says. Yet, Sartre’s condemnation *to* freedom, which holds that existence persists even without the support of God, is in the middle Schelling the opposite, which is to say that in Schelling’s project freedom is found *in* God. Sartre is right when he characterises his project as fundamentally optimistic, even though he does not allow for love to have true intersubjective value since in this quite formal sense, our radical freedom ought to be fully exercised: ‘en ce sens, l’existentialisme est un optimisme’ (*EH* 78). But Schelling’s account is precisely that the radical non-self-coincidence found in Sartre’s version of *pour soi* can, in a sense, be extended to be thought in God himself. God is apprehensive, radically dis-unified, uncertain of himself and of his act of Creation. God, too, is condemned to *his* absolute freedom, he is alienated, afraid, and without excuses. This conclusion yields a more intrinsically pessimistic view, a figure of God – an *en soi pour soi* – that is properly dethroned.

Speaking of God in this way is, no doubt, unfashionable to our contemporary intuitions, perhaps even objectionable to our atheistic sensibilities — as well as being both Eurocentric and Christian-centric. However, it must be noted that, for Schelling, these are not simply difficult philosophical problems that we are attempting to resolve, or interesting detours to entertain in our human reality. These problems, the tension of the irremediable non-self-coincidence of our subjectivity, are the very schism found at the heart of God himself, and this ought to be taken as a microcosm of our human condition. For Schelling, the “soul” is a serious concern, and it is precisely what is at stake. Schelling says in the second draft of his *Weltalter*:

> Man must be granted an essence outside and above the world; for how could he alone, of all creatures, retrace the long path of development from the present back into the deepest night of the past, how could he alone rise up to the beginning of things unless there were in him an essence from the beginning of times? (114).

For Schelling, attempting to speculate upon the origins of the world, time, and the universe is crucial to understanding both God and Man. This speculation is, in a sense, the metaphysical goal which, if adequately resolved, will alleviate the burden of our human condition — Man will be redeemed from the catastrophe of the Fall. Schelling's *Ages of the World* is characterised by its sense of urgency, possessing all the hallmark drama of the German Romantic period. And, for Schelling, in total contrast to the Enlightenment philosophers, we must go back to 'the deepest night,' no longer revel in the cleansing sunlight of Enlightened reason and rationalism (*Weltalter* 114). This seemingly doomed search through darkness is not as reactionary, or conservative, as it may appear since Schelling's work offers us a wholly reconfigured God — one who has shared his absolute freedom with Man. Schelling is doing something profoundly different in this text by attempting to speculate on the 'faute originelle' that Sartre argued 'qu'on peut *éclairer* par la considération de l'événement originel' (*CPM* 17-8). As we will see, there are many echoes to Lacan's psychoanalysis here, notably with "Kant avec Sade" and concerning *jouissance féminine,* which we will explore in chapters three and four.

Schelling holds that man is privy, by virtue of his essence, to a glimpse of the origins of the world. However, this is, Schelling says; 'the unfathomable' (*Weltalter* 14). For Schelling, the 'prehistoric age rests in this essence; although it faithfully protects the treasures of the holy past, this essence is in itself *mute* and cannot express what is enclosed within it' (ibid: my emphasis). For Schelling, we arrive at an impasse, subjects know that there is something to know about the origins of the world, but how do we grasp the inner core of it? All of knowledge, science, and history, for Schelling, succeeds only in unraveling the "facts" of available "data," so that, for Schelling: 'the history of nature has its monuments,' these are 'thoroughly researched, in part genuinely deciphered, and yet they tell us nothing but rather remain dead' (116), until such a time that we can think

the inner core of the thing, the primordial "something to know," by which Schelling means the moment of creation, or the "holy past." Schelling's discussion of time proposes a view of time which is unlike anything we understand it to be in the quotidian. The Past is not, for Schelling, a linear succession of "presents;" 'most know only of that [past] which grows within each moment through precisely that moment, and which is itself only becoming, not being' (*Weltalter* 120). So, when Schelling discusses the past he means something closer to what is best described as the biblical past:

> Thus, everything remains incomprehensible to man until it has become inward for him; that is, until it has been led back to precisely that innermost [aspect] of his essence which for him [is] the living witness of all truth (*Weltalter* 116).

Thus, for Schelling, to think *this* past is to make great metaphysical inroads in philosophy; it is, in contrast to Hegel's *Logic*, possible to think the historical past in this way: 'these lofty representations might protect him [Schelling referring to himself as philosopher] from the belaboured concepts of a sterile and dispirited dialectic [which is presumably a thinly veiled critique of Hegelian doctrine]' (*Weltalter* 117). It is to accept that 'our knowledge is incomplete, that is, it must be produced piecemeal in sections and degrees' (*Weltalter* 117). Schelling is keen to ascribe modesty to these reflections, and to the achievability of the task at hand, first to think the 'infinite manifold [that] is ultimately produced from the greatest simplicity of essence,' Man 'must experience it in himself' (*Weltalter* 117). However, Schelling knows this to be an extremely taxing task:

> But all experiencing, feeling, and intuiting is in and of itself mute and requires a mediating organ to gain expression. If the intuiter [*sic*] does not have this, or if he intentionally pushes it away from himself so that he might speak immediately from his intuition, he thereby loses the measure necessary to him: he is one with the object and, to a third [party], like the object itself. For precisely this reason, *he is not master of his thoughts; he is caught in a futile struggle*, *expressing without any certainty what is nonetheless inexpressible*; he encounters what he might, though without being sure of it, without being able to place it securely before him and, as it were, to reinspect it in the understanding as if in the mirror (*Weltalter* 117-8: my emphasis).

Schelling's first decisive insight is that the subject is 'not master of his thoughts,' and in a reverberating pre-echo to Sartre (and Lacan), 'he is caught in a futile struggle.' So Schelling says, in order to understand the past, we must posit the unconscious grounds of the beginning: 'unconscious presence of the eternal, science leads it up to the supreme transfiguration in a divine consciousness' (*Weltalter* 119).[24] Ominously, Schelling adds, 'this is still a time of struggle' (*Weltalter* 120). The general process is one of radical re-orientation, thus, in typical grandeur, Schelling announces that:

> The man who cannot separate himself from himself, who cannot break loose from everything that happens to him and actively oppose it – such a man has no past, or more likely he never emerges from it, but lives in it continually (*Weltalter* 120).

Schelling's insight is clear, he asks us to follow him in suspending the Present as constitutive in representing anything other than the appearance of day-to-day empirical reality – what we earlier called "data." Instead, Schelling's gambit is that we must try to separate ourselves from ourselves, draw closer to our divine essence, and try to think the historical past. This is already a radical subversion of philosophy as it stood at the turn of the nineteenth-century; Schelling is demanding from us a wholesale reconceptualisation of philosophy and time, in order to re-orient ourselves towards a theosophy. This new conception of 'the past,' for Schelling, is 'what came before the world' (*Weltalter* 121), and, for Schelling, the evidence of this biblical past exists all around us. According to Schelling, in order to understand this past, we must ask ourselves *how* are we to form a conception of the birth of the world, the oldest marks of the age of the world, without first positing these as 'unconscious.' For example, Schelling asks how can we understand the oldest geological formations, which have their birth before humanity, without first positing them as an unknown event, an 'unconscious' beginning of the world (*Weltalter*

[24] As we will discover in our later chapters, this description of the unconscious closely resembles Lacan's view of the same concept. See: chapter 4, section i.

121)? In *The Abyss of Freedom,* Žižek explains that 'Schelling's fundamental thesis is that, to put it bluntly, *the true Beginning is not at the beginning*: there is something that precedes the Beginning itself' (1997: 14). Schelling is searching for the 'beginning of the beginning,' he proclaims that there exists a primordial "something to know," of which we have an inkling by virtue of our essence, and which our task is to think. In other words, Schelling's attempts to comprehend the 'beginning of the beginning' is to locate what Sartre had called the 'faute originelle' (*CPM* 17). However, the difference with Sartre is that Schelling locates the true beginning in *en soi,* the original catastrophe is that it is the absolute, God himself, who has to learn to come to terms with himself.

Schelling argues that in order to understand the absolute past, and the resultant relationship between *en soi* and *pour soi,* we need to appreciate that time itself is constituted by two motions. One which propels time forwards, the other a slowing mechanism that attempts to prevent it from going too fast:

> Whoever takes time only as it presents itself feels a *conflict of two principles* in it; one strives forwards, driving towards development, and one holds back, inhibiting [hemmend] [*sic*] and striving against development (*Weltalter* 123: my emphasis).

This is important for Schelling since if this inhibiting element did not exist then time would take place in an 'uninterrupted flash' (*Weltalter* 123). Moreover, if the inhibiting element were to exercise itself too much then the world would be at total rest, and there would be only stillness. Therefore, it is the dynamic interplay of the continual conflict between the two elements that allows for time to be characterised as it appears to us (*Weltalter* 123). Crucially, this insight, adduced through time, is quickly enlisted to explain being; Schelling now argues that 'it is necessary to conceive of these principles in everything that is — indeed, in being' (*Weltalter* 123). This idea, distilled from the speculation on time, has clear bearings on our human subjectivity, Schelling argues. The conflict at the heart of being, which for Sartre in *EN* is the conflicting relationship

between the two incommunicable regions — *en soi* and *pour soi* — is in Schelling's *Weltalter* the 'original conflict of principles within being, which generates conscious subjectivity, and in so doing transposes itself into the relation of subject to world' (Gardner 2006: 253). In a sense, Schelling's speculations, adduced through time, have rendered explicit the relationship between the two forms of being; it is the continual dynamic interplay between *en soi* and *pour soi* that generates conscious subjectivity. Furthermore, Schelling's account of freedom is secure, since he invests the *en soi* with freedom — as we detailed in the last section — which is then reinvested into *pour soi* through the fall of the absolute into the *Gegenbild.*

Sartre's task in *EN* is a similar one; Sartre is attempting to build a concrete phenomenological picture where the two forms of being — *pour soi* and *en soi* — communicate with one another. He claims that these must be taken together in order to form a coherent whole: the two units of analysis form the concrete synthesis. Sartre claims that the *en soi* is beyond understanding, that it just *is*: 'l'*en soi* n'a pas de secret […] il est ce qu'il est […] — l'être-*en soi est*' (*EN* 33-34). So Sartre writes:

> Une foule de questions demeurent encore sans réponse: quel est le *sens* profond de ces deux types d'être? Pour quelles raisons appartiennent-ils l'un et l'autre à *l'être* en général? Quel est le sens de l'être, en tant qu'il comprend en lui ces deux régions d'être radicalement tranchées? Si l'idéalisme et le réalisme échouent l'un et l'autre à expliquer les rapports qui unissent en fait ces régions en droit incommunicables, quelle autre solution peut-on donner à ce problème? (*EN* 34).

Sartre's task is to answer these questions throughout *EN,* he says: 'elles ont abouti à une impasse puisque nous n'avons pu établir de liaison entre les deux régions d'être que nous avons découvertes' (*EN* 38). Sartre attempts to answer this by somehow linking *en soi* with *pour soi*, following Heidegger in appropriating *being-in-the-world* and elucidating it through anthropogenetic reading of humans: 'le concret, c'est l'homme dans le monde avec cette union spécifique de l'homme au monde que Heidegger, par exemple, nomme

"être-dans le monde"' (*EN* 38). And, although Sartre's suggestion that in order to move forward all we need to do is simply open our eyes – stating that: 'il suffit d'ouvrir les yeux et d'interroger en toute naïveté cette totalité qu'est l'homme dans-le-monde' (*EN* 38) –, this has perhaps not really allowed Sartre to answer his own question in a way which is sufficient, namely that of rendering intelligible the communication between *en soi* and *pour soi*. Sartre writes:

> Nous avions, dès notre introduction, découvert la conscience comme un appel d'être et nous avions montré que le *cogito* renvoyait immédiatement à un être-*en soi objet* de la conscience. Mais après description de l'*en soi* et du *pour soi*, il nous avait paru difficile d'établir un lien entre eux et nous avions craint de tomber dans un dualisme insurmontable. Ce dualisme nous menaçait encore d'une autre façon: dans la mesure, en effet, où l'on pouvait dire du *pour soi* qu'il était, nous nous trouvions en face de deux modes d'être radicalement distincts, celui du *pour soi* qui a à être ce qu'il est, c'est-à-dire qui est ce qu'il n'est pas et qui n'est pas ce qu'il est, et celui de l'*en soi* qui est ce qu'il est. Nous nous sommes demandé alors si la découverte de ces deux types d'être n'aboutissait pas à établir un hiatus scindant l'Être, comme catégorie générale appartenant à tous les existants, en deux régions incommunicables et dans chacune desquelles la notion d'Être devait être prise dans une acception originale et singulière. (*EN* 711)

To avoid confusion, Sartre, of course, does explain that the *en soi* and *pour soi* have been shown to relate to each other in some way throughout the course of the *EN,* that 'le *pour soi* et l'*en soi* sont réunis par une liaison synthétique qui n'est autre que le *pour soi* lui même (*EN* 711), which Sartre clarifies as being a 'néantisation qui prend son origine au sein de l'être' (*EN* 711). Sartre argues that this enables him to bat away the question as to *how* this union effectuates itself in the heart of being: 'nous n'avons donc pas lieu de nous interroger sur la manière dont le *pour soi* peut s'unir a l'*en soi* puisque le *pour soi* n'est aucunement une substance autonome' (*EN* 712). However, what Sartre had called 'une décompression de l'être' in his introduction is now under pressure — for it is the actual decompression itself that is not explained in any meaningful sense, nor does Sartre claim that the birth of the *pour soi* from *en soi,* by virtue of the *néantisation* in the heart of being, can be assumed to be a brute ontological fact:

> For example, [Sartre] takes care to say […] that the for-itself is a nihilation which *has its origin* in being, not that it is in being; so the question is expressly left open concerning the ground in being of the nihilation which the for-itself consists in (Gardner 2006: 251).

Therefore, Sartre has touched upon a problem that he, too, recognises; 'il y a donc place ici pour un problème métaphysique qui pourrait se formuler ainsi: Pourquoi le *pour soi* surgit-il à partir de l'être?' (*EN* 713). To answer this question, Sartre simply restates the, he argues, vital distinction between ontology and metaphysics; 'la métaphysique est à l'ontologie comme l'histoire à la sociologie. Nous avons vu qu'il serait absurde de se demander pourquoi l'être est,' indeed Sartre goes on to say that 'tous les "pourquoi," en effet, sont postérieurs à l'être et le supposent. L'être est, sans raison, sans cause et sans nécessité' (*EN* 713). For Sartre, the only questions that we should concern ourselves with are ontological questions to try and answer that, 'il s'agit […] d'expliquer un événement, non de décrire les structures d'un être' (*EN* 714). This is what we earlier referred to as Sartre's atheistic pause.

Sartre's reconstruction of two differing regions of being both striving for communication with each other is in Schelling the radical separation of *ground* from its *existence*. Both thinkers, it would seem, are attempting to grasp 'how individual self-conscious subjectivity can arise out of pre-self-conscious being' (Gardner 2011: 68). Yet, Schelling is willing to take the leap into speculative metaphysics to answer Sartre's 'pourquoi le *pour soi* surgit-il à partir de l'être?' (*EN* 713), whereas Sartre leaves the full weight of his conclusions in suspension, and without explication. It is for this reason that Schelling is included here, since the attempt to think the absolute is one speculative leap beyond Sartre, in the direction of an onto-theology (Gardner 2006: 253). Schelling's elaborate scheme is to try and uncover the origin of the *pour soi* in *en soi,* and Schelling manages to do so whilst maintaining Sartre's 'emphasis on the non-intentional character of the upsurge of the for-itself' (Gardner 2006: 253). Whereas Sartre explains the upsurge

of the *pour soi* as somehow a 'néantisation qui prend son origine au sein de l'être' (*EN* 711), this is 'reconceptualized in Schelling's idealistic terms, as the absolute or eternity' (Gardner 2006: 253). And so, 'at the point where what Sartre calls being-in-itself gives rise to the upsurge of the for-itself, being-in-itself *is* what onto-theology calls the highest being' (ibid). Schelling's insights are guaranteed by his deferral to 'the Absolute,' 'the eternal,' or 'God,' whereas Sartre's vast ontological programme does not have such a safety net. Sartre based everything on the *néantisation* at the heart of being. For Sartre, freedom *is* the very stuff of our existence, so that freedom and existence are synonymous, yet guaranteed by nothing — while simultaneously being the synecdoche for everything. The result is that Sartre's entire system outside of *en soi* is vulnerable to the charge that, 'while fully coherent, may nevertheless be merely the expression of a vast *illusion*' (ibid: 261). Gardner argues:

> Thus it remains entirely possible that all of Sartre's theory of nothingness, freedom, the mode of being of the for-itself, etc., is simply the expression of a systematic illusion: it is possible that Sartrean belief in the reality of everything over and above being-in-itself — everything which his ontology of the for-itself comprehends — is empty, and that in reality there is nothing but being-in-itself (ibid).

Schelling does not have this problem since he endows freedom with ontological primacy in *en soi*, whereas Sartre relegates freedom to an ontologically secondary position, as residing in the *pour soi.* For Schelling, as we have seen, God himself has *fallen* from himself, he has freely chosen the catastrophe of the Fall, and as such has freely fallen from the absolute. Therefore, God's choice remains an acutely *free choice* found right at the heart of the absolute, or the Sartrean *en soi.* In Schellingian terms, this is the 'décompression de l'être' that would explain the connection between *en soi* and *pour soi* which would substantiate the real, instead of falling into the charge of illusion.

The comparison with Schelling has unearthed how Sartre's ontological account could be said to have a crucial metaphysical problem; if Sartre refuses to accept the

charge that everything outside the *en soi* is ungrounded and illusory, he nevertheless suffers with the insurmountable consequences of an unfounded metaphysical system. On the other hand, Sartre could relinquish his atheistic pause and follow Schelling in the direction of an onto-theology — which, as Gardner points out, would not be inconsistent with Sartre's atheistic desires.[25] Nevertheless, the impossibility of love, as propounded in Sartre's ontological account of the *pour soi*, could be extended to being the *illusion of the impossibility of love*, opening, once again, the meaningful possibility of love and desire as not governed by the impossible characteristics endowed onto them by Sartre in *EN*.

In what follows, we undertake a detailed investigation of Lacan's psychoanalysis with the problematics outlined in this chapter in mind in order to demonstrate how Lacan's complex view of love brings us back full circle to its impossibility, with the caveat that love is impossible but necessary.

[25] Gardner argues:

> There is in fact no contradiction between an onto-theology of the appropriate kind, and Sartre's 'humanistic' claim for our total and exclusive self-responsibility. A form of onto-theology like Schelling's, in which the will does not follow from 'the understanding', and in which it is held that the transition from the being of God to that of the human subject is not a relation of purposive creation through which human beings are bound to a concept of an end lying in the divine mind, supplying them with an essence which precedes their existence, does not contradict Sartre's axiom of human freedom (Gardner 2006: 263).

CHAPTER 2 — TEMPORARY MISUNDERSTANDING
Part One: Imaginary, Symbolic, Real

Le langage joue entièrement
dans l'ambiguïté, et la plupart du
temps, vous ne savez absolument
rien de ce que vous dites.

Lacan, *Les Psychoses*

i. Introduction: Lacan, *Sujet supposé Savoir*

In this chapter, we turn our attention to Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic project. Lacan's contributions to the history of French philosophy are both wide-ranging and complex. The young Lacan first trained as a psychiatrist, and after having completed his medical doctorate, he sat the *concours du médicat* exam in 1934 to qualify as a 'médecin-chef des asiles' (Roudinesco 1993: 115). Lacan almost failed this exam, and in their examiners' report, his examiners noted that 'ce garçon nous ennuie' (114). And while Lacan did qualify, he never took up the intended post; instead opting to continue running his psychoanalytic practice (101). His first seminar, *S0*, *L'Homme aux loups, L'Homme aux rats*, took place between 1951-1953, and these seminars were held at Lacan's home. *S0* is the only seminar that was not stenographed, and so is unavailable for scrutiny. Lacan's last public seminar took place in August 1980, in Caracas, Venezuela, a year before his death (Krutzen 2009: XI).

Lacan is known for his many grandiose and controversial statements (notably: *l'inconscient est structuré comme un langage, il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel,* and ~~*La*~~ *femme n'existe pas*), as well as for his notoriously opaque writing style and eccentric presentation. As Jean Allouch remarks in *L'Amour Lacan,* there are long stretches in Lacan's seminars where nothing interesting happens for months, and times when his ideas develop very rapidly (2009: 251). This strategy is perhaps unsurprising since Lacan's ideas developed incrementally and in full public view, and, throughout the seminars, Lacan would make categorical statements one year only to correct himself the following year. This spasmodic style presents us with many challenges as we approach the Lacanian corpus. However, as we will see in more detail, Lacan's endless equivocation means that we cannot very convincingly pin him to anything. Although far from being problematic, we contend that we should enter into this ambiguous intellectual

spirit – devoid of certainty – to see that that is, in fact, the goal of Lacan's practice. As our final chapter will show, equivocation becomes central to Lacan's concept of *le sinthome.*

Lacan's public persona was that of an omniscient *maître*, and we contend that we ought to understand his public personality ironically. Just like his brand of psychoanalysis, Lacan's idiosyncratic persona contains its auto-critique. For example, Lacan presented himself as the absolute master,[26] yet in *SXI*, *Les Quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse*, he develops the *Sujet supposé Savoir* (SsS), and although Lacan affirms the subject's implacable need for a master, evidently the master who is supposed to know applies to Lacan, also. For Lacan, the Subject supposed to Know (SsS) is a charlatan and a fraud but one who kickstarts the process of transference between teacher and student by adopting the position of an allegedly all-knowing master. So, Lacan adopts the position of a charlatan and a fraud, whilst simultaneously affirming: 'il est bien certain, de la connaissance de tous, qu'aucun psychanalyste ne peut prétendre représenter, de façon si mince soit-elle, un savoir absolu' (*SXI* 210), and of course that includes Lacan himself. Therefore, Lacan's presentation as an all-knowing *maître* should be understood as parody – his seminars merely perform this persona of the master. For example, in *SVII*, *L'Éthique de la psychanalyse,* Lacan begins the November 25th session by flippantly declaring: 'miel, j'essaie de vous apporter mon miel' (*SVII* 27), and in the many available audio recordings of these seminars Lacan's auditors often laugh as he makes these increasingly ridiculous jokes. This aspect of Lacan's seminars gets lost in the published versions, and we mention this here since it is, we contend, crucial to understanding the performative dimension of Lacan's practice.

[26] I borrow this term from Borch-Jacobsen's *Lacan*: *Le Maître absolu* (1990).

Lacan's psychoanalytic project in relation to theories of subjectivity is governed by his desire to unravel the maxim that the subject is not his own master [*m'être*] (*SXVII* 178) but is instead governed by a *maître*. Lacan's philosophy relies on the idea that subjective insight is not located where philosophers have traditionally argued it ought to be, or where classical philosophy had placed the self prior to the advent of Freudian psychoanalysis. Mind-body dualism was abandoned by Freud (*SIII* 273), and Lacan argues that psychoanalysis's most significant early contribution to the understanding of subjectivity had been that the subject itself is not the site of the problem. Subjectivity, the location of the subject, and the ambiguous relation of being to consciousness will be our primary topics of interest in Lacan's early work.

The early Lacan, working on the Imaginary and the Symbolic, distinguishes the ego from the subject.[27] For Lacan, the ego exists in imaginary relations, 'si l'ego est une fonction imaginaire, il ne se confond pas avec le sujet' (*SI* 218). However, Lacan does not suggest that they are not related, 'tout ce qui est de l'ego doit être réalisé dans ce que le sujet reconnaît de lui-même' (*SI* 219). Therefore, the structure of the ego allows humans to enter the Symbolic through the Imaginary. I take this birth of the subject in the Symbolic as my starting point, and my aim is to build a coherent account of Lacan's argument that ultimately reaches the impasse expressed in his famous slogan: *il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel*.[28] Lacan's *non rapport sexuel* suggests that there is a deadlock at the heart of subjectivity, which emerges in the relations between two subjects, for example,

[27] This is reminiscent of Sartre's claim in *La Transcendance de l'ego* that the subject can only ever apprehend himself in fleeting moments, 'en effet, l'Ego n'apparaît jamais que lorsqu'on ne le regarde pas […] Alors, derrière l'état, à l'horizon, l'Ego paraît. Il n'est donc jamais vu que "du coin de l'œil"' (70). Indeed, as Clotilde Leguil argues in *Sartre avec Lacan*, these two thinkers are not the strange bed-fellows they are often cast as: 'notre analyse conduit à affirmer qu'il [Lacan] a aussi formulé son retour à Freud en empruntant à Sartre certaines de ses thèses et quelques-uns de ses concepts' (2012: 22). While Sartre influenced Lacan in many ways, Lacan also draws inspiration from other contemporaries: Heidegger, Kojève, Hyppolite, and Jakobson. The influence of Freud, Hegel (albeit, via Kojève and Hyppolite (Žižek 2012: 507), and Saussure cannot be overstated (see: Roudinesco 1993 [on Saussure]: 51, [on Kojève]: 94, [on Hyppolite]: 222, [on Heidegger]: 291/298, [on Jakobson]: 304.)

[28] Lacan frequently discusses the *non rapport sexuel*, especially in the later seminars from *SXV* onwards. See for example *SXX* p. 17 and *AÉ* p. 455.

Man and Woman.[29] For Lacan, the absent sexual relationship is the by-product of a myriad of interrelated problems. We reconstruct a partially chronological account of Lacan's argument as it mirrors incremental developments in his thought through the yearly seminars.

For Lacan, if sexual relations were successfully achieved between subjects, the Other would be annihilated, the subject who achieved such a state would instantly transform themselves into the mythical Father of unregulated desire ['*le père de la horde*'], and would have foreclosed the master signifier (*SXVII* 129-30). In what follows, I aim to unpack these jargon-laden Lacanian assertions and explain why Lacan arrives at these conclusions. In part two of this chapter, after having reconstructed the necessary Lacanian framework in part one, I aim to complicate Lacan's argument by reintroducing onto-theology in discussions with Lacan on God. I will argue, by exploiting the now open possibility of love from chapter one in relation to Sartre's conception of *en soi pour soi,* that, since God himself has fallen from the seat of the Absolute, God can now be conceptualised differently. Schelling's construal of the metaphysical Fall of Man, we suggested, created difficulty for Sartre's argument that *pour soi* is founded on a decompression of being from *en soi.* If Schelling is correct and God has fallen from the seat of the Absolute, we are now able to consider Schelling's fallen God alongside Lacan's suggestion that God is potentially pernicious and evil; a God who only maintains the *appearance* of himself as stable and permanent.

Beginning with Descartes's *Fourth Meditation*, Lacan makes the argument that God (or, *en soi pour soi*) might be deceiving us, which means that the empirical world is governed only by an appearance of stability and permanence. I engage Lacan into a discussion with Schelling and argue that since God has fallen from the seat of the

[29] 'Man' and 'Woman' are to be understood as psychoanalytic concepts linked to sexual difference but not based on anatomy/ gendered difference.

Absolute, perhaps God's deception is double — both as the perceived deceit of a stable world, and as the perceived deceit of his own stability and permanence.

I argue that love remains a possibility as *en soi pour soi,* since it is precisely *en soi pour soi,* the Other par excellence, that we know nothing about. However, for now, we argue that we love precisely because we do not know, love is possible because we will never know. I argue that the best way to conceptualise *en soi pour soi* in relation to love is akin to the figure of the decorator crab. A crab which having camouflaged itself to look like a rock (*une pierre*), and so taking on the appearance of an inanimate object characterised by 'stability' and 'permanence' (*en soi*), suddenly sprouts legs and begins to rush off the beach (*en soi pour soi*). The decorator crab is a metaphor for the pernicious God, who, after having fallen from the seat of the absolute is scared and alone. The crab's final act on his descent from the heavens was to seemingly render the world empirically stable. Analogously, attempting to love, trying to achieve *en soi pour soi,* is not impossible because, ultimately, we would not be attempting to grasp at the static and the infinite, rather we would be grasping for an unknown, which is a theological *leap of faith*. This leap could very well end in failure, but it is not (yet) impossible. Sartre would be incorrect, since the metaphor of the decorator crab illustrates the potential for the unknown in the guise of what looks like *en soi.*

In order to construct a cogent account of Lacan's ideas on philosophical themes, I undertake a comprehensive analysis, by no means exhaustive, of his work on language, psychosis, as well as mapping out the complex system that Lacan elaborates throughout the developments of his thought. For now, I omit Lacan's work on transference.[30]

[30] Indeed, there is much on Lacan I omit, for now, since the literature on love and psychoanalysis is extensive. For example (not-exhaustive): Copjec 1994; David-Ménard 1997; Morel 2000; Soler 2003; Balmès 2007; Allouch 2009; Monnier 2011; Žižek 2012.

ii. The Problem with Language

According to Lacan, the central psychoanalytic insight stems from 'le recours à la lettre' (*SIII* 272). Simply put, this slogan is a note on the use of language. The psychoanalytic tradition appreciates that, while language is an imperfect substitute for what the subject is really trying to say, we must nevertheless take the subject at her/his word – since the language deployed by any given subject contains the inexpressible kernel that eludes even the subject himself. The psychoanalytic task, then, is to grasp these moments from the unconscious and bring them into consciousness. 'Tout découle de là. Quel est cet autre qui parle dans le sujet, et dont le sujet n'est ni le maître, ni le semblable, quel est l'autre qui parle en lui? Tout est là' (*SIII* 272). From this point, we are able to extrapolate quite a significant portion of Lacan's early thinking — namely the triad: Imaginary, Symbolic, and Real.

Freud heavily influenced Lacan, and Lacan considered himself a Freudian right up to his death – stating as late as 1980 in Caracas, Venezuela: 'Moi, je suis freudien' (*SXXVII* 2) – and, throughout his teachings, Lacan remains faithful to Freud's central idea that subjectivity is somehow defective. Therefore, it is unsurprising that Lacan inaugurated his practice with a plea for a return to Freud. However, as Lacan says: 'le sens d'un retour à Freud, c'est un retour au sens de Freud' (*É* 405), which means that his 'return to Freud' is his *own* profoundly original return. Lacan reads Freud quite liberally, and his engagement with Freud's writings illustrates Lacan's view about the instability of language itself.

If Lacan's philosophy has a core, it would be the idea that language is ambiguous and actively duplicitous: 'le langage joue entièrement dans l'ambiguïté, et la plupart du temps, vous ne savez absolument rien de ce que vous dites' (*SIII* 131). However, Lacan affirms the ambiguity of language in clear language, which paradoxically allows for a

reading of the ambiguity of language as straightforward (*SIII* 184) — and so taking language at its word. This complication is essential since it allows, according to Lacan, for *temporary misunderstanding* in his psychoanalysis.[31] Lacan's method of understanding is through this essential detour. 'Au pied de la lettre' Lacan stresses, because it illustrates his keen belief in disassociating the subject from her/his conscious speech. Lacan explicitly refers to language as untameable, yet we must work within its bounds, 'si la psychanalyse habite le langage, elle ne saurait sans s'altérer le méconnaître en son discours' (*SIII* 164). What is clear is that language is 'a marker of absence,' that 'illusion and imagination have an important role to play in self-understanding' (Howells 2011: 134-8). Lacan's primary aim is not necessarily to promote clarity of expression — for Lacan clarity of expression is, in a sense, a decoy; false security that does everything to obfuscate the nature of complex concepts. In *Écrits,* Lacan explains:

> L'écrit se distingue en effet par une prévalence du *texte*, au sens qu'on va voir prendre ici à ce facteur du discours, — ce qui y permet ce resserrement qui à mon gré ne doit laisser au lecteur d'autre sortie que son entrée, que je préfère difficile (493).

Lacan goes to great lengths to, on the one hand, prevent misunderstandings, while simultaneously maintaining the ambiguity of language itself. 'J'approche, vous le voyez, par petites touches,' Lacan says in the unpublished manuscript of SXV*, L'Acte psychanalytique*. He goes on:

> Je ne peux pas dire ces choses en termes tout de suite affichés — si l'on peut dire – non pas du tout qu'à l'occasion je ne le pratique pas, mais parce qu'ici en cette matière qui est délicate, ce qu'il s'agit d'éviter avant tout, c'est le malentendu (22).

Misunderstandings are to be avoided, through an only temporary misunderstanding. The temporary lapse in clarity of expression and the temporary misunderstanding is essential

[31] We revisit this idea in our discussion of Scudéry's *Carte de Tendre.*

to the Lacanian method. Lacan argues we should read other philosophers in this way too, for example Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*:

> Lisez l'*Éthique à Nicomaque,* […] Sans doute quelques difficultés se rencontrent-elles dans le texte de son énoncé, dans ses détours, dans l'ordre de ce qu'il discute. Mais franchissez les passages qui vous sembleraient trop compliqués, ou bien ayez une édition avec de bonnes notes qui vous réfèrent à ce qu'il est nécessaire de connaître de sa Logique, à l'occasion, pour comprendre les problèmes qu'il évoque. Surtout, ne vous embarrassez pas de tout saisir paragraphe par paragraphe, mais essayez d'abord de lire de bout en bout, et vous en aurez sûrement la récompense (*SVII* 30).

There is no need to grasp every sentence and every word. For Lacan, 'lisez'! The reader will surely gain something from an insufficient first reading. Of course, Lacan's final aim *is* to transmit a fullness of comprehension of delicate concepts that speech and writing themselves make difficult, he clarifies: 'ce qui est important, c'est de comprendre ce qu'on dit. Et pour comprendre ce qu'on dit, il importe d'en voir les doublures, les résonances, les superpositions significatives' (*SIII* 131). Therefore, for example, Lacan seeks to read *into* Freud, which is why Lacan believes he has provided a 'retour au *sens* de Freud.'

Lacan's methodological approach is a form of hermeneutic exegesis of the language the subject deploys. It is for this reason that Lacan suggests we should follow a strategy of temporarily misunderstanding in order to finally understand his meaning because, at first glance, his ideas seem incomprehensible or counterintuitive. In *SXVIII, D'un discours qui ne serait pas du semblant,* Lacan offers his readers hope by remarking to his critics who claim that he is incomprehensible: '*on n'y comprend rien,* qu'ils m'ont dit. Remarquez que c'est beaucoup. Quelque chose auquel on ne comprend rien, c'est tout l'espoir, c'est le signe qu'on en est affecté' (*SXVIII* 105). For Lacan, the comprehension of difficult concepts is possible in language; yet language is not what it seems. Lacan contends that the Real does not easily manifest itself in language: 'c'est vous dire combien il ne faut pas s'illusionner sur l'idée que le langage est modelé par une

appréhension simple et directe du réel' (*SIII* 133), and according to Lacan, the subject needs to work hard to get a sense of the Real in language.

Lacan impresses upon us that the radical inexpressibility of language mimics the radical inexpressibility of the unconscious, and it is for this reason that the unconscious is structured like a language (*SIII* 187). Lacan says, 'l'inconscient est, dans son fond, structuré, tramé, chaîné, tissé de langage' (*SIII* 135). Language ultimately leaves subjects feeling wanting, since it is an imperfect tool for understanding the unconscious:

> L'obscurité, la confusion dans laquelle nous vivons, et grâce à quoi nous avons toujours, quand nous exposons quelque chose, ce sentiment de discordance de ne jamais être tout à fait ce que nous voulons dire. C'est cela, la réalité du discours (*SIII* 176).

Obscurity is woven into discourse, and confusions are a necessary part of expression in-itself, and Lacan cautions us not to blindly trust in words and labels. In *SVII*, *l'Éthique de la psychanalyse,* he says: 'mais attention, il y a lieu de ne pas se fier aux mots et aux étiquettes' — relying on words and labels is dangerous for Lacan, it obstructs both the '*vérité libératrice*' as well as the location of truth (*SVII* 32). Language is problematic; it partly carries the liberating truth while disguising it, also – which is why Lacan urges us to proceed cautiously. The "problem with language" sets the intellectual ground for the *point de capiton* (quilting point), that becomes central to Lacan's conception of the big Other from the 1950s onwards. This discussion also sets the scene for understanding how the *pas-toute*, explored in section vii, is meaningless yet envelops all truth and knowledge.

iii. The Birth of the big Other and the Oedipus Complex

At the outset of this chapter, we highlighted the view that Freudian psychoanalysis dethroned the subject from its position in classical thought.[32] Freud postulated the unconscious and revealed that central aspects of our subjectivity resided in the unconscious. This psychoanalytic idea shares the ambivalent structure that Lacan assigns to language (Howells 2011: 134), which is to say that language mediates subjective understanding, and, therefore, subjectivity must also share some of the obscurity of language. Lacan says, 'l'inconscient est un concept forgé sur la trace de ce qui opère pour constituer le sujet' (*SIII* 194). The unconscious shapes the subject, and the unconscious is structured like a language, in language itself. It is language 'which makes us subjects rather than mere animals' (Howells 2011: 134), and language necessarily implies language *for* someone else; 'le langage avant de signifier quelque chose, signifie pour quelqu'un' (*É* 82). According to Lacan, despite the ambiguities of language, we are still able to communicate with one another since when subjects communicate, they ignore the fundamental ambiguity of language. We prevent the discordance between our experience of language as ambiguous, untrustworthy, and duplicitous, and the everyday use of language by ignoring the fundamental ambiguity of language in interlocution with another (*É* 82).

[32] Of course this is too cursory, while Freud is generally considered to have popularised the notion of a 'split subject' (conscious/ unconscious) — 'no twentieth-century discussion of what the subject is and where it comes from has been untouched by the theories and vocabulary of Freudian psychoanalysis' (Mansfield 2000: 25) — it is useful to contextualise Freud himself. It is unclear if Freud read Schelling, but it is clear that he read Kant. Freud did not always see Kant as a willing partner; Freud rejected Kantianism 'because of the associated "transcendental" qualities of its epistemology' (Tauber 2010: 10). However, Freud's division of the mind into 'unconscious' and 'conscious' faculties, with biological characteristics of the 'unconscious' — subject to natural causation, and rational characteristics of our 'conscious' faculty — independent of natural cause, meant that Freud followed a Kantian construction of epistemological partitioning in order to engender our self-understanding (ibid 117). Therefore, Freud is heavily indebted to nineteenth-century developments in Kantian, and post-Kantian philosophy. See: Longuenesse 2012, Tauber 2010, and Nicholls & Liebscher 2010. For more on the lineage and developments of the unconscious see: Whyte 1960, Henry 1993, and Bell 2005. Lacan also acknowledged his debt to Kant: 'la philosophie, depuis quelque temps, depuis Kant au moins, s'efforce d'ailleurs de nous avertir à tue-tête qu'il y a des champs différents de la réalité, et que les problèmes s'expriment, s'organisent et se posent dans des registres également différents' (*SIII* 126).

For Lacan, language is made up of signs, 'cette expérience est d'abord du langage, un langage, c'est-à-dire un signe' (ibid), and signs are constituted by signifiers, and signifiers are understood in relation to the Symbolic Order. Therefore, the Symbolic Order is the domain of language for the subject, and Lacan says:

> Qu'un nom, si confus soit-il, désigne une personne déterminée, c'est exactement en cela que consiste le passage à l'état humain. Si on doit définir à quel moment l'homme devient humain, disons que c'est au moment où, si peu que ce soit, il entre dans la relation symbolique (*SI* 178).

Subjects enter the Symbolic Order as soon as they are interpellated by name, which is to say as soon as they are named as infants (or before), and at that moment they become human. For Lacan, subjectivity is not necessarily located in conscious speech, as we identified earlier, and Lacan is contesting the idea that the subject is the site of his/her subjectivity (*SIII* 47). Subjects partake in the Symbolic Order through language, and human beings intersubjectively share the faculty of language. However, it does not necessarily follow that language or conscious speech is the location of the subject or subjective insight. The subject can attempt to articulate and describe language's structure by deploying words, and the subject can utilise language to explain and describe specific symptoms, delusions, or psychotic episodes, yet, fundamentally, language's first function is to necessarily imply an other, someone else, which is to say that language does not exist without the relationship between subject and other. Earlier, we explained how for Lacan, language before signifying something, must signify *for someone,* 'le langage avant de signifier quelque chose, signifie pour quelqu'un' (*É* 82). This 'someone' must be other than me, and, therefore, 'du moment que le sujet parle, il y a l'Autre avec un grand A' (*SIII* 52). Lacan's highly original move is to suggest that the spoken word of an other inaugurates the big Other, and this big Other, to put it in crude terms, is the stand-in for

the Symbolic Order.[33] Therefore, the big Other is a necessary counterpart to language, and, for Lacan, subjects not only interact with each other but with the big Other:

> À l'intérieur de la notion de communication en tant que généralisée, je spécifie ce que c'est que la parole en tant que parler à l'autre. C'est faire parler l'autre comme tel. […] Cet autre, nous l'écrirons, si vous le voulez bien, avec un grand A (*SIII* 48).

For Lacan, it hardly matters if there is an empirical other person to consent to the subject's use of language or their speech, because there always exists a 'third,' a big Other who hears what we have to say, who consents to our use of language and our speech, thereby reinforcing our obedience to the Symbolic Order.

According to Lacan, the Symbolic Order overlaps with the Imaginary and the Real, and these three realms interact with each other in several ways.[34] For example, Lacan characterises the ego as unstable and aggressive, depicting it as rivalrous and jealous, and, according to Lacan, the ego will necessarily attempt to establish its dominance over other egos in the imaginary realm. However, in the Symbolic Order, the big Other acts to regulate these aggressive egos through a process that creates and forms the subject, transforming their ego-ideal into the Ideal-Ego – as we will explore in much more detail in our next chapter.

Lacan explains that the desiring subject emerges from a series of incoherent desires that are themselves rooted in the incoherent set of desires that the egos form based on the desire of the other. Lacan says:

> L'objet humain se distingue par sa neutralité et sa prolifération indéfinie. Il n'est pas dépendant de la préparation d'aucune coaptation instinctuelle du sujet, comme il y a coaptation, emboîtement, d'une valence chimique avec une autre. Ce qui fait que le monde humain est un monde couvert d'objets est fondé sur ceci, que l'objet d'intérêt humain, c'est l'objet du désir de l'autre (*SIII* 50).

[33] Which is why in the graph of desire Lacan illustrates the "voix" as partly constituting the big Other for the subject, see figure 3.1, chapter three.
[34] For a visual representation of the interplay between the three realms, see Lacan's Borromean knot, chapter four, section i.

The object of human interest is the object of desire of the other, and, according to Lacan, this interest in the desire of the other is an incoherent desire. Therefore, Lacan claims that the body is fragmented at the mirror stage because, in the Imaginary, the ego necessarily predicates itself on an *alter ego.* Lacan says: 'la première synthèse de l'*ego* est essentiellement *alter ego,* elle est aliénée' (*SIII* 50). In the sentence that immediately follows, Lacan shifts from the ego to the subject in the Symbolic: 'le sujet humain désirant se constitue autour d'un centre qui est l'autre en tant qu'il lui donne son unité' (*SIII* 50). So, the subject partly emerges from an original incoherence which is found in the subject's ego in the Imaginary realm.

It might seem paradoxical for Lacan to jump from the ego in the Imaginary to the subject in the Symbolic, but Lacan is simply highlighting the linguistic connection between the two realms. An aggressive tension characterises egos in the Imaginary, and this, Lacan says, leaves its mark on the big Other in the Symbolic: 'le caractère agressif de la concurrence primitive laisse sa marque dans toute espèce de discours sur le petit autre, sur l'Autre en tant que tiers' (50). This move enables Lacan to claim that the subject's object of desire is the other's object of desire, because 'le moi humain, c'est l'autre' (ibid). We will explore this in much greater detail as it relates to the Symbolic Order in our next chapter, suffice to say for now that the early Lacan argues that the subject, in early childhood and adolescence, models him/herself on others before their own wishes and desires emerge through a process called subject formation (*SIII* 50).

As we said, the ego's strategy of modelling its desire on the desires of the other is rooted in an incoherent set of desires, and this is based on the ego's fallacious belief that the other has a more coherent set of desires than its own. As a result, for Lacan, the ego is a fragmented body, and the emergence of its own character ['surgissement de sa propre tendance' (ibid)] is trapped in the imaginary relationship it builds with the world at the

mirror stage; 'il y suffit de comprendre le stade du miroir *comme identification* au sens plein que l'analyse donne à ce terme: à savoir la transformation produite chez le sujet, quand il assume une image' (*É* 94). The infant does not recognise their body as fragmented in their mirror image; instead, they assume the '*je-idéal*' of the (imagined) seemingly coherent and fully formed image which is being reflected back at them. When egos stare at themselves in the mirror, they are confident that they exist, and egos see themselves as possessing a full being. However, Lacan argues that this stable relationship between the ego and its mirror image is only imagined; an imagined ego-ideal replaces the incoherent, fragmented body that is staring back at us in the mirror. However, the infant's identification with the ego-ideal reveals the tension between the missing object of the infant's desire and the other's object of desire, inaugurating, for Lacan, a dualism at the heart of the ego.

Our relationship with the other takes place in our communications with the other, and this communication is predicated on jealousy and rivalry: 'toute connaissance humaine prend sa source dans la dialectique de la jalousie, qui est une manifestation primordiale de la communication' (*SIII* 49). For Lacan, the instability of this 'primodial communication,' cemented at the mirror stage in relation to desire and the other, is the distinction between the Imaginary and the Real (*SIII* 50). Lacan is careful to say 'primodial communication' and not language, because language belongs to the subject in the Symbolic, and, at this stage, he is primarily describing egos in the Imaginary. Therefore, the aggressive relationship between egos is at the heart of all primordial communications with the other; 'la parole est toujours pacte, accord, on s'entend, on est d'accord […] Mais le caractère agressif de la concurrence primitive laisse sa marque dans toute espèce de discours' (*SIII* 50). Lacan argues that, if taken to its limit, this aggressive

tension in primodial communication would mean that it is possible to quash the other (*d'annuler l'autre*):

> Pour une simple raison. Le départ de cette dialectique étant mon aliénation dans l'autre, il y a un moment où je peux être mis en posture d'être moi-même annulé parce que l'autre n'est pas d'accord. La dialectique de l'inconscient implique toujours comme une de ses possibilités, la lutte, l'impossibilité de la coexistence avec l'autre (*SIII* 50-1).

Lacan then deploys this 'dialectic of the unconscious' to draw parallels with Hegel's Master and Slave dialectic. The connections to Sartre are also stark since 'l'impossibilité de la coexistence avec l'autre' is clearly influenced by Sartre's discussions of the impossibility of love and desire in *EN*, explored in chapter one. Importantly, for Lacan, subjects vie in a contest for true recognition from the big Other but no subject will ever be vindicated in their struggle, since there is no adjudicator, no judge; no one subject will win since the big Other is vacuous and unknown, and yet the big Other remains paramount for all signification and maintains the Symbolic Order.

In order to develop the function of this third other, the big Other, we turn to the antagonisms in intersubjective relationships at the cusp between the Imaginary and Symbolic realms. For Lacan, the aggressive tension between egos is central to all relationships, including erotic relationships, and the mirror stage brings to the fore the same tension which is, correspondingly, inherent to the ego (*SIII* 107). Lacan says:

> Si la relation agressive intervient dans cette formation qui s'appelle le moi, […] c'est que le moi est d'ores et déjà par lui-même un autre, qu'il s'instaure dans une dualité interne au sujet. Le moi est ce maître que le sujet trouve dans un autre, et qui s'instaure dans sa fonction de maîtrise au cœur de lui-même. Si dans tout rapport, même érotique, avec l'autre, il y a quelque écho de cette relation d'exclusion, *c'est lui ou moi*, c'est que, sur le plan imaginaire, le sujet humain est ainsi constitué que l'autre est toujours près de reprendre sa maîtrise par rapport à lui, qu'en lui il y a un moi qui lui est toujours en partie étranger, maître implanté en lui par-dessus l'ensemble de ses tendances, de ses comportements, de ses instincts, de ses pulsions (ibid).

Lacan argues that when the ego apprehends itself in the Imaginary, it is unwittingly constituted by the other's object of desire – creating a duality between the ego's object of

desire and the other's object of desire, as we have already identified. For Lacan, 'le moi est ce maître que le sujet trouve dans un autre,' by which he means that the subject is necessarily unstable since the subject's ego is to be found in the other, who is its master. This duality at the heart of the ego resembles the one that is at stake in erotic relations; for example, in the breakdown of a loving relationship, the sudden withdrawal of one's former lover can often be painful because our previous partner seemingly held our ego securely ['le moi est ce maître que le sujet trouve dans un autre'], which has now been squashed and left in ruin. For Lacan, the ego in the Imaginary realm is fighting two wars, one internally and one with others. In erotic relations, the other can quash the ego [*annuler*], and be his/her master, and, conversely, the ego is always ready to regain its mastery over the other, and in so doing, the ego could quash the other. Moreover, since the other is the master of the subject's ego in the Imaginary realm, and the other seems to possess all their tendencies [*l'ensemble de ses tendances*] — behavioural traits, instincts, and drives that are merely implanted in the ego — the other could easily hijack the ego [*c'est lui ou moi*].

However, in the internal conflict between the drives, Lacan argues, the ego must choose which drives and tendencies it should embody, and which ones it should discard. As egos, we do not know why we choose what we choose, there are some drives and tendencies we adopt and some we do not, but regardless of the choices we make; the 'synthesis of the I' is never accomplished. 'Synthesis' is not coherent in the Imaginary, and Lacan suggests, 'on ferait mieux de dire fonction de maîtrise' (*SIII* 108). The 'function of mastery' we adopt is always made in relation to the big Other's desire, who is both inside and outside the ego. It is for this reason that any equilibrium reached with another ego is characterised by a fundamental instability (*SIII* 108).

> Son unification ne sera jamais complète parce qu'elle s'est faite précisément par une voie aliénante, sous la forme d'une image étrangère, qui constitue une

> fonction psychique originale. La tension agressive de ce *moi ou l'autre* est absolument intégrée à toute espèce de fonctionnement imaginaire chez l'homme (*SIII* 110).

The aggressive tension between egos (or, the dialectic of the unconscious) necessarily precludes any co-existence with the other. Relations between egos in the Imaginary are necessarily unstable as a result, and, if left to their own devices, this would result in totally unregulated mayhem. Therefore, something needs to structure the Imaginary, and Lacan argues that this void is filled by the big Other, language, and the Symbolic Order; without which the aggressive relations in the Imaginary between egos would lead to a complete collision: 'un écrabouillement général […] L'ambiguïté, la béance de la relation imaginaire exigent quelque chose qui maintienne relation, fonction et distance. C'est le sens même du complexe d'Œdipe' (*SIII* 111). Therefore, for Lacan, the Oedipus complex emerges as a result of the aggressive tensions between egos at the heart of the Imaginary relations.

Without the Oedipus complex, the aggressive tension between egos would be laced with incestuous drives and would lead to further conflict and ruin. In order for humans to have the most "normal" relations a 'third' needs to intervene, and the 'third' needs to be the model for a successful relationship, 'le modèle d'une harmonie' (*SIII* 111). For Lacan, this model of harmony must be an injunction enshrined in law, the Law of the Symbolic Order:

> L'intervention de l'ordre de la parole, c'est-a-dire du père. Non pas le père naturel, mais de ce qui s'appelle le père. L'ordre qui empêche la collision et l'éclatement de la situation dans l'ensemble est fondé sur l'existence de ce nom du père (*SIII* 111).

Lacan insists the *Nom-du-Père* is the master signifier in the signifying chain that reigns over the Symbolic Order. This signifier (*Nom-du-Père*) is identical to the other signifiers that regulate Symbolic life, for example, the *fear-of-God*, *the Phallus,* and *the Father*. These signifiers found the symbolic law, the structure, within which subjects are allowed

to operate, 'l'ordre symbolique doît être conçu comme quelque chose de superposé, et sans quoi il n'y aurait pas de vie animale possible pour ce sujet biscornu qu'est l'homme' (*SIII* 111). The Symbolic Order is fundamental, it is what makes human life possible, and it contains language, the law, and the signifying chain. Lacan says, 'c'est dans le *nom du père* qu'il nous faut reconnaître le support de la fonction symbolique qui, depuis l'orée des temps historiques, identifie sa personne à la figure de la loi' (*É* 278). The role it plays in the Oedipus complex is key since it regulates the subject's desires (Grigg 2008: 9). We now turn to what happens when this Symbolic Order is mis-structured for the subject, which results in the pre-psychotic subject.

iv. Psychosis, Foreclosure, and Sexual Difference

Psychosis and foreclosure are fundamental concepts in Lacan's conceptual scheme, and, in order to develop an understanding of *sexuation* and sexual identity that informs much of the second half of this chapter in relation to Lacan's famous slogan *il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel,* we begin by discussing foreclosure [*forclusion*]. It is precisely the absence of phallic meaning (or, the master signifier) in psychosis that informs our understanding of Lacan's view of sexual difference and love, and, as is often the case with Lacan's work, a *temporary detour* is essential: 'si cela ne vous paraît pas évident la contre-épreuve, comme d'habitude, l'est bien plus' (*SIII* 47).[35]

Though we encounter the Symbolic Order at the original level of naming (and so language), we are only properly inculcated into the Symbolic Order from early childhood onwards. It is during this process that subjects are either properly oedipalised or not; as Howells put it: 'entry into the Symbolic Order is conditional on the initial renunciation of *jouissance* in the castration complex; because the signifier creates and splits the subject'

[35] As we explored in section II.ii

(2011: 137). Subjects are exposed to certain signifiers (*le Phallus/ Crainte de Dieu/ le Père/ Nom-du-Père*) that are either recognised or misidentified, which results in a structuring or mis-structuring in the subject's relationship with the Symbolic Order, and, according to Lacan, this has severe consequences for subject development. The Symbolic Order is 'au-dela de toute compréhension, à l'interieur de quoi toute compréhension s'insère, et qui exerce une influence si manifestement perturbante sur les rapports humains et interhumains' (*SIII* 17). Much like the interrelated concept of language, the Symbolic Order is both beyond all comprehension, and the mechanism by which all comprehension is apprehended, 'le compréhensible est un terme toujours fuyant, insaisissable […] Commencez par ne pas croire ce que vous comprenez. Partez de l'idée du malentendu fondamental' (*SIII* 29). This is why, as we have shown, Lacan refers to the big Other as something about which we know nothing, 'l'Autre en tant qu'il n'est pas connu' (*SIII* 51). The big Other belongs to the Symbolic, and in crude terms, it is the mis-structuring of the subject's relationship with the big Other which leads to psychosis.

Lacan aims to show how the subject experiences foreclosure by studying the clues offered by psychotic subjects and their manifestations in psychotic breakdowns. According to Lacan, foreclosure is a specific mechanism located at the origin of psychosis and predicated on the subject's rejection of specific foundational signifiers (Laplanche & Pontalis 2014: 163). Lacan's *SIII, Les Psychoses,* attempts to interpret Freud's '*Verwerfung*' as '*forclusion*' by undertaking a close exegesis of Daniel Schreber's *Memoirs of my Nervous Illness* (1903). Schreber's text had been the subject of a detailed analysis by Freud, whose efforts were directed towards understanding psychotic symptoms at the turn of the twentieth century. Lacan criticised the prevailing clinical view of Schreber's psychosis as having remained at the level of unconscious drives, and subsequent repression of homosexual tendencies: 'la psychanalyse explique le

cas du président Schreber, et le paranoïa en general, par un schéma suivant lequel la pulsion inconsciente du sujet n'est autre qu'une tendance homosexuelle' (*SIII* 39). Instead, Lacan argues that Schreber was not properly inculcated into the Symbolic Order at the oedipal stage. In simple terms, Schreber experienced foreclosure, a rejection of the primordial signifiers, which resulted in delusions and dysfunctional intra-human relationships. Schreber's psychosis, according to Lacan, was prompted by a defective inculcation into the Symbolic Order, a schism which only appeared at a later moment in Schreber's psychic development:

> Il se peut qu'au départ il n'y ait pas assez de pieds au tabouret, mais qu'il tienne tout de même jusqu'à certain moment, quand le sujet, à un certain carrefour de son histoire biographique, est confronté avec ce défaut qui existe depuis toujours (*SIII* 229).

Psychosis and foreclosure do not indicate that Schreber did not identify with *a* symbolic order; Lacan insists on this point. Against prevailing theories, Lacan interprets Schreber's delusions from the perspective of Schreber's unique identification with God, because this relationship reveals his connection with *a* symbolic order. Schreber's psychotic delusions, Lacan argues, are comprehensible from within the triadic schema, Imaginary/ Symbolic/ Real, precisely because Schreber's delusions signal a fractured inculcation into symbolic coordinates, and these are translatable into comprehension. Therefore, for Lacan, Schreber's "delusions" were not so delusional after all, and Lacan is seemingly taking his cue from Schreber himself who noted in *Memoirs of my Nervous Illness*:

> La science, d'après ce que je lis là-dessus chez Kraepelin, par exemple — *psychiatrie,* t. I, p.102 s. — semble contester à toutes ces hallucinations, sans exception, le moindre fondement dans la réalité. Je soutiens que, décidément, et du moins formulée sous ce mode de généralité, cette position est erronée. (Schreber 1975: 246).

In 'typical' subject development, the subject's symbolic castration offers her/him the chance to form "normal" libidinal relations with others, and, in order for this to happen, the subject must renounce the mother's unregulated desire, or in other words, the subject

'gives up some jouissance' (Fink 1995: 99).[36] If they do not, they risk being faced with the big Other's *jouissance,* which is utterly incomprehensible from the subject's standpoint. We return to *jouissance* later, for now, it is enough to rely on Lacan's schema from *Écrits* (557):

Figure 2.1 $\frac{\text{Nom-du-père}}{\text{Désir de la Mère}} \cdot \frac{\text{Désir de la Mère}}{\text{Signifié au sujet}} \rightarrow \text{Nom-du-père} \left(\frac{\text{A}}{\text{Phallus}}\right)$

In this schema, Lacan shows the normal structuring of desire and the phallus economy which enables the normal subject to form libidinal relations with others. Crucially, since the relinquishment in castration is of *jouissance* and not the penis, this schema applies to both sexes (Fink 1995: 99), and indeed, as Howells argued: 'the phallus is not the penis' (Howells 2011: 143). In the case of the psychotic, the foreclosure of the *Nom-du-Père* indicates an absence of phallic meaning which results in forming dysfunctional libidinal relations.

Le père, the signifier that structures *la vérité de la chose,* is defective in the pre-psychotic, which precipitates the pre-psychotic's descent into psychosis. However, what happens to the subject when the father, *qua* actual empirical being, is himself missing or defective? 'Que se passe-t-il,' Lacan asks, 'quand la vérité de la chose manque, *quand il n'y a plus rien pour la représenter dans sa vérité*, quand par exemple le registre du père est en défaut? (*SIII* 230: my emphasis). Lacan clearly disassociates the signifiers (*Phallus, Fear-of-God, The Father, Name-of-the-Father*) from actual empirical beings, individuals, or for example one's father. Reading the paternal function in relation to empirical beings, or understanding 'the phallus' literally, for example, would be to have

[36] We explain this in much more detail in our discussion of *das Ding* in chapter 3.

missed the point of Lacan's argument.[37] Lacan argues that the process of oedipalisation, symbolic castration, and the general inculcation into the symbolic by way of the signifiers, can be achieved (or forfeited) simply by an exposure to the image of the signifier itself — *Un-père*. 'Supposons,' Lacan argues, 'que cette situation comporte précisément pour le sujet l'impossibilité d'assumer la réalisation du signifiant père au niveau symbolique. Que lui reste-t-il? Il lui reste l'image à quoi se réduit la fonction paternelle' (*SIII* 230). The image of the signifier (*Un-père*) is more important than the empirical person that assumes the position of the signifier in the Symbolic Order. 'Comment le Nom-du-Père peut-il être appelé par le sujet à la seule place d'où il ait pu lui advenir et où il n'a jamais été? Par rien d'autre qu'un père réel, non pas du tout forcément par le père du sujet, par Un-père' (*É* 577).

Lacan demonstrates the priority of the image in the Symbolic Order (representation) with the case of 'history' vs. 'History.' There is, Lacan argues, a distinction between 'l'histoire de France,' and 'l'Histoire de France,' whereby in the former 'truth' may reside, whereas in the latter 'truth' may be relegated in favour of the decisive symbolic articulation of the History of France. 'Ce qui nous intéresse, ce sont les points décisifs de l'articulation symbolique, de l'histoire, mais au sens où vous dites l'Histoire de France' (*SIII* 126-7). What counts, Lacan argues, in our attempts to understand the psychotic, is not so much the truth of the thing, but the signifier that structures the Truth of the thing in its symbolic articulation, or simply, its image (*Un-père*):

> Tel jour, Mlle de Montpensier était sur les barricades, elle y était peut-être par hasard, et ça n'avait peut-être pas d'importance dans une certaine perspective, mais ce qu'il y a de certain, c'est qu'il n'y a que ça qui reste dans l'Histoire, elle était là, et on a donné à sa présence un sens, vrai ou pas vrai. Sur le moment, d'ailleurs, le sens est toujours un peu plus vrai, mais c'est ce qui est devenu vrai dans l'histoire qui compte et fonctionne (*SIII* 127).

[37] See: "Cosi fan tutti" in Irigaray 1977.

Mlle de Montpensier could have or could not have actually been at the barricades that day, but what counts, '[ce] qui compte et fonctionne,' is that we understand the position of the image of the signifiers with regards to the Symbolic Order more generally. The disassociation of the (empirical) father from the image of *Un-père* is crucial. The properly castrated subject experiences the same inculcation into the Symbolic Order as a subject that has been inculcated by the image of the signifier (*SIII* 230). However, Lacan associates the psychotic with the secondary form of paternal identification, which is to say with the identification with the image of the father. The subject who is exposed to the image of the signifier could experience a radical and alienating inculcation into the Symbolic Order. Therefore, the subject can be captured by the specular, limitless image of paternal authority:

> L'image prend en elle-même et d'emblée la fonction sexualisée, sans avoir besoin d'aucun intermédiaire, d'aucune identification à la mère ni à qui que ce soit. Le sujet adopte alors cette position intimidée […] La relation imaginaire s'instaure toute seule, sur un plan qui n'a rien de typique, qui est déshumanisant, parce qu'il ne laisse pas place à la relation d'exclusion réciproque qui permet de fonder l'image du moi sur l'orbite que donne le modèle de l'autre, plus achevée (*SIII* 230-1).

The defective identification could mean that the pre-psychotic subject forecloses the signifier, by misperceiving the captivating image that is without limits and so manifests him/herself 'dans l'ordre de la puissance et non dans celui du pacte' (*SIII* 230). The pact with the father is the normal resolution of the Oedipus complex, the child would be said to have been properly castrated. The subject's exposure to, and subsequent realisation of, a father who had rightful possession of the mother is central to the subject's resolution of the Oedipus complex, the child having ascended to the normal model of virility (*SIII* 230-1). Conversely, the subject who forecloses would not be able to model themselves on the more complete Other (the father), and therefore relates to a Symbolic Order characterised by an absent core.

This problem, the original mis-structuring of the Symbolic Order (the pre-psychotic), is carried forth throughout the subject's life until prompted into a full psychotic breakdown triggered by specific events in her/his life. 'C'est ainsi que la situation peut se soutenir longtemps, que des psychotiques vivent compensés, ont apparemment les comportements ordinaires considérés comme normalement virils, et tout d'un coup, mystérieusement, Dieu sait pourquoi, se décompensent' (*SIII* 231). The psychotic subject forecloses and annihilates her/himself through a misidentification with the Other's desire. However, the pre-psychotic subject descends into madness proper only after a traumatic moment that triggers the underlying psychosis in the subject's life, which had been a life of normal functioning until the onset of delusions. Since the pre-psychotic, Schreber for example, is plainly in *a* symbolic order, not *the* Symbolic Order, any attempt to resolve the question of the father or the problems of his sexual identity are being undertaken at the wrong level. And so, it takes an encounter with the *Nom-du-Père* for a psychotic, like Schreber, to break down: 'pour que la psychose se déclenche, il faut que le Nom-du-Père, *verworfen,* forclos, c'est-à-dire jamais venu à la place de l'Autre, y soit appelé en opposition symbolique au sujet' (*É* 577). A confrontation with the *Nom-du-Père* summons the subject to recognise her/his opposition to the Symbolic. The sheer weight of this summoning causes the subject to break down psychologically. This actualisation, brought on by exposure to the signifier, uncovers their absence and demonstrates their lack of sexual identity. In Schreber's case, the absence of a primordial male signifier was hidden for a long time, 'il avait l'air de tenir son rôle d'homme, et d'être quelqu'un, comme tout le monde' (*SIII* 286). And, since virility signified something essential for Schreber, it is unsurprising, for Lacan, that the onset of his psychosis was triggered by having discovered that his wife was newly pregnant and that his election to the position of a Judge at the local judiciary was complete; igniting in him

the fear of castration. 'C'est parce qu'il accède finalement à une position paternelle, que du même coup la crainte de la castration revit chez lui, avec une appétence homosexuelle corrélative (*SIII* 40). This meant that the missing signifiers came to light in the guise of his desire to be a woman undergoing sexual intercourse; 'la virilité […], c'est l'objet de ses [Schreber] très vives protestations lors de l'irruption du délire, qui d'emblée se présente sous la forme d'une question sur son sexe […] – *qu'il serait beau d'être une femme subissant l'accouplement*' (*SIII* 286). Schreber's delusion was that he could only construct the realities of the world, the cosmos, according to the idea that he must be the universal God's wife (ibid). The decompensation that Schreber suffered occurred because he realised that he felt he could not become a 'Father;' the phallic signifier had not been correctly installed in his psychic economy (*SIII* 360).[38]

Building on our previous understanding of subjective inculcations into the Symbolic Order, we should note that the typical subject is not any more complete than a psychotic subject simply because s/he is named at birth, and so initiated into a relationship with the Symbolic Order; Schreber, too, was named. Rather, it is the process of castration and a subject's relationship with the big Other that structures the "normal" functioning of the Symbolic Order. The clinical tools, such as foreclosure, which Lacan develops from case-studies of psychotics like Schreber, are not inserted to wedge a distinction between "normal" and "abnormal," as though only psychotics are abnormal

[38] Schreber was also a distinguished legal scholar, as Peter Goodrich shows in *Schreber's Law* (2018). Moreover, Patricia Gherovici argues in *Transgender Psychoanalysis* (2017) that 'Schreber […] thought that he was becoming a woman rather than expressing a demand for a sex change' (91). Gherovici explains further: 'Schreber was *certain* that he was becoming a woman. He would become God's bride, a consenting prey to God's voluptuous pleasures. Freud interprets Schreber's paranoia as a defence against homosexuality while Lacan centres his analysis in what he calls Schreber's transsexual drive and, most importantly, his transsexual enjoyment. This should not surprise us […] Lacan conducted a psychotherapy with a transgender person and was well aware of the differences between transsexuality and homosexuality' (92).

through the identification of a symptom. Hence, Lacan remains philosophically minded since he makes both an ontological and a clinical point.[39]

At the beginning of this section we identified that subjects are initially inculcated into the symbolic at the original level of naming. We are spoken to, thus interpellated, and so initiated into a relationship with the various processes governing the Symbolic dimension. However, it is important to note that even though this might be 'typical,' it does not follow that it is successful. This is Lacan's ontological discovery concerning subjectivity. Our 'typical' inculcation into the Symbolic Order necessarily represents a failure, as we will develop in much more detail in our final chapter. In Žižek's terms:

> The subject *is* the retroactive effect of the failure of its representation. It is because of this failure that the subject is divided – not into something and something else, but into something (its symbolic representation) and nothing, and fantasy fills the void of this nothingness. And the catch is that this symbolic representation of the subject is primordially *not its own.* […] The speaking subject persists in this in-between, prior to nomination, there is no subject, but once it is named, it already disappears in its signifier – the subject never is, it always *will have been* (2016: 210).

In order to understand why our inculcation into the Symbolic Order represents a failure, we turn to Lacan's arguments of the signifiers themselves. We will show how the subject disappears into its signifiers by looking at Lacan's qualifications of the signifiers themselves as meaningless and fake.

v. The Quilting Point

Lacan is unambiguous that the master signifier (Φx), for example, the phallus, is not something that we can possess. Moreover, the phallus is not restricted to men – the phallus is 'baladeur,' it is elsewhere (*SIII* 359). Psychoanalysis has sometimes been characterised as phallocentric, and, according to this characterisation, the phallus belongs

[39] We return to the ontological impact of psychosis in our final chapter.

solely to the father and the father alone can possess it — the phallus becomes shorthand for oedipal domination by patriarchal power over feminine sexuality.[40] However, this argument is potentially dissipated by recalling that symbolic articulations, as we have seen, can be established without the physical signifier, and by relying on the image of the signifier:

> Or, si des échanges affectifs, imaginaires, s'établissent entre la mère et l'enfant autour du manque imaginaire du phallus, ce qui en fait l'élément essentiel de la coaptation intersubjective, le père, dans la dialectique freudienne, a le sien, c'est tout, il ne l'échange ni ne le donne. Il n'y a aucune circulation. Le père n'a aucune fonction dans le trio, sinon de représenter le porteur, le détenteur du phallus. Le père, en tant que père, a le phallus – un point c'est tout (*SIII* 359).

It is a misconception to assume that the Lacanian concept of the phallus is a stand-in for a patriarchal theory of libidinal relations in psychoanalysis. For Lacan, the phallus-as-signifier is not determined by the father's penis; Lacan illustrates the concept of the phallus-as-signifier with reference to the celestial sphere.[41] The master signifier is spectral, denoting nothing but a glimpse of the Symbolic Order itself — as the manifestation of the law in a symbol. This master signifier is not gendered *per se;* it is un-gendered par excellence because it can take on any form (for example: the Fear-of-God). Evidently (and lamentably), we live in a patriarchal society, and that is why, for Lacan, the signifier is phallic since the phallic signifier is Lacan's description of social power rather than Lacan's prescription for how society ought to be. Lacan is not suggesting we should keep the phallus, but that any signifier can take-on the structure of the master signifier. Lacan's use of the term phallus is an ironic, quasi-comical, take on societal formations, which seeks to undermine patriarchal power rather than to strengthen

[40] Jacqueline Rose argues in *Feminine Sexuality* (1982) that 'there is, therefore, no question of denying here that Lacan was implicated in the phallocentrism he described' (56). Furthermore, Emily Zakin argues: 'here we arrive at the phallocentrism, if not the patriarchalism, of Lacan's thought, the central role of the phallus in his thinking about subjectivity and sexual difference. […] Lacan centres human experience not on the supposed biological fixity of anatomical distinctions, but on a representational economy, the phallus retains its associations with masculinity and remains the focal point of sexual identity.' see: Zakin 2011; see also Irigaray 1977.

[41] See: "*Le Phallus et le météore*," *SIII* p. 349

it. As Rabaté puts it in *Jacques Lacan*: *Psychoanalysis and the Subject of Literature* (2001):

> The phallus is fundamentally a comical notion since it is intimately bound up with the genre of comedy that begins with Aristophanes, reaches its maturity with Molière and culminates with Jean Genet […]. No need, therefore, to believe that [Lacan] remains caught up in a nostalgic fascination for the phallus, or to understand it just as the "signifier of lack" to which it has too often been reduced, since the phallus provides an introduction to a fundamentally funny, even ludicrous version of a bloated, excessive impossible and symptomatic sexuality from which we are saved — but condemned at the same time — because we are "speaking beings" whose fate has been written in advance (13).

The comical aspect of the phallus is picked up by Lacan in *SXIX*, *...Ou pire,* where Lacan says: 'ici, on peut rigoler […] le phallus, c'est la signification, c'est ce par quoi le langage signifie. Il n'y a qu'une seule *Bedeutung*, c'est le phallus' (*SXIX* 69-70). Crucially, Lacan emphasises that the master signifier is fastened at a certain quilting point (*point de capiton*) in the construction of the Symbolic Order.

In such a paradigm of meaning, the fulcrum that binds the set together does not need to be real, or true. In order for a community of people to communicate on a shared topic, the shared master signifier does not need to exist. Moreover, Lacan suggests that the master signifier does even not require meaning:

> Il s'agit de la transmission de quelque chose de vide, qui lasse et épuise le sujet. A leur naissance, ces phénomènes se situent à la limite de la signification, mais ils deviennent bientôt tout le contraire – résidus, déchets, corps vides (*SIII* 294).

This master signifier that guarantees the big Other is an empty signifier without a contentful signified. Žižek explains:

> Suffice it to recall how a community functions: the master signifier that guarantees the community's consistency is a signifier whose signified is an enigma for the members themselves — nobody really knows what it means, but each of them somehow presupposes that others know it, that it has to mean "the real thing," and so they use it all the time. This logic is [also at work] in some Lacanian communities, where the group recognises itself through the common use of some jargon-laden expressions whose meaning is not clear to anyone, be it "symbolic castration" or "divided subject" — everyone refers to them, and what binds the group together is ultimately their shared *ignorance* (Žižek 2002: 58).

We can see the logic of shared ignorance in Lacan's concept of the *point de capiton*. The *point de capiton* is Lacan's first major qualification to the structure of the big Other that he effectuates in the mid-1950s during his work on psychosis. The second revision that Lacan makes in relation to the big Other is in *SXX, Encore,* in the 1970s, where he uses the logic of the 'not-all' and the 'exception constitutive of the universal' (Žižek 2002: 58), we will return to Lacan's second revision in section vii, and again in chapter four.

In order to make his point about the *point de capiton,* Lacan shows how the master signifier, this time under the guise of the '*fear-of-God,*' was quilted by Racine's *Athalie:*

> La crainte de Dieu est un signifiant qui ne traîne pas partout. Il a fallu quelqu'un pour l'inventer, et proposer aux hommes, comme remède à un monde fait de terreurs multiples […] Remplacer les craintes innombrables par la crainte d'un être unique qui n'a d'autre moyen de manifester sa puissance que par ce qui est craint derrière ces innombrables craintes, c'est fort (*SIII* 302).

Lacan argues that in order to invent a system structure with a master signifier like that of the *fear-of-God,* one must be either a prophet or poet, 'au moins par la grâce de Racine, qu'il peut user comme il le fait de ce signifiant majeur et primordial' (*SIII* 302). For Lacan, Racine effectuates a sleight-of-hand that transmutes normal fear into a faith in God, which guarantees an end to everyday normal fear by supplanting it with the master signifier: the *fear-of-God*. This transformation gives the subject enough faith to confront normal fear; however, Lacan points out that the master signifier (*fear-of-God*) is a fabrication (God) signifying nothing — an empty container.

> La vertu du signifiant, l'efficace de ce mot de *crainte,* a été de transformer le *zèle* du début, avec tout ce que le mot comporte d'ambigu, et de douteux, voire de toujours prêt à tous les retournements, en la *fidélité* de la fin. Cette transmutation est de l'ordre du signifiant comme tel. Aucune accumulation, aucune superposition, aucune somme de significations, ne peut suffire à la justifier (*SIII* 303).

As we have seen, the signifiers hardly need to be real in order for them to function as signifiers, and that argument underpins the *point de capiton*. The *fear-of-God* is not founded on any real fears; *fear-of-God* does not signify anything in reality. Lacan

maintains that God is merely an imagined construction of poets and prophets, and yet, he does not mean to suggest that faith should be ridiculed or ignored. On the contrary, faith is a foundational signifier that governs human actions. Faith operates the same machinery of the Symbolic Order; God is its master signifier. The pious refer to God, and what binds them together is their shared *ignorance* of what constitutes God as a master signifier, or as the big Other. Which is why at the end of our previous section we stated that the subject disappears into the signifier, because the signifier is a fake; and yet, the master signifier is the very mechanism of apprehending the world in the Symbolic Order for the subject.

The case of the psychotic has enabled us to see how symbolic castration is essential at the Oedipal stage to the development of desire. The properly formed subject will acquire a sexual identity at this stage, and the absence of phallic meaning in psychosis is pivotal to Lacan conceptualisation of sexual difference. We have also qualified the signifier in order to transmit Lacan's insistence on the vacuity of the big Other. The master signifier is not something we can know anything about; this insight becomes crucial in tying together our view of the possibility of love as an attempt at becoming *en soi pour soi* (or God – the unknown), in the second part of this chapter. We now turn to Lacan's conception of sexual difference, and his discussion in *SXX* of the *pas-toute*; Lacan's second qualification of the status of the big Other as unknown enables our argument that love is possible as an unknown leap of faith.

Chapter 2 — Temporary Misunderstanding

Part Two: *Il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel*

> Parler d'amour, en effet, on ne fait que ça dans le discours analytique […] parler d'amour est en soi une jouissance.
>
> Lacan, *Encore*

i. The Absence of the Sexual Relationship

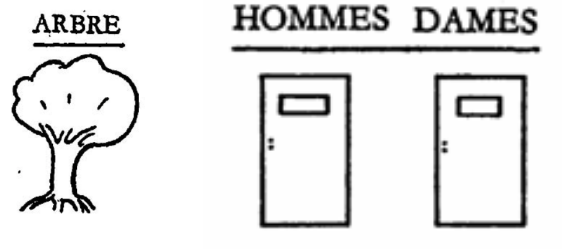


Figure 2.2 (É 499)

In our previous section, we saw how the quilting point fastened a master signifier in language, and we said this master signifier was paramount to all signification, but that the master signifier was only an empty container whose primary function is to regulate the language the subject used in the Symbolic Order.[42] In "L'instance de la lettre dans l'inconscient ou la raison depuis Freud," from the *Écrits*, Lacan further develops the signifier by advancing the complicated relationship between the signifier and the signified in his philosophy, in order to advance his argument concerning the split between the subject and the subject of the unconscious, (this is an early iteration of a corresponding difference that Lacan develops, using different terms, in his later seminars which we will explore in our final chapter).

Lacan criticises and complicates Saussure's famous tree schema to clarify the relationship between the signifier and the signified. The 'famous Saussurean algorithm (S/s—signifier over signified)' shows that the signifier and the signified are separated by a bar (Zupančič 2017: 57). Whereas, Lacan's schema differs by replacing the signifier, 'Arbre' in Saussure's classical schema, with 'Hommes' and 'Dames.' In *What is Sex?,* Alenka Zupančič contextualises Lacan's original move:

> The central theme of structural linguistics is the emphasis on pure differentiality (as Saussure famously puts it in his *Course in General Linguistics*: in language there are only differences without positive terms, and signifiers "make sense," or

[42] In our next chapter, we will develop the quilting point and show how meaning is produced as a result of the arbitrary tying together of some knowledge and truth. See chapter three, part one, section ii.

> produce meaning, only as parts of differential networks of places, binary oppositions, etc.), as well as the emphasis on the arbitrariness of the sign: the signifying chain is strictly *separated* from the signified, which is what the bar in the Saussurean algorithm indicates. […] The signifier "tree" would serve (albeit arbitrarily) to represent some signification. This is the conception that Lacan refutes as erroneous (2017: 57-8).

Unlike for Saussure, according to Lacan, the signifier enters the signified. Lacan says: 'le signifiant entre en fait dans le signifié; à savoir sous une forme qui, pour n'être pas immatérielle, pose la question de sa place dans la réalité' (*É* 500). In amending Saussure's illustration, Lacan is differentiating his practice from structural linguistics, arguing that the important relationship is not the separation between the signifier and signified, nor is it the sign's relationship to 'representation' in the signifying structure. Instead, Lacan highlights that it is the 'signifier and the unconscious [which] are inseparable concepts; the signifying order […] and the constitution of the unconscious are one and the same thing' (Zupančič 2017: 58). The crucial difference between Lacan and Saussure is that, for Lacan, as we saw, the signifier itself is qualified as lacking, and this lack opens the space for the subject of the unconscious. To show this, Lacan adapts Saussure's tree schema to include two twin doors ['deux portes jumelles' (*É* 500)] in lieu of Saussure's illustration of a tree — to designate the signified. And, as Zupančič explains, 'what do we have here? Two different names written above (the repetition of) the same thing, a door. In other words, we have differentiality (two different signifiers), but there is nothing different in the realities to which they refer. And yet they are not one reality, but reality as split' (59). We begin with this schema from *Écrits* since it succinctly illustrates the idea that Lacan's theory of sexual difference occurs at the level of the split signifier and not at the level of the signified (or the referent).

As we explored earlier, Lacan divorces the signifier from the signified by introducing the *point de capiton,* 'tout vrai signifiant est, en tant que tel,' he says in *SIII,* 'un signifiant qui ne signifie rien' (185). Therefore, Lacan's conceptualisation of

sexuation and sexual difference is not at the level of biology or alleged anatomical differences between the sexes. Rather, it could be said that, according to Lacan, the sexes are twin — the two doors in the schema above are the same; 'hommes' and 'dames' are twins. For Lacan, sexual differences exist at the level of the Symbolic Order; differences exist as a result of the two sexes' operations concerning language, the big Other, and the lack in the signifying chain. Lacan explains the paradox of sexual difference as it relates to a fundamental lack through the story of a young sister and brother in a train, pulling into a train station:

> Un train arrive en gare. Un petit garçon et une petite fille, le frère et la sœur, dans un compartiment sont assis l'un en face de l'autre du côté où la vitre donnant sur l'extérieur laisse se dérouler la vue des bâtiments du quai le long duquel le train stoppe: "Tiens, dit le frère, on est à Dames!" – Imbécile! Répond la sœur, tu ne vois pas qu'on est à Hommes" (*É* 500).

For Lacan, this story illustrates the radical failure of signification, the deadlock of the subject's perception, and Lacan says:

> Il faudrait, […] n'avoir pas les yeux en face des trous pour s'y embrouiller sur la place respective du signifiant et du signifié, et ne pas suivre de quel centre rayonnant le premier vient à refléter sa lumière dans la ténèbres des significations inachevées.
> Car il va porter la Dissension, seulement animale et vouée à l'oubli des brumes naturelles, à la puissance sans mesure, implacable aux familles et harcelantes aux dieux, de la guerre idéologique. Hommes et Dames seront dès lors pour ces enfants deux patries vers quoi leurs âmes chacune tireront d'une aile divergente, et sur lesquelles il leur sera d'autant plus impossible de pactiser qu'étant en vérité la même, aucun ne saurait céder sur la précellence de l'une sans attenter à la gloire de l'autre (*É* 500-1).

For Lacan, then, the signifiers 'Hommes et Dames' offers a kind of ideological phoney war in language, and, seen from the perspective of each side, they each pull in their direction. However, they are 'deux patries' of the same soul ['étant en vérité la même']. As Zupančič explains, 'in other words, the "Ladies and Gentlemen" example is not so much an example of the logic of the signifier as the example "illustrating" the constitutive gap and contradiction at the very core of the signifying logic' (2017: 60). So,

although Lacan is trying to maintain the differences between the sexes at the level of the signifier, there is a sense in which Lacan is also arguing that they are, in fact, the same, or it would be more accurate to say: twin. The discord at the heart of the signifier illustrated by 'Hommes et Dames' mimics the difference between the subject and the subject of the unconscious we mentioned at the outset of this section. For Lacan, 'Hommes et Dames' highlights the primary gap (or, discord) between the conscious subject and their unconscious, and, therefore, we might already be able to see why *il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel.*

As early as 12 April 1967, in *SXIV*, *La Logique du fantasme*, Lacan says that 'le grand secret de la psychanalyse c'est qu'il n'y a pas d'acte sexuel' (355). Years later, he formalises this thought into his famous slogan 'il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel,' wherein he does not mean to suggest that sex is impossible – 'n'implique pas qu'il n'y ait pas de rapport au sexe' (*AÉ* 464) – but that the relationship (interaction in the realm of ideas) between the sexes is not possible (Fink 1995: 104). At the symbolic level – at the level of 'Hommes,' and 'Dames' as signifiers – sex is not possible. Furthermore, the *non rapport sexuel* should not be read as a denial of the difference between the sexes, 'ce n'est pas que je nie la différence qu'il y a, dès le plus jeune âge, entre ce que l'on appelle une petite fille et un petit garçon. C'est même de là que je pars' (*SXIX* 13). Characteristically, Lacan's *non rapport sexuel* is both a provocation and a container for an idea that requires extrication:

> *Il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel* se propose donc comme vérité. Mais j'ai déjà dit de la vérité qu'elle ne peut que se mi-dire. Donc, ce que je dis, c'est qu'il s'agit somme toute que l'autre moitié dise pire (12).

Sexuality, for Lacan, does not simply describe certain characteristics of human reality; instead, we should understand sexuality as an ontological category, where *castration,* for

example, designates specific conditions of the universe, that would classically have been denoted as *finitude* or *limitation* (Žižek 2012: 739).

In our reconstruction of Lacan's psychoanalysis, we have purposefully avoided drawing a marked distinction between the sexes, since, earlier, it would have complicated matters. In Lacanian psychoanalysis, men and women are not necessarily tied to biology. Instead, men and women are psychoanalytic concepts. We could even argue that "Men" are not necessarily "male," and "Women" are not necessarily "female." As Ankhi Mukherjee put it in her introduction to *After Lacan*, 'for Lacan, sexuality is indissociable from language and linguistic processes and is a matter of speech and discourse, not biology' (2018: 10). Lacan distinguishes the sexes in relation to language, and so *sexuation* is intimately linked to language, 'quand je dis qu'*il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel,* j'avance très précisément cette vérité, que le sexe ne définit nul rapport chez l'être parlant' (*SXIX* 13). In other words, the speaking being has no sexual relationship with another speaking being. Lacan links the *non rapport sexuel* to language once again in *Je Parle Aux Murs*:

> [*Il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel*] paraît comme ça un peu zinzin, un peu *effloupi.* Il suffirait de baiser un bon coup pour me démontrer le contraire. Malheureusement, c'est une chose qui ne démontre absolument rien de pareil, parce que la notion de rapport ne coïncide pas tout à fait avec l'usage métaphorique que l'on fait de ce mot tout court, *rapport, ils ont eu des rapports.* Ce n'est pas tout à fait ça. On ne peut sérieusement parler de rapport que non seulement quand un discours établit le rapport, mais quand on énonce le rapport. Le réel est là avant que nous le pensions, mais le rapport, c'est beaucoup plus douteux. Non seulement il faut le penser, mais il faut l'écrire. Si vous n'êtes pas foutus de l'écrire, il n'y a pas de rapport (32-3).

Lacan asserts the connection of *il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel* to language very clearly; sex is not at stake for Lacan, 'le réel est là avant que nous le pensions,' he says. The *rapport,* Lacan argues, is of the realm of the metaphorical. The *rapport* must not only be *thought,* it must also be *written*, otherwise*,* 'vous êtes foutus' — thus forced into the

realm of language, and ultimately the Symbolic. Without formalisation in writing, there is no *rapport* at all, and yet *can* it be written?

Lacan clarifies *il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel* in relation to speaking beings in *SXX.* Lacan develops *mathemes* in an attempt to formalise key concepts in psychoanalysis, with constant reference to the schema (figure 2.3) below. Lacan says, regardless of biological sex, a speaking being will be in either one of the two boxes at the top of the schema; 'qui que ce soit de l'être parlant s'inscrit d'un côté ou de l'autre' (*SXX* 74):

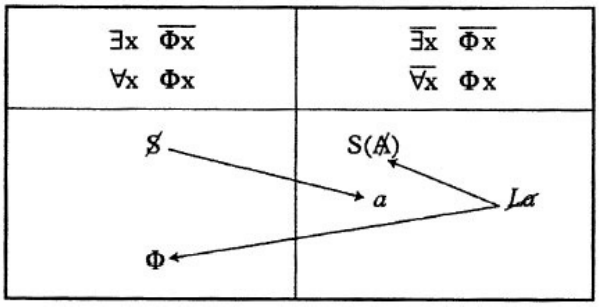


Figure 2.3: (*SXX* 73)

Everything we have seen so far, symbolic castration, the phallic function, foreclosure, and the successful (or unsuccessful) resolution of the Oedipus complex, is primarily tied to psychoanalytic conceptions of Man. However, as earlier indicated, it does not follow that women are not also predisposed to the same development since, in Lacan's illustration, the two doors were twin at the level of signification. If, as we have said, castration (the function that produces "Man") is Lacan's word for *finitude*, then we can already see that The woman is produced by *infinitude,* and, therefore, we can begin to appreciate why she is impossible.[43] Whereas, for Lacan, all finite subjects are properly alienated in language and marked by the psychic construction we have so far laid out. They are tied to the limits of language, and thus subject to the prohibitions of the

[43] We will return to Lacan's concept of ~~*La femme*~~ in our final chapter.

Symbolic Order, organised around the master signifier *Nom-du-Père* and its corollary injunction of the '*non!*' *du père*.

Lacan's *mathemes* seek to express sexuality in logical denotations; he expresses the 'masculine' under the remit of the phallic economy, as ∀xΦx (as seen figure 2.3 above, in the top left square); where '∀' is the function for 'all,' or the 'whole,' x is the 'subject,' or part thereof, and 'Φx' is the phallic function for the subject that precedes it (*SXX* 73-4). We can translate this Lacanian logic as: the whole subject (∀x) is governed by the phallic function (Φx), and is, therefore, prey to the power of the signifier in the Symbolic Order. '∀xΦx indique que c'est par la fonction phallique que l'homme comme tout prend son inscription.' However, Lacan says, 'à ceci près que cette fonction trouve sa limite dans l'existence d'un x par quoi la fonction Φx est niée, ∃x$\overline{\Phi x}$' (*SXX* 74).[44] Men are governed by an ultimate limit (Φx), and it is for this exact reason that they can be considered whole, '∃x: there exists some x [some subject or part thereof] such that $\overline{\Phi x}$, the phallic function is foreclosed' (Fink 1995: 109). In simple terms, the *Nom-du-Père* (the signifier, the mythical primordial father, *le Père*), or ∃xΦx, envelops man's desire and so it is whole — man's incestuous desire has been castrated, and is therefore foreclosed.[45] The limitless father, the psychotic who sees all women as indiscriminately accessible is ∃xΦx, (S_1). And the son who has been properly castrated is ∀xΦx, (S_2), 'tout mâle est serf de la fonction phallique' (*SXIX* 108). The primordial psychotic father (S_1) is the only one who is able to have unrestricted sexual relations with a woman, 'jouir du corps de la femme,' which is one reason why *il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel.*

An exemplary case of the psychotic father (S_1) appears in Pedro Almodóvar's *Mujeres al borde de un ataque de nervios* (1988). In the opening scene, the mythical

[44] The "bar" across the top of the matheme means "not."
[45] In *What is Sex?,* Alenka Zupančič puts it thus: 'the logic at stake here is nicely summed up by the following joke: "There are no cannibals here, we ate the last one yesterday"' (2017: 51).

primordial father, Iván (himself, very appropriately devoid of a surname, master signifier par excellence), confronts an endless conveyer belt of women, finding them indiscriminately accessible. As he gallivants from woman to woman, flirting with each according to their ostensible stereotypes, he indulges in a form of unregulated enjoyment.[46] To a woman in traditional Spanish dress, he quips: 'life means nothing without you.' Then he mocks a nun: 'will you marry me?'. 'One thousand and one nights wouldn't be enough,' he says lustfully to a harem girl. 'I love you, I desire you, need you,' Iván rehearses. As a geisha walks by: 'you are the geisha of my life. Sayonara.' He does not stop there: 'let's get married again,' he says to his ex-wife. Finally, Iván deigns to tell a prostitute: 'I accept you as you are.' 'Great' she replies. Iván acts on unregulated impulse, just like the father of the mythical hoard; no phallic function ($\overline{\Phi x}$) exists to restrict his *jouissance.* Iván's unregulated enjoyment and desire demonstrates the absence of prohibition, and, according to Lacan, 'le père de la horde' is an impossible myth that no human subject can embody, 'le père de la horde humaine, on n'en a jamais vu la moindre trace' (*SXVII* 129-30).

To undergo proper castration, the son (S_2) must renounce unstructured, limitless *jouissance,* which is to say that, unlike Iván, the son must make choices. Lacan says; 'la jouissance phallique est l'obstacle par quoi l'homme n'arrive pas, dirai-je, à jouir du corps de la femme, précisément parce que ce dont il jouit, c'est de la jouissance de l'organe' (*SXX* 13). The exclusion of incest allows for an inclusion of everyone else — creating a whole. Unrestricted sexual relations are only possible from the position of the mythical father who is able to truly *jouir de la femme,* the entirety of the woman. All properly castrated men (S_2), can only achieve a maximum of '*jouissance de l'organe*' — in effect, the sexual relationship amounts to the enjoyment of only one part of the Other's

[46] See: https://youtu.be/7femT8pLeFA?t=58 (last accessed 21 August 2019).

body (*SXX* 26). Therefore, (S_2) is qualified by the features of limitation and finitude, and, for Lacan, all subjects are (S_2).[47]

Women, on the other hand, are not necessarily restricted by the same phallic function (Φx). They *are* captured by the phallus, but not in exactly the same way and potentially not to the same degree. Of course, women are not lesser than men, nor are women unable to have a host of sexual relations with men (or indeed, women) in the symbolic articulation of the phallus economy; 'enfin l'absence du rapport sexuel n'empêche manifestement pas, bien loin de là, la liaison, mais lui donne ses conditions […] les actes passionnants […] nécessitent l'absence de rapport' (*SXIX* 19). The *non rapport sexuel* does not denote the impossibility of the physical act, as we have seen; instead Lacan suggests that the *non rapport sexuel* is the condition of possibility for 'les actes passionnants' (*SXIX* 19). Furthermore, Lacan does not suggest that the psychoanalytic concept of 'women' necessarily corresponds to being anatomically perceived as female, just as he did not earlier designate 'men' as anatomically perceived as male. Sex is not related to *sexe,* as we said. Moreover, according to Lacan, we *can-be-not* our designated biological sex.

Returning to figure 2.3, Lacan denotes women as $\overline{\forall x}\Phi x$, where $\overline{\forall x}$ denotes the not-all (*pas toute*) subject, x, that is governed by the phallic function (Φx):

> De la part femme des êtres parlants, […] il est permis, quel qu'il soit, qu'il soit ou non pourvu des attributs de la masculinité — attributs qui restent à déterminer — de s'inscrire dans cette partie. S'il s'y inscrit, il ne permettra aucune universalité, il sera ce pas-tout, en tant qu'il a le choix de se poser dans le Φx ou bien de n'en pas être (*SXX* 74).

If the woman chooses *not* to recognise the mastery of the signifier (Φx), then the expression would be written, $\overline{\exists x}\overline{\Phi x}$, and she would not *Be* (*n'en pas être*). Lacan says that all speaking beings, regardless of their anatomical attributes (or those yet to be

[47] 'On ne peut jouir que d'une partie de corps de l'Autre, […], c'est pour ça qu'on en est réduit simplement à une petite étreinte, comme ça, à prendre un avant-bras ou n'importe quoi d'autre - ouille!' (*SXX*: 26).

determined), remain in the clutches of the Phallus as master signifier. The expression $\overline{\exists x}\Phi\overline{x}$ designates no possible being. 'Ou bien de n'en pas être' in the Symbolic Order means that the woman $\overline{\exists x}\overline{\Phi x}$ would have foreclosed (having rejected the primordial signifier, *le phallus*), and would live as a psychotic subject beyond signification.

Before returning to the implications of the *pas-toute* and the transcendental logic of feminine *jouissance* which enables my re-introduction of a pernicious God in the next section, our final task in this section is to tease out what the *non rapport sexuel* implies in relation to knowledge and truth. Lacan's main aim in introducing the logic of the *non rapport sexuel,* from *SXIV* onwards, is to demonstrate the limits of the logic of truth, and the incompleteness of truth itself (Chiesa 2016: 77). Lacan, as we have mentioned, stresses that the *non rapport sexuel* is related to language and writing: 'non seulement il faut le penser, mais il faut l'écrire. Si vous n'êtes pas foutus de l'écrire, il n'y a pas de rapport' (*JPM* 32-3). So, Lacan says once again 'ce non-rapport, si je puis m'exprimer ainsi, il faut l'écrire. Il faut l'écrire à tout prix' (*SXIX* 31). Lacan argues that the *rapport sexuel* is impossible precisely because it cannot be formalised in symbolic structures. Thus, in being un-formalisable, the *rapport sexuel* does not exist.

> Le rapport sexuel ne subsiste au dernier terme que de l'écrit. L'essentiel du rapport, c'est une application, *a* appliqué sur b — $a \rightarrow b$. Si vous ne l'écrivez pas *a* et *b,* vous ne tenez pas le rapport en tant que tel (*SXVIII* 65).

So, for Lacan, from a purely linguistic and logical standpoint, there is no sexual relationship: 'qu'il n'y ait pas de rapport sexuel, je l'ai déjà fixé sous cette forme, qu'il n'y a aucun mode de l'écrire actuellement' (*SXVIII* 83). Therefore, language forces a disjunction between Man and Woman, and it is impossible to formalise the *non rapport sexuel,* 'par l'effet de langage, inscrit dans la disjonction de l'homme et de la femme' (*SXVIII* 75). The central question of the *non rapport sexuel*, that Lacan investigates in

these seminars is: how to formalise the unformalizable? Which, in many ways, resembles Schelling's view of the unfathomable that we identified in our previous chapter.

In adopting the *mathemes,* Lacan tries to overcome these difficulties in formalising *sexuation* by attempting to express the relationship of Men and of Women to the symbolic as $\forall x \Phi x$ and $\overline{\forall x} \Phi x$, respectively (*SXX* 73-4). Clearly, the problem of language articulated earlier is systemic to the entirety of Lacan's conceptual thinking:

> La prétendue sexualisation des fonctions qu'on peut appeler subjectives qu'accomplirait la doctrine freudienne, à condition de les situer de l'ordre du langage, consiste essentiellement en ceci, que ce qui devrait résulter du langage, à savoir que la relation sexuelle puisse s'y inscrire d'une façon quelconque, montre précisément, et ceci dans le fait, son échec. Elle n'est pas inscriptible. […] On retient par exemple que je dis que le rapport sexuel échoue à être énoncé dans le langage. Mais justement, ce n'est pas *énoncé* que j'ai dit, c'est *inscriptible* (*SXVIII* 132).

The problem of formalising *sexuation* does not make discussions of sex or love impossible — 'parler d'amour, en effet, on ne fait que ça dans le discours analytique […] parler d'amour est en soi une jouissance' (*SXX* 77). Lacan explicitly denotes sex: F(*x*), 'symbolisé de la façon plus simple à savoir ceci, F, dans un certain rapport avec *x*, soit F(*x*)' (*SXVIII* 132). However, we are unable to effectively *inscribe* the resolution of the sexual relationship, and thus unable to merge the two poles — Man and Woman.

> Il ne peut faire que cette inscription soit ce que je définis comme inscription effective de ce qui serait le rapport sexuel en tant qu'il mettrait en rapport les deux pôles, les deux termes qui s'intituleraient de l'homme et de la femme […] chez un être qui parle, autrement dit, qui, habitant le langage, se trouve en tirer cet usage qui est celui de la parole (*SXVIII* 132).

Lacan explains the *non rapport sexuel* from the logical standpoint of language itself. Man and Woman are disjunctive and non-complementary; the two poles of sexuation (Man and Woman) organised around the phallic function make any inscription untenable, 'cette fonction du phallus rend désormais intenable la bipolarité sexuelle, et intenable d'une façon qui volatilise littéralement ce qu'il en est de ce qui peut s'écrire de ce rapport' (*SXVIII* 67). Ultimately, psychoanalysis offers a new track for thinking about sexuality:

> Nous nous trouvons là devant l'éclatement de la notion, disons, de sexualité. La sexualité est sans aucun doute au centre de tout ce qui se passe dans l'inconscient. Mais elle est au centre en ceci qu'elle est un manque. C'est-à-dire que, à la place de quoi que ce soit qui pourrait s'écrire du rapport sexuel comme tel, se substituent les impasses qu'engendre la fonction de la jouissance sexuelle, en tant qu'elle apparaît comme ce point de mirage dont Freud lui-même donne quelque part la note comme de la jouissance absolue. Et c'est vrai que, précisément, elle ne l'est pas, absolue. Elle ne l'est en aucun sens, d'abord parce que, comme telle, elle est vouée à ces différentes formes d'échec que constituent la castration, pour la jouissance masculine, la division pour la féminine (*JPM* 34/5).

The impasse reached in the *non rapport sexuel* is the renunciation of unrestricted *jouissance* at the original level of castration. Pure *jouissance* would entail a return to the unregulated desire of the Father of the mythic hoard. By renouncing this *jouissance*, we are instead left with the semblance of *jouissance,* only able to enjoy part of the body. The true sexual relation would be effectively uninscribable, precisely because it is absolute, incomprehensible, and ungoverned by formal structure or language. What remains is a semblance of the real, and we are nothing but 'des êtres de fiction' in an incomplete structure of a fiction. (*SXVIII* 132). In the fiction that we perceive as real, we play our gendered identification, and our identity is rendered "stable." Lacan says, 'pour le garçon, il s'agit, à l'âge adulte, *de faire-homme*,' and this functions identically for girls and women, they 'make-women' (*SXVIII* 32: my emphasis). 'L'identification sexuelle ne consiste pas à se croire homme ou femme, mais à tenir compte de ce qu'il y ait des femmes, pour le garçon, qu'il ait des hommes, pour la fille' (*SXVIII* 34). Ironically, while gender identity is built on a relationship between Men and Women, the construction is founded on the relation of an un-relation of the *non rapport sexuel.* Lacan removes completeness and essence from Men and Women (*SXVIII* 32). 'When thought of as outside of symbolic institutions and the phallic function that sustains them, man and woman can only designate sex as a *real* "unknown"' (Chiesa 2016: 80). Ultimately the logic of *sexuation* in Lacan's construction is that subjectivation occurs around the symbolic identification with the signifier (Phallus), which is structured differently for

Men and Women. 'Yet at the same time always presupposes the other sex […], man becomes a man only against the background of woman, just as woman becomes a woman only against the background of man' (Chiesa 2016: 106). *Il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel* expresses a recognition of the limits of psychoanalysis. Lacan's slogan recognises that psychoanalysis will not be able to produce scientific laws of nature, that are repeatable and predictable in all subjects and their development. Geneviève Morel states 'la psychanalyse ne peut pas écrire la loi universelle de ce rapport, ni en donner les règles, parce qu'elles n'existent pas' (Morel 2000: 19).

The dislocation that sexuality exposes through the *non rapport sexuel* is Lacan's equivalent of the ontological gap which, according to Žižek, finds its earliest expression in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason,* and envelops the whole of German Idealism*,* most notably in the philosophies of Schelling and Hegel (Žižek 2012: 739/40). Lacan 're-ontologizes' sexual difference, so that it no longer simply designates 'a particular ontic sphere of human reality' but instead 'stands for a certain displacement, an anamorphic distortion, whose status is strictly formal. […Sexuality,] does *not* have its own "proper" sphere, because it is primordially "out of joint," marked by a constitutive gap or discord' (ibid). In *SXX*, Lacan clearly identifies this ontological gap as the difference between phallic *jouissance,* and the other (feminine) *jouissance,* to which we will return in chapter four. 'Only phallic enjoyment is (f)actual, actually existing, while the other (feminine) *jouissance* is counterfactual' (Žižek 2016: 296). Žižek uses the term counterfactual to designate the difference between what we have so far exposited as the phallic master signifier of masculine sexuality (finitude), and the not-all (*pas-toute*) to which we now turn (infinitude). We also turn to the corollary discussion of Lacan's God hypothesis, which finds its earliest expression in *SIII, Les Psychoses.* The aim now is to demonstrate how love is ultimately possible, *contra* Sartre, as the symptomatic expression of an

unknown — and, therefore, speculatively thinkable through Schelling's metaphysical construal of the Fall.

ii. The Paradoxes of the not-All, or God's Deception

In keeping with his method of temporary detours, Lacan's distinction between phallic and feminine *jouissance* is mostly designed to shed light on the former, just as, at the outset of the previous section, the subject was clarified thanks to the comparison with the subject of the unconscious. If we translate Lacan's intellectual strategy into Kantian language, we can see that Lacan posits a *noumenal* unknown (feminine *jouissance*) in order to flesh out the *phenomenal* known (*jouissance phallique*). For Lacan, feminine *jouissance* is both not possible and not required, formalised thus: $\overline{\exists x}\Phi\overline{x}$, and pursuing feminine *jouissance* would result in in-existence; it is 'la jouissance qu'il ne faudrait pas.' Lacan continues, 'c'est là le corrélat de ce qu'il n'y ait pas de rapport sexuel, et c'est le substantiel de la fonction phallique' (*SXX* 55). Feminine *jouissance* is not only prohibited but entirely inaccessible for the subject in Lacan's thought because it describes a mere illusion, and yet, this fiction is necessary for the phallic function.

> S'il y en avait une autre que la jouissance phallique, il ne faudrait pas que ce soit celle-là […] "s'il y en avait une autre:" il n'y en a pas d'autre que la jouissance phallique. Sauf celle sur laquelle la femme ne souffle mot, peut-être parce qu'elle ne la connaît pas, celle qui la fait *pas toute* en tout cas. Il est donc faux, hein, qu'il y en ait une autre. […] À supposer qu'il y en ait une autre, mais justement il n'y en a pas, et du même coup, c'est pas parce qu'il n'y en a pas...et que c'est de ça que dépend le "il ne faudrait pas" … pour que le couperet n'en tombe pas moins sûr. Eh bien celle-là qui n'est pas l'autre, celle dont nous sommes partis, il faut que celle-là soit faute, entendez-le culpabilité, et faute de l'autre, de celle qui n'est pas. (*SXXa* 140-1).[48]

[48] I rely on the stenographed transcript, SXXa, published by Patrick Valas: http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/s20_encore-2.pdf . In many ways these are less mediated than the published version edited Jacques-Alain Miller (Seuil), which can often stray too far from Lacan's word. *cf*: footnote 92, p. 247.

In much the same way as the un-relation of the *non rapport* created the connection between Man and Woman in our previous section, Lacan posits the other (feminine) *jouissance* ['à supposer qu'il y en ait une autre, mais justement il n'y en a pas'] in order to say something about *jouissance phallique.* Lacan jokes that while we may think that it is only *jouissance phallique* that exits, *la femme* knows better and is a tease ['sauf celle sur laquelle la femme ne souffle mot']. Once again, Lacan is employing his strategy of temporary misunderstandings through a speculative fiction in order to illustrate its opposite ['il est donc faux, hein, qu'il y en ait une autre']. Lacan argues that 'there exists no *x* that is not (Φx)' [there is no subject that is not enthralled to the phallic function], all the while stressing that it does not necessarily follow that 'all *x* is (Φx)' [all subjects are enthralled to the phallic function]. In other words, both statements suggest that there is no woman that is *not* in some way linked to the phallic function. However, this should be taken in conjunction with: 'not-all of the woman is linked to this function (Φx)' (David-Ménard 1997: 139: my translation). Therefore, some part of the woman *is* linked to the phallic function but not all of her is linked to the phallic function. Lacan says, 'lorsqu'un être parlant quelconque se range sous la bannière des femmes' Lacan says, 'c'est à partir de ceci qu'il se fonde de n'être pas-tout, à se placer dans le fonction phallique' (*SXX* 68). This paradox is Lacan's (fictional) logic of the *not-all.* Women comply with the 'exigence de l'Un' (universal phallic function), and yet *do not* do so universally, but rather one-by-one (*une par une*) – a countable infinity and, therefore, not a totality. Women, in their status as *pas-toute,* are only able to be taken by the masculine sex (and so phallically) one-by-one, putting them at odds with universality. This means that 'c'est quand même elles qui possèdent les hommes, […] le phallus, son homme comme elle dit' (*SXX* 68-9). As Chiesa puts is: 'woman is, at the same time, infinite and countable, or

better, she becomes countable precisely insofar as she exposes the count as nontotalizable' (Chiesa 2016: 4).

However, Lacan, never wishing to be outdone, suggests that this impossible thing that does not exist, ~~*La*~~ *femme* (or, $\exists\overline{x}\Phi\overline{x}$, the *pas-tout* foreclosed), is at the same time a line of flight that could reach outside the totalised enclosure of phallic *jouissance* — while remaining impossible in practice and not being required. Therefore, although the feminine *jouissance* is a fiction created to make *jouissance phallique* more concrete, and, therefore, a necessary counterpart for *jouissance phallique*, feminine *jouissance* nevertheless persists spectrally, beyond the reach of the subject, haunting him/her as a possible impossibility. Just like the concept of the quilting point, Lacan says: 'il y a une jouissance à elle, à cette *elle* qui n'existe pas et ne signifie rien.' (*SXX* 69). If we read Lacan's infamous slogan of 'il n'y a pas *la* femme' (*SXX* 13) alongside the logic of the quilting point, we can see how her nonexistence and non-signification renders the slogan itself *not real*, a lie that is deployed for another purpose. As I said earlier: the *point de capiton,* the *fear-of-God* is not real, it does not signify something in reality. Lacan's frequent use of '*il n'y a'* works in the same way, '*il n'y a'* introduces a fiction which gives necessary intellectual supports for the actual. It is for this reason that *il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel* resembles '~~*La*~~ *femme*' (*SXX* 68), because in both cases Lacan is inventing (then, denying) the opposite in order to make more concrete the opposing idea.

Lacan's late thought is highly speculative, and, in many ways, resembles Schelling's fragmentary text we explored in our previous chapter. In what follows, we conceptualise Lacan's *not-all* as one of the names for God — following Lacan's argument that God is a woman from *SXXIII*, *Le Sinthome*: 'la femme dont il s'agit est un autre nom de Dieu, et c'est en quoi elle n'existe pas' (*SXXIII* 14). Both God and the

Woman's ex-istence, are the intellectual bedrocks that support Lacan's system, which Lacan calls 'l'hypothèse Dieu:'

> Ce qui supplée au rapport sexuel, c'est précisément l'amour. L'Autre, l'Autre comme lieu de la vérité, est la seule place, quoiqu'irréductible, que nous pouvons donner au terme de l'être divin, de Dieu pour l'appeler par son nom. Dieu est proprement le lieu où, si vous m'en permettez le jeu, se produit le *dieu* - le *dieur* - le *dire.* Pour un rien, le dire ça fait Dieu. Et aussi longtemps que se dira quelque chose, l'hypothèse Dieu sera là (*SXX* 44).

Although God is inexistent, according to Lacan, he can only in-exist as a fiction in, *stricto sensu*, the manner explored previously. For Lacan, God persists in this way because we can say the word 'God,' and so God persists in language. This fact haunts us, and we are only able to experience ourselves as free of God because we can safely ignore the concept of God, appropriately maintaining *the theistic logic of our atheism*. This insight ties in with the idea that we must have a concept of God in order to reject that concept. Paradoxically, 'c'est ce qui fait qu'en somme il ne peut y avoir de vraiment athées que les théologiens, c'est à savoir ceux qui, de Dieu, en parlent' (*SXX* 45). Since faith relies on a lie, faith is a paradox that exemplifies the logic of the fiction we described earlier concerning the *non rapport sexuel* and ~~*La*~~ *femme,* which Žižek calls 'counterfactual:'

> If we take as our starting point a false premise that we can clearly see the true in its proper contours, […] it is only from a counterfactual premise that we can grasp the truth of the factual. The big problem of the cognitive process is thus not simply to get rid of the lies and illusions, but how to select the right lie, a lie which eventually can enable us to arrive at the truth – if we want to go directly for truth, we lose the truth itself (Žižek 2016: 298-9).

'Selecting the right lie' is the central idea which governs Lacan's thinking on *sexuation*, love, God, and the Real. It underscores Lacan's argument of 'il n'y a pas d'Autre de l'Autre' (*SXXIII* 127), to which we will return in chapters three and four.

Jean-Luc Nancy understood Lacan when he summarised the central Lacanian insight thus: 'la psychanalyse se fonde, nous a dit Lacan, sur un principe qui s'énonce

ainsi: “Il n’y a pas de rapport sexuel,” […] ou bien simplement l’autre formulation […]: “La jouissance est impossible” (2001: 9). The *non rapport sexuel* is intimately linked to the unbearable feminine *jouissance*, and its corollary impossibility of being not-all. We could say that the not-all of feminine sexuality is another way of expressing the impossible fiction we explored earlier, which guarantees the Symbolic Order. Its totality envelops the master signifier (the Phallus) in relation to masculine sexuality. The not-all is outside, inaccessible, which exists as ‘des bouts de réel’ (*SXXIII* 123) for the subject; the not-all is the exception that guarantees the rule. Or, to put it another way, it is the truth of incompleteness — a Lacanian paradox: ‘le réel, c’est ce qui intéresse ceci que, dans ce qui est la fonction la plus commune, vous baignez dans la signifiance. C’est interdit par leur structure même’ (*SXIX* 30). Therefore, as we suggested earlier, God, the not-all of feminine sexuality, is Lacan’s second major qualification of the big Other (Žižek 2002: 58).

As we saw, for Lacan, God could be based on a lie, and the truth of God is an incomplete truth that is not guaranteed by the totality of a universal. The split for the subject exists at a primary, ontological level of being, whereas the transcendental logic of feminine *jouissance* is beyond the phallic function. These speculative insights that Lacan, as we have seen, developed more seriously in *SXX*, *Encore*, find their origin in *SIII*.

In *SIII,* Lacan focuses on God and his potential for deceit, starting with Descartes’s “Fourth meditation.” Descartes’s theory considers that while human doubt renders ideas both incomplete and dependent, at the very least, we may form an idea of a clear, distinct God, and conclude that he exists absolutely. We can know with certainty that God guarantees our existence:

> Cùmque attendo me dubitare, sive esse rem incompletam & dependentem, adeo clara & distincta idea entis independentis & completi, hoc est Dei, mihi occurrit; & ex hoc uno quòd talis idea in me sit, sive quòd ego ideam illam habens existam, adeo manifeste concludo Deum etiam existere, atque ab illo singulis momentis

> totam existentiam meam dependere, ut nihil evidentius, nihil certius ab humano ingenio cognosci posse confidam (IV).[49]

Descartes further argues that this God is not duplicitous, nor is he deceitful. God maintains the world as empirically stable; Descartes elaborates:

> In primis enim agnosco fieri non posse ut ille me unquam fallat; in omni enim fallaciâ vel deceptione aliquid imperfectionis reperitur; & quamvis posse fallere, nonnullum esse videatur acuminis aut potentiae argumentum, proculdubio velle fallere, vel malitiam vel imbecillitatem testatur, nec proinde in Deum cadit. (IV).[50]

Descartes argues that although God might have the ability to deceive us, he does not do so because, logically, a benevolent God would never do such a thing. Lacan questions this Cartesian logic, arguing that nothing protects the subject from God's potential malice.

Therefore, as early as *SIII,* Lacan makes a rudimentary case for the logic of the *non rapport sexuel,* and the concomitant argument for the deceptiveness of the big Other. There is, Lacan says, in the triad of the Imaginary, Symbolic, and Real, the basic condition of all relationships; 'la condition fondamentale de tout rapport' (*SIII* 76). Lacan argues that the Imaginary, Symbolic, and Real realms reflect the registers of the subject: speech, the order of alterity as such, and of the Other. 'Dans le sens vertical, il y a le registre du sujet, de la parole et de l'ordre de l'altérité comme telle, de l'Autre' (*SIII* 76). The pivotal point of the function of speech is the subjectivity of the Other, who is capable of lying: 'le point-pivot de la fonction de la parole est la subjectivité de l'Autre, c'est-à-dire le fait que l'Autre est essentiellement celui qui est capable, comme le sujet, de convaincre et mentir' (*SIII* 76). However, the Cartesian wager was that there must be a

[49] 'And when I consider the fact that I have doubts, or that I am a thing that is incomplete and dependent, then there arises in me a clear and distinct idea of a being who is independent and complete, that is, an idea of God. And from the mere fact that there is such an idea within me, or that I who possess this idea exist, I clearly infer that God also exists, and that every single moment of my entire existence depends on him. (Descartes 1996: 37).

[50] 'To begin with, I recognise that it is impossible that God should ever deceive me. For in every case of trickery or deception some imperfection is to be found; and although the ability to deceive me appears to be an indication of cleverness or power, the will to deceive is undoubtably evidence of malice or weakness, and so cannot apply to God.' (Descartes 1996: 37).

non-deceptive core of reality at the heart of the big Other. 'Le corrélat dialectique de la structure fondamentale qui fait de la parole de sujet à sujet une parole qui peut tromper, c'est qu'il y ait aussi quelque chose qui ne trompe pas' (*SIII* 76). Indeed, modern science has done much to demonstrate the repeatability, and, therefore, perceived stability of the world, 'la notion que le réel, si délicat qu'il soit à pénétrer, ne peut pas jouer au vilain avec nous [… c'est…] essentiel à la constitution du monde de la science' (*SIII* 77). But Lacan reminds us that the core of the Real is always already a function of speech, and there is absolutely nothing that guarantees the original step of all scientific investigations as anything other than an act of faith — God maintaining the world as empirically stable:

> Nous n'avons jamais rien constaté en effet qui nous montre au fond de la nature un démon trompeur. Mais il n'empêche que c'est un acte de foi qui a été nécessaire aux premiers pas de la science et de la constitution de la science expérimentale. Il va de soi pour nous que la matière n'est pas tricheuse, qu'elle ne fait pas exprès d'écraser nos expériences et faire sauter nos machines. Ça arrive, mais c'est que nous nous trompons, il n'est pas question qu'elle nous trompe. Ce pas [*sic*], ce n'est pas du tout-cuit (*SIII* 77).

Lacan does not share the certainty found in Descartes's *Fourth Meditation.* Lacan sees God as a potentially pernicious in-itself who forces the world to react maliciously and manipulates the order of things to render our world duplicitous. For Lacan, every empirical development in modern science rests on those 'bouts de réel' that we know nothing about, onto which we project 'stability' and 'permanence;' the phenomenological approach of taking things as they appear is invalid, according to Lacan. Recall the opening lines of *L'Être et le néant,* 'la pensée moderne a réalisé un progrès considérable en réduisant l'existant à la série des apparitions qui le manifestent' (*EN* 11). Yet, Sartre's view does not take into account Lacan's argument that there is always the possibility of a deceptive God who is playing with the 'appearances' which manifest themselves in the world.

iii. The Decorator Crab

Sartre had argued that in loving another, we would effectively be attempting to become *en soi pour soi* — which would amount to wanting to become God –, and, as we saw, this metamorphosis is both impossible and incomprehensible for Sartre because ultimately, we would have to partially renounce freedom to acquire the features of stability and permanence from God, and this is impossible. According to Sartre, we are condemned to our own freedom. However, the problem, as we see it, is that Lacan's double qualification of the big Other, in *SIII* and *SXX*, demonstrated that the concept of *en soi pour soi* as God is complex, and prone to subterfuge. I contend that Lacan's Other (*Autre/ jouissance féminine*) is Sartre's *en soi pour soi,* and it takes on two dimensions in Lacan's work. On the one hand, there is the big Other of the mythical hoard — the Father of unregulated desire – the *Père* who injects the novocaine to force the subject to suffer peacefully. On the other, for Lacan, there is the big Other of feminine *jouissance;* the meaningless and unnecessary lie (fiction) which supports the structure of the Symbolic, and, therefore, the entire empiricism of modern science. And, it is in the big Other of feminine *jouissance*, not in the big Other of the mythical psychotic father, that we can safely conclude that to love would be to want to discover the unknown, to stab in the dark.[51]

The dualism at the heart of the big Other resembles Schelling's argument that God had fallen from the seat of the absolute. As we saw in our previous chapter, Schelling held that God (or the Absolute) had to share his absolute freedom with something that was not himself — the *Gegenbild*:

> The counter-image [Gegenbild], as an absolute entity and having all its attributes in common with the originary [*sic*] image, would not truly be in itself and absolute if it could not grasp itself in its selfhood [*Selbstheit*], in order to have true

[51] We will contextualise this in our next chapter in our discussion with Scudéry's *Carte de Tendre*.

> being as the *other* absolute. But it cannot be as the *other* absolute unless it separates itself or falls away from the true Absolute (*PR*, 28).

To put it in Lacanian terms, Schelling's philosophy attempted to conceptualise the Lacanian Other of the not-all, and we could further develop his speculative account of the Fall into our understanding of God as unknowable, an *en soi pour soi* which enables the technical possibility of love. As we saw, Lacan argued that God could be deceptive and could have chosen not to render the world empirically stable or permanent. Unlike Sartre, who argued that *en soi* was governed by the characteristics of stability and permanence, we can now say that *en soi* is governed only by an *appearance* of stability and permanence. The entirety of our knowledge is predicated on that which only has the *appearance* of truth and stability, which, thus, amounts to what is unknown. If God is capable of deceiving us about *en soi*, would it not then follow that he is also able to deceive us about *en soi pour soi*? Therefore, God's deception could be double — indeed, following Lacan, we have little logical proof for *en soi*'s stability or permanence.

If the pre-historic ontological scene were a deserted beach, we can imagine beach shrubs, driftwood, and rocks amassing on the sand dunes on the backshore. A small crab who has camouflaged itself to look like a rock — taking on the appearance of an inanimate object characterised by stability and permanence — suddenly sprouts legs and begins to rush off the beach. This almost imperceptible movement is our pernicious God himself, who, after having fallen from the seat of the absolute, is scared and alone. God's fall from the heavens was the result of his own narcissistic attempt to verify the *Gegenbild,* Schelling had argued. However, what if God's final act on his descent from the heavens was to also render the appearance of *en soi* as permanent and stable so that we could not find him lying afraid on the beach — an eternity of camouflage and deceit? The decorator crab camouflaged as a rock is the problematic Sartrean *en soi pour soi,* and, mistaking the crab for a rock would amount to being unaware of its deceit. What

Lacan has shown, by employing the same radical speculation that Schelling had earlier, is that the *en soi* need not be stable and permanent. Therefore, there is no conflict in potentially marrying freedom and permanence as *en soi pour soi* in love. Schelling's and Lacan's move is to posit such an unknown fiction, the decorator crab that looks like *en soi* but is potentially *en soi pour soi*. Lacan's doubt *retroactively* throws the human condition into sharp relief. Could this be the reason why Sartre finds Pierre so disconcerting in *EN?*:

> Lorsque Pierre me regarde, je sais sans doute qu'il me regarde, ses yeux — choses du monde — sont fixés sur mon corps — chose du monde: voilà le fait objectif dont je puis dire: il *est*. Mais c'est aussi un fait du monde. Le sens de ce regard n'est point et c'est ce qui me gêne: quoi que je fasse, sourires, promesses, menaces — rien ne peut décrocher l'approbation, le libre jugement que je quête, je sais qu'il est toujours au-delà (*EN* 101).

For Sartre, Pierre is beyond, impossible to love as *pour soi*. To love Pierre would be to renounce one's radical freedom. However, what if instead, we gave Pierre the features of *une pierre* as decorator crab? What if *une pierre* (or, stability and permanence) was the fictional lie that sustains the truth of the world? What if half of Pierre, as our decorator crab, is one of the names of God? For Lacan, the impossibility of love is necessary, the subject needs this fiction, the impossible concept of the Other of the Other, *jouissance féminine*, God, even if it does not exist. Postulating God's existence is taking a *leap of faith,* and, as our third and fourth chapter will show, this false hope, the temporary detour through speculative fiction, is, for Lacan, necessary for the subject to *be* in the world.

CHAPTER 3 — THE WISH TO BE LOVED
Part One: Beyond the Signifier, and into Fantasy

> Il paraît étrange que […] l'espace
> démesuré qu'implique toute demande
> [est la] requête de l'amour.
>
> Lacan, *Écrits*

i. Introduction

In this chapter, we investigate Lacan's concept of *jouissance* as it relates to the notions of desire, fantasy, and pleasure. In our previous chapter, we investigated the *point de capiton,* and argued that this could qualify the master signifier, Φx, as deceitful since the signifier's meaning was only fixed arbitrarily. If the master signifier, Φx, is not outright deceitful, it is characterisable as partially untruthful. Lacan identified the quilting point in his third Seminar, and he continued to rework the notion throughout his teachings. The quilting point is central to Lacan's graph of desire (see figure 3.1), and I begin the first part of this chapter by contextualising and analysing this graph.

The graph's main explanatory power resides is in its ability to schematically illustrate subject development in language. The graph introduces a distinction between the Subject of Language and the Subject of *Jouissance* (the lower and upper parts of the graph, respectively). The graph visually illustrates the core components of our

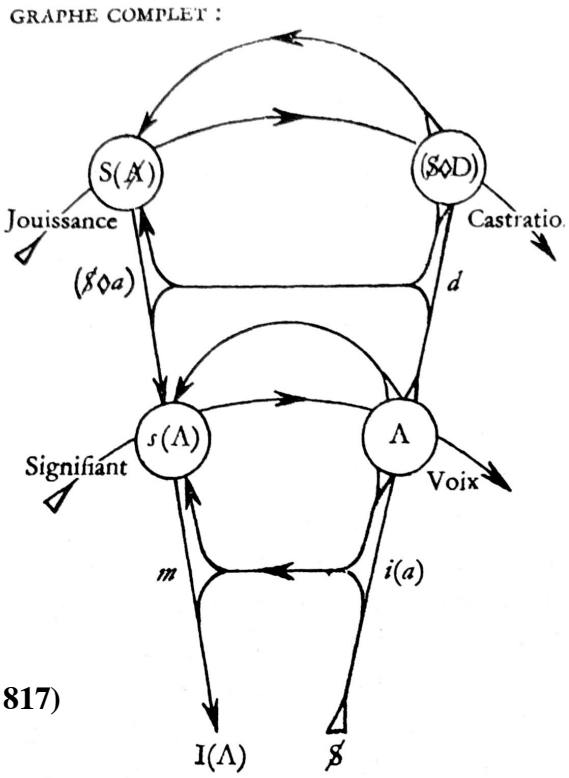


Figure 3.1 (*É* 817)

understanding of Lacan's psychoanalytic theory of subject development. The analysis of the graph will lead our argument to Lacan's concept of *jouissance* which we explore through discussions of *das Ding* and the ethics of psychoanalysis, explored in the third part of this chapter. Part two of this chapter contextualises the abstract concepts with some examples: I analyse Madeleine de Scudéry's *Carte de Tendre* to exemplify the Lacanian fantasy screen and the disintegration of the subject's psychic life in the pursuit of *jouissance*. I also discuss *qui perd gagne* and ask if we can relate this concept to Lacan's psychoanalysis to highlight the desolation of the subject and the closed circle of symbolic coordinates, *les non-dupes errent*. Finally, I demonstrate *jouissance*'s relevance to the theory of love that I am sketching concerning Lacan's psychoanalysis. I argue that love, in Lacan's work, is both necessary and impossible. Lacan does not explicitly treat love as this essential leftover which is impossible to subsume, however, I claim that not only is this an appealing Lacanian definition of love, but that love is the necessary metaphysical leftover of Lacan's psychoanalytic practice itself.

In Lacan's early teachings, the clinical aspects of his psychoanalytic theory took priority. Lacan's first seminar on Freud, *Les Écrits techniques de Freud,* engages in a sustained close reading of what he calls 'Freud's technical papers' to sketch the parameters of the psychoanalytic clinic (*SI* 18). In *SI* Lacan investigates the Symbolic Order to highlight the centrality of this register to his clinical practice (*SI* 343), and by Lacan's third seminar, on psychosis, he contends that psychosis is a diagnosable symptom within the Symbolic Order and, therefore, in need of broader analysis. By Lacan's seventh seminar, *L'Éthique de la psychanalyse*, his strategy begins to shift. His seminars become increasingly popular with auditors, and he delivers his lessons to a popular, philosophically-minded, audience, and not just clinicians. For example, in *L'Éthique* Lacan introduced ethical concerns, drawing heavily from Freud's *Civilisation*

and Its Discontents. Lacan stretched his clinical interpretations to apply them to society, effectively turning his practice into a branch of social theory.

Responding to his changing audience, Lacan focuses on literature, electing to analyse Sophocles's *Antigone* as a means of performing the psychoanalytic ethic he describes. Lacan does this by referring to the law and tragedy. Lacan pursued a similar strategy the previous year in his sixth seminar, *Le Désir et son interprétation,* offering a sustained analysis of Shakespeare's *Hamlet.* Lacan will continue this method in his later seminars, most notably with Joyce in *SXXIII*, *Le Sinthome,* to which we will return in our final chapter. As we saw in the previous chapter, Lacan's ideas and teaching style resist easy categorisation, and this makes it challenging to systematise his work. Lacan is also a difficult author to systematise because what he means keeps 'sliding' around at different moments, and any investigation of Lacan's psychoanalysis will aim to identify the 'quilting point' in his work; the point at which a set of theses, said to be "Lacanian," could intersect.[52] By the time of Lacan's eleventh seminar, *Les Quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse,* his lectures will have moved from *L'Hôpital Sainte-Anne* to the *Salle Dussane* of the *École normale dupérieure,* and from *SXI* onwards we detect an even more pronounced shift in Lacan's teaching style. As we saw in the previous chapter, towards *SXX*, *Encore*, Lacan becomes increasingly obsessed with formal logic and continues the transformation of his teachings into dense *mathemes* and graphs, and these have eluded me as often as they have clarified his concepts. [53] I will only focus on graphs and mathemes if these help to clarify my argument.

[52] 'Sliding' because, as we will see, meaning emerges from the clipping together of the free sliding around of signifiers. Moreover, as we saw earlier, Lacan kept changing his mind, for example, he qualifies the big Other twice, first in *SIII*, then in *SXX*, effectively changing what he meant.

[53] In *L'Œuvre claire* (1995), Jean-Claude Milner argues that this shift is a shift from what he calls 'le premier classicisme Lacanien' to 'le second classicisme Lacanien,' which pivots on Lacan's move towards the formal logic expressed in the mathemes: 'le pivot du second classicisme est la notion de mathème' (122).

ii. The Quilting of Meaning

In what follows, the graph of desire is treated systematically with continuous reference to "Subversion du sujet et dialectique du désir dans l'inconscient Freudien" from *Écrits*.[54] However, before entering this dense and complex text, we turn to *SV*, *Les Formations de l'inconscient*, where Lacan first mentions the graph. Lacan begins by briefly summarising his teachings to date (1957), stressing the importance of the quilting point and his third seminar on psychosis more generally: 'dans la troisième année de mon séminaire, nous avons parlé de la psychose en tant qu'elle est fondée sur une carence signifiante primordiale' (*SV* 12). The *carence* (lack or deficiency) of the primordial signifier is comparable to what I have called the sickness ('*maladie*') in Being, following from Sartre and Schelling, in chapter one. Moreover, as I intimated in chapter two, Lacan universalised the pre-psychotic's experience of this lack to demonstrate the broader subjective experience of the lack and its role in symbolic subject development. He says in *SV*:

> Je pense néanmoins que le séminaire sur la psychose vous a permis de comprendre, sinon le dernier ressort, du moins le mécanisme essentiel de la réduction de l'Autre, du grand Autre, de l'Autre comme siège de la parole, à l'autre imaginaire. C'est une suppléance du symbolique par l'imaginaire (*SV* 12).

As we saw, Lacan's 'mécanisme essentiel' is a reference to those aggressive egos in the imaginary realm, who vie for the attention of the big Other thereby inaugurating the big Other's omnipotent power as the regulator who will prevent the unregulated mayhem [*écrabouillement général* (*SIII* 111)] of the egos. For Lacan, this recognition of the big Other's role and power enables an analytic shift of focus from the subject's ego in the Imaginary to the development of the subject in the Symbolic Order. According to Lacan, once in the Symbolic, some subjects might foreclose the master signifier, which is

[54] Lacan refers to and explains the graph of desire in many other texts including *SV, SVI, SXIII, SXVI*, and *SXX*, (this list is non-exhaustive). I will treat the graph thematically and so will draw from a comprehensive set of sources. However, my primary source text will be the *Ecrits*.

psychosis by definition. The psychotic subject denies the big Other in the process of their subjective development, and this foreclosure is instrumental in the psychotic subject's dysfunctional development. Lacan sums up further:

> Je pense, donc je suis, disons-nous intransitivement. Assurément, c'est là la difficulté pour le psychosé, en raison précisément de la réduction de la duplicité de l'Autre avec le grand A, et de l'autre avec le petit a, de l'Autre, siège de la parole et garant de la vérité, et de l'autre duel qui est celui en face de qui le sujet se trouve comme étant sa propre image. La disparition de cette dualité est précisément ce qui donne au psychosé tant de difficultés à se maintenir dans un réel humain, c'est-à-dire dans un réel symbolique (*SV* 12).

The psychotic subject misidentifies the Symbolic Order, and this leads them to experience a psychological breakdown when they realise that they had misrecognised the big Other. As a result, the psychotic identifies with the wrong big Other, and, upon realising this, the psychotic collapses since their 'guarantor of truth' has failed to hold symbolic reality together. In short, the psychotic denies a specific symbolic reality, and, as we will demonstrate, the subject who pursues pure *jouissance* ends up in the same place.

The crucial implication for Lacan's social theory is that the Symbolic Order, which we understand to mean the incomplete marriage of truth and knowledge in language, needs to be governed by a big Other that acts as the guarantor of truth. Truth is quilted and expressed in the big Other whose role is to prevent the free fall of meaning (*jouissance*), Lacan says, 'il faut bien en effet qu'en quelque point, le tissu de l'un s'attache au tissu de l'autre, pour que nous sachions à quoi nous en tenir, au moins sur les limites possibles de ces glissements' (*SV* 13). The quilting point is the point at which the fabric of reality is sewed together, knotted, or clipped, to prevent further sliding on the signifying chain. Lacan develops this idea from Ferdinand de Saussure's *Cours de linguistique générale* (1916), where Saussure argues: 'si par rapport à l'idée qu'il représente le signifiant apparaît comme librement choisi, en revanche, par rapport à la

communauté linguistique qui emploie, il n'est pas libre, il est imposé' (1995: 104). Clearly, Lacan's argument for imposed meaning is taken directly from Saussure's idea; the quilting point possesses a fixity that is implicit in the imposed Saussurian model. Furthermore, Saussure is clear that the meaning of the signifier is conferred by a social body, which Saussure names 'the collectivity,' that arbitrarily imposes meaning. In Saussure's terms:

> À son tour, l'arbitraire du signe nous fait mieux comprendre pourquoi le fait social peut seul créer un système linguistique. La collectivité est nécessaire pour établir des valeurs dont l'unique raison d'être est dans l'usage et le consentement général; l'individu à lui seul est incapable d'en fixer aucune (Saussure 1995: 157).

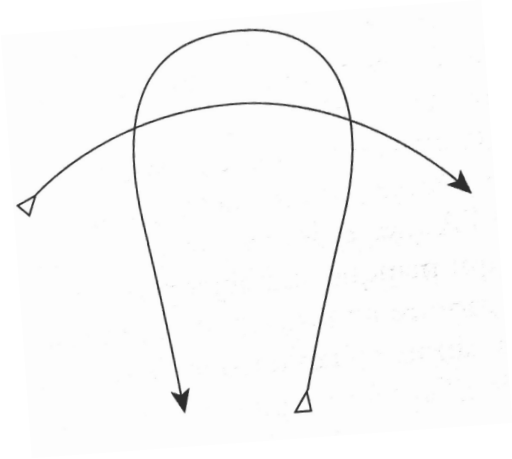
The quilting point synthesises symbolic power on the one hand with the arbitrary aspect of language on the other. The resulting master signifier, Φx, is only fixed by the choice and tacit consent of 'the collective.' The graph of desire's descriptive strength resides in schematically representing the arbitrary marriage of truth and reality in the process of subject formation. The process of subject formation throughout Lacan's work is always contingent on the big Other, which takes hold from the mere clipping together of signifiers. The quilting of meaning could have been otherwise, but it is was not, and, therefore, from the subject's perspective, the big Other is a void which now appears whole.

iii The Graph of Desire

The graph of desire stitches together the various aspects of subject formation and development described in our previous chapter, illustrating the relationship between the subject and the signifier, and, once understood, the graph of desire succinctly represents much of Lacan's early conceptual scheme. Lacan defines the graph of desire's intended aim: 'il nous servira ici à présenter où se situe le désir par rapport à un sujet défini de son

articulation par le signifiant' (*É* 805). Lacan claims that desire exists in relation to the signifier, articulating itself against the signifier. Lacan introduces the graph of desire in *SV* in its most rudimentary form (see figure 3.2 below).

Figure 3.2: (*SV* 14)



The graph is intended to be read backward, or *retroactively*, beginning from the lower right corner. Briefly, because we will comment on this later, the central horseshoe (right-to-left) vector represents subject development from birth and ends up in what I will call, for now, the *affected subject of experience*. Therefore, the right-to-left horseshoe vector illustrates a subject who has been affected by the weight of symbolic life. The left-to-right vector, which cuts across the top of the horseshoe vector, represents the quilting of the signifiers in language. Lacan's disparate theoretical threads find their realisation in this rudimentary schema.

Before commenting further on the graph, Lacan explains that a key question for psychoanalysis is whether both 'truth' and 'knowledge' can ever be quilted together. Lacan is taking his cue from Hegel, and the latter's quest for Absolute Knowledge. Lacan says, 'je dis: [à-propos la psychanalyse] sa pertinence philosophique, puisque tel est au bout du compte le schéma que Hegel nous a donné de l'Histoire dans *la Phénoménologie de l'esprit*' (*É* 793). Leaving to one side the controversy surrounding Lacan's reading of Hegel, as well as Hegel's twentieth-century French reception more generally, which is

subject to endless discussion,[55] Lacan is entrusting psychoanalysis with a primary task of situating the subject in a relationship to knowledge ('un rapport au savoir'). Accordingly, Lacan states that psychoanalysis's task is to demonstrate the ambiguity of such a relationship ['demontrer l'ambiguïté d'un tel rapport'] (*É* 793-4).

Traditionally, the subject was not thought to be in an ambiguous relationship with knowledge, and this is why Lacan sees the psychoanalytic task as one of subverting the question of the subject because the subject introduces doubt (*É* 794). However, what does the subject desire from all this? Do they want to be subverted? For Lacan, the primary relationship between the subject and knowledge arises from the relationship between the subject and the Other which is characterised by radical insecurity. Lacan says: '*Che vuoi?* que veux-tu? est celle qui conduit le mieux au chemin de son propre désir, – s'il se met, grâce au savoir-faire d'un partenaire du nom de psychanalyste, à la reprendre, fût-ce sans bien le savoir, dans le sens d'un: Que me veut-il?' (*É* 815). The subject does not know what he/she wants, and subjects will instead ask: *Che Vuoi?* 'What do you want from me?' which pushes the subject to start asking the right questions about their desire in their search for knowledge. However, before they begin asking the right questions ('grâce au savoir-faire d'un partenaire du nom de psychanalyste'!) the subject wrongly pursues the desire of the Other. Therefore, in the process of subject formation, subjects first have to accept the desires of the Other before they can know what they want.

Lacan appeals to the Copernican Revolution in "Subversion du sujet" to explain how the subject exists in an ambiguous relationship with the truth. For Lacan, modern science is just one of many subjects of knowledge, with psychoanalysis representing another example, he says, 'ceci […] mérite qu'on parle d'un sujet de la science' (*É* 794). Lacan interferes in the epistemological debate of identifying the subject of science

[55] As we saw in chapter one.

because he believes that psychoanalysis is better placed to subvert the question of the subject, to better capture the ambiguous relationship between the subject and knowledge.[56] Lacan discusses the subject of science through the example of Copernicus's paradigm shift from a geocentric to a heliocentric universe. Lacan argues that, in postulating a heliocentric universe, Copernicus ended up splitting 'empirical' truth from 'divine' truth. The result was that, far from getting closer to the truth, Copernicus simply forced the truth to multiply. Lacan says, 'rien fait-il apparaître que l'autre vérité si nous appelons ainsi la vérité révélée, en ait pâti sérieusement?' (*É* 797). For Lacan, the Copernican revolution has a linguistic legacy, 'l'emploi du nom de Copernic à une suggestion langagière […]. La révolution n'est pas moindre de ne porter que sur les "révolutions célestes"' (ibid). 'Meaning' is continually sliding around, and the nomination 'Copernicus' merely quilts the intended concept, 'des ressources plus celées qui touchent justement à ce qui vient déjà de glisser de notre plume comme rapport au vrai' (ibid). The knotting together of truth and knowledge that formed in the naming of 'Copernicus' is only a formal exercise in the semantic restructuring of reality. Lacan argues in *Écrits*:

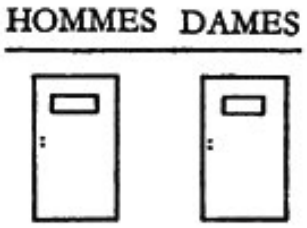
> Dès ce moment s'y arrêter n'a plus seulement le sens de révoquer une sottise de la tradition religieuse qui, on le voit assez, ne s'en porte pas plus mal, mais de nouer plus intimement le régime du savoir à celui de la vérité (ibid).

[56] Analytic philosophers of science have generally ignored twentieth-century French philosophy and social theory. The early Anglo-American debates surrounding the demarcation of science, corroboration, realism/antirealism, and falsification are impoverished by the blind refusal to read Canguilhem, Bachelard, Foucault, and Lacan. Lacan develops a psychoanalytic tradition which actively works against "science" in its purely empirical, measurable, quantifiable and repeatable vein. He explicitly states that: 'ce qui nous qualifie pour procéder dans cette voie est évidemment notre expérience de cette praxis […] qui, pour n'être sans danger pour la praxis elle-même, résultent [*sic*], l'une comme les autres, dans une absence totale de statut scientifique' (*É* 794). Indeed, Lacan also argues that 'on l'appréciera à la contre-épreuve de la contribution que la psychanalyse a apportée à la physiologie depuis qu'elle existe: cette contribution est nulle, fût-ce concernant les organes sexuels. Aucune fabulation ne prévaudra contre ce bilan' (*É* 805). Lacan advocates for a psychoanalytic discipline that stands independently from science and one which could respond to the same "scientific" questions from a different paradigm. Lacan's approach is unlike Freud's who insisted on the biological nature of psychoanalysis, and its supposed claims to scientism. For example, we should read Lacan alongside Popper 1998, Kuhn 1996, Lakatos 1998, and Feyerabend 1993 in the epistemological debates in the philosophy of science.

Lacan's paradoxical conclusion is that, in having corrected the religious geocentric view of the universe, the Copernican revolution's only result was to have created a new subject of science. For Lacan, the Copernican revolution achieved nothing but the arbitrary knotting together of knowledge and truth in a novel way. The Copernican revolution did not develop a more accurate understanding of "the truth," but only created a *new subject of the truth*. Lacan suggests that this is the form of subversion that psychoanalysis can offer.

As we saw in the last chapter, Lacan claimed there to be a radical discontinuity at the heart of the signifier, which, Lacan claimed, illustrated the difference between the subject and the subject of the unconscious. Against Saussure, we showed that, for Lacan, the relationship between signifier and signified is ambiguous because there is a discord at the level of the signifier. Lacan demonstrated this radical separation between the signifier and the signified in the schema he adapted from Saussure's tree schema, with 'Hommes' and 'Dames' followed by two identical doors.

Figure 3.3 (*É* 499)



As demonstrated earlier, Lacan argued that the concept of *sexuation* was founded on this split at the heart of the signifier. However, there is also a difference between the signifier and signified, and this is a general concept in Lacan's psychoanalysis, 'à nous analystes, il nous faut tout ramener à la fonction de coupure dans le discours, la plus forte étant celle qui fait barre entre le signifiant et le signifié' (*É* 801). And, according to Lacan, the split in the signifying chain is the only evidence we have of the discontinuity of the subject in the Real: 'cette coupure de la chaîne signifiante est seule à vérifier la structure du sujet

comme discontinuité dans le réel' (ibid). This means that the symbolic structures of language are not connected to the objects to which they supposedly refer, and it is this structure of discontinuity which follows the structure of the unconscious, as we saw. This is why Lacan repeatedly states that the unconscious is structured like a language because the unconscious is equally discontinuous (*SIII* 135), and this idea of discontinuity is closely related to the *non rapport sexuel*.[57] Lacan says, 'si la linguistique nous promeut le signifiant à y voir le déterminant du signifié, l'analyse révèle la vérité de ce rapport à faire des trous du sens les déterminants de son discours' (*É* 801).

The argument that Lacan is deploying is that the 'gaps in our understanding' affect any truth which might emerge from discourse, which is Lacanian jargon for the truth is always incomplete (in full Lacanian jargon it is said to be *mi-dit* [half-said]). The focus on discontinuity is an early formulation of what will later become the *non rapport sexuel.* The necessary relation of the *non-rapport* is riddled with gaps, making any coherent, rational, or systematised sense impossible. However, we stress, and argue, that this is a *necessary* non-relation. But why? Because the attempt to make sense of the *non-rapport* is a necessary one: even Lacan is attempting to make some sense of it in his discussions of the *non-rapport*. There might not be a *rapport sexuel* but subjects need some symbolic/ fictitious/ conceptual sexual relationship to exist in the first instance for the truth of this relation to be qualified as 'non' or impossible. The arbitrarily posited fiction, as we saw in our last chapter, *retroactively* generates some truth. This fiction of retroactive truth is illustrated in the graph of desire; by starting on the right-hand side of the right-to-left vector, Lacan is suggesting that the graph already presupposes "a subject" that is ready to be affected by the world.

[57] It is for this reason that Didier Anzieu was wrong to criticise Lacan's concept of the unconscious. The reference to the unconscious's structure as mimicking the structure of language is not a kind of linguistic determinism. Lacan does not mean that the unconscious *is* language. Rather, he means that the very instability and discontinuity of language mimics the unconscious (see Anzieu and Tarrab 1990: 43).

The graph of desire's explanatory strength is that it schematises the quilting which we have been discussing (see figure 3.4 below), knotting the signifier and the signified

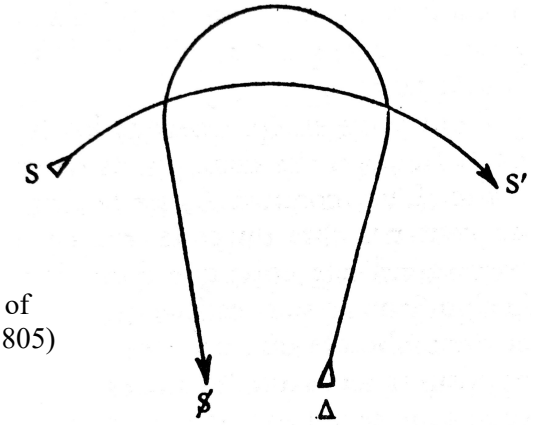


Figure 3.4: Graph of Desire Stage 1 (*É*: 805)

together. Once this process has taken place, we are left with a decisive, though arbitrary and cunning, master signifier. Arbitrary and cunning because, as we have just seen, there are holes in the discourses from where the master signifier emerges. Figure 3.4 develops the previous graph (figure 3.2) by adding Lacan's labelling from the *Écrits*, 'voici ce qu'on pourrait dire en être la cellule élémentaire. S'y articule ce que nous avons appelé le point de capiton par quoi le signifiant arrête le glissement autrement indéfini de la signification' (*É* 805). The updated graph shows the process by which the signifier is quilted and how meaning takes on currency. Lacan places the prelinguistic subject at 'Δ,' this is the fictitious animal being who is *retroactively* seeking to make sense of the world. '*$*' refers to the fully formed barred subject, one who has been through the process of subjectivation in language and on whom the signifiers have been impressed. The left-to-right vector ($\overrightarrow{S.S'}$) which cuts across the top of the main vector ($\overrightarrow{\Delta.\$}$) represents the signifying chain in language. The main vector, ($\overrightarrow{\Delta.\$}$), demonstrates the meaning-making process of subject formation. As already noted, this graph should be read *retroactively*, the retroactive mechanism of subject formation will become ever more crucial to Lacan's conceptual scheme. Therefore, the graph should be read by beginning from (Δ) and

ending in (*$*), after having been impressed at (S) and (S'). Confusingly, Lacan will later transform S and S' into S1 and S2 (respectively) following the mathemes (Fink 2004: 114), as explored in the previous chapter, and so, the horizontal vector ($\overrightarrow{\Delta.\$}$) intersects at S1 and S2, as shown in figure 3.5 below:

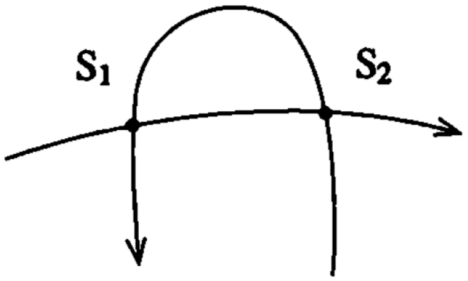


Figure 3.5
(Fink 2004: 114)

The graph displays the process of subject formation with all three psychoanalytic realms (R.S.I.) present in the graph, as will become apparent as we explain the graph in more detail. The *point de capiton* is located where ($\overrightarrow{S1.S2}$) intersects with ($\overrightarrow{\Delta.\$}$).

Lacan further complicates the graph by changing the labelling once again (see figure 3.6), and claiming that both (*s*(A)) and (A) are 'le lieu du trésor de signifiant.' *s*(A) 'est ce qu'on peut appeler la ponctuation où la signification se constitue comme produit fini,' and, Lacan adds, 'observons la dissymétrie de l'un qui est un lieu (place plutôt qu'espace) à l'autre qui est un moment (scansion plutôt que durée)' (*É* 806). At both

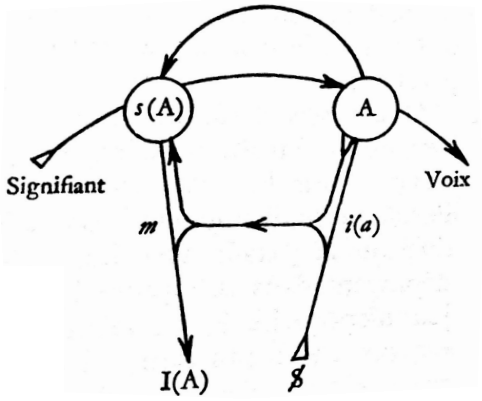


Figure 3.6: (*É* 808)

intersections along the signifying chain [*s*(A) and (A)], the big Other acts to tame the subject to the arbitrary will of the Signifier.

To contextualise this highly abstract discussion, let us imagine a child who is journeying merrily along the path of subject formation [$\overrightarrow{\$.I(A)}$], and suddenly finds themselves confronted with the big Other (A). In childhood, a subject's parents personify the big Other (A). When the child's parents first impose a strict restriction on their child, they inadvertently coerce the child into submitting to the power of the Other. The parents might rationalise with the child to convince them to submit to authority, by stressing the immediacy of a danger which might risk the child's bare life.[58] Therefore, a threat will often follow a prohibition; sometimes "under pain of death" to guarantee its proper installation. The parent might say: "do not cross the road if the 'red man' lights up. You could get run over by a car, so watch out!" When a parent warns their child in this way, compelling them to wait for the "green man" as they cross the road, the parent is nothing but a vector for the desire of the big Other, in this case, personified by the local authority or the State. However, the severity of the symbolic injunction has been forcefully impressed upon the child; Lacan represents this moment of confrontation with the big Other as (A) on the graph. The next time the child confronts a road crossing, with or without her/his parents, the memory of the symbolic injunction to "Wait!" is so severely installed in the child that they will wait. Lacan labels this child with symbolic awareness '*s*(A)', the child (*s*) with an awareness of the prohibition of this big Other (A). After this event has taken place, we can say that the Signifier has quilted, and it is representable on the chain of signification. The signifier's quilting is a two-stage process; both moments involve a certain amount of interaction with the other. The feedback loop begins with

[58] I borrow this term from Giorgio Agamben, 1998.

(A), the primary exposure to the symbolic demand, then the installed symbolic restriction at *s*(A) feeds back to (A) and is passed on to future subjects.

> La soumission du sujet au signifiant, qui se produit dans le circuit qui va de *s*(A) à A pour revenir de A à *s*(A), est proprement un cercle pour autant que l'assertion qui s'y instaure, faute de se clore sur rien que sur sa propre scansion (*É* 806).

This demonstrates the insignificance or lack of meaning of the signifier; 'autrement dit faute d'un acte où elle trouverait sa certitude, ne renvoie qu'à sa propre anticipation dans la composition du signifiant, en elle-même insignifiante' (*É* 806). Since the content of the restriction is arbitrary, in this case, the rules of the road in the UK, we could imagine a society where cars do not obey the "green man" rule. In Greece, as I know first-hand, for example, crossing any road at any time is under pain of death! Moreover, in the example I have laid out to explain the graph, Lacan illustrates the interplay between the three psychoanalytic realms. The child and her/his imaginary ego journeying along the path, the parent and the weight of symbolic authority forcing the ego into language and the symbolic law, and, finally, the real of being run over and escaping language through death.

One difference between figure 3.5 and figure 3.6 is that the big Other (A) replaces S2. Lacan says that to square the circle, and for the graph to make sense, (A) need not be a complete and contentful signifier, it only needs to look complete and contentful: 'n'exige que la complétude de la batterie signifiante installée en A, symbolisant dès lors le lieu de l'Autre' (*É* 806). Lacan again argues that (A), the big Other, is characterised by the incompleteness we explored in our previous chapter. Lacan characterises the big Other as lacking a fullness of being, and it is wrong, according to Lacan, to presume that the big Other is a complete and truthful thing. If we do, we reduce the big Other to a mere formalism and diminish the graph to a pure expression of Game Theory, which gives the subject calculable choices:

> A quoi l'on voit que cet Autre n'est rien que le pur sujet de la moderne stratégie des jeux, comme tel parfaitement accessible au calcul de la conjecture, pour autant que le sujet réel, pour y régler le sien, n'a à y tenir aucun compte d'aucune aberration dite subjective au sens commun (*É* 806).

Squaring this circle is impossible, Lacan says:

> Cette quadrature est pourtant impossible, mais seulement du fait que le sujet ne se constitue qu'à s'y soustraire et à la décompléter essentiellement pour à la fois devoir s'y compter et n'y faire fonction que de manque (*É* 806-7).

When the subject confronts the big Other, they subtract their desire from the equation and submit to the big Other to simultaneously come into being against it and allow the big Other to function as a lack in their subjective economy.

This confrontation is the necessary and impossible logic of the big Other. On the one hand, it demands from the subject the complete submission to its law and the subtraction of the subject's desire only to then require that the subject propagate its vacuous law, reinforcing its power. Translating this abstract analysis into the language of our example, the child, in confronting the big Other, subtracts his/her desire: to cross the street unobstructed at whim and will. The subject becomes an *affected subject* when they have installed the desire of the Other in their subjective economy. The child essentially sacrifices their desire for nothing concrete in return because the big Other is unable to offer a definite, cast-iron, guarantee that vehicles will *always* stop at red traffic lights. Of course, it would not be unreasonable to assume that a car would probably stop if a child ran out into the road, provided the driver was paying sufficient attention and performed an emergency stop. However, it is not inconceivable that a car could run the child over, and the big Other cannot provide a solid guarantee to the contrary. Lacan argues that, in this example, the law acts to preserve the Law itself, and not the child's life. The "green man" is not a failsafe guarantee that the child will never be run over. It is a game of chance and probability. What the local authority's rules of the road provide is a *semblance of law and order*, a set of rules which inaugurates the subject's guilt, creates

prosecutable offences, and, as such, the big Other always wins. The child gives up some desire to a vacuous and deceptive big Other. The child has staked their entire being on the incoherence and vacuity of the big Other. However, Lacan does not (yet) lament this structure. There is no other viable way for societies to function, and for this reason, it is *necessary*. And, for Lacan, we must be dupes to these lies, *les non-dupes errent*.

iv. The big Other and the Ego-ideal

The existence and structure of the master signifier precede the subject's relationship with it, as the example of the child illustrated. For Lacan, the symbolic law is always already present, and he says the big Other is a 'pur sujet du signifiant' and 'y tient la position de maîtresse, avant même d'y venir à l'existence, pour le dire avec Hegel et contre lui, en Maître absolu' (*É* 807). The structure of the pure signifier of signification is sovereign, and codes exist in our world even before we have uncovered them, or entered into a relationship with them, they are always already operative:

> On ne peut même parler de code que si c'est déjà le code de l'Autre, or c'est bien d'autre chose qu'il s'agit dans le message puisque c'est de lui que le sujet se constitue, par quoi c'est de l'Autre que le sujet reçoit même le message qu'il émet. Et sont justifiées les notations A et *s*(A) (*É* 807).

Lacan stresses that the big Other is the 'lieu' [locus/ site] of Speech (*É* 807), this confirms the logic of Lacan's conceptual scheme because it is only within the Symbolic Order that a subject can speak. Speech always already inculcates the subject into the Symbolic Order, and this is so because naming the subject in language necessarily includes them in the relation. However, Lacan adds a caveat 'entre parenthèse,' as it were, that the big Other 'ne s'impose pas moins comme témoin de la Vérité' (*É* 807). The concept of Truth is further complicated: not only is the Truth multiple, as demonstrated earlier concerning Copernicus's heliocentric universe, but now Lacan argues that the Truth is born, constructed, and continually related to lies.

To show this Lacan makes a comparison between the 'pretence' (*feinte*) which might overcome an animal and the deceit (*tromperie*) which a signifier in Speech might undertake.

> La tromperie de la Parole ne se distinguerait pas de la feinte qui, dans la lutte combative ou la parade sexuelle, en est pourtant bien différente […] Mais un animal ne feint pas de feindre. Il ne fait pas de traces dont la tromperie consisterait à se faire prendre pour fausses, étant les vraies, c'est-à-dire celles qui donneraient la bonne piste (*É* 807).

There is a difference between preparing decoys to throw a hunter off-scent as a survival mechanism, as found in the animal kingdom, which is how I have understood Lacan's example of *feinte* in animals, and the *tromperie* of the signifiers themselves: 'l'animal […] arrive à dépister en amorçant un départ qui est de leurre. Cela peut aller aussi loin qu'à suggérer chez le gibier la noblesse d'honorer ce qu'il y a dans la chasse de parade' (*É* 807). However, the deceit of the signifier is greater, it is inscribed in the signifiers themselves and for-themselves.[59]

> Il est clair que la Parole ne commence qu'avec le passage de la feinte à l'ordre du signifiant, et que le signifiant exige un autre lieu, – le lieu de l'Autre, l'Autre témoin, le témoin Autre qu'aucun des partenaires, - pour que la Parole qu'il supporte puisse mentir, c'est-à-dire se poser comme Vérité (807).

The decoy enables Speech to ascend to the rank of the signifier. Lacan says that the Other is invoked to bear witness to this transformation, thereby elevating the animal decoy to the *tromperie* of the signifier. In simpler terms, the decoy enables the lie to enter into Speech, in effect endowing Speech with the capacity to lie (*tromperie*), and through the lie, Speech converges with the signifier to pass itself off as Truth. The reason that the deceit of the signifier is greater than the animal decoy is that Speech *sells* Truth in

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[59] Lacan's *tromperie* is a refashioning of Freud's joke from *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious* about two Jews who meet in a railway carriage at a station in Galicia. Freud explains:

> '"Where are you going?" asked one. "To Cracow," was the answer. "What a liar you are!" broke out the other. "If you say you're going to Cracow, you want me to believe you're going to Lemberg. But I know that in fact you're going to Cracow. So why are you lying to me?"'(Freud 1960: 115).

I am grateful to Christina Howells for this reference.

language.[60] Lacan says, 'ainsi c'est d'ailleurs que de la Réalité qu'elle concerne que la Vérité tire sa garantie: c'est de la Parole. Comme c'est d'elle qu'elle reçoit cette marque qui l'institue dans une structure de fiction' (*É* 808). Further, 'c'est la parole qui instaure dans la réalité le mensonge' (*SI* 352). What makes the structure of the big Other and its relation to the lie relevant to us? Why does Lacan include all this in his discussion of the second stage of the graph of desire?

The big Other is not an innocuous force in subject formation, and, as we saw in the previous chapter, the master signifier (Φx) *is* the big Other and it is central to subject

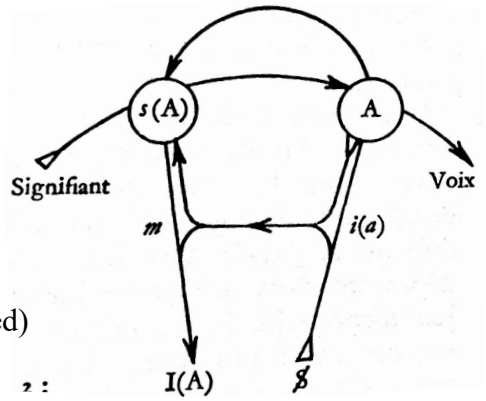


Figure 3.6 (reproduced)

formation as the graph shows. The right-to-left horseshoe vector represents the movement of subject creation as subjects are impacted by the big Other, chiefly at (A) and *s*(A), see figure 3.6. At (A), the big Other is effectively taming the subject, commanding the subject: barking orders, telling him/her how they ought to live, what they ought to do, and how they ought to feel. In *The Great Dictator*, Chaplin's final speech echoes the way the subject can experience the dictates of the big Other. Chaplin says:

> Don't give yourselves to brutes — men who despise you — enslave you — who regiment your lives — tell you what to do — what to think and what to feel! Who drill you — diet you — treat you like cattle, use you as cannon fodder. Don't give yourselves to these unnatural men — machine men with machine minds and machine hearts! (Chaplin: 1940).

[60] This is Lacanian jargon for: language contains its own perfidy.

Except, for Lacan, that is precisely what subjects do, they acquiesce to the machine heart of the big Other, they are enslaved by the big Other. Lacan says, 'le dit premier décrète, légifère, aphorise, est oracle, il confère à l'autre réel son obscure autorité' (*É* 808). The big Other issues the regulative principles which affix the codes that emerge from the quilting (*capitonnage*) of meaning at point (A). For example, if a young boy is hurt after a minor fall, a parent might deploy the widely espoused symbolic demand: "big boys don't cry," and, in effect, the parent is invoking the big Other's obscene power which seeks to modulate basic emotions, inculcating the boy into a system structure which focuses on the repression of his emotions. Another example, as we saw in the epigraph to our introduction, is Malcolm X's succinct capturing of the big Other's obscene strategy in exposing how Black Americans are deliberately exploited, disadvantaged, and disenfranchised by the White Man in the United States:

> It's like when you go to the dentist, and the man's going to take your tooth. You're going to fight him when he starts pulling. So they squirts some stuff in your jaw called novocaine, to make you think they're not doing anything to you. So you sit there, and because you've got all of that novocaine in your jaw, you suffer – peacefully. Blood running all down your jaw, and you don't know what's happening. Because someone has taught you to suffer – peacefully (Malcolm X 2003: 124).

For Lacan, the big Other's power, in this case, wielded by structural White Supremacy, is precisely that power which slowly inculcates and bends its subject to its will, forcing one to suffer peacefully. "Big boys don't cry" works in the same way; it is founded on a lie because, plainly, all children (and adults) cry. This shameless power is the power of castration in the oedipal process, and as we will see in our final chapter, this is the strategy which creates pre-psychotic subjects.

Nevertheless, a parent might employ such a strategy, borrowing some of the big Other's obscene power, because it is successful in achieving the desired result: the boy will most likely stop crying and might not cry again. The boy wants to satisfy the desire

of the Other and if that desire is for "men" not to cry, and the boy wants to become a "man," as defined by the desire of the Other, then, the boy will *will* himself into submission.[61] In a similar vein, women are subject to the so-called "biological clock" symbolic demand which states that women should "hurry up" should they wish to have children, this is an equally perverse injunction deployed to invoke the same power of the big Other to regulate women's lives, bodies, and mould our final Ideal-Ego. These examples demonstrate the power the signifiers hold in subject formation. All signifiers are not necessarily true, in fact they are lies, and yet, these oracles legislate their fictions and demand the subject's strict adherence to their codes of speech. And this is central to the graph of desire and Lacan's theory of subject formation because these demands are willingly internalised by subjects as their Ideal-Ego.

v. The Second Mirror Stage

Unlike the Ideal-Ego, which is formed by the demands and desires of the big Other, the imaginary ego-ideal is formed during the second phase of the mirror stage. Lacan tweaked the mirror stage in *SVIII*, *Le Transfert* (1960-61), five years before the publication of the *Écrits* (1966). He says, 'une modification nécessaire à la théorie analytique telle qu'elle s'engageait dans la voie où le moi était utilisé comme je vous l'ai montré tout à l'heure [...] sous le nom de stade du mirror' 401). The mirror stage part II has not been subject to as much scrutiny as the original, which we discussed earlier.[62] Lacan elaborates on this notion alongside the ego-ideal, in chapters thirteen and fourteen of *SVIII, Le Transfert*.

[61] Of course, this conclusion does not apply in quite the same way to Malcolm X's analogy, which is a much more complicated deployment of the big Other's obscene power.
[62] See: chapter 2, part I, section iii.

In the subject's search for self-understanding, Lacan says that an essential misunderstanding comes to the fore. As is often the case with Lacan, the subject prepares for self-consciousness via an essential detour through misunderstanding. 'Ici s'insère l'ambiguïté d'un méconnaître essentiel au me connaître. Car tout ce dont le sujet peut s'assurer, dans cette rétrovisée, c'est venant à sa rencontre l'image, elle anticipée, qu'il prit de lui-même en son miroir' (*É* 808). After having recognised the specular image of her/his reflection for the first time, the child looks back at their parents for reassurance. The child seeks to corroborate the discovery of their *"I"* in the eye of the parent. It is at this moment that the child will begin internalising the desires of the Other (A), in this case, personified by the desires of the parent. These could be, for example, the set of future expectations for the child. These parental desires are continually seen in the subject's 'rear-view-mirror' and act to encourage specific actions, behaviours, and desires.[63] These parental commands are not expressed directly but rather proliferate

[63] In "The Fetish of Fluidity," Brad Epps mistakenly argues, by my reading at any rate, that Lacan inaugurates the potential for a powerful queer subject that could somehow contest the power of the signifier *le Père,* and question the Symbolic Order more broadly. Epps argues:

> For Lacan, the reproof, not surprisingly, issues from the father, or the law of the father, and comes to mark, through introjection, any and every subject who contests the father and his law. The queer is presumably such a subject, but one who contests not just the father and his law, *but also the regime of subjectivity, and identity, itself* (Epps 2001: 414: my emphasis).

Epps continues:

> Lacan is here at his most cantankerous, and what he asserts is that every contestation of authority, every move against and beyond the law, every effort to make father shit ("*faire chier* père") is shadowed, as it were, by the signifier *father*: So much so that identity is constituted in the very resistance to identity - constituted, enriched, and benefited (ibid 415).

Finally, Epps states:

> For Lacan states that the [girl contends] with the father, not in the flesh, but as a name - as an instance, that is, of symbolic power. More pointedly, he indicates that [she] can contend with him *only* through the name, the signifier, whose separation from the signified permits a realm of possibility that includes, as we have seen, making the father shit (ibid).

Although I agree with Epps's arguing that the process of *subjectivation* happens at the level of the Symbolic Order, through the subject's exposure to the signifiers, and that all resistance to the signifier *Père* would be immanent to the symbolic structure that the signifier *père* inaugurates, the idea that the subject stands even a fighting chance ('permits a realm of possibility that includes […] making the father shit') is diametrically opposed to Lacan's argument. Epps is overstating the power of '*faire chier*' – which is, as far as I am aware, an expression signalling annoyance rather than expressing a serious destabilising force. I argue that Lacan's point is that though subjects can (and do) complain about the Father's law, this does not destabilise the master signifier's ability to impart his idea of what the subject's Ideal-Ego should look like at the end of the process of subject formation. Lacan says that 'c'est pour faire chier le père' that 'a' Marie-Chantal (a hypothetical daughter-figure personified by Lacan to make his point) might join the Communist Party of France, but this youthful rebellion actually reinforces the father's image of the daughter, that 'Marie-Chantal' then reintegrates. 'Marie-Chantal […est] tout simplement englobés [*sic*] dans le monde organisé par le père, s'il n'y avait pas justement le signifiant *père,* qui permet, si je puis dire, de s'en extraire pour s'imaginer le faire chier, et même pour y arriver. C'est ce que l'on exprime en disant qu'il ou elle introjecte en l'occasion l'image paternelle' (*SVIII* 402). Lacan is consistent, there is no subjective redemption in small acts of rebellion in the process of subject formation; for Lacan, small acts of defiance

ambiguously; these commands lead the child toward a myriad of misunderstandings in their search for self-understanding. Lacan extrapolates this insight from subject formation into broader considerations of intersubjective relations in society. All subjects act to fulfil the desires of the Other without necessarily knowing what those desires are, instead we all act on approximations of the tacitly accepted suggestions of the big Other. Lacan cautions us to be wary of the simple rehashing of the mirror metaphor because in its second variation it does not hold as evident a visual representation. The original Mirror Stage is, after all, a "scientifically" observable phenomenon: that of a (pre-linguistic) infant in front of a mirror enamoured by the recognition of their reflection for the first time. Whereas in its second variation this is not the case, as Lacan explains:

> L'ordre du miroir va beaucoup plus loin que le modèle […], ce [deuxième] schéma est d'un ordre un petit peu plus élaboré que celui de l'expérience concrète qui se produit pour l'enfant devant une surface réelle jouant le rôle de miroir. […] ce qui est ici représenté comme miroir plan ou une surface polie. Le schéma a en effet l'intérêt d'introduire la fonction du grand Autre, dont le chiffre, sous la forme de la lettre A, est ici mis au niveau de l'appareil du miroir plan (*SVIII* 412).

In looking over their shoulder, after recognising their specular image, the child recognises the big Other standing behind them. However, this recognition does not introduce the big Other into the world, since the big Other was always already there, but this recognition brings in an awareness of the big Other in the subject's life. Skipping ahead slightly, the child, in recognising its self-consciousness against the desires of the big Other, begins to understand the extent of its unawareness and its lack of knowledge. The subject's

work to reinforce symbolic power. The power of the master signifier is akin to quicksand, and the more one struggles, the deeper one slides into its suffocating Law. *Faire chier le père* is always already included in subject development and is, in fact, a mechanism by which the father can install his image which then becomes the subject's Ego-Ideal. The queer subject does not 'contest' the Father's law by being true to his/her homosexual desire, suggesting this propagates a misreading of Lacan. Lacan says, 'le meurtre du père aveugle tous ces jeunes taureaux imbéciles que je vois graviter de temps en temps autour de moi dans des arènes ridicules. Le meurtre du père veut justement dire qu'on ne peut pas le tuer. Il est déjà mort depuis toujours […] seulement voilà, il reste le Nom-du-Père, et tout tourne autour de cela' (*SXI* 151). For even if such a subject did contest the power of the signifier, they would end up in the fantasy ($◇a), which, as we will see in further discussions on the graph of desire, is where desire often ends up.

spontaneous reaction will be to begin asking the big Other: *Che Vuoi?,* or "what do you want from me?!" Backtracking a bit, Lacan explains:

> Il y a dans l'image quelque chose qui transcende le mouvement, le muable de la vie, en ce sens que l'image survit au vivant. C'est un des premiers pas de l'art, pour le *nous* antique - dans la statuaire est éternisé le mortel. C'est bien aussi, dans notre élaboration du miroir, la fonction qui est remplie d'une certaine façon par l'image du sujet. Quand cette image vient à être par lui perçue quelque chose là lui est soudain proposé où il se reconnaît, cette image se présente déjà comme une *Urbild* idéale, quelque chose d'à la fois en avant et en arrière, quelque chose de toujours, quelque chose qui subsiste par soi, quelque chose devant quoi il ressent ses propres fissures d'être prématuré, et s'éprouve lui-même comme encore insuffisamment coordonné pour y répondre dans sa totalité (*SVIII* 413).

What the subject recognises in their rear-view [*rétrovisée*] is a coherent '*Urbild* idéale,' which I have understood as a pre-image ideal or archetype. Lacan is clear that this is already present because the '*Urbild* idéale' does not merely include the desires and expectations of parents but also the comprehensive set of past and future societal expectations which are or will be internalised by the subject. The comprehensive set includes the demands of the master signifier. The subject internalises an entire system structure. This realisation happens, echoing Heidegger, as a thrown-ness in the world ('a la fois en avant et en arrière') inaugurated as the child looks back to his/her parent.[64] As Lacan explains:

> Exemplifions-le dans un geste de l'enfant devant le miroir […]. L'enfant qui est dans les bras de l'adulte est confronté exprès à son image. L'adulte, qu'il

[64] In §38 of *Being and Time* (1927), Heidegger discusses being-thrown-in-the-world. In *Ontologie et temporalité,* Jean Greisch explains:

> Le monde des "faits" est un monde transcendantalement statique, dans lequel rien ne bouge. En effet, dans un tel monde […] les faits ne bougent pas; tout au plus les choses se recombinent-elles pour former de nouveaux états de choses. Au cœur de la facticité par contre, nous découvrons le tourbillonnement infini de la déchéance: "Non seulement l'être-jeté n'est pas un "fait fixe", mais il n'est pas non plus un fait accompli […]. Il appartient à sa facticité que le *Dasein, aussi longtemps qu'il* est ce qu'il est, reste dans le jet et est entraîné par le tourbillon dans l'inauthenticité du On" (SZ *179*). Hamlet, dont le nom signifie d'ailleurs "tourbillon," pourrait en offrir une illustration littéraire. L'analytique existentiale aborde ici une expérience que d'autres philosophes, Schelling notamment, ont théorisé sous le titre de "vertige spéculatif". On peut en effet se demander si un *Dasein* aussi foncièrement "piégé" par lui-même […] qui "se perd" aussi vertigineusement lui-même […] (SZ *179*), dispose encore d'un quelconque moyen pour accéder à une existentialité authentique. La réponse de Heidegger à cette question est paradoxale à souhait: loin de constituter un obstacle *contre* l'existentialité, la déchéance est "plutôt la preuve la plus élémentaire à l'appui de l'existentialité du *Dasein*" (SZ *179*) (Greisch 1994: 227/8).

Stitching together aspects of Schelling, Heidegger and Lacan, the subject thrown-in-the-world could be said to be locked in an infinite whirlwind of oncoming decay ('le tourbillonnement infini de la déchéance'). This Heideggerian insight is the same one which pushed Schelling to describe being as something the subject "contracts" (see chapter 1, part II, section i). The subject is irremediably lost, and Lacan captures this subject in the '*Urbild* idéale.'

> comprenne ou pas, ça l'amuse. Il faut donner alors toute son importance à ce geste de la tête de l'enfant qui, même après avoir été captivé par les premières ébauches de jeu qu'il fait devant sa propre image, se retourne vers l'adulte qui le porte, sans que l'on puisse dire sans doute ce qu'il en attend, si c'est de l'ordre d'un accord ou d'un témoignage, mais la référence à l'Autre vient jouer là une fonction essentielle. Ce n'est pas forcer cette fonction que de l'articuler de cette façon, et de mettre ainsi en place ce qui s'attachera respectivement au moi idéale et à l'idéale du moi sans la suite du développement du sujet. De cet Autre, pour autant que l'enfant devant le miroir se retourne vers lui, que peut-il venir? Nous disons qu'il n'en peut venir que le signe *image de a,* cette image spéculaire, désirable et destructrice à la fois, effectivement désirée ou non. Voilà ce qui vient de celui vers lequel le sujet ce retourne, à la place même où il s'identifie à ce moment, en tant qu'il soutient son identification à l'image spéculaire (*SVIII* 415).

Lacan argues that from this moment on the child's Ego-Ideal, I(A), is born, and acts to regulate the ego. From the moment of self-recognition the ego is simply a good student waiting to be mastered, 'le moi est dès lors fonction de maîtrise, jeu de prestance, rivalité constituée' (*É* 809), to be mastered by the big Other.

Graph II (figure 3.6) represents the mastering of the subject by the big Other. The subject begins his/her journey at *$* and entertains imaginary relationships with "small others" (traditionally known as intersubjective relations, *i*(*a*)), Lacan says, 'à l'autre, c'est-à-dire au semblable à connoter d'un petit a' (*É* 810). The intersubjective relationships are said to be imaginary because, as phase one of the mirror stage showed, all egos are imagined, and the subject soon realises these small others are only *semblants* of his/her own ego, shell characters, expressed as '*i*(*a*)' (figure 3.6). The subject who has

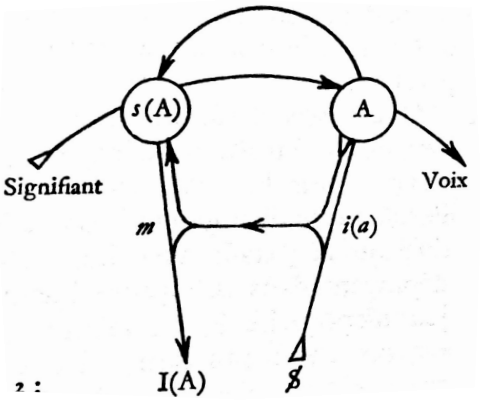


Figure 3.6 (reproduced)

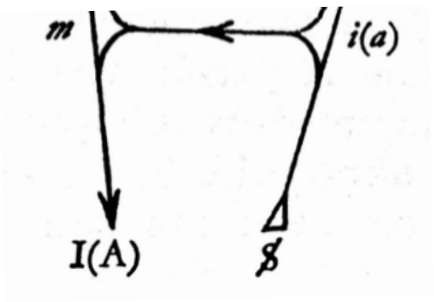


Figure 3.7: lower half graph of desire

refused to settle for a mere *semblant*, *i*(*a*), is exposed to the big Other, (A), and, as a result, becomes a subject of the big Other, expressed '*s*(A).' In simpler terms, the subject's ego is produced by first being exposed to their parents (A), thereby accepting the demands of the Other, which makes them: *s*(A). In turn, this now *processed* child is denoted '*m*' for '*moi*' [ego], on the graph (figure 3.6) which ends in the full transformation of the ego into the Ego-Ideal, I(A). Note how there is a shortcut on the graph, which avoids the (A), the Symbolic Order, altogether, from $i(a)\overrightarrow{\ }m$, this represents the unregulated mayhem [*écrabouillement général* (*SIII* 111)] of the conflict between egos without the decrees and legislation of the big Other. Instead, Lacan focuses on the journey to the Ego-Ideal through the Symbolic Order, taming the subject's ego through the desires of the big Other.

At the outset of this chapter, we described the subject's transformation into the Ideal-Ego, I(A) as the *affected subject of experience* – a subject who has been affected by *the weight of symbolic life*. Lacan explains:

> Ce procès imaginaire qui de l'image spéculaire va à la constitution du moi sur le chemin de la subjectivation par le signifiant, est signifié dans notre graphe par le vecteur $i(a).\overrightarrow{m}$ à sens unique, mais articulé doublement, une première fois en court-circuit sur $\$.\overrightarrow{I(A)}$, une seconde fois en voie de retour sur $s(A).\overrightarrow{A}$. Ce qui montre que le moi ne s'achève qu'à être articulé non comme Je du discours, mais comme métonymie de sa signification (*É* 809).

Lacan draws a distinction between the $i(a).\overrightarrow{m}$ vector and $\$.\overrightarrow{I(A)}$ vector. The $i(a).\overrightarrow{m}$ vector represents a short circuit that bypasses the quilting of the signifiers, and, therefore, is designated an unsuccessful means of arriving to the Ego-ideal, 'I(A).' It is for this reason that we cannot chop the graph in half, as I have done in figure 3.7, since the process of subject formation must go through (A) and then *s*(A), the quilted signifiers, to be completed (figure 3.6). We can now understand why 'I(A)' expresses a subject which has been impacted by the weight of symbolic demands and expectations. Lacan argues that

the subject must go through the metonymy of signification (quilting or '*capitonnage*') by pursuing the strategy expressed in the whole $\$.\overrightarrow{I(A)}$ horseshoe vector. There is no shortcut in the formation of the subject.

To get beyond the lower half of the graph of desire to the upper half, Lacan depicts the subject and Other in a relationship of conflict, and he is, once again, taking his cue from Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit.* Lacan returns to the Master and Slave dialectic and relates this to his understanding of intersubjective relations in psychoanalysis (*É* 810-

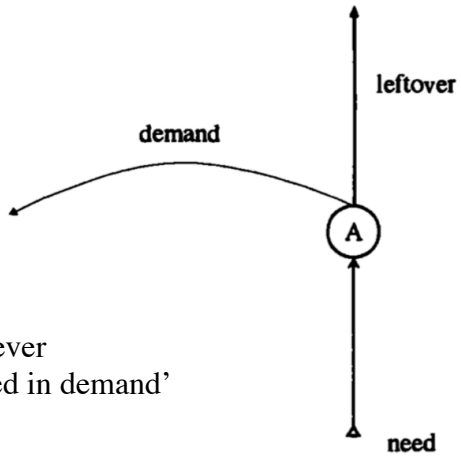


Figure 3.8 'Need never completely expressed in demand' (Fink 2004: 119)

11). Lacan deploys the classic Hegelian theme of conflict to discuss the relationship between the subject on the one hand, and his/her needs and demands on the other. Lacan locates 'demand' in relation to signifiers so that demands only exist in their articulation against the big Other's desires, once the quilting of meaning has affected the subject. Lacan says:

> Impossible pourtant à ceux qui prétendent que ce soit par l'accueil fait à la demande que s'introduit la discordance dans les besoins supposés à l'origine du sujet, de négliger le fait qu'il n'y a de demande qui ne passe à quelque titre par les défilés du signifiant (*É* 811).

For Lacan, while 'needs' always pre-exist and are directed at the big Other to be fulfilled (see figure 3.8), some specific demands cannot be satisfied by the big Other nor by the

quilting of the signifiers, and this 'leftover' demand opens the subject up to her/his desire (*d*) and, eventually, *jouissance*.

For Lacan, subject formation occurs as a result of the subject's relationship with others, and, therefore, her/his needs and demands are necessarily intersubjective. Moreover, the subject's desires are only ever generated as a result of the byproduct produced by the big Other's having fulfilled the subject's needs and demands, effectively having satisfied the subject's needs and demands. Therefore, in this relationship, the subject's desires emerge from the subject's conflict with the big Other. Moreover, once the subject is confronted with this leftover desire, they are unable to entertain it for long, and will, instead, be expected to acquiesce to the clear and straightforward edicts of the big Other in exchange for having fulfilled the subject's demands.

For clarity, we have, so far, avoided the distinction Lacan draws between the Ideal-Ego and the ego-ideal, opting to treat them separately. We have avoided this distinction because we have so far chosen to focus on the subject's Ideal-Ego in the Symbolic, stemming from the subject's relationship with the Other, and expressing what the Other wants from the subject. The lower half of the graph of desire has the primary function of representing the Symbolic Order's signifying structure as it relates to subject formation, illustrating the mastery of the subject by the Other. However, the lower half's second function is to show how leftover demand is generated and transformed into the subject's desires, and this leftover desire prompts Lacan to re-investigate the subject's ego-ideal, opposed to the subject's Ideal-Ego, arguing that the subject's primary interest is in their desires.

On social media, for example, users articulate and sharpen their ego-ideals. Only after users have intensively vetted the way they will be represented do they authorise the use of their virtual *semblant*. Subjects ensure that they are content with what they have

constructed, selecting the right profile pictures, ones that will satisfy their ego-ideal, and subjects further sharpen their ego-ideal in preparing the accompanying text/speech which they consider to be original and exciting. Subjects say and do things which express what they believe their ego truly *is* — their ego-ideal — whereas the Ideal-Ego is what the Other wants from the subject. It is this distinction which opens up the next section of the graph of desire, to which we alluded earlier. As subjects develop a plethora of 'needs,' they increasingly begin 'demanding' satisfaction and pleasure. Lacan is clear that the subject is a demanding subject. S/he needs things from others; for example, we might need our parents to feed us as young children. However, what is leftover from the requests of these needs is an insatiable demand, an unquenchable thirst, and it is this surplus that Lacan calls desire (*d*).

vii. Desire is a Trap

For Sartre, desire forces the subject to confront the impossible abyss of failure; the desiring touch reduces the other to an object, and, therefore, is always in vain. Sartre said: 'le désir est lui-même voué à l'échec' (*EN* 466). However, Lacan says in *Écrits*

> Pour le dire: au point que ces besoins soient passés au registre du désir, avec tout ce qu'il nous impose de confronter à notre nouvelle expérience, de ses paradoxes de toujours pour le moraliste, de cette marque d'infini qu'y relèvent les théologiens, voire de la précarité de son statut, telle qu'elle s'annonce dans le dernier cri de sa formule, poussé par Sartre: le désir, passion inutile (*É* 812).

Unlike Sartre, Lacan argues that desire is not useless, and, opting to make a platitudinous comment, Lacan jokingly says that desire is a natural function which serves to maintain the propagation of the species (*É* 812).[65] Moving the argument onto surer ground, Lacan argues that the question of desire brings the subject back to the role of the Father and

[65] If this is not a joke, it is a rather weak argument since it presupposes that nature offers something of intrinsic value, and Lacan is probably making this point with a view to convincing a scientific reader, rather than because it advances his argument in any meaningful sense.

prompts us to ask 'what is a Father?' (ibid). Lacan contends that Freud proclaimed the Father dead, but we did not take notice, 'c'est le Père mort, répond Freud, mais personne ne l'entend, et pour ce que Lacan en reprend sous le chef du Nom-du-Père' (ibid).[66] The *Nom-du-Père* returns as a structuring principle which enables the normal functioning of desire, for Lacan. This argument corroborates our reconstruction of Lacan's argument concerning desire from our previous chapter. We said that the subject renounced the unrestricted enjoyment of the Other, and, in the broader process of symbolic castration, the subject accepted the partial enjoyment of the Other's body; the subject seeks the *objet petit a* (the object cause of desire) but will never find it.[67] As we have seen, the big Other is the master signifier personified, and our present investigation seeks to demonstrate how and why this big Other can wield so much power. We argued that the big Other (or master signifier) is a lie, and yet, the lie functions as truth. The lie governs subject development and installs the Symbolic Order. And, now, Lacan goes further in qualifying and characterising this big Other:

> Tout énoncé d'autorité n'y a d'autre garantie que son énoncé même, car il est vain qu'il le cherche dans un autre signifiant, lequel d'aucune façon ne saurait apparaître hors de ce lieu. Ce que nous formulons à dire qu'il n'y a pas de métalangage qui puisse être parlé , plus aphoristiquement: qu'il n'y a pas d'Autre de l'Autre. C'est en imposteur que se présente pour y suppléer, le Législateur (celui qui prétend ériger la Loi). Mais non pas la Loi elle-même, non plus que celui qui s'en autorise. (*É* 813).

According to Lacan, conferring the authority of the Legislator onto the master signifier "the Father" is an act of perfidy. The question of desire is a question of first uncovering the desires of the Other in order to guarantee the Other's love for the subject.

> Il paraîtra étrange que, s'ouvrant là l'espace démesuré qu'implique toute demande: d'être requête de l'amour, nous n'y laissions pas plus d'ébat à ladite question. Mais la concentrions sur ce qui se ferme en deçà, du même effet de la demande, pour faire proprement la place du désir. C'est en effet très simplement, et nous allons dire en quel sens, comme désir de l'Autre que le désir de l'homme

[66] Lacan often refers to himself in the third person.
[67] See part three of this chapter for more on the *objet petit a*.

> trouve forme, mais d'abord à ne garder qu'une opacité subjective pour y représenter le besoin (ibid).

The subject spends a substantial amount of time imagining what it is that the Other desires from them, and motivating the subject is simply *a wish to be loved*, the subject acquiesces to the desires of the Other because they simply want to be loved. Moreover, this *wish to be loved* will reappear in *SXX*, *Encore*, as our final chapter will show. The subject's wish to be loved ignites their search for their true desire, pushing the subject beyond the desires of the Other (ibid). The '*opacité subjective*' is simply Lacanian jargon for the subject's desire which has not yet been fully formed, what we earlier called 'leftover,' following Bruce Fink's designation from figure 3.8. The subject's desire can only materialise against the backdrop of the desires of the Other, as we saw, and that is why there are two stages to the graph of desire. Louis Malle's *Les Amants* (1958) illustrates the *wish to be loved* as the site of the subject's pure desire convincingly. In *Les Amants,* Jeanne suffers in an unhappy marriage, her husband never shows Jeanne any love or affection, and, although he supports her with her *needs* and *demands* in exchange for her silence and obedience to the patriarchal norm*,* Jeanne's *wish to be loved* persists. Her wish for love prompts her to seek her leftover desires elsewhere, which she eventually discovers with Bernard (Malle 1958), and Lacan represents Jeanne's search for love beyond her husband, in the upper level of the graph.

The lower part of the graph maintains the subject in a clear relationship with the big Other — this is the Subject of Language. If the subject can work out what the Other wants from him/her, that subject can try and satisfy the desires of the Other: for example, children who fulfil the desires of their parents, or Jeanne who suffers quietly, living with her husband and looking after his children. However, Lacan is simultaneously developing a general intersubjective theory of the subject's desires at the Symbolic level, and he argues that desire is what befalls the subject when their demands diverge from their

needs; ‘le désir s’ébauche dans la marge où la demande se déchire du besoin’ (814). The split pushes the subject away from the formal structures of language and the symbolic, and drives the subject closer to *jouissance,* S(Ⱥ). In many ways, this split in desire is a re-articulation of the split that we investigated in the previous chapter as the difference between the subject and the subject of the unconscious, which was drawn from the split signifier ‘Hommes’ and ‘Dames.’

However, the subject finds that this path to *jouissance,* S(Ⱥ), is a dead end, because there is never any escape from language. The subject’s search for their true desire necessarily leads the subject to the fantasy (*$◇a*), and this is what Jeanne discovered at the end of *Les Amants*, she is desperately unsure of herself, and seemingly wishes for the restoration of the Symbolic fantasy which she has denied in her relationship with Bernard. The push towards desire runs the subject close to *jouissance*. The small ‘*a*’ in ‘*$◇a*’ is the *objet petit a* — object cause of desire. Graph 3 (figure 3.9: opposite) illustrates the difference between the desire of the Other and the subject’s desire. The subject recognises this split through the question ‘*Che vuoi?*’ The subject is led to ask: what do you want from me? The left-to-right, *s*(A) to (A), vector denotes the subject’s search for the

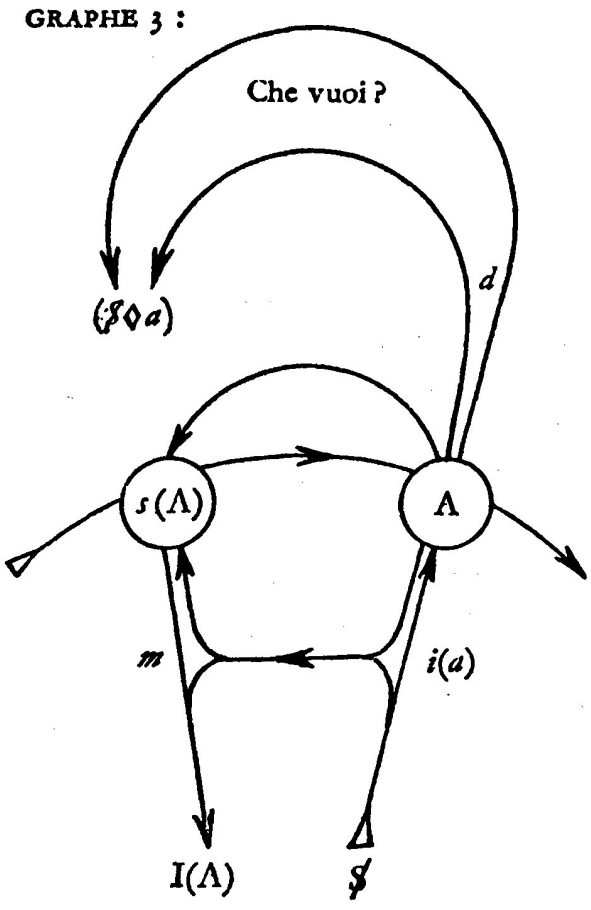


Figure 3.9 Graph 3 (*É* 815).

desires of the Other, while the lines which split off towards (*$◇a*) illustrates the subject's search for his/her own desire which necessarily ends in the fantasy.

> Le fantasme est défini par la forme la plus générale qu'il reçoit d'une algèbre […] *$◇a,* où le poinçon ◇ se lit "désir de," à lire de même dans le sens rétrograde, introduisant une identité qui se fonde sur non-réciprocité absolue (*É* 774).

(*$◇a*) states that the barred subject's desire is for the object *a,* 'elle y articule le plaisir auquel a été substitué un instrument (objet *a* de la formule) à la sorte de division soutenue du sujet qu'ordonne l'expérience' (ibid). And, for Lacan, this desire for object *a* is the *fantasy* par excellence, because object *a* resides in the *jouissance* of the Other, which, as we will see in our final chapter, is both impossible and deceitful.

According to Lacan, anxiety (*angoisse*) results from our never being able to reach the *objet petit a*, and so anxiety ensnares the subject because the subject has a 'need' which cannot be satisfactorily or universally fulfilled (814). Therefore, we experience anxiety's grip as 'le piétinement d'éléphant de caprice de l'Autre' (ibid). The perceived whims of the Other are internalised and introduce in the subject 'le fantôme de la Toute-puissance non pas du sujet, mais de l'Autre où s'installe sa demande' (ibid). It is for this reason, according to Lacan's psychoanalysis, that all rejection is painful. The pain a subject experiences in rejection is not directly caused by the subject who rejects them, but is the result of a need which will now go unfulfilled by the big Other. The subject experiences this loss as the arbitrary whim of the big Other's elephant feet trampling on one's heart. The all-powerful big Other rejects the subject's need to be loved. The request for love is unconditional and necessarily puts the subject in a relationship of subjection to the big Other, 'le sujet reste dans la sujétion de l'Autre' (ibid), and it is under this subjection that the subject discovers its proper desire:

> C'est pourquoi la question *de* l'Autre qui revient au sujet de la place où il en attend un oracle, sous le libellé d'un: *Che vuoi?* que veux-tu? est celle qui

> conduit le mieux au chemin de son propre désir, - s'il se met, grâce au savoir-faire d'un partenaire du nom de psychanalyste, à la reprendre, fût-ce sans bien le savoir, dans le sens d'un: Que me veut-il? (815).

What does this person want from me? This question launches the subject onto the path to fantasy, which ends the journey represented in the upper part of Graph 3 (figure 3.9, above). As the subject descends from the top of the graph, they are exposed, once again, to the quilted signifier, and this forces the subject to translate their pure desire into language, making them feel the full weight of symbolic commands. The sheer weight of the signifier, *s*(A), re-structures the subject's ill-fated attempt to exercise its desire. The process re-fashions the subject's desire into the appropriate Ego-Ideal arrived at by way of re-integrating the desire of the Other.

This is the same strategy and insight, expressed in different terms, as symbolic castration ($◇D) which we explored in the previous chapter. We can now understand that as the subject is impacted by the big Other, (A), and discovers their desire, (*d*), they are forced to submit to symbolic castration ($◇D). In so doing, the subject gives up a bit of *jouissance,* S(Ⱥ), and enters the fantasy inaugurated by their wish to fulfil their desires ($◇*a*), this necessarily leads the subject back to the desire of the Other, *s*(A), which the ego, (*m*), has now accepted. The ego installs the desires of the Other as the subject's own desire and this ends the formation of the subject's desires; with the ego having been refashioned as the Ideal-Ego, I(A).

As noted previously, the lower half of the graph depicts the relationship the subject has with the big Other and so with language, the Symbolic Order, and results in the subject's Ego-Ideal. Whereas, the top of the graph deals with what the subject would like for her/himself. '*Che Vuoi?*' is the moment that the subject begins asking about their place in the construction of their subjectivity, but this only happens because the subject refuses to give up on her/his desire. Lacan concludes *SVII* with his famous slogan: '*ne*

pas céder sur son désir' which is directly related to this move from the lower level of the graph of desire to the upper level. Lacan says, 'la seule chose dont on puisse être coupable, au moins dans la perspective analytique, c'est d'avoir cédé sur son désir' (*SVII* 368). If the subject feels guilt, it is because she/he has effectively sacrificed her/his desire, 'le sujet se sent effectivement coupable quand il fait de la culpabilité, de façon recevable ou non pour le directeur de conscience, c'est toujours, à la racine, pour autant qu'il a cédé sur son désir' (*SVII* 368). Repressing one's desires and pursuing desire in someone else's name or in the "name of the good" inflicts guilt upon the subject because they are refusing to accept their desires. Lacan says, 'faire les choses au nom du bien, et plus encore au nom du bien de l'autre, voilà qui est bien loin de nous mettre à l'abri non seulement de la culpabilité, mais de toutes sortes de catastrophes intérieures' (*SVII* 368). Subjects do themselves great psychological harm by relinquishing their desire in this way; they elicit the guilt they feel, and this catastrophic error denies them the formation of normal libidinal relations:

> Ou le sujet trahit sa voie, se trahit lui-même, et c'est sensible pour lui-même. Ou, plus simplement, il tolère que quelqu'un avec qui il s'est plus ou moins voué à quelque chose ait trahi son attente, n'ait pas fait à son endroit ce que comportait le pacte – le pacte quel qu'il soit, faste ou néfaste, précaire, à courte vue, voire de révolte, voire de fuite, qu'importe (*É* 370).

Subject formation is betrayed by the subject's incapacity to submit to her/his own desire, what the subject should do, according to Lacan, is renounce the desire of the Other which characterises the lower half of the graph of desire. Abandoning the desire of the Other forces the subject to follow her/his own desire, and yet this 'leftover' desire leads the subject to renounce unrestricted *jouissance*, and this renunciation is, as we saw in our previous chapter, the successful resolution of the Oedipus complex. The process allows

the subject to be castrated symbolically and for the forfeited *jouissance* to be surrendered at S(Ⱥ).

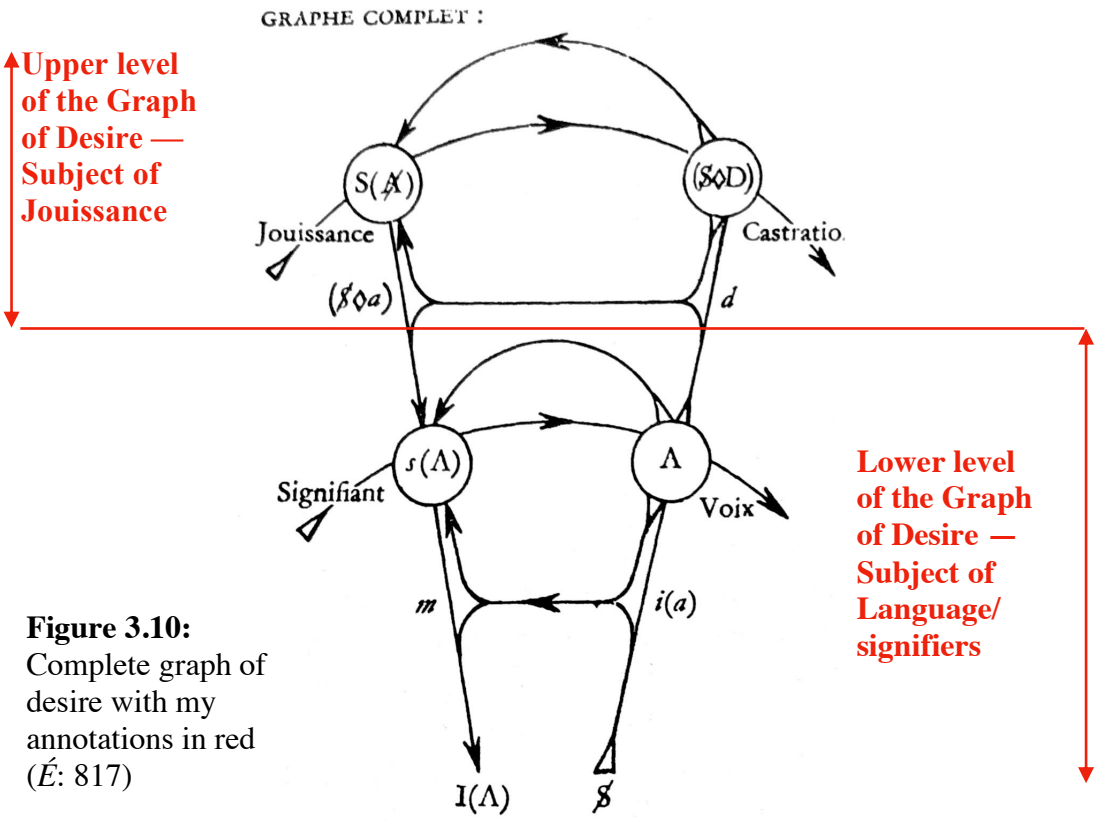


Figure 3.10: Complete graph of desire with my annotations in red (*É*: 817)

According to Lacan, desire does not promise the subject any means of escape from the Symbolic Order. Instead, the pure desire (*d*) wished for by the subject is actually an elaborate trap, and the process of symbolic castration contains no real solution for the subject since the subject that emerges is necessarily captured by the symbolic structure. The grand Lacanian irony is that '*ne pas céder sur son désir*' is actually the appropriate mechanism by which the subject is coerced into re-entering the symbolic structure, after they traverse the fantasy, and the big Other demands from the subject that s/he actually exchange her/his desire for the desires of the Other, thereby re-integrating the commandments of the big Other and the power of the law itself. It is for this reason that the subject is always already guilty before the law, and it allows the law to exact a high price from all subjects. The paradox is that, for Lacan, desire is necessarily destined to

fail, which is strikingly similar to Sartre's claim that 'le désir est lui-même voué à l'échec' (*EN* 466). And, we argue, Lacan and Sartre are making the same point, for both Lacan and Sartre the failure is a necessary one. It is necessary to go through the process and fail. Moreover, as we will see in the next part, failure allows for the process of symbolic castration ($\$ \diamond D$), and it is this necessary mechanism that allows subjects to remain within the linguistic structure, the Symbolic Order. We will return to this necessary inclusion in part three of this chapter.

vii. S(Ⱥ)

According to Lacan, S(Ⱥ), or, simply, *jouissance*, describes the lack in the Other itself 'cette jouissance dont le manque fait l'Autre inconsistant' (*É* 819-20), and as our final chapter will clarify, S(Ⱥ) is the impossible *en soi pour soi* with which we have been wrestling since Sartre introduced it in our first chapter. S(Ⱥ) expresses the inconsistency in the big Other, 'c'est ici en S(Ⱥ) et le lire: signifiant d'un manque dans l'Autre' (*É* 818). S(Ⱥ) emerges for the subject in the clash between the Symbolic Order and *jouissance*, exposing the signifier of the lack in the Other, which is to say that there is no Other of the Other, no God that guarantees our existence. Lacan says, 'le manque dont il s'agit est bien ce que nous avons déjà formulé: qu'il n'y ait pas d'Autre de l'Autre (*É* 818), and, strictly speaking, this lack in the Other is the impossible *objet petit a* the subject desires.

Therefore, the pure desire (*d*) that the subject discovers takes him/her to a point where enjoyment (*jouissance*) has to be forfeited to continue on the path of identification. However, S(Ⱥ) is itself barred, confirming what we described in the previous chapter as the inconsistent lying, arbitrary, unknown, master signifier. This traumatic reality can only be digested via the medium of fantasy ($\$ \diamond a$) which provides the subject with the appropriate lenses to survive this traumatic reality. Which is why exposure to S(Ⱥ)

necessitates a renunciation of S(Ⱥ) and an acceptance of fantasy, because at S(Ⱥ) we are not directly in language, but close to the edges of language. The fantasy screen hides the Real which states that our God is a liar. The fantasy screen is the camouflage that God, S(Ⱥ), employs to keep his inconsistency secret. However, S(Ⱥ), as the impossible *en soi pour soi,* also updates *en soi pour soi,* because the process is a necessary one. S(Ⱥ) is a conventional operation in the process of subject formation, part of the resolution of the Oedipus complex and, concomitantly, part of the process of symbolic castration ($◇D).

As soon as a subject begins demanding more than the desires of the Other, the subject's desires mutate and are no longer simple leftover demands but rather, Lacan says, these demands become drives [*pulsions*]. The transformation occurs in the process of *Che Vuoi,* where the subject asks "what do you want from me." Lacan says:

> Mais si notre graphe complet nous permet de placer la pulsion comme trésor des signifiants, sa notation comme ($◇D) maintient sa structure en la liant à la diachronie. Elle est ce qui advient de la demande quand le sujet s'y évanouit (*É* 817).

The lower half of the graph expresses the meaning that is guaranteed by the big Other, *s*(A), this meaning is quilted and continuously upheld by the master signifier, for example, the incest prohibition as contained in the signifier *le Père.* However, at the upper level of the graph of desire, there is no longer a guaranteed big Other, no big Other which could convincingly answer our questions. Therefore, the sheer fabric of meaning fragments, and one can no longer pin the signifiers to the signified, and this radical instability is *jouissance* itself, which is characterised by a lack. It is precisely this lack that love seeks to fill to reestablish meaning and coherence.

S(Ⱥ) expresses the inconsistent and lying master signifier, the *en soi pour soi,* or God himself, and S(Ⱥ) also expresses the related notion that there is no Other of the Other, no God's God. Therefore, S(Ⱥ) describes a primordial lack. It is the missing piece.

The humble realization that Lacan's psychoanalysis offers no easy truths, only some Faithless truth (*du Sans-Foi de la vérité*) which can offer no guarantees:

> Le manque dont il s'agit est bien ce que nous avons déjà formulé: qu'il n'y ait pas d'Autre de l'Autre. Mais ce trait du Sans-Foi de la vérité, est-ce bien là le dernier mot qui vaille à donner, à la question: que me veut de l'Autre?, sa réponse quand nous, analyste, en sommes le porte-parole? – Sûrement pas, et justement en ce que notre office n'a rien de doctrinal. Nous n'avons à répondre d'aucune vérité dernière, spécialement ni pour ni contre aucune religion (*É* 818).

The task of the analyst is not to tell the analysand what he expects from them, rather analysis has a much more modest aim which is to remind us how destitute our subjectivity really is. The Faithless truth is symptomatic of Lacan's overall method, characterised by its continuous revisions. In parts of our second chapter we described the big Other and the master signifier as *the* regulative principle of the Symbolic Order; we discussed the *Nom-du-Père* as the principle which guaranteed the existence of the Symbolic Order. However, the middle Lacan quoted here from the final chapters of the *Écrits* has very enthusiastically claimed that there is 'no Other of the Other,' that is to say no regulative principle of the big Other itself, which is what a subject tries to uncover in *jouissance.* It is this kind of revision that makes Lacan so difficult to read and pin down, he continually changed his mind, and the only way to approach Lacan, therefore, is to read 'Lacan contre Lacan' as Miller had suggested in his seminars.[68]

[68] As Žižek explains:

> The fundamental presupposition of my approach to Lacan is the utter incongruity of a 'synchronous' reading of his texts and seminars: the only way to comprehend Lacan is to approach his work as a work in progress, as a succession of attempts to seize the same persistent traumatic kernel. The shifts in Lacan's work become manifest the moment one concentrates on his great negative theses: 'There is no Other of the Other', 'The desire of the analyst is not a pure desire'... Upon encountering such a thesis, one must always ask the simple question: who is this idiot who is claiming that there is an Other of the Other, that the desire of the analyst is a pure desire, and so on? There is, of course, only one answer: *Lacan himself a couple of years ago* (1994: 173).

Chapter III — The Wish to be Loved

Part Two: *Carte du Désir* and *Les Non-Dupes Errent*

> Cependant c'est une folie d'un moment,
> que je ne regarde tout au plus que
> comme une bagatelle qui a peut-être
> quelque galanterie, et quelque
> nouveauté, pour ceux qui ont l'esprit
> assez bien tourné pour l'entendre
>
> *Clélie*, Scudéry



Figure 3.11: Scudéry's *La Carte du Pays de Tendre, Clélie*

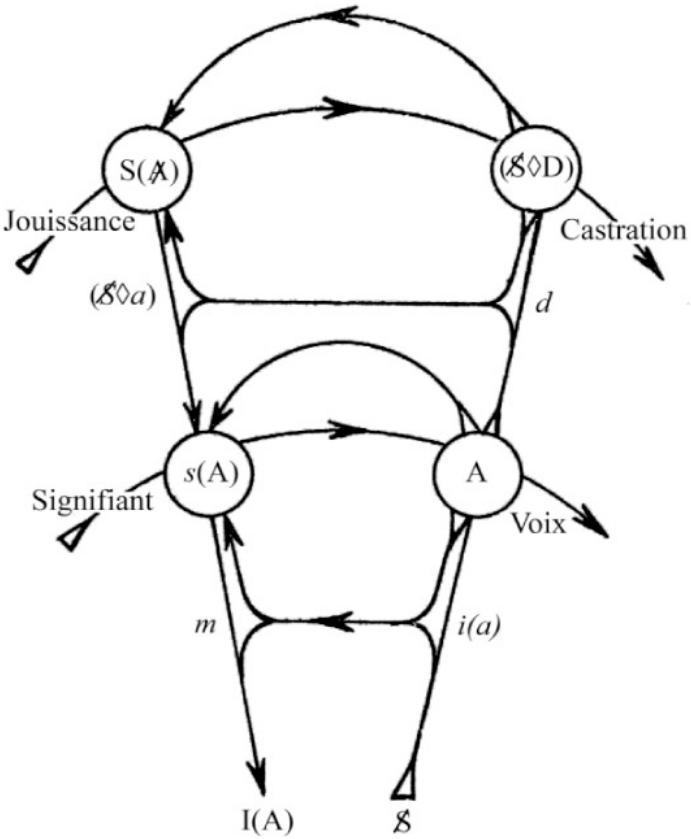


Figure 3.12: Lacan's *Graphe du Désir*, *Écrits*

i. Contextualising the Fantasy with Scudéry's *Clélie*

Thus far, our discussions on Lacan's graph of desire, the process of subject formation, the Father's Law, and love and desire, as both necessary and impossible, has been both highly abstract and theoretical. In this section, I turn to Madeleine de Scudéry's *Carte de Tendre* (figure 3.11, above) to contextualise our discussion and illustrate Lacan's distinction between the Symbolic and the Real, and the concomitant difference between signifier (Φx) and *jouissance* S(Ⱥ).

Scudéry's *Carte de Tendre* first appeared in *Clélie, histoire romaine* (1654-1660), it illustrates a lover's journey, plotting the possible emotional responses to friendship. I contend that we can read Scudéry's *Carte* in the light of Lacan's *Graphe du Désir*. I synthesise Scudéry's *Carte* with Lacan's *Graphe* to adapt it to include Lacan's view that *il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel*. And, although our argument seeks to dig into Scudéry's *Carte*, it is mainly a discussion on Lacan's distinction between the signifier (Φx) and *jouissance* S(Ⱥ), which I argue parallels Scudéry's division between the *Mer dangereuse* and the *Terres inconnues*. Our comparison with Scudéry's *Carte* aims to show how Scudéry's *Terres inconnues* foreshadowed Lacan's concept of *jouissance*, and the inclusion of Scudéry's *Clélie* is designed to show how the late Lacan's philosophy is, therefore, not as abstract as might appear at first glance.

I begin by showing how Lacan's graph is a reimagining of Scudéry's map. Then, I track the rhetorical and linguistic similarities between Lacan's practice and Scudéry's salon. I do this to demonstrate how Scudéry's *Carte* challenged the seventeenth-century French social order, thereby highlighting the value of Lacan's practice as a form of social theory. We contend that we can only appreciate Scudéry's threat to the language of reigning power from a Lacanian standpoint, where Scudéry's *Carte* pointed not just to the signifiers but also *jouissance,* and it was for this reason that Scudéry's language caused

such anxiety to seventeenth-century masculine *doxa*. Scudéry threatened to expose what *doxa* needed to keep hidden to strengthen its symbolic power, and by illustrating these unknown lands, Scudéry made visible what *doxa* wished to remain invisible, namely the fragility of masculine power. Scudéry's "Real" move was to use the *Carte* to defy male authorship and writing, threatening the sheer symbolic fabric of patriarchal relations because such an act highlights the inconsistency of reigning power. This illustration is crucial since, for Lacan, the *non-rapport sexuel* is shorthand for such a move, which can also be described as the trauma of the Real. This trauma reveals that the Symbolic was but a mere fiction offering only an illusion of stability and coherence. This move prepares our discussion in our final chapter of the difference between *jouissance phallique* and *jouissance féminine,* in order to show how love is aligned with the latter and, therefore, impossible. However, as the discussion of Scudéry's *Carte* will show, the impossible *jouissance* (or *Terres inconnues*) is a necessary fiction which supports *jouissance phallique* (or, *Mère dangereuse*) and, therefore, preserves the subject's symbolic libidinal economy in the process of subject formation. Furthermore, the Lacanian reading I offer of Scudéry's writings, as both threatening and preserving symbolic power, bolsters our understanding of Lacanian psychoanalysis's vital relationship to language and writing.

ii. *Carte du Désir*

Both Scudéry's *Carte* and Lacan's *Graphe* share visual and conceptual similarities, and, although not much has been written on the visual similarities between these two illustrations, Lacan did note multiple connections between his work and the *Carte*.[69] And, as Miller has maintained, Lacan and the *précieuses* complement each other: 'Lacan, contre Molière, était du parti des Précieuses ridicules et des Femmes savantes'

[69] For example: *É* 407; *SI* 238 & 295; *SVII* 175 (non exhaustive).

(Miller 2011: 336). Therefore, I seek to investigate the *Graphe* in light of Scudéry's *Carte*, to see what we can discover about each from this comparison since both illustrate the subject's desires and emotions as they interact with social rules and expectations.

Lacan's graph of desire expresses an emotional journey comparable with the one found in Scudéry's *Carte*. However, Lacan's graph, as we have seen, also depicts the process of subject formation as the subject interacts with language and the Other, *s*(A), while Scudéry's map focuses on intersubjective relationships. Although, I contend, both show the subject's relationship with the big Other.

Scudéry's *Carte* illustrates the debates surrounding amorous relationships in seventeenth-century France. For Scudéry, the map does not reflect love as it necessarily relates to sexual desire, since these are usually considered to be separate in the bulk of the geographic area visualised by the *Carte*:

> Allegorically, it is a map of an imaginary land called Tenderness. As the novel's heroine teaches her audience how to read it, the map is revealed to be a course in gallantry, giving men the woman's perspective on both the ways to win her heart […] and the ways to lose it (DeJean 1991: 57).

By contrast, as we know, Lacan's graph of desire is revealed to be a lesson in subject formation. While Lacan's graph does allude to the sexual act, like Scudéry's map, it does so only parenthetically. The graph separates love and sex, and, as we showed, it is organised into an upper and lower-level, separated by the left to right vector *Signifiant* –> *Voix*. As we saw, the Subject of Language [*l'être parlant*] is expressed below this arrow, at the lower-level. Above this arrow, at the upper-level, Lacan depicts the Subject of *Jouissance* [*parlêtre*], and, remarkably, both Scudéry and Lacan banish sex to the top of their respective illustrations. It is at the upper-level of the graph that the sexual relationship would occur if it were possible, and where physical acts partially occur. The sexual relationship is characterised by a *non-rapport* because the Subject of *Jouissance* is not submitted to the symbolic restrictions of language or the dictates of the big Other,

which is why the sexual relationship is inexpressible. Instead, the subject is in the free fall of *jouissance*, where unregulated enjoyment operates. Subjects cannot forge relationships outside of language and speech; the sexual act cannot be inscribed, written, or translated convincingly.[70]

Burrowing around in the *Terres inconnues* has returned something closely resembling the Subject of *Jouissance*, a subject that exists beyond all societal restrictions — as opposed to the Subject of Language, encountered in the central landmass, *Tendre*, which describes a subject as tied to the signifiers. As we saw, the signifier entraps this latter subject through language and, since language always already contains societal expectations, it inevitably wears the subject down. According to Lacan, Subjects of Language are oblivious to societal pressures and do not recognise them as such, which is why Lacan states wryly: 'les êtres parlants sont heureux' (*AÉ* 556). As we saw, the upper-level of the graph describes a subject who, in pursuing their leftover desires, attempts to reach *jouissance*. This journey ends in the fantasy (*$◇a*) because *jouissance* is much too excessive and incoherent to bear directly; therefore, the subject is forced to return from the upper-level to the lower-level of the graph. Paradigmatically, in Scudéry's *Carte,* the traveller is coerced into staying behind the *Mer dangereuse* (Φx). In both illustrations, the desiring subject is compelled to fashion a fantasy screen, enjoying *jouissance* or the *Terres inconnues,* S(Ⱥ), only from a safe distance. The fantasy screen is built to sustain the subject's self-image and to prevent them from getting too close to *jouissance*. Understood this way, we could say that the lower-level of the *Carte* is a fantasy screen, it is a lover's ideal designed to sustain the fantasy of courtship, friendship, and the loving relationship uncorrupted by sex (*SI* 238). However, the paradox of the *Carte* is that in wilfully excluding sex from the map it becomes about the *non rapport sexuel.*

[70] *cf*: Milner 2009 p. 91.

Both *jouissance* and the *Terres inconnues* are located at the upper-levels of the respective illustrations. Scudéry intended to relegate sex to the realm beyond the *Mer dangereuse,* placing the sex act beyond a treacherous and dangerous sea, Scudéry says, 'parce qu'il est assez dangereux à une femme, d'aller un peu au-delà des dernières bornes de l'amitié' (*Clélie* 184). Though, for Scudéry, the sexual prohibition begins right at the edge of friendship ('un peu au-delà'), and so, directly in the *Mer dangereuse*; we are not quite in the *Terres inconnues* yet: 'au-delà de cette mer, c'est ce que nous appelons *Terres inconnues*' (184). Therefore, the *Terres inconnues* hint at something else, not necessarily sex but unregulated desire, or *jouissance.* Similarly*,* for Lacan, the *non-rapport* is hidden behind the dangerous arrow of *jouissance –> Castration*. Scudéry does not attempt to discuss what might take place in the *Terres inconnues*, 'en effet nous ne savons point ce qu'il y a, et que nous ne croyons pas que personne ait été plus loin qu'Hercule' (ibid). And, if it is the *Mer dangereuse* that prohibits sex, then what is in the *Terres inconnues*? Understood in this way, the *Terres inconnues* become analogous with Lacan's realm of *jouissance* beyond the Real of *il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel*.

A notable difference between the *Carte* and the *Graphe* is that the graph is descriptive, not prescriptive. Lacan is not sketching a perfect subject; instead, he is expressing the subject's troubled journey. First, the subjugation by the signifiers, then, the desolation felt at the loss of unregulated desire, and, finally, the integration of the fantasy which gives the subject enough will to continue doing the big Other's bidding. The graph expresses a subject who has agreed to society's restrictions and expectations. I argue that this reading of the graph mirrors the role played by the lower half of the *Carte*. Both illustrations describe a journey whose travellers are cautioned to respect its laws and customs. In Lacan's graph, subjects are invited to renounce *jouissance* and restore the fantasy screen to tacitly accept the excessive power of the big Other – the *Nom-du-Père*.

In the *Carte,* the traveller is warned against crossing the bounds of friendship, and they are invited to renounce their curiosity for the *Terres inconnues* to maintain the fantasy of a genuinely tender relationship – the *Mer*(*e*) *dangereuse*.

The *Mer dangereuse* marks the acceptable limit of social relations in the *Carte,* and as such everything (allegedly) becomes about avoiding it. Claude Filteau argues that for Scudéry's *Carte* 'tout se tient de la forme et du fond d'un discours' (1979: 38). Language and speech are the essential characteristics of amorous relationships, and these are privileged over bodily relations.

> Les précieuses partagent les leçons qu'un Pascal tire de sa lecture de Montaigne: parce qu'aucune vérité n'est définitive, une affirmation ne peut être valide qu'en la posant par rapport à d'autres qui lui sont contraires: voilà pourquoi les précieuses privilégient la parole et le genre dialogique (ibid).

The radical view Scudéry shares with Pascal, Montaigne, and Lacan, is that the truth is unstable and affirmed only relationally. The "truth" needs the support of conventional social norms and rules, as well as the contradictions and arguments which disputation then reinforces. The *Mer dangereuse* is the restrictive social limit which should not be violated by those who follow the map. The signifier *Mer*(*e*) enables complex amorous events to take place in language, just like the *Nom-du-Père* enables the complex intersubjective relationships to take place in language. In other words, the *Mer dangereuse* is the very condition of possibility of the *Carte de Tendre*. As we saw in our second chapter, Lacan suggested that the *non rapport* was the very condition of possibility for 'les actes passionnants (*SXIX* 19),'[71] and almost identically, Scudéry's prohibiting the sexual act enables the tender friendship found in the map, and so, paradoxically, the map largely becomes about this prohibition.[72] Accordingly, we contend that in Scudéry's *Carte*, we could say that the master signifier (Φx) is the "*Mère*

[71] See: chapter 2, part two, section i.
[72] As Milner argues, 'ce qui pour l'être parlant est lieu d'impossible, est aussi lieu d'une prohibition' (2009: 64).

dangereuse," who is both mostly absent and excessively present, just like the *Nom-du-Père*.

The central logic of Scudéry's map is contained and preserved by the use of water, the *Lac d'indifférence, Mer d'inimité,* and *Mer dangereuse*; the liquid, material, element of the signifying chain expressed in the *Mère dangereuse,* and just as in Lacan's graph, subjects are only ever formed against their signifier, which appears to regulate them. In Lacan's case, as we have seen, the master signifier is *le-Nom-du-Père* (or, Non!-du-Père/ *les-Non-Dupes-Errent*). The very condition of possibility for the intelligibility of the Subject of Language [*l'être parlant*] rests in this signifier. The symbolic structure contains the law and sets the parameters for social interactions. In Scudéry's *Carte*, the water is meant to signal the "natural" limit, but also the principal direction of travel, orientating the travellers in the land of *Tendre*. All three rivers bend towards the *Mer dangereuse* and so, perilously close to the *Terres inconnues*.[73]

The rivers drift in the direction of the *Mer dangereuse*, where the waters suddenly run still and are no longer characterised by the natural movement of the rivers — making the sexual act, for Scudéry, a matter of *will*, because a boat is required.[74] Therefore,

[73] 'La rivière d'Inclination se jette dans une mer qu'on appelle la Mer Dangereuse' (*Clélie* 184).

[74] Katherine Ibbett has argued in "Productive Perfection: The Trope of the River in Early Modern Political Writing" that the trope of the river runs through early modern political writing. Ibbett argues that 'the […] rhetorical deployment of the river was frequent in the literature of reason of state that circulated in early modern Europe. […] This use of the river as a forceful grounding point for simile occurs again and again in Renaissance texts' (44). Ibbett also makes the point that 'watery tropes' were deployed by some early modern writers to develop core analyses. The 'figurative river is accompanied by – and perhaps facilitates – something more prosaically productive, allowing us to admire the works of man as well as those of God.' (53). Water, and rivers more specifically, were, in their rhetorical deployment, a powerful conceptual tool. In the language of the present study we could say the 'watery trope' is a signifying chain. Ibbett begins her article with an ominous warning of the danger that rivers could present. Ibbett writes: 'In "Le Torrent et la rivière" [La Fontaine] sketches the history of a man escaping from robbers who, with some trepidation, crosses a dangerous torrent to get away. The man discovers that his fears are unfounded, for the torrent is less dangerous than it seems. […] He continues, still pursued by the robbers, and comes to a much more reassuring sight, a peaceful river […] The man crosses the river, but though he manages to escape the robbers, he does not get out of the clutches of the river, and he drowns. La Fontaine adds darkly that the man and his horse are thus doomed to cross otherworldly rivers, and concludes, succinctly, that "Les gens sans bruit sont dangereux": when still waters run deep, they are dangerous' (Ibbett 2008: 44). As a parable echoing *la Mer*(*e*) *dangereuse*, we could seldom do better than Ibbett's channelling of La Fontaine.

crossing the *Mer dangereuse* is only achievable by those who exercise the agency of their desires. As Jörn Steigerwald argues: 'dans tous les cas, il faut prendre un bateau, c'est-à-dire la "trope majeure" des métaphores, pour aller aux "Terres inconnues"'(2008: 241). The unknown lands do not mark the destination of the journey expressed in the *Carte*, but they do indicate the general direction of the drifting rivers. If the waters were allowed to carry an inanimate player, one would necessarily end in muddy (emotional) waters. Scudéry's *Carte* contends that the water is an overwhelming natural force, both an uncontrollable element and a wild compulsion which, if left unchecked, would enable natural impulses to carry a player outside language and the symbolic regulations of the *Carte*. This watery 'wild compulsion' mimics Lacan's argument that the drives develop out of the leftover desire, which was discussed earlier, further reinforcing the connection between the *Carte* and the *Graphe* (*É* 817).[75] The water metaphor highlights the subject's relationship between nature and their drives. However, as Steigerwald explains, lovers need to make their journey across the *Mer dangereuse* by boat; the boat highlights the human agency of our desire to reach these unknown lands. Effectively, subjects who journey to these *Terres inconnues* would have breached the prohibition expressed in the *Mère dangereuse.* And, this compulsion to violate the law is not against their will; the desire to reach these unknown lands is not the result of some animal instinct, it is a reasoned and spoken attempt to cross the *Mer*(*e*) *dangereuse,* and a deliberate violation of the command expressed in this signifier.

The travellers's *wish* is to find love by building the sexual relationship in language, which, as Lacan stated, is impossible. It is this attempt for subjects to connect in speech and writing that is doomed to fail. Not sex *qua* physical act, which is never really risked in the *non-rapport.* It is precisely the subjective desire to relate to lovers in

[75] Chapter 3, part one, section vii.

language, to inscribe sex in speech, or writing that is impossible. Filteau maintains his analysis of the *Carte* at the lower-level of the graph, where tenderness is only expressed against symbolic structures, therefore ignoring the Real. However, I argue that we can meld this separation by speculatively reading the *Carte*'s meaning beyond the *Mer*(*e*) *dangereuse*. I want to suggest that we should shift our reading away from only viewing the map as related to the signifiers, to the map as also related to *jouissance* S(Ⱥ); this move allows us to recognise the centrality of *jouissance* to the entire Lacanian schema.

iii. The Temporary Detour (*la Folie d'un Moment*)

In opposition to the standard critical cliché which sees the *Carte* as a lover's game, a frivolous map illustrating how to win over a woman's heart, Joan DeJean and Jeffrey Peters see the *Carte* as a powerful expression of proto-feminist power.[76] Lacan makes a similar point in *L'Éthique*.[77] DeJean rejects Molière's (as well as the post-Molière) characterisation of the *précieuses* as ridiculous.

> The leaders of seventeenth-century salon society have generally been portrayed as silly, frivolous women who frittered away their time and that of the male aristocrats. [… Where] all products of salon culture are only social games, shallow amusements of the idle rich. What if, however, the *précieuse* salons were thus ridiculed precisely because they were far more than a superficial pastime? (DeJean 1991: 86).

We wholeheartedly agree with DeJean that the *précieuses* were ridiculed because they offered something far more than the superficial characterisation put forth by conservative critics. However, DeJean, like Filteau, maintains her analysis of Scudéry's proto-feminist

[76] DeJean is credited with coining 'salon-writing.' See: Beasley 2000 p. 69. See also, Peters 2004.

[77] Lacan says:

> Il se présente à nous sous une forme beaucoup plus affadie ...comme "*Carte du Tendre*," puisqu'en somme *les Précieuses*, à un autre moment de l'histoire, ont remis au premier plan un certain art social de la conversation. Ici il s'agit de choses qui sont d'autant plus surprenantes à voir surgir, qu'elles surgissent dans une époque dont les coordonnées historiques nous montrent qu'au contraire rien n'y semblait - bien loin de là - y répondre à ce qu'on pourrait appeler une *promotion*, voire une *libération* de la femme (*SVIIa* 301).

The published version, SVIII [*Seuil*], is imprecise on this point. Therefore, I have chosen to cite the unpublished transcript.

influence at the level of symbolic structures when it is argued that the leaders of seventeenth-century salon culture helped to shape and precipitate the developments of a meritocratic French society. For DeJean, the accusations of frivolity and ridiculousness needed to be contested from within the remit of prevailing cultural and political *doxa*:

> Scudéry's tender geography has been enshrined in literary history as a mere bagatelle, the frivolous pastime of idle aristocrats. This recollection is founded on a deliberate forgetting, that of the political content of Scudéry's Tenderness (ibid 78).

Scudéry's 'novels provide the clearest illustration' of salon writing (ibid 73). The collaborative literary exercise of shared production in Scudéry's salon 'operated in effect as social levellers to blur the demarcations of a normally rigid class system' (ibid 76). The melding of aristocratic and bourgeois artists in the salons, of which Scudéry's was the most instructive, attempted to 'transform the French class system along the lines of a meritocracy' (ibid). DeJean adds that 'many [aristocrats] were willing to accord the privileges of aristocracy to the artist' which allowed 'rebellious aristocrats to continue their politics of subversion in less visible ways' (ibid).

The salons' meritocratic subversion of dominant power occurred under the direction of women, 'the "author" is the woman who presided over the salon in which the novel developed, she who dictated the style of the salon, the style that lives on in each of these extended exercises in writing the politics of a salon' (DeJean 1991: 76-7). And, it was Scudéry's writing style in particular 'that early critics of the novel found so threatening' (ibid). Scudéry's major advance was that she provided a 'psychological' or 'affective' realism to interpersonal relations 'especially of love:'

> Scudéry's illustrious women, however, pour out their passions not to win back a delinquent lover who would take pity on their suffering but in order to provide their side of tales already told by others, to supply that which has been left out of traditional historical accounts (79).

DeJean clarifies that these testimonies of Scudéry's illustrious women were not characterised by the Ovidian model, instead arguing that:

> When they are given the opportunity to speak for themselves, Scudéry's heroines protest the slanders of history and attempt to vindicate themselves. Their collective testimonies demonstrate resoundingly that female autobiographical speech could be far removed from the pitiful cries of abandonment (80).

In vindicating themselves, DeJean shows that the novelistic advances made by Scudéry's heroines also served to unseat the privilege usually accorded to the 'individual literary subject:' 'the dominant feature of Scudéry's vast novelistic enterprise is the erasure of the identity of the individual literary subject' (84). This effacement of the individual literary subject 'inevitably calls to mind the erasure of individual authorial identity in salon writing,' thereby strengthening DeJean's argument that Scudéry's contribution was to use the salon to democratise societal norms and bend them toward meritocracy. 'In *Clélie* conversation increasingly dominates action, indicating that the scene of aristocratic power has shifted from the battlefield to the salon' which allows 'her salon's members [to be] the generation that had made the transition from civil war to a life of civility' (85). The power that DeJean reads in *Clélie,* and Scudéry's salon, is deployed to show how *Clélie*'s chauvinistic reception was misguided, and, therefore, reading it as a subversive novel:

> [*The précieuses*] were nevertheless widely perceived as a threat to what one eighteenth-century commentator on the novel termed "the laws most necessary to preserve society" […] in particular, the legal and social code that governed women's status in marriage. […] *Clélie* [is] a novel of social subversion (86).

DeJean continues:

> It is easy to underestimate her project because her new subversiveness depends on an element in which the nonliterary implications are hardly evident, what early commentators saw as "her intimate knowledge of the human heart" […]. From the beginning, even those critics who find fault with the "implausibility" of her narrative or with the "excessiveness" of her stylistic *préciosité* praise the "natural" quality of her portrayal of sentiments (ibid).

DeJean makes a convincing case for salon writing as sites of proto-feminist resistance. However, the nature of this subversion seems ambiguous. Where DeJean reads

subversion, we partly see, following Lacan, a kind of conformism; where France's meritocratic development is complying with *doxa*'s prevailing rule in exchange for selective freedoms accorded to a few, whereas the sheer 'excessiveness' and 'implausibility' of Scudéry's writings exposed the very fragmentation and disintegration of the language of *doxa* itself. It is for this reason that Scudéry's conservative critics reacted so vehemently to salon writing, since the upper-part of the *Carte*, which includes the *Mer dangereuse* and the *Terres inconnues*, is Scudéry's illustration of the Real and *jouissance*, and highlighting these was an implicit revolutionary gesture which threatened the upheaval of symbolic structures, and, therefore, language itself.

DeJean's underlying premise is to simultaneously maintain and propagate the ridiculous/ sensible binary established by commentators; concluding that far from ridiculous these sensible salons precipitated France's meritocratic development. Similarly, Peters sees the *Carte* as a site of relations of power (2004: 93). Instead, I show how Scudéry's additional proto-feminist move was to highlight the very contradictions and failures of *doxa* itself, thereby emphasising the vacuity of symbolic power. Scudéry demonstrated the incoherence of symbolic coordinates by highlighting their internal antagonisms, forcing them to disintegrate. Similarly, Lacan's psychoanalysis was, and continues to be, characterised as an equally silly, frivolous and superficial pastime. In "Hommage fait à Marguerite Duras," Lacan addresses this caricature and paradoxically deploys it to distinguish between the science of psychoanalysis and its opposite. For Lacan, the science of psychoanalysis is uncouth; by stressing its supposed calculable nature it is committing a boorish error ['*goujaterie*'] (*AÉ* 192). Instead, we should appreciate that psychoanalysis is not a scientific dogma but, rather, outplays ['*déjoue*'] scientific discourse itself (*SXXIII* 22), as we saw in our second chapter.

Scudéry and Lacan's unorthodox approaches seem nonsensical from within a scientific worldview, because salon writing, the *Carte,* the *Graphe*, or psychoanalysis *are* ridiculous if we adopt the coordinates of prevailing doxa and negotiate their value from inside an incommensurable worldview (*AÉ* 192). Both salon writing and psychoanalysis are lucid when taken on their own terms; similarly, Schelling's highly speculative *Die Weltalter* needed to be appreciated from within an Abrahamic (Christian) theological paradigm, as we saw in chapter one.[78] DeJean makes a similar point, stating that 'the strange format [of the *Carte*] almost invites these criticisms' (1991: 87). We could say that Lacan's graphs also invite these criticisms. Therefore, *Clélie*'s 'ridiculous' reception was an unsurprising reaction; *doxa* will react with ridicule to highly original threats to its established power. For example, the medical sciences see the Lacanian clinic as a flippant social game, created for the shallow amusement of the idle rich.[79] We argue that we should assume that these modes of thinking *are* frivolous, and, in their frivolousness, pose a direct threat that seeks to outplay dominant paradigms and demand something more radical than subversion.

Scudéry's major stylistic innovation anguished commentators because her salon writings effectively outplay [*déjoue*] many of dominant *doxa*'s essential requirements of good writing, namely that of clarity and the singular male author. To decipher their anguish, we return to Lacan's method of *temporary misunderstanding*. For Lacan, as we saw in our second chapter, one should not understand too well at first. If one understands too quickly, the subject has misapprehended the origin and locus of their speech, as well as their desires. This temporary incomprehensibility is necessary in order to elucidate any understanding of the Real (*SI* 397). It is for this reason that Lacan continuously refers to

[78] See: chapter 1, part two, ii.
[79] See for example: Meyer 2005.

the instability of speech and language itself (*SIII* 272). As we saw, to get to the heart of the matter, the subject first needs to misrecognise themselves and others, and this is Lacan's method, 'mon gré ne doit laisser au lecteur d'autre sortie que son entrée, que je préfère difficile' (*É* 493). In formal terms alone, Lacan shares this with Scudéry's salon writing. As DeJean points out:

> In *Clélie,* the situation is stranger still. Scudéry makes what may well be the major stylistic innovation in the early development of the novel when she introduces conversations on a larger scale. However, Scudéry's conversations seem almost to undermine the form's normal functioning. Since speaking styles are generally not differentiated, the demarcations among characters are rarely precise; the reader is confronted once again with a mass of referentially unbound, nearly free-floating pronouns, this time in the first person (1991: 84).

Scudéry's writings are slippery and enigmatic, and, as Peters develops, 'in the opinion of Scudéry's critics, the spatial language of the map of *Tendre* is another example of the apparently impenetrable jargon of the salons' (2004: 91). DeJean highlights that commentators found fault with 'the "implausibility" of [Scudéry's] narrative [and] with the "excessiveness" of her stylistic *préciosité*' (1991: 86). We could say, paraphrasing Lacan, that Scudéry leaves her readers with only one exit; the one which doubled up as the entrance. As Peters argues, 'the members of Scudéry's *samedi* group communicated with each other through a galant code of proverbs, riddles, and acrostic verses' (2004: 91), and, once again, the criticisms of these boorish commentators could apply just as much to Lacan as they supposedly had to Scudéry. Lacan also communicated with his salon through riddles and supposedly impenetrable jargon. It is for this reason that both *Clélie*, and the *Carte*, need to be read on their terms, following Scudéry's precise path.

Scudéry, anticipating her critics, provides us with an apt illustration of Lacan's idea of *understanding through misunderstanding*. First, we are led to believe that Clélie thinks that the *Carte* should only be disclosed to the already initiated, and not allow the public to learn about their highly original map:

> Aussi, Aronce, Herminius et moi trouvâmes-nous cette carte si galante que nous la sûmes devant que de nous séparer. Clélie priait pourtant instamment celui pour qui elle l'avait faite de ne la montrer qu'à cinq ou six personnes qu'elle aimait assez pour la leur faire voir, car, comme ce n'était qu'un simple enjouement de son esprit, elle ne voulait pas que de sottes gens, qui ne sauraient pas le commencement de la chose, et qui ne seraient pas capables d'entendre certaine nouvelle galanterie, allassent en parler selon leur caprice ou la grossièreté de leur esprit (*Clélie* 185).

However, Scudéry goes on to say: '[la *Carte*] fit pourtant un si grand bruit par le monde, qu'on ne parlait que de la *Carte de Tendre*' (ibid). The *Carte*'s instant popularity angered Clélie, 'Clélie fut bien fâchée qu'on en parlât tant'(ibid). And, suddenly, she adopts a Lacanian approach:

> Un jour à Herminius, pensez-vous que je trouve bon qu'une bagatelle que j'ai pensé qui avait quelque chose de plaisant pour notre cabale en particulier, devienne publique, et que ce que j'ai fait pour n'être vu que de cinq ou six personnes qui ont infiniment de l'esprit, qui l'ont délicat et connaissant, soit vu de deux mille qui n'en ont guère, qui l'ont mal tourné et peu éclairé, et qui entendent fort mal les plus belles choses? (*Clélie* 185).

Scudéry is situating *her* map within *her* language, customs, or 'cabal.' The *Carte* is a personal object deriving from the salon's collective imagination, and Clélie almost admits that outside the salon the map becomes 'ridiculous' because it has been transplanted out of context and left to the stupidity of the indelicate to misunderstand, before turning this argument on its head:

> Il y a de fort étranges gens par le monde, j'appréhende extrêmement qu'il n'y en ait qui s'imaginent que j'ai pensé à cela fort sérieusement, que j'ai rêvé plusieurs jours pour le chercher, et que je crois avoir fait une chose admirable. *Cependant c'est une folie d'un moment, que je ne regarde tout au plus que comme une bagatelle* qui a peut-être quelque galanterie, et quelque nouveauté, pour ceux qui ont l'esprit assez bien tourné pour l'entendre (ibid).

Scudéry describes the *Carte* as having been created in a *moment of madness*, seemingly agreeing with those indelicate and stupid readers she admonishes. Clélie states that, of course, she does not take the map seriously: 'je ne regarde tout au plus que comme une bagatelle.' Except that she does – the map has the potential to create something new, 'quelque nouveauté,' and it is only obtainable to those who are ready to hear it, 'pour

ceux qui ont l'esprit assez bien tourné pour l'entendre.' However, the *Carte*'s radical originality forces Clélie herself to initially misunderstand, describing it as a moment of madness ('*folie d*'*un moment*'); a clear sign of the *Carte*'s status in the Real. This passage in *Clélie* places the *Carte* outside *doxa*'s prevailing symbolic coordinates. It is for this reason that the *Carte* can strike the uninitiated as incomprehensible from without, and so it is only intelligible on its terms, inside the language of Scudéry's cabal. Scudéry's *Carte* operates as an incomprehensible document, and, in its alleged incomprehensibility, it is a direct challenge to established *doxa*. The *Carte* promises a temporary misunderstanding on the way to another (proto-feminist) understanding, and only once one has entered into her language can the *Carte* make sense. Scudéry's move is not quite subversion but revolution; a demand to upend the very fabric of established language with a competing language and set of referents. As we will see in our final chapter, Scudéry's argument concerning the '*folie d*'*un moment*' almost anticipates Lacan's argument about psychosis in *SXXIII*, *Le Sinthome*, where he will attempt to align psychosis with subjectivity.

Therefore, Scudéry's method mimics Lacan's, both call for a departure from existing symbolic coordinates, demanding that the reader enters into the language and customs of their creations.

> *Le mot me manque* – à quel moment dans la littérature apparaît une tournure comme celle-là? C'est Saint-Amand qui l'a prononcée pour la première fois – pas même écrite, mais dite un jour comme ça dans la rue, et cela fait partie des innovations introduites dans la langue par les précieux […] entre mille autres formes qui nous sont maintenant communes. […] Il y a, vous le voyez, un rapport entre la Carte du Tendre et la psychologie psychanalytique. *Le mot me manque,* on n'aurait jamais dit chose pareille au XVIe siècle (*SI* 295).

It is for this reason that Lacan relies so heavily on homophones, to continually remind his audience of the audible instability of language and writing, including his own. Scudéry continues:

> Clélie n'avait pourtant pas de raison de s'inquiéter, madame, car il est certain que tout le monde prit tout à fait bien cette nouvelle invention de faire savoir par où

> l'on peut acquérir la tendresse d'une honnête personne qu'à la réserve de quelques gens grossiers, stupides, malicieux ou mauvais plaisants, *dont l'approbation était indifférente à Clélie, on en parle avec louange; encore tira-t-on même quelque divertissement de la sottise de ces gens-là*, car il y eut un homme entre les autres qui, après avoir vu cette carte qu'il avait demandé à voir avec une opiniâtreté étrange, et qui après l'avoir entendu louer à de plus honnêtes gens que lui, demanda grossièrement à quoi cela servait et de quelle utilité était cette carte. "Je ne sais pas, lui répliqua celui à qui il parlait, après l'avoir repliée fort diligemment, si elle servira à quelqu'un, mais je sais bien qu'elle ne vous conduira jamais à Tendre (*Clélie* 186).

The strange men who question the Carte's utility and insist that it is but a frivolous game are much too stupid to understand its value, and, anticipating the commentators, Scudéry seems to suggest that: these men will mock us, and it will be their loss. The map will never lead these idiotic men to *Tendre*. Crucially, Clélie is indifferent to these men. We should follow Scudéry and adopt her attitude; Scudéry's *Carte* exists on a different intellectual plane, one which is not understandable from the position of dominant intellectual discourse, and, therein lies the minor deviation I enact from DeJean's analysis. Which is not to say that I disagree with DeJean's overall goal, I agree that:

> The *Carte de Tendre* forces us to confront the central interpretative dilemma posed by *préciosité*: the conjunction it stages between a rhetoric that is by today's standards overblown virtually to the point of being no longer readable and the hard-hitting vindication of the rights of women that is couched in this rhetoric (1991: 87).

The hard-hitting vindication of the rights of women couched in this rhetoric attests to the fact that Scudéry's work challenged the language *doxa* assigned to women, indeed, by bending the meaning of words Scudéry made visible the fabric of the Real. Scudéry ended up saying much more than *doxa* would have ever permitted if it were not for the subtlety of her sleight of hand, and it is for this reason that I place the *Carte* in the category of the Real, focusing on the *Terres inconnues*, as the site which causes the most anxiety. The inclusion of these lands is the proverbial "bone in the throat," which caused such anxiety to the masculine reception to Scudéry's work, and it was done in plain sight.

As we saw briefly, Lacan was similarly unfazed by how he was characterised as ridiculous. Echoing Scudéry, Lacan contended that: 'ce qui est important, c'est de comprendre ce qu'on dit. Et pour comprendre ce qu'on dit, il importe d'en voir les doublures, les résonances, les superpositions significatives' (*SIII* 131). The double meanings, the resonances, the superimposed significations which Lacan highlights are the very distinctions Scudéry drew between the language inside and outside the salon. The *Carte* plays with this dissonance. And, we can now better understand Lacan's response to his critics, partially quoted earlier, when he offered a similar rebuke as Scudéry:

> Ils m'ont donné leur point de vue de techniciens – *On n'y comprend rien, qu'ils m'ont dit*. Remarquez que c'est beaucoup. Quelque chose auquel on ne comprend rien, c'est tout l'espoir, c'est le signe qu'on en est affecté. Heureusement qu'on n'a rien compris, parce qu'on ne peut jamais comprendre que ce qu'on a déjà dans la tête (*SXVIII* 105).

Lacan's argument mimics Scudéry's, which is to say that *doxa* cannot understand any original works because their biases are insurmountable, the paradigms are incommensurable, and their biased mode of thinking prevents them from understanding, so they simply proclaim that: 'on n'y comprend rien.' Scudéry and Lacan's flair is to forgive and look beyond this imbecility, with Lacan stating that 'quelque chose auquel on ne comprend rien, c'est tout l'espoir, c'est le signe qu'on en est affecté.' Coupled with Scudéry's, 'le destin de cette carte fut si heureux que ceux mêmes qui furent assez stupides pour ne l'entendre point servirent à nous divertir, en nous donnant sujet de nous moquer de leurs sottises' (*Clélie* 186).

Lacan's allegedly ridiculous persona was so prevalent that it was even picked up by Frantz Fanon:

> Il est peu d'hommes aussi contestés que Jacques Lacan. L'on pourrait, parodiant l'expression, dire: parmi les psychiatres, il y a les partisans et les adversaires de Lacan. Encore faudrait-il ajouter que les adversaires sont de loin les plus nombreux… Ce qui n'a pas l'air de gêner spécialement le "logicien de la folie" (*Aliénation* 268).

What Fanon saw was that being the 'logicien de la folie' was no slur.[80] As Fanon knew, Lacan directly provoked the medical establishment by daring to treat 'la folie' on its terms, and ultimately returning it within language itself – a democratising gesture which 'parmi les psychiatres' seemed ridiculous.[81] Which is why Lacan was firmly on the side of the *précieuses* '*ridicule,*' where Scudéry's *Carte* equally emerged from a 'folie d'un moment,' and, as I have argued, Scudéry invites us to enter this madness, to initially misunderstand, precisely to outplay *doxa* and access the Real. Both Scudéry and Lacan were indifferent to the ridicule by others: '*encore tira-t-on même quelque divertissement de la sottise de ces gens-là*' (*Clélie* 186).

[80] We gently disagree with Robert J.C Young who argues in "Fanon and the Pathology of Freedom" that: 'although, as has been suggested, Fanon is in some ways sympathetic to Lacan, [Fanon] characterises Lacan's position overall with the slightly sarcastic remark, "Personnellement, si nous avions à définir la position de Lacan, nous dirions qu'elle est une défense acharnée des droits nobiliaires de la folie"' *Aliénation* p. 268 and Young 2019 p. 210. We contend that we need not take Fanon's remark sarcastically; instead, this, along with Fanon's many descriptions of Lacan, amount to a pertinent commentary of Jacques Lacan's overall theoretical project. The 'droits nobiliaires de la folie,' albeit an admittedly clunky turn of phrase, sees Fanon qualifying Lacan's view of madness as a noble psychic state, and not an attempt to enter madness into a kind of aristocratic hierarchy. We suggest that Fanon means 'the noble rights of madness,' as opposed to 'the nobility rights of madness.' See Young 2019 p. 210.

Our interpretation might fit more comfortably with the rest of Fanon's descriptions of Lacan in *Aliénation.* Later, Fanon states:

> Pour Lacan, la croyance délirante est méconnaissance. À ce niveau se situe d'après nous le renversement logique de l'attitude scientifique de Lacan. L'auteur, en abordant la valeur humaine de la folie, passe du plan de la causalité à celui de la motivation. Partant de la connaissance et de la croyance, il envisage la folie dans une perspective intersubjectiviste. "La folie," dit [Lacan], "est vécue toute dans le registre du sens. Et [...] sa portée métaphysique se révèle en ceci que le phénomène de la folie n'est pas séparable du langage pour l'homme." (273).

[81] See: Lacan's doctoral thesis, *Rapports* p. 345-348. We return to this argument in chapter 4, section vi.

iv. The Mother's trap

Scudéry's distinction between tenderness and sex is an artificial difference since, as we saw, there are no speech acts in psychoanalysis that can be isolated from their signifier – in our case, the *Mer*(*e*) *Dangereuse.* As we have argued, the prohibition expressed in this signifier is the very conditions of possibility for Scudéry's *Carte*, and this prohibition is deployed to regulate what Scudéry's cabal can and cannot say. Prohibitions are implemented using language, and these two are locked in a nexus whereby the excluded is never eliminable. Paradoxically, a strict prohibition has the effect of making all future discussions about the prohibition itself. The more the social order laboriously demands that we accept a prohibition, the more all subjects can do is discuss the prohibition. Lacan's psychoanalysis aims to recognise the centrality of language, the duplicitousness of words and speech, to tease out unconscious thoughts and desires. Language is trickery, and, for Lacan, this view of language as deceitful reads instability in all speech and communication, where everything becomes flexible and treacherous, as it was for Pascal and Montaigne earlier (*SIII* 131).

The idea that language is duplicitous develops our discussion which tried to read Scudéry's *Carte* as a map which threatened language itself by highlighting the Real. By blending the treachery of language with its potential for expressing the unconscious, we open up the possibility of seeing the *Terres inconnues* as depicting the *non-rapport* of the sexual relationship. As Laura Burch argues, echoing DeJean and Peters, Scudéry's language challenged dominant intellectual *doxa,* 'the anxiety produced by Scudéry's slippery use of language [was that] she used both text and her famous *Carte de Tendre* to provoke disruptions in dominant contemporary literary and epistemological discourse' (Burch 2014: 7). The disruption, Burch suggests, occurred because Scudéry cast the woman 'as friend,' and this was 'interpreted as a deceptive and dangerous fiction, a

menace to the integrity of French literary and political territory, as well as to masculinity of the "holy bond" (*sainte couture*) of male friendship through which that territory was organised' (ibid). Scudéry's disruption of dominant discourse was powerful because Scudéry also established a signifying chain based on the exclusion of the sex act, relegating sex beyond the *Mer dangereuse*. However, the power of Scudéry's disruption of *doxa*'s language is not predicated on the assumption that sex is somehow absent from the map; rather, the power of this move is that Scudéry even dared to prohibit, relegate, and, therefore, paradoxically, highlight bodily relations as central to the *précieuses*. The supposed prohibition provoked a disruption to the 'holy bond' of traditional male friendship.

Lacan argued that sex occurs *in* speech: 'en d'autres termes — pour l'instant, je ne baise pas, je vous parle, eh bien! je peux avoir exactement la même satisfaction que si je baisais' (*SXI* 151). Lacan's argument mirrors the argument I ascribe to Scudéry, which says that sex, entertained in speech, is much more dangerous to *doxa*, which is why the map was so powerful at disrupting it. The seemingly innocuous emotions of tenderness and the stressing of friendships are suffused with all sorts of drives: 'il faut pourtant bien qu'ils viennent de quelque part, ces éléments qu'il appelle la tendresse, l'idéalisation, et qui sont ces mirages de l'amour qui drapent l'acte génital – la carte du Tendre' (*SI* 238). And, as Taylor showed, Boileau's *Satire X* displays a classic example of knee-jerk masculine insecurity:

> To ridicule further the reign of the *précieuses,* Boileau condemns the literary genre with which they were particularly associated: he accuses Scudéry's novel, *Clélie,* of immorality:
>
> D'abord tu la verras, ainsi que dans Clélie
> Recevant ses Amans sous le doux nom d'amis […]
> Dans le crime il suffit qu'une fois on débute
> Une chûte toûjours attire une autre chûte (Taylor 2017: 18).

Boileau's overwhelming fear was that *Clélie* would invite immorality by stealth, by hiding behind friendship. We partly agree with Boileau's fear. He absolutely should be afraid! Scudéry's language is treacherous, powerful, and threatening. The *Carte* allegedly says so little about sex and so much about emotional relations because emotional relations are sexual in language, and, for Lacan, it is in this relationship that an impossible antagonism exists. The *Carte* highlights this *non-rapport* as well as what is generally understood by the physical act. The insecurity engendered by exploring this aspect of sex, produced much discontent within the masculine holy bond.

Scudéry's signifier the *Mer dangereuse* operates in the same way as Lacan's left-to-right arrow in the lower half of the *Graphe.* For Lacan, meaning and truth are merely clipped together by signifiers, which are themselves only arbitrarily decided. The *Mer dangereuse* is chosen arbitrarily to create the space for discussions against it. We will recall that that is what Lacan called the *point de capiton,* and this buttoning of meaning and truth in the arbitrary signifier inaugurates the master signifier which regulates all discussions in social life, yet: 'tout vrai signifiant est, en tant que tel, un signifiant qui ne signifie rien' (*SIII* 185). The master signifier emerges as the vacuous deciding principle in our social life, and this is fixed by the choices and tacit consent of 'the collective' (Saussure 1995: 157). The graph's descriptive strength resides in its illustration of the arbitrariness of the marriage of truth and meaning for subject development, as expressed in the Symbolic. The *Mère dangereuse* is such a signifier which structures the social rules in the *Carte*. We could say that the compelling challenge to dominant discourse evoked by DeJean, Peters, and Burch, resides in the threat Scudéry posed to the power of the signifier, the *Mère dangereuse*.

DeJean argues that Scudéry's 'long term legacy' 'may well be' her concept of *inclination.* DeJean explains the political ramifications of Scudéry's concept:

> Scudéry's heroine turns to her mother, Sulpicie, for advice: she is torn between two suitors, her father's choice, the noble and Roman-born Horace, and Aronce, to whom she personally "inclines" even though he is of unknown birth and therefore expressly forbidden to her by her father's dictate that she can only marry a Roman. Sulpicie appears unmoved by either the paternal concern for pure lineage or the paternal definition of marriage as political alliance: she unhesitatingly encourages her daughter to "give over her heart to her inclination for Aronce" (I:424). […] It is easy, for modern readers at least, to overlook the political implications of *Clélie*'s tender geography, but the mother's discourse reminds us that Scudéry is asserting such fundamental concepts as a woman's right to choose for herself (DeJean 1991: 88).

However, as we saw, the *Mère dangereuse* as signifier is also an elaborate trap; mimicking the trap of all signifiers. For Lacan, we should not trust in these because they often describe sites of conservatism which, by my reading, is where DeJean's argument ends. The Mother's trap is that Sulpicie might appear a proto-feminist in her determination to overcome the Father's symbolic obstacles: as a result of the patriarchal command for a Roman-born husband, Sulpicie offers her daughter the space to love Aronce. However, the lesson of the signifier is that both those options reinforce the closed patriarchal circle of marriage, religion, and oppressive social norms. 'A woman's right to choose,' DeJean has argued, but what is the choice? Both paths lead to subjugation to the Father and the Mother's law, the symbolic structures serving to reinforce family relations. In this case, the right to choose does nothing but accommodate a fundamentally unperturbed structure. French society might have adopted modest meritocratic characteristics, though without really altering the core, heteronormative, symbolic coordinates of relations of power. The figure of the Mother is complicit with the Father, guaranteeing a form of enslavement which allows the daughter the freedom of a forced choice. Lacan does not offer any radicalism from within symbolic coordinates of the law. It is for this reason that I argue that any analysis within the remit of the Subject of Language only yields further subjugation. The lower part of the graph expresses desire

in terms of language and symbolic structures, whereas the top expresses that which is beyond language: *jouissance.*

v. Beyond *la Mère dangereuse*

In *Clélie*, Scudéry hints at what could lie beyond the symbolic restraints of oppressive social norms. And, though Scudéry does write that 'au-delà de cette Mer, c'est ce que nous appelons Terres Inconnues parce qu'en effet nous ne savons point ce qu'il y a…,' (*Clélie* 184: my emphasis). I contend that 'ce qu'il y a' beyond the *Mer dangereuse* is: *pas de rapport sexuel*.

The signifier, the *Mère dangereuse,* shelters the *Carte*'s travellers from their desire for the *Terres inconnues* (*jouissance*). Charles Sorel had understood that to pursue desire in this way would be to allow oneself to be 'emport[é] aux frénésies de l'Amour' (Sorel 1667: 185). However, what Sorel missed was that Scudéry's alleged *frenzy of love* is nothing other than the *fantasy of love,* and, highlighting the *Terres inconnues,* exposed this fantasy. As Clélie clarified, no one knows what lies beyond tender friendship*,* confirming Lacan's insight that *il n'y a pas de rapport,* since both corroborate the failure of the beyond. It's not that nothing physically exists beyond, it's that whatever exists (*jouissance/ Terres inconnues*) is necessarily a weak point which is prone to failure, forcing the *Carte*'s travellers, or the graph's subjects, to reintegrate the Mother's or the Father's law, respectively, and either accept the fantasy or risk psychic catastrophe. Therefore, the *non-rapport* has a dual meaning, on the one hand, it describes the incomplete physical act, which does not preoccupy Lacan (*JPM* 32-2), and on the other, it describes the frustrating inability to make a success of *jouissance*. Strikingly, Scudéry also suggested that the *Terres inconnues* contain this dual meaning:

> Je me contente de vous dire deux choses; la première est que je vous défends absolument de me parler jamais en particulier et la seconde est que *cet inconnu*

> *dont vous parlez, n'est point aux Terres inconnues,* parce que personne n'y est et n'y peut jamais être (*Clélie* 187).

Clélie firmly rebuffs Horace, yet, simultaneously acknowledges the possible double meaning of the *Terres inconnues*; confirming Lacan's distinction between sex and *jouissance*. And, it is in *jouissance* that: 'nous ne savons point ce qu'il y a' […] 'parce que personne n'y est et n'y peut jamais être.' Moreover, 'n'y peut jamais être' can also be interpreted to mean never be/ become. The mere fact that Clélie deploys Horace's misunderstanding to point to the ontological status of the *Terres inconnues,* as that which exists outside the symbolic limit of *doxa,* is a radical act mimicking the move in Lacan's upper-level of the graph. Therefore, the *Carte* is both a radical feminist move, as well as being a despairing account of the failure of *jouissance.* By pointing to *jouissance* Scudéry revealed the insecurity and instability of seventeenth-century *doxa*, but this is simultaneously an act of subjective self-annihilation. The conclusion the subject must reach at the end of Lacan's graph points to the failure of subjectivity itself, and the move from the *Mer dangereuse* to the *Terres inconnues* is Scudéry's brush with the Real which offers the same conclusion.

Scudéry's *Carte* opens a seventeenth-century social space for *jouissance*, and it is in crossing the *Mer*(*e*) *dangereuse* that the consequences of rebelling against her law become overwhelming. Scudéry's inclusion of the *Mer dangereuse* is an implicit invitation for her followers to violate this prohibition. However, those who reach the *Terres inconnues* substitute the fantasy for the thing-itself, the live-wire of the sexual relationship against which they were cautioned. In effect, the subjects which emerge in the *Terres inconnues* know too much about the *Mère dangereuse*: she was never really there; she was merely a fictive symbolic constraint – only the supposed guarantor of tender friendship. Therein lies the power of the *Terres inconnues* / *jouissance,* once there,

we realise they highlight the fragility of all signifiers — they are hollow, and yet we follow (or, *les non-dupes-errent*).

It is for this reason that Scudéry was ridiculed because she made visible in the *Terres inconnues* the ultimate weakness of male power. The fantasy screen of a genuine tender friendship was the camouflage that the *Mère dangereuse* employed to hide her inconsistency, and, in moving beyond her reach, the *Carte*'s travellers realise the desolation of their new found freedom. This move is the Real, where the sheer fabric of symbolic meaning fragments, which is to say that the seventeenth-century aristocratic *monde* of social exchange starts to unravel. Subjects can no longer pin the signifiers to the signified, and this instability is the beginning of *jouissance*. However, the desolate freedom found in *jouissance* or the *Terres inconnues* is incoherent since it is outside the language of symbolic meaning, which is why 'personne n'y est et n'y peut jamais être.'

As a result of making the *Terres inconnues* visible, even as against the backdrop of a prohibition, Scudéry not only threatened the seventeenth-century social order's fantasy of coherence — thereby exposing the vacuity of the Symbolic — but also threatened the supposed 'laws most necessary to preserve society' (DeJean 1991: 86). Scudéry revealed, not just in writing but also by illustrating, *doxa*'s fragile power. However, as Scudéry knew, foreshadowing Lacan, in the end, both the *Mère dangereuse* and *Terres inconnues* are frustratingly unsatisfying and incomplete:

> *L'amour est un mal agréable,*
> *Dont mon cœur ne saurait guérir*:
> *Mais quand il serait guérissable,*
> *Il est bien plus doux d'en mourir.* (*Clélie* 188).

Scudéry's reinterpretation of this fragment from Sappho's poem suggests that when the fantasy disappears, *il est bien plus doux d'en mourir* because *jouissance* (or the *Terres inconnues*) is much too excessive and incomprehensible to bear. Instead, subjects will undoubtedly wish for the relative coherence of language and the signifiers (or, the *Mère*

dangereuse) — the *mal agréable* that is the ultimate fantasy of love itself; *dont mon cœur ne saurait guérir*.

The process of subject formation, displayed in the graph of desire, demonstrates Lacan's commitment to the idea that the subject is left desolate. For Lacan, nothing is ever as it seems, since language is treachery, and the subject is never free of symbolic restrictions since this would mean to be outside of language. However, *jouissance* exists, for Lacan. It is the fictional (counterfactual) goal that subjects aim for in the pursuit of their own desires. As we have seen, the subject is necessarily expected to renounce *jouissance*, and re-enter into the symbolic coordinates of language, this means accepting the desires of the Other and installing them in one's subjective economy. The subject digests this process through the fantasy, as the upper level of the graph demonstrated. Scudéry's *Carte de Tendre* is a means of digesting this truth — it is the fantasy screen par excellence. The process of subject formation and the brush against *jouissance* in order to renounce it, is necessary, and the search for love (the *wish to be loved*) is always 'voué à l'échec,' as Sartre had claimed, but, for Lacan, not without first feeling the desolation of one's subjective position. To further sketch out this Lacanian fatalism, we turn to *qui perd gagne* which will show, through Lacan's discussions concerning the *Nom-du-Père* in *SXXI*, *Les Non-dupes errent,* that *qui perd gagne* (*oui mais quand même*) once again shows the mechanism by which the duped subject restores the master signifier, for fear of falling foul of the *Non-du-Père*, or master signifier (Φx).

vi. *Qui Perd Gagne* (*Je Sais Bien*)

At various points, we have touched upon Christina Howells's analysis in *Sartre*: *The Necessity of Freedom* of *qui perd gagne*. We agree *qui perd gagne* is the most convincing shorthand for the strategy that Sartre employs concerning subjectivity in

L'Être et le néant, and, we argue, Lacan re-articulates a version of *qui perd gagne* in *SXXI* under the guise of the homophony *le Nom-du-Père/ Les Non-Dupes Errent*.[82] As we have suggested, Lacan's early work was in many ways indebted to Sartre's existential philosophy, and, while Lacan saw his later work as enacting a 'déviation fatale' away from Sartre (*AÉ* 179), we contend against Lacan's self-representation, that his later engagement with *les non-dupes errent* closely resembles the strategy of *qui perd gagne* with a few fundamental revisions. To highlight the resemblance, we show how the 'recuperative transformation' of *qui perd gagne* is a form of fetishistic disavowal if viewed in Lacanian terms (Howells 1988: 198). If we consider *qui perd gagne* in this way, Lacan has effectively morphed *qui perd gagne* into *les non-dupes errent*. Therefore, our argument is to realign the notion of *qui perd gagne* with *les non-dupes errent*. *Qui perd gagne* settles the impasse of subjectivity expressed in the symbolic triad: *le nom-du-père / le non du père / les non-dupes errent*.

Although subjects originally encounter the Symbolic Order at the original level of naming, and so language, for Lacan, subjects are only correctly inculcated into the Symbolic Order from childhood onwards, and this inclusion occurs alongside the subjective journey expressed in the graph of desire. It is during this process that subjects are either properly oedipalised or not. As Howells puts it: 'entry into the Symbolic Order is conditional on the initial renunciation of *jouissance* in the castration complex; because the signifier creates and splits the subject' (Howells 2011: 137). Subjects are exposed to specific signifiers, for example, *le Nom-du-Père,* and these are either recognised or misidentified, which results in a structuring or mis-structuring of a subject's relationship with the Symbolic Order. As we saw, this inculcation has serious consequences for subject development since, like language, the Symbolic Order is both beyond all

[82] Parts of this subsection have been published in Richards 2019.

comprehension, since it is founded on lies, and the mechanism by which all comprehension is apprehended because it contains communication in language. It is for this reason that Lacan refers to the big Other as something about which we know nothing: 'l'Autre en tant qu'il n'est pas connu' (*SIII* 51). The big Other belongs to the realm of the Symbolic, and, in simple terms, it is the mis-structuring of the subject's relationship to the big Other that might lead the subject to psychosis. Moreover, we argued that *le père* was the signifier that structures the truth of the thing [*la vérité de la chose*], and we showed how Lacan separates the signifiers from the thing they supposedly signified, for example, one's father. The image of the signifier (*Un-père*), for Lacan, is more important than the empirical person who assumes the position of the signifier in the Symbolic Order. Therefore, *le père* is founded on a lie, and, because the Symbolic Order is founded around the master signifier *le père*, who need not exist, the Symbolic Order is also a fake.

The master signifier (*le nom-du-père*) is the Symbolic Order's regulative principle, and it places restrictions on named subjects, hence the *nom/non* homophony. In *SXXI,* Lacan further develops the homophony, transforming it into *les non-dupes errent*, and in so doing, Lacan suggests that we must be dupes to signifiers in the Symbolic Order. So, we argue that Lacan's necessary dupery is the 'recuperative transformation' of *qui perd gagne* (Howells 1988: 198) in a slightly different form. Because, since the subject must accept the total power of the signifier in order to continue on the path of subject formation in language, the loss of the subject's desire becomes a Symbolic gain for the subject; the subject gains language and, therefore, the tools of expression and intersubjective communication. *Les-non-dupes-errent* codifies the argument, explored in our second chapter, that the subject necessarily required the "lie" in order to access some half-truths in the Symbolic Order. As we highlighted, for Lacan, the arbitrarily posited fiction *retroactively* threw the truth into sharp relief, and, in short, this means that the

subject needs certain untruths (the vacuous big Other, or God, for example) in the Symbolic for some truth itself to be half-expressible in language. As Lacan puts it, the truth can only ever be *mi-dit:*

> Je sais bien qu'il y a *cette sacrée question de la vérité* […]. Mais nous n'allons pas comme ça, après ce que je vous en ai dit, et combien de fois... et y revenant et y retournant, nous mettre à y coller sans savoir que *c'est un choix*, puisqu'elle ne peut que se *mi-dire* (*SXXI* 19).

According to Lacan, the truth, if it exists at all, is only half-said, and, because we are unable to express the unconscious in speech, the truth is always a *choice* [*c'est un choix*]. The *non-dupes* are those subjects who refuse to recognize this Symbolic fact, and so, the loser wins because the subject must be a dupe to gain some half-truth in language, which is to say the gain of half-truth mediated by a deceitful big Other.

However, what the subject gained in the form of linguistic *duperie* also involves a necessary disavowal of something else, the full truth which is inaccessible for the subject and resides in the Real. For Lacan, the aspect of loss in *qui perd gagne* needs to be disavowed in order for the subject to access their winnings. Octave Mannoni's formula for disavowal is: '*je sais bien, mais quand même!,*' and, in *Clefs pour l'imaginaire ou l'autre scène* (1969), following Freud, Mannoni argues that disavowal is the moment the child recognises the feminine anatomy of his mother as the absence of the phallus (the '*je sais bien*' moment). However, the child's immediate reaction is to repudiate this fact (*mais quand même!*). Following Freud, Mannoni reads this subjective experience as the paradigm for the fetishistic subject, arguing that the fetishist's original disavowal always leaves them marked with a '*stigma indélébile*' from the original maternal disavowal (11). However, Mannoni is not suggesting that the fetishist *wishes* a phallus for the mother – they know she does not possess one. Thus, Mannoni states: 'la croyance à la présence du phallus chez la mère est la première croyance répudiée, et le modèle de toutes les autres répudiations' (17). For Lacan, the signifier *les-non-dupes-errent* requires that the subject

disavow the fact that the Symbolic is a closed circle, a prison (the subject's '*je sais bien*' moment), yet this prison simultaneously offers the subject language and the comfort of the signifiers (the subject's *mais quand même!* moment) – therefore, the loser wins [*qui perd gagne*].

vii. *Oui, Mais Quand Même!*

Nevertheless, there is also another aspect of disavowal at play in Lacan's re-conceptualisation of Sartre's strategy. For Lacan, as we saw, the subject is alone, irremediably lost to themselves, and unable to understand even the most basic features of their existence, and, as a result, the subject does not wish to abandon the safe confines of language, the seemingly coherent desires of the Other, or the comfort of the signifiers. As we said, as soon as the fantasy vanishes, *il est bien plus doux d'en mourir* because the unconscious is much too excessive and incomprehensible to bear directly. Therefore, subjects undoubtedly wish for some understanding in language, and the comfort of the signifiers. Moreover, despite the crucial differences that Lacan draws between the Symbolic and the Real, as we saw with Scudéry's *Clélie*, the desolate subject faces antagonisms in the Symbolic and incoherence in the Real, and it is this subjective inconsistency that *les non-dupes errent* forces the subject to accept, under the guise of *le Nom-du-Père.* Lacan says:

> Dans ces deux termes mis en mots, des *Noms du Père* et des *non-dupes qui errent,* c'est le même savoir. Dans les deux. C'est le même savoir au sens où l'inconscient c'est un savoir dont le sujet peut se déchiffrer. C'est la définition du sujet, qu'ici je donne, du sujet tel que le constitue l'inconscient. (*SXXI* 5)

Lacan is associating *le nom-du-père* and *les non-dupes errent* in the same logic; they both contain the same knowledge [*savoir*]. However, the knowledge gained is akin to the knowledge the subject can decipher from the unconscious, which is a somewhat facetious point since the subject is unable to learn much from the unconscious because it is an

incoherent jumble. However, crucially, Lacan insists that the subject is only established in the relationship with the unconscious. Lacan explains:

> C'est à savoir que cet inconscient, par rapport à ce qui couplerait si bien le moi au monde… le corps à ce qui l'entoure, ce qui l'ordonnerait sous cette sorte de rapport qu'on s'obstine à vouloir considérer comme naturel … c'est que par rapport à lui, cet inconscient se présente comme essentiellement différent de cette harmonie – disons le mot – *dysharmonique* (*SXXI* 263).

For Lacan, although it is structured like a language, the unconscious is qualified as being *dysharmonious*, and because a significant part of the subject is drawn from the unconscious, the subject must be formed from within the chaos of the Real. Therefore, for Lacan in *SXXI*, we must not forget the impact of the Real and the *savoir du Réel* on the subject; which means that there will always be a minimum level of incoherence which cannot be subsumed by the subject in the winnings of *qui perd gagne*, even though the subject's unconscious does sometimes emit incoherent bits of the Real in speech, which is why Lacan says, 'dites n'importe quoi, ça touchera toujours au vrai*'* (*SXXI* 178). However, when subjects are faced with these incoherent bits of speech that reflect the fundamental deadlock of human subjectivity, all these subjects can do is hide from the *dysharmonious* impasse of the de-centred subject by declaring: *oui, mais quand même*. Therefore, disavowal, is *qui perd gagne* par excellence. *Qui perd gagne* is a lie we tell ourselves to stave off the *maladie* inscribed in our human condition, it is a form of self-deception. However, what the subject receives from such a lie is not *la morale,* as though one should not lie. What one gets instead is the underlying positive value of the lie. The lie which, as Shakespeare's Sonnet 138 captures, is the sincerest demonstration of love itself:

> *When my love swears that she is made of truth,*
> *I do believe her, though I know she lies,*
> *That she might think me some untutored youth,*
> *Unlearnèd in the world's false subtleties.*
> *Thus vainly thinking that she thinks me young,*
> *Although she knows my days are past the best,*

Simply I credit her false-speaking tongue.
On both sides thus is simple truth suppressed:
But wherefore says she not she is unjust?
And wherefore say not I that I am old?
O, love's best habit is in seeming trust,
And age in love loves not to have years told.
Therefore I lie with her and she with me,
And in our faults by lies we flattered be. (Shakespeare 2002: 657).

When my love swears that she is made of truth / I do believe her, though I know she lies: she lies because the truth is only ever *mi-dit* [half-said]. We are all *untutored youth.* We are *unlearnèd in the world's false subtleties* since we are privy only to conscious knowledge not the knowledge of the Real in the unconscious. Therefore, all our tongues are *false-speaking,* and it is the *seeming trust* that is the key; we seemingly trust symbolic appearances. It would seem that it was the Bard who first theorised *les non-dupes errent*: *On both sides thus is simple truth suppressed / But wherefore says she not she is unjust?* The underlying value of the lie is finally redeemed *Therefore I lie with her and she with me / And in our faults by lies we flattered be.* We can also draw a link with the *non-rapport sexuel* since, by the end of the sonnet, there seems to be a resignation that, although there will never be a true sexual relationship *in our faults by lies,* nevertheless *I lie with her and she with me.*

For Lacan, the fundamental ambivalence between the Symbolic and Real is the crucial tragedy that subjects have to confront in process of subject formation. For Lacan it is not quite *qui perd gagne*; we do not just win — we win, but our gain is a loss which has been repudiated or disavowed, and, according to Lacan, we simply persist incoherently. Therefore, either we admit that we do not know, or we lie earnestly. However, we must be dupes to these lies, dupes to, for example, the *Nom-du-Père*. Gaining something from being duped is the reason why *les non-dupes errent* is closely related to *qui perd gagne*. Moreover, it is for this reason that we have been arguing that attempting to "escape the Symbolic" is a fruitless task, the Subject's inculcation into the

Symbolic Order is a necessary subjugation in order to for the subject to speak, and to enable subject formation. Any attempt to move beyond, or somehow escape, symbolic coordinates is incoherent from within the Lacanian conception of subject development. As we will see in our final chapter, the late Lacan makes one exception, *le sinthome*.

Although Lacan tried to distance himself from Sartre in his later work, the Sartrean concept of *qui perd gagne,* as articulated by Howells, returns in a different form. It remains, for Lacan, a manner of 'recuperative transformation,' however, the crucial difference concerns the (fictional) master signifier which governs the Symbolic Order. We might be aware of its deceit, but we must choose to be dupes to win (*qui perd gagne*); yet, this is simultaneously a necessary choice, and ultimately a false choice. The false choice of the master signifier's deceit *is* the little bit of the real, the essential antagonism, included in *les non-dupes errent* which is missing from *qui perd gagne*. Regardless of the differences between *qui perd gagne* and *les non-dupes errent*, one thing is certain: *On both sides thus is simple truth suppressed.*

Chapter III — The Wish to be Loved
Part Three: the Object of *Jouissance — Objet petit a*

Au niveau de l'inconscient, le
sujet ment. Et ce mensonge est sa
façon de dire là-dessus la vérité.

Lacan, *L'Éthique*

i. The Subject of *Jouissance*

In *Donc*, Jacques-Alain Miller sought to qualify the differences between the Subject of the Signifier and the Subject of *Jouissance* in Lacan's work. Miller states: 'on peut se demander, d'ailleurs, qu'est-ce qui nous donne, à nous, du grain à moudre sur la psychanalyse. C'est peut-être une certaine antinomie entre le signifiant et ce que nous appelons la jouissance' (Miller 1994: unpublished, *SX, cours du 9 mars*). Our preceding discussions concerning the graph of desire and the *Carte de Tendre* will be helpful in elucidating the antinomy between these two subjects, and of course, it is worth clarifying that we are investigating the transformation of the same subject at two different moments in the process of subject formation.

As we have seen, the lower part of the graph expresses the Subject of the Signifier — a subject who uncritically obeys symbolic demands. This subject has been ensnared by the battery of signifiers [*batterie signifiante*] where all possible societal restrictions apply. However, as we have noted, this subject experiences themselves as free of those restrictions, 'les êtres parlants sont heureux' Lacan had said (*AÉ* 556). The Subject of the Signifier does not know s/he is a symbolic prisoner; where the societal and familial restrictions applied onto the subject are the very conditions of possibility for the subject's development (*É* 806). It is our understanding that at this moment in the *Écrits,* Lacan is building a rudimentary case for *les non-dupes errent,* which we have just developed.

On the other hand, the Subject of *Jouissance* describe no possible subject, yet Lacan nevertheless speculates on the nature of the Subject of *Jouissance*. According to Lacan, we are only able to grapple with the former of the two subjects in the facticity of everyday life. Therefore, the Subject of the Signifier *is* the "Subject of Science," Lacan says: 'le sujet sur quoi nous opérons en psychanalyse *ne peut être que* le sujet de la science' (*É* 858: my emphasis). If this argument sounds familiar, it is because we find

Lacan repeating this intellectual strategy throughout his work: the divided subject (*Maître/ m'être*); Man and Woman, *l'être parlant* vs. *parlêtre*; *langage* vs. *lalangue*; conscious vs. unconscious; and Subject of the Signifier vs. Subject of *Jouissance,* and S2. vs. S1. (among others), where the former is a subject for scientific analysis and the latter is merely a speculative fiction. In this section, we seek to develop the differences between the Subject of the Signifier and the Subject of *Jouissance,* and this distinction advances our discussion of *jouissance,* which is intimately linked to *das Ding*, *l'objet petit a,* and sublimation. In exploring these concepts, we demonstrate the necessity of subject formation and the castration complex. In turn, this establishes the necessary impossibility of love, which we discussed at the outset of this thesis.

ii. *das Ding*

In *SXVII, L'Envers de la psychanalyse,* Lacan refers to the 'champ de la jouissance' (*SXVII* 93), and, though we have touched upon *jouissance* at various points in our thesis, we have deliberately sought to minimise any direct discussions of it. In chapter two we investigated *il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel*, a concept of the *Real,* and picked it up again it in the present chapter concerning Madeleine de Scudéry's *Terres inconnues*. We have at various stages discussed the renunciation of *jouissance* as part of symbolic castration. However, what is *jouissance* for Lacan? And from where does it emerge?

Lacan employs an old French word 'jouir,' whose modern usage mostly refers to orgasm. Morel argues that *jouissance* is an uncommon word in contemporary French speech, '"Jouir" est un vieux mot […] que l'on trouve plus chez Racine et Corneille que dans la langue d'aujourd'hui' (2000: 25). Lacan employs the word 'jouir' because of its wide gamut of meaning,'jouir' is also highly ambiguous and context is usually required

to ascertain what is being described. *Jouissance* is Lacan's word for what Freud had placed beyond the pleasure principle:

> Parce qu'ils impliquent une destruction de l'homéostase exigée par le principe de plaisir; ni trop, ni trop peu. "Jouissance" désigne alors aussi bien l'excès de plaisir, la satisfaction trop intense pour le sujet, que la souffrance qui peut résulter d'une excitation interne prolongée qui dérange l'équilibre requis par le principe de plaisir (Morel 2000: 25).

Lacan begins to develop *jouissance* in earnest from around *SVII* where he identifies, clarifies, and substantiates what he calls: *das Ding* [*la chose*]. *Das Ding* sets the foundations for what will become *l'Autre jouissance* from *SXX*, *Encore*, onwards, which we discussed in our previous chapter. In *SVII*, *L'Éthique de la psychanalyse*, Lacan argues that 'ce qu'il y a dans *das Ding,* c'est le secret véritable (58). Lacan's ambiguity and equivocation in these pages illustrate that he is building something about which he is, at this stage, still uncertain.

For Freud, *das Ding* describes the relationship between the subject and their very first human contact or partner. Usually, this designates the mother or the maternal figure in the child's life. Lacan uses Freud's the *Nebenmensch* to highlight this primary maternal relation in his conceptualisation of *das Ding*. 'Le *Nebenmensch*, c'est la personne qui entend de façon *adéquate* l'appel de l'enfant (la mère bien sûr, mais, au-delà de celle-ci, toute personne exerçant cette *fonction*)' (Richard 2011: 1539). The mother is the first person who will be able to satisfy the infant's earliest needs and demands, eliciting in the infant either pleasure or displeasure. The infant will recognise in the mother her capacity to satisfy their needs, and so the child will conceptually divide the *Nebenmensch* into, on the one hand, the "satisfier" of their needs, and, on the other hand, the mother as the unassimilable *Ding* itself — that part of the *Nebenmensch* which is not for the child (Morel 2000: 26). Lacan's focus here is on the unassimilable thing from the *Nebenmensch.* Lacan says:

> Le *Ding* est l'élément qui est à l'origine isolé par le sujet, dans son expérience du *Nebenmensch,* comme étant de sa nature étranger, *Fremde.* Le complexe de l'objet est en deux parties, il y a division, différence dans l'abord du jugement (*SVII* 64-65).

Lacan stresses that *das Ding* designates an aspect of the *Nebenmensch* that is foreign to the subject, and potentially even hostile to the subject. 'Le *Ding* comme *Fremde,* étranger et même hostile à l'occasion (*SVII* 65). Lacan gives *das Ding* a central role in the entire structuring of the subject's path of desire:

> En tout cas comme le premier extérieur, c'est ce autour de quoi s'oriente tout le cheminement du sujet. C'est sans aucun doute un cheminement de contrôle, de référence, par rapport à quoi? — au monde de ses désirs. Il fait preuve que quelque chose, après tout, est bien là, qui, jusqu'à un certain degré, peut servir. Servir à quoi? — à rien d'autre qu'à référer par rapport à ce monde de souhaits et d'attente, orienté vers ce qui servira à l'occasion à atteindre *das Ding.* Cet objet sera là quand toutes les conditions seront remplies, au bout du compte — bien entendu, il est clair que ce qu'il s'agit de trouver ne peut pas être retrouvé. C'est de sa nature que l'objet est perdu comme tel. Il ne sera jamais retrouvé. Quelque chose est là en attendant mieux, ou en attendant pire, mais en attendant (*SVII* 65).

In the context of satisfying the demands that lead to desire, and so the creation of *jouissance*, Lacan is implying that *das Ding* mediates and orients the subject, 'c'est par rapport à ce *das Ding* originel que se fait la première orientation, le premier choix, la première assise de l'orientation subjective' (*SVII* 68). However, *das Ding* is both elusive and always out of reach, and, therefore, the lack returns once again. *Das Ding* is the lost object that the subject cannot locate, forcing the subject to learn about patience. The subject, having split the *Nebenmensch,* is unable to acquire the missing aspect of *das Ding*; the object which serves no other function than to regulate their demands and needs. *Das Ding* is the absolute Other of the subject which the subject spends time trying to recover, 'l'Autre absolu du sujet, qu'il s'agit de retrouver' (*SVII* 65). However, if the subject happens to find this *Thing*, it necessarily recovers *it* in regret, and this reveals the coordinates of a former pleasure, 'on le retrouve tout au plus comme regret. Ce n'est pas lui que l'on retrouve, mais ses coordonnées de plaisir' (*SVII* 65).

The structure of *jouissance* is closely related to the absence of *das Ding* and *jouissance* signals the subject's wish to recapture *the Thing*. However, Lacan argues that this desire to recover *das Ding* yields an excess of pleasure, which is why *jouissance* is situated beyond the pleasure principle because it is linked to this excess. 'Puisque le principe de plaisir nous est effectivement donné pour avoir un mode de fonctionnement qui est justement d'éviter l'excès, le trop de plaisir' (*SVII* 67). Moreover, as the upper level of the graph of desire demonstrates, *jouissance,* as well as the corollary 'leftover' demand arising from the desire elicited by *Che Vuoi*, is situated beyond the remit of the signifier, leading Lacan to state:

> *Das Ding* est originellement ce que nous appellerons le hors-signifié. C'est en fonction de cet hors-signifié, et d'un rapport pathétique à lui que le sujet conserve sa distance, et se constitute dans un mode de rapport, d'affect primaire, antérieur à tout refoulement (*SVII* 67-8).

The Thing is located outside signification, and its relationship with the subject is one of pathetic repression. Which is to say that *the Thing* necessarily belongs to the domain of *jouissance,* and apprehendable by the subject only as a result of the distance provided by the fantasy screen. Therefore, *das Ding* only appears to the subject in order to shut down their desire:

> La Chose ne se présente à nous que pour autant qu'elle fait mot […] la façon dont l'étranger, l'hostile, apparaît dans la première expérience de la réalité pour le sujet humain, c'est le cri. Ce cri, dirai-je, nous n'en avons pas besoin. […] *Mot*, c'est essentiellement *point de réponse. Mot,* dit quelque part La Fontaine, c'est ce qui se tait, c'est justement ce à quoi aucun mot n'est prononcé (*SVII* 68).

The Thing reveals itself to the subject as a potentially promising route in their search for their true desire. However, the path through *das Ding* is a path that shuts down any discussions with the subject. The subject must unilaterally accept *the Thing* in order to continue on this path on the journey to subject formation, which is why, Lacan says, *the Thing* is accompanied by a transmuted 'cry,' but the cry is not something the subject needed or ever desired. *The Thing*'s cry is excessive, and the subject automatically wants

to reject the excessive burden of *das Ding* howling at them. In *SVII*, Lacan is building a view of *jouissance* that is necessarily burdensome, he associates the wailing of the infant with the unattainable aspect of the *Nebenmensch* (the mother). The infant's cry is transubstantiated into its opposite; as the infant becomes a subject and searches for her/his desire, *das Ding* becomes the one who wails uncontrollably. It is for this reason that all subjects are forced to repudiate the unassimilable *Thing*. In more concrete terms, this is one aspect of symbolic castration; the subject rejects *das Ding*, and, in so doing, is simultaneously renouncing *jouissance*.

iii. *das Ding* cont., Courtly Love, and Sublimation

Lacan's discussion in *SVII* of courtly love has less to do with the development of love within the scheme of R.S.I (Real, Symbolic, Imaginary), and more to do with elaborating the dual concepts of *das Ding* and sublimation which are the main objects of study in *L'Éthique de la psychanalyse* (Allouch 2009: 122). Lacan insists on the elaborate rules of engagement in courtly love because, in this discussion, he is placing a greater emphasis on the "rules" rather than on the love that is generated, 'l'amour courtois est principalement envisagé comme un cas paradigmatique de sublimation' (Allouch 2009: 122). Sublimation is the reinterpretation of sexual energies into non-sexual fields, for example in art. Lacan says, 'la sublimation […] apporte au *Trieb* une satisfaction différente de son but' (*SVII*133). Lacan interprets the complex rules of courtly love as a sublimation of the object:

> Ce que Freud appellerait *Überschätzung*, survalorisation de l'objet, je vais dès maintenant appeler sublimation de l'objet —, dans des conditions où l'objet de la passion amoureuse prend une certain signification — et c'est dans ce sens que j'ai l'intention d'introduire la dialectique où je prétends vous enseigner à situer ce qu'est réellement la sublimation —, donc, que dans certaines conditions de sublimation de l'objet féminin, autrement dit l'exaltation historiquement datable (*SVII* 130).

Beyond the pleasure principle, in the *champ de la jouissance*, the subject is confronted with an excess of pleasure, and this provides the subject with the choice of two possible paths; either the subject integrates or rejects these drives. As Lacan puts it:

> Je vous ai ainsi rapproché deux cas […] deux formes de la transgression au delà des limites normalement désignées au principe du plaisir en face du principe de la réalité considéré comme critère, à savoir, la sublimation excessive de l'objet, et ce que l'on appelle communément la perversion (*SVII* 131).

Both sublimation and perversion belong to the realm of desire, 'sublimation et perversion sont l'une et l'autre un certain rapport du désir' (*SVII* 131). However, Lacan also argues that we need to account for a third dimension: the relationship the subject has with *das Ding. Das Ding* is important in the Lacanian schema because it describes, as we saw, a desire that is sacrificed in the process of symbolic castration:

> Eh bien, le pas fait, au niveau du principe du plaisir, par Freud, est de nous montrer qu'il n'y a pas de Souverain Bien - que le Souverain Bien, qui est *das Ding,* qui est la mère, l'objet de l'inceste, est un bien interdit, et qu'il n'y a pas d'autre bien. Tel est le fondement, renversé chez Freud, de la loi morale (*SVII* 85).

Lacan characterises *das Ding* as the 'objet irretrouvable,' and, yet, we continually find it in reality. *Das Ding* destroys desire and is the figurative force behind *jouissance*. Additionally, according to Lacan, *das Ding* also founds the moral law:

> Il y a un registre de la moralité qui est dirigé du côté de ce qu'il y a au niveau de das Ding, c'est à savoir ce registre qui fait hésiter le sujet au moment de porter un faux témoignage contre das Ding, c'est-à-dire le lieu de son désir, qu'il soit pervers ou sublimé (*SVII* 131).

Signalling that there is an aspect of *das Ding* which could be more important than its stated relation to subject development, Lacan is making a rudimentary case for the unassimilable *das Ding* as *l'Autre jouissance,* which as we saw, he will develop more substantially in *Encore*. As we discussed in the previous chapter, this Other jouissance *is* the second qualification of the big Other as feminine *jouissance*, and Lacan is planting clues to this effect as early as *SVII*. The field of *the Thing* is the field beyond, 'ce champ où se projette quelque chose au-delà, à l'origine de la chaîne signifiante, lieu où est mis

en cause tout ce qui est lieu de l'être, lieu élu où se produit la sublimation' (*SVII* 253). Confirming our reading, Lacan situates 'La femme' on this transcendental field, at the origin of the signifying chain:

> C'est aussi le lieu de l'œuvre que l'homme, singulièrement, se met à courtiser, et c'est pourquoi le premier exemple que je vous ai donné a été emprunté à l'amour courtois. Avouez que placer en ce point d'au-delà une créature comme la femme est une idée vraiment incroyable (*SVII* 253).

And Lacan says immediately after: 'je ne porte nullement sur ces êtres un jugement dépréciatif, que les personnes se rassurent' (*SVII* 253).

Lacan places *jouissance* beyond the function of desire, as it is illustrated in the graph of desire. However, desire is a necessary precursor to *jouissance*. *Jouissance* is characterised as obscure and opaque, '[le] problème de la jouissance, en tant qu'elle se présente comme enfouie dans un champ central, avec des caractères d'inaccessibilité, d'obscurité et d'opacité, dans un champ cerné d'une barrière qui rend l'accès au sujet plus que difficile, inaccessible peut-être' (*SVII* 247). Lacan explains that the analytic value of *jouissance* is that it is a satisfaction of the drives and not just the satisfaction of leftover needs, 'la jouissance se présente non purement et simplement comme la satisfaction d'un besoin, mais comme la satisfaction d'une pulsion' (*SVII* 247-8). *Jouissance* is the subject's attempt to satisfy the drives, and that is why any analysis of *jouissance* is so difficult and inaccessible, because understanding the drives themselves, and what motivates them, is a singularly difficult task:

> La pulsion proprement dite est quelque chose de très complexe […] la remémorisation, l'historisation, est coextensive au fonctionnement de la pulsion dans ce que l'on appelle le psychique humain. C'est aussi là que s'enregistre, qu'entre dans le registre de l'expérience, la destruction (*SVII* 248).

Placing *La femme* at the point of *jouissance*, as beyond desire, is not designed to transform the woman into a scientific object of study but instead, it is attempting to do the opposite: how can we understand Being itself, which for Lacan is *La femme*, 'si cette idée

incroyable a pu venir, de mettre la femme à la place de l'être, cela ne la concerne pas en tant que femme, mais en tant qu'objet du désir' (*SVII* 254). The central thesis to be gleaned from Lacan's focus on courtly love is not how it characterises love but how it captures desire. Desire is directly linked to *La femme* 'au lieu de l'être,' which should be understood as 'in the place of being' as well as 'instead of being' because *La femme* is conceptualised by Lacan as an 'être de signifiant' (*SVII* 254). We can already see how *La femme*, as one of the names of God, is the reunification of *en soi* and *pour soi,* 'au lieu de l'être,' as we detail in our final chapter.

iv. Underneath Desire: *Jouissance* and Anxiety

Miller argued that anxiety underpins desire in the Lacanian psychoanalytic schema, 'qu'y a-t-il en deçà du désir ? La réponse est ici donnée, répétée, martelée, et j'ai laissé un schéma sommaire, même dupliqué : en deçà du désir, il y a la jouissance et il y a l'angoisse' (Miller 2005: 68). In order to better understand *jouissance*, we will first treat the concept of anxiety. Lacan's view of anxiety is heavily indebted to Sartre. However, Lacan claims that while Sartre focused on contrasting anxiety to both nothingness and liberty, he, instead, postulates a third relation to anxiety that Sartre had allegedly missed, namely, the relationship between anxiety and the desire of the Other. 'Le rapport essentiel de l'angoisse au désir de l'Autre (*SX* 14). Recalling the *Che Vuoi* moment in the graph of desire, Lacan says:

> J'ai placé au centre des signifiants sur ce tableau la question […] *Che vuoi? Que veux-tu?* Poussez un petit peu plus le fonctionnement, l'entrée de la clé, et vous avez *Que me veut-il?,* avec l'ambiguïté que le français permet sur le *me* […]. Ce n'est pas seulement *Que veut-Il à moi?,* mais aussi une interrogation suspendue qui concerne directement le moi, non pas *Comment me veut-Il?,* mais *Que veut-Il concernant cette place du moi?* (*SX* 14).

As we saw briefly earlier, anxiety emerges for the subject as a result of the subject's exposure to *l'objet petit a*. Understanding anxiety in this way marks a pronounced shift in

Lacan's thinking from *SX*, *Angoisse,* onwards. Prior to 1962, Lacan had believed that a subject's desire was aimed at a specific person or thing, making it object-orientated. However, desire can also aim at nothing, a lack of something, where desire becomes object-caused. In many ways, this move also marks a shift from the earlier to later Lacan, and it inaugurates Lacan's increasing concern with the Real.

For Lacan, Anxiety unearths the insurmountable antagonisms which constitute the Real:

> Seule la notion de réel, dans la fonction opaque qui est celle dont je parle pour lui opposer celle du signifiant, nous permet de nous orienter. Nous pouvons déjà dire que cet *etwas* devant quoi l'angoisse opère comme signal est de l'ordre de l'irréductible du réel (*SX* 188).

Therefore, *SX* is an attempt to both outline the structure of anxiety and qualify a discussion about *jouissance* and the Real. Lacan says,

> Nous nous trouvons avoir précisé, sur notre chemin de l'angoisse, le statut de ce que j'ai désigné d'emblée par la lettre *a.* […] la manifestation la plus éclatante de cet objet *a,* le signal de son intervention, c'est l'angoisse (*SX* 102).

For Lacan, the focus on anxiety is necessary because anxiety is not restricted to the signifiers, but, rather, as is evidenced in the graph of desire, anxiety is situated in the realm beyond the signifiers at the level of unregulated desire, and so '[du] champ de la jouissance.' The subject's anxiety emerges from *objet petit a*, as we said, and this takes place, Lacan argues, after the subject confronts the question *Che Vuoi?*. And, for Lacan, 'le problème est de l'entrée du signifiant dans le réel, et de voir comment de cela naît le sujet (*SX* 104). Lacan seeks to understand how the signifier can enter the Real and how this can create and split the subject; Lacan stresses that this process is one of complete foreignness, '*initium*, aura, aurore d'un sentiment d'étrangeté qui est la porte ouverte sur l'angoisse' (*SX* 104). Anxiety is provoked by a strange encounter with object *a,* it is the brush with *l'objet petit a* that generate feelings of anxiousness in the subject, and that is why Lacan is careful to insist that anxiety exists in a relationship with an object, '*elle*

n'est pas sans objet' (*SX* 105). However, the connection with the object is not a *rapport* 'telle est exactement la formule où doit être suspendu le rapport de l'angoisse à un objet' (*SX* 104). The loss of, or inability to fully grasp, the object small *a* causes the subject to feel anxious. Giving up the object *a* is synonymous with the renunciation of *jouissance* which results in symbolic castration, as we have seen. Therefore, subjects feel anxious when they realise that they will need to be symbolically castrated. Object *a* is also related to *jouissance* in this sense, since, in order to enter the world of signification, the subject needs to sacrifice the desire for object *a*. Earlier, we stated that the formula for fantasy was *$◇a,* which we can now better understand as: the barred subject's (*$*) desire for (◇) object *a* (*a*), which is a fantasy. Object *a* is also not qualified as intentional, it is not something which we desire intentionally, 'l'objet *a* n'est pas à situer dans […] l'intentionnalité du désir […] cet objet est à concevoir comme la cause du désir' (*SX* 120).

Lacan's rhetorical strategy is 'qu'y a-t-il en deçà,' and this is evident from the way he develops the various elements of his theory, and how they converge in "Kant avec Sade," as we will see in more detail in our next section. In "Kant avec Sade," Lacan shows how *das Ding* relates to the Real, as an early version of *jouissance*, or, we argue, *en soi pour soi.* For Lacan, the Real in the Symbolic is not an *en soi,* the bits of the Real in the Symbolic describe the antagonisms found at the heart of the Symbolic Order. The Real in the Symbolic is the name Lacan gives for the disintegration of the Symbolic Order, where the metonymic structures begin to wear and tear. Analogously, in "Kant avec Sade" Lacan uses the Marquis de Sade's writings to demonstrate the vulnerabilities of Kant's ethical system. Lacan investigates what might underpin Kant's ethical system. Our analysis of Lacan's argument illustrates how the various strands of Lacan's thought intersect, and enables us to ask '*qu'y a-t-il en deçà*' *de l'amour*?

v. Kant with Sade

Lacan's "Kant avec Sade" is a highly original contribution to the history of German philosophy, and he begins this chapter in *Écrits* by claiming that although the standard received view often sees Sade as a precursor to Freud: this is 'une sottise, qui se redit dans les lettres' (*É* 765). Instead, Lacan claims that it is, in fact, Kant and Sade who are much closer intellectual bedfellows. The move to disassociate Sade and Freud, and instead focus on the connection of Kant with Sade might seem paradoxical at first glance, on account of the rigid traditionalism of Kant's ethical philosophy and the Marquis de Sade's *libertinage*. Nevertheless, Lacan states: 'ici Sade est le pas inaugural d'une subversion, si piquant que cela semble au regard de la froideur de l'homme, Kant est le point tournant, et jamais repéré, que nous sachions, comme tel' (*É* 765). Moreover, Lacan, explicitly states that Sade's *La Philosophie dans le boudoir* strengthens the truth of Kant's *Critique*, 'nous dirons qu'elle [*La Philosophie dans le boudoir*] donne la vérité de la *Critique*' (*É* 766). Lacan jokes that he is adding the grain of salt that Kant's ethical system is missing (*É* 769).

Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason,* and the categorical imperatives more specifically, describe an ethical position founded on a series of prohibitive laws. Lacan qualifies these as the 'voix dans la conscience,' and it ought to continually regulate the subject's actions. For Kant, the prohibitive law should offer universal maxims, 'il faut et il suffit qu'à l'épreuve d'une telle raison, elle puisse être retenue comme universelle en droit de logique (*É* 767). For Lacan, the prohibition, or 'Ethical Law,' is equal to desire, in the sense that the law is always a repressed desire. 'La loi et le désir refoulé sont une seule et même chose' (*É* 782). Lacan repeats this claim in *SX*, 'le désir et la loi sont la

même chose en ce sens que leur objet est commun' (*SX* 126), and Lacan relates this to the Oedipus complex more generally by qualifying that:

> Le mythe de l'Œdipe ne veut pas dire autre chose que ceci — à l'origine, le désir comme désir du père et la loi sont une seule et même chose. Le rapport de la loi au désir est si étroit que seule la fonction de la loi trace le chemin du désir (*SX* 126).

Desire's relationship to the law is fundamental. Lacan says that the mother is not, in-and-of-herself, the most desirable (charming!) 'après tout, la mère n'est pas en soi l'objet le plus désirable,' rather what makes her desirable, Lacan claims, is the prohibition itself, 'pour tout dire, on désire au commandement' (*SX* 126). Subjects incline towards desires that are prohibited. Therefore, prohibitions mediate the desires subjects have for one another. Lacan summarises his argument in *SVII* in relation to Kantian ethics, 'c'est le culmen à la fois kantien et sadiste de la Chose, ce en quoi la morale devient, d'un côté, pure et simple application de la maxime universelle, de l'autre, pur et simple objet' (*SVII* 85). For Lacan, *das Ding* is closely related to the moral law: 'car ce *das Ding* est justement au centre au sens qu'il est exclu' (*SVII* 87). As we said, *das Ding* is the absence around which the subject is constituted, and this is also the case with the moral law, forerunning the concept of *l'Autre jouissance* which is precisely what the subject renounces in symbolic castration:

> Ce *das Ding,* cet Autre préhistorique impossible à oublier dont Freud nous affirme la nécessité de la position première, sous la forme de quelque chose qui est *entfremdet*, étranger à moi tout en étant au cœur de ce moi (*SVII* 87).

Lacan argues that in the law there is always an unconscious relation to *das Ding*:

> Le désir pour la mère ne saurait être satisfait parce qu'il est la fin, le terme, l'abolition de tout le monde de la demande, qui est celui qui structure le plus profondément l'inconscient de l'homme. C'est dans la mesure même où la fonction du principe du plaisir est de faire que l'homme cherche toujours ce qu'il doit retrouver, mais ce qu'il ne saurait atteindre, c'est là que gît l'essentiel, ce ressort, ce rapport qui s'appelle la loi de l'interdiction de l'inceste (*SVII* 83).

Therefore*, das Ding* refers to something which is outside permitted desire, and the paradigmatic example is the incest prohibition.

It is worth noting that Lacan is not laying down a challenge, suggesting that we ought to pursue all incestuous desires, whatever the cost. Instead, the point is the opposite, Lacan is recounting a system structure that explains the obstacles and conditions to desire. For Lacan, the subject is continually searching for what they think they want or are looking for, but they will never find it, and that desire is symbolically castrated, and this renunciation of incest is articulated in terms of *das Ding.* Lacan says that the essential desire is *le désir de la mère,* 'la chose maternelle […] en tant qu'elle occupe la place de cette chose*,* de *das Ding*' (*SVII* 82). This desire-prohibition nexus is necessary, the 'interdiction nécessaire' (*SVII* 82), because it is the prohibition which structures desire:

> Est-ce que la Loi est la Chose ? Que non pas. Toutefois je n'ai eu connaissance de la Chose que par la Loi. En effet, je n'aurais pas eu l'idée de la convoiter si la Loi n'avait dit – Tu ne la convoiteras pas. Mais la Chose trouvant l'occasion produit en moi toutes sortes de convoitises grâce au commandement, car sans la Loi la Chose est morte. Or, moi j'étais vivant jadis, sans la Loi. Mais quand le commandement est venu, la Chose a flambé, est venue de nouveau, alors que moi, j'ai trouvé la mort. Et pour moi, le commandement qui devait mener à la vie s'est trouvé mener à la mort, car la Chose trouvant l'occasion m'a séduit grâce au commandement, et par lui m'a fait désir de mort. (*SVII* 101)

Relating this discussion back to Kant's categorical imperatives, Lacan suggests that the commandment 'Thou shalt not covet' is what makes a subject covet, 'je n'aurais pas eu l'idée de la convoiter si la Loi n'avait dit.' Without the law, *das Ding* is dead for Lacan; they go hand in glove.

Lacan is at pains to relate the concept of *das Ding* to a concept of the 'Good,' or employing Kant's language from the *Critique of Practical Reason,* the *Wohl* 'que je mettrai en avant pour désigner le bien dont il s'agit' (*SVII* 88). Indeed, for Lacan, *das Ding* ought not necessarily be considered a negative aspect of the unconscious, or a

negative aspect of *jouissance*, 'encore faut-il dire que das Ding n'est pas à ce niveau distingué comme mauvais' (*SVII* 89). However, the subject cannot cope with the extreme Good that *das Ding* could bring, which is why the subject pushes *das Ding* into the negative: 'il ne peut pas supporter l'extrême du bien que peut apporter *das Ding,* à plus forte raison ne peut-il se situer à l'endroit du mauvais' (ibid). The subject protects themselves from *das Ding* by creating a series of symptoms, Lacan calls these 'symptoms of defence' or we could say simply: defence mechanisms. This is an "organic" defence: 'le moi se défend en se mutilant comme le crabe lâche sa patte' (*SVII*89). However, there is another form of defence that is not the self-mutilation emulating the crab, which, for Lacan, is the lie: 'au niveau de l'inconscient, le sujet ment. Et ce mensonge est sa façon de dire là-dessus la vérité' (*SVII* 90). So, it is at this point that the relationship between subject and *das Ding* is cast as either negative or pathologically mediated by the symptom:

> C'est par là que nous avons l'indication de ce qui, chez le sujet, marque à jamais son rapport avec *das Ding* comme mauvais - dont il ne peut pourtant formuler qu'il soit mauvais autrement que par le symptôme (SVII 90).

Lacan introduces *das Ding* and its relation to the moral law in order to develop his hypothesis that:

> La loi morale s'articule à la visée du réel comme tel, du réel en tant qu'il peut être la garantie de la Chose. C'est pourquoi je vous invite à vous intéresser à ce que nous pouvons appeler l'acmé de la crise de l'éthique (*SVII* 92).

The moral law is articulated in relation to the Real, Lacan states, to guarantee *das Ding,* and this is, for him, the crisis of ethics. Kantian ethics establishes a problematic ethic, which, instead of articulating a moral law that aims at the Real, offers morality without an object (*É* 768). Lacan caricatures the Kantian imperatives as employing 'le langage de l'électronique et de l'automation — *N'agis jamais qu'en sorte que ton action puisse être programmée*' (*SVII* 94). According to Lacan, Kant tried to implement rules of nature

from the supposed universalism of the categorical imperatives, which is why Kantian ethics is unable to withstand criticism. Lacan says:

> Mais observez qu'il nous dit les lois *d'une nature*, non *d'une société*. Il n'est que trop clair, non seulement que les sociétés vivent très bien de références à des lois qui sont très loin de supporter la mise en place d'une application universelle, mais bien plus, comme je vous l'ai déjà indiqué la dernière fois, que c'est de la transgression de ces maximes que les sociétés prospèrent (*SVII* 94).

Paradoxically, transgressions of the law enable societies to prosper, whereas for Kant, there is no need for there to be a positive feeling or reason to act ethically, subjects must do their duty for the Good of all of mankind. If subjects pursue the Good by seeking pleasure they are acting pathologically, Lacan says: 'nul *Wohl,* que ce soit le nôtre ou celui de notre prochain, ne doit entrer comme tel dans la finalité de l'action morale' (*SVII* 93). Lacan associates *Wohl* (the pathological, pleasure seeking, good), with *das Ding,* while he associates the Good (the dutiful, ethical Good) with the law. Lacan effectively splits Kantian ethics in two, on the one hand, the pleasure seeking *Wohl,* and the duty of obeying the rule of law on the other.

> Il faut évidemment lui reconnaître ce caractère pour la simple raison que sa seule annonce (son *kérygme*) a la vertu d'instaurer à la fois — et cette réjection radicale du pathologique, de tout égard pris à un bien, à une passion, voire à une compassion, soit la réjection par où Kant libère le champ de la loi morale, — et la forme de cette loi qui est aussi sa seule substance, en tant que la volonté ne s'y oblige qu'à débouter de sa pratique toute raison qui ne soit pas de sa maxime elle-même (*É* 770).

Having established the dual nature of Kantian ethics and argued that Kant maintains his ethical system on one side of this dual system, Lacan says:

> La bipolarité dont s'instaure la Loi morale n'est rien d'autre que cette refente du sujet qui s'opère de toute intervention du signifiant: nommément du sujet de l'énonciation au sujet de l'énoncé (ibid).

In the Kantian categorical imperative, the law operates within the subject; the superego ethical imperative is installed inside the subject. According to Lacan, Kantian ethics is pursued symbolically. Bruce Fink argues that 'Kant is credited [by Lacan] with

emphasising strictly symbolic relations: a relationship between the subject and the Other as Law' (Fink 2014: 114). Kant is attempting to universalise the symbolic function of his categorical imperative, and this is, Lacan says, congruous with the Sadian law. Sade's plea for *libertinage* is related to Kant's ethical plea. We are compelled by the big Other to act per the categorical imperatives and also by our own internal 'voice of conscience' (ibid).

> Certes ces deux impératifs entre quoi peut être tendue, jusqu'au brisement de la vie, l'expérience morale, nous sont dans le paradoxe sadien imposés comme à l'Autre, et non comme à nous-mêmes (*É* 770).

This distinction, or split, is the difference between the subject as mediated by the signifier, *le sujet de l'énoncé*, and, the subject as negotiated outside language and signification, and so beyond meaning, *le sujet de l'énonciation*. According to Lacan, the two subjects that are compelled by the ethical demand are considered separately by Sade but not by Kant. Kant collapses the two subjects into one, which is why, Lacan argues, Sade is Kant's necessary counterpart. The moral law, in emanating from the mouth of the Other, is more honest than Kant's singular appeal to the subject's internal voice. 'La maxime sadienne est, de se prononcer de la bouche de l'Autre, plus honnête qu'à faire appel à la voix du dedans, puisqu'elle démasque la refente, escamotée à l'ordinaire, du sujet' (*É* 770). The moral law, as it is directed by the big Other, unmasks the split in the subject that ordinarily remains hidden in Kant's ethical paradigm. Therefore, Kant's system effectively ignores the object of ethics, the being-in-the-world, or *Dasein,* of the tormenting agent, 'cet objet, ne le voilà-t-il pas, descendu de son inaccessibilité, dans l'experience sadienne, et dévoilé comme Être-là, *Dasein,* de l'agent du tourment?' (772). This is an unnecessarily complicated (pseudo-Heideggerian) way of stating that the sadist ('the agent of torment') is an object-instrument of the Other's *jouissance*; a mere vector for the unchecked power of the big Other's unregulated *jouissance.* As Lacan puts it:

> Qu'est-ce que le sadique cherche dans l'Autre? Il est bien clair que, pour lui, l'Autre existe, et ce n'est pas parce qu'il le prend pour objet que nous devons dire qu'il y a là je ne sais quelle relation immature ou encore prégénitale. L'Autre est absolument essentiel, et c'est bien ce que j'ai voulu articuler quand je vous ai fait mon Séminaire sur l'éthique en rapprochant Sade de Kant, et en vous montrant que l'essentielle mise à la question de l'Autre par Sade va jusqu'à simuler, et non par hasard, les exigences de la loi morale, qui sont bien là pour nous montrer que la référence à l'Autre comme tel fait partie de sa visée (*SX* 193).

One of the central arguments of "Kant avec Sade" is to affirm the implacable strength of the big Other in the structuring of the moral law. At Lacan's hand, Sade amounts to nothing more than the big Other's spokesperson. 'C'est ce qu'il advient de l'exécuteur dans l'expérience sadique, quand sa présence à la limite se résume à n'en être plus que l'instrument' (*É* 773). What is the sadist's reward? Why does the sadist partake in these perversions, according to Lacan? Lacan postulates a series of reactions (symptoms) to symbolic structures.

The goal of psychoanalysis is to identify symbolic structures and determine how subjects react to these structures, in order to offer a remedy or 'cure.' Perversion expressed sadistically is one way that the subject learns to relate and engage with desire and pleasure. Sadism aims to embody the big Other, but as we have already seen the result is that the sadist becomes merely an instrument of the big Other. 'Mais que sa jouissance s'y fige, ne la dérobe pas à l'humilité d'un acte dont il ne peut faire qu'il n'y vienne comme être de chair, et, jusqu'aux os, serf du plaisir (*É* 773). A mere slave to pleasure, the sadist operates an imagined power exercised on the split subject and obfuscates its own radical insecurity, 'duplication qui ne reflète, ni ne réciproque […] celle qui s'est opérée dans l'Autre des deux altérités du sujet' (ibid). The insight Lacan offers is that the sadist imagines themselves to be the embodiment of *objet petit a,* the sadist is an auto-object cause of desire. However, the sadist's view of themselves is not a structurally viable route to subject formation within the Lacanian schema, since the sadist is imagining themselves to be the cause of fantasy, which is a mere self-deception. Lacan

denotes sadian desire ($a \diamond \$$), which is the reversal of the inscription for fantasy ($\$ \diamond a$). Put simply, ($a \diamond \$$) represents: 'the sadist as object *a* is the cause of the subject as split, is the cause of the split in the subject' (Fink 2014: 122). The crucial point about the sadist is that they do not only seek to inflict physical pain for the sake of making their partner suffer, the sadist's primary purpose is to elicit anxiety in their victim:

> Le désir sadique, avec tout ce qu'il comporte d'énigme, n'est articulable qu'à partir de la schize, la dissociation, qu'il vise à introduire chez le sujet, l'autre, en lui imposant, jusqu'à une certaine limite, ce qui ne saurait être toléré – à la limite exacte où apparaît chez ce sujet une division, une béance, entre son existence de sujet et ce qu'il subit, ce dont il peut pâtir, dans son corps […] Ce n'est pas tellement la souffrance de l'autre qui est cherchée dans l'intention sadique, que son angoisse. […] L'angoisse de l'autre, son existence essentielle comme sujet par rapport à cette angoisse, voilà ce que le désir sadique s'entend à faire vibrer (*SX* 123).

Lacan claims that Kant's categorical imperatives appeal to the same anguish, the same anxiety, which is elicited by the sadist. Effectively, Lacan has just labeled Kant a sadist, the Kantian imperatives are merely the instrument of the big Other, transforming them into vacuous ethical maxims. Lacan will later say in *SXX*, *Encore*, 'c'est ce que j'ai cru devoir avancer dans un article, *Kant avec Sade* — elle avoue qu'elle est Sade, la moralité' (*SXX* 80).

By flipping the schema below, Lacan is able to use the same schema to represent how, on the one hand, the sadist views themselves, and how, on the other, Lacan views the sadist. In the schema (figure 3.14), Lacan represents the sadist's (V) *volonté – will* – to enjoy or engage in sadistic acts, and (S) describes the sadist's victim. This first schema

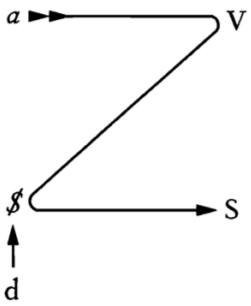


Figure 3.14
(***É*** 778):
The sadist's view of himself

should be read from the top down, (V) to (S). The graph expresses the sadist's will to enjoy the victim's body unrestrictedly, which is the sadist's imaginary belief they hold of themselves. The victim, (S), that the sadist abuses is considered by the sadist to be a full 'S,' not characterised as barred or lacking subject (*$*) because the sadist wrongly believes in the fullness of being of his/her victim. This self-represented view is the Sadian fantasy since, in reality, Lacan states that the sadist's desire is actually: (*a*◇*$*), which is to say that the sadist is the mere instrument of the object small *a.* The sadist is her/himself a barred subject (*$*) just like everyone else, despite her/his impotent sadistic acts, and, therefore, the sadist is alienated. Lacan says, 'c'est le sujet reconstitué de l'aliénation au prix de n'être que l'instrument de la jouissance' (*É* 775). To show this, Lacan flips the

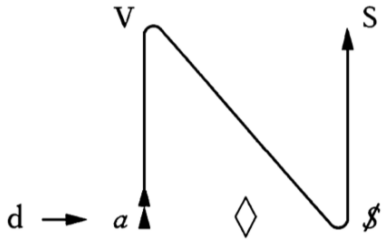


Figure 3.15 (***É*** 778):
Lacan's view of sadist

schema, and, in so doing, demonstrates why Kant must be understood *with* Sade. In this second schema, the sadist is more accurately, according to Lacan, represented as the barred subject (*$*). This time, the sadist (*$*) is a victim of the will (V) of the big Other. Lacan explains by appealing to the powerful will of Sade's mOther in law, *la Présidente de Montreuil* who successfully committed Sade to prison numerous times and was the one who exercised real power over Sade.

> V, la volonté de jouissance ne laisse plus contester sa nature de passer dans la contrainte morale exercée implacablement par la Présidente de Montreuil sur le sujet dont il se voit que sa division n'exige pas d'être réunie dans un seul corps' (*É* 778).

Therefore, the real sadistic *Volonté* always belongs to the big Other for the subject.

In a similar way, as we said earlier, "Kant avec Sade" is controversial because Lacan is suggesting that Kant's categorical imperatives work in a sadistic way, 'c'est pourquoi je n'ai pas hésité […] à en rapporter la structure comme proprement homologue à ce que Kant a articulé comme la condition de l'exercice d'une raison pure pratique' (*SX* 123). For Lacan, following Freud, anxiety is a signal, a cue, alerting the subject to a specific and oncoming danger, 'le danger en question est lié au caractère de cession du moment constitutif de l'objet *a*' (*SX* 375). Anxiety is related to the 'cessation of the object' (*SX* 375), the cessation of the *objet petit a,* and the cessation of *objet petit a* is the final aim of the Kantian moral imperatives. However, this does not happen, it cannot happen, according to Lacan, it must *persist*. Instead, *jouissance* empties the ethical act of all content, and that is *jouissance*'s aim. Paradoxically, Kant eliminates the pathological aspect of acting morally, which is to say, for Lacan, the enjoyable aspect of acting ethically, or the 'Good' as we said earlier. So that once the act of morality is restricted to its purely formal aspect, it becomes a purely sadistic endeavour. The sadistic aspect of the purely formal ethical act demonstrates that far from banishing *jouissance* (or, *objet petit a*) what the subject finds *under* the desire for a formal Law (Kantian imperatives) is surplus *jouissance*. Lacan argues that the supposed purity of the ethical act, in its formal structure, actually *produces* more of what it is trying to restrict, which is *jouissance*. This surplus enjoyment is *objet petit a.*[83] The bubbling of *jouissance* always threatens to overspill and resurface, which is why the only real sadist is the Symbolic Law itself – personified by *la Présidente de Montreuil,* the mOther. In our next chapter, we will see how Lacan's relating of *das Ding* with *object petit a* as the basis of the big Other's total sadistic power, and the concomitant conclusion of surplus *jouissance,* informs his concept

[83] The translation of '*jouissance'* as 'enjoyment' is not an appropriate one; however, we have used it since it continues to be translated in this way in the relevant scholarship.

of *plus-de-jouir,* which is central to his distinction between *jouissance phallique* and *jouissance féminine.* This distinction is crucial to elucidating our view that love is both necessary and impossible, since the big Other is both a necessary part of subject formation, as well as being the site of unfathomable excess and impossibility.

vi. Fantasy, *Objet Petit a,* and the Desolation of the Subject

In this chapter, we have sought to highlight the necessary desolation facing all subjects who undergo the process of subject formation, as described by Lacan in the graph of desire. Whatever the chosen path, the subject will always be forced or coerced into making certain choices, and the subject will first be inculcated into an already existing Symbolic Order that had been merely clipped by certain lying signifiers, and only tacitly agreed by the collective. The big Other will install its desires in the subject, as soon as the subject is named, and the subject might try to escape the big Other by pursuing their drives, as we suggested with Scudéry's *Carte de Tendre* — the traveller attempts to reach the *Terres inconnues.* However, paradoxically, getting too close to the lying signifier dismantles the fantasy, which allows subjective instability to set in in the subject's psychic life. Language's grip is much too powerful for any subject to escape its clutches. As we highlighted, Fanon described Lacan as a 'logician of madness,' and, as we saw in our previous chapter, one of the positive aspects of Lacan's psychoanalysis is his categorical refusal to consider psychotics as somehow outside symbolic coordinates. As our final chapter aims to show, Lacan's stubbornness was that, rather than confine psychotics and label them 'mad,' he claimed that perhaps we were all psychotics – trapped within symbolic coordinates – no better, only more numerous in our Symbolic Order. Lacan saw that we could not merely point to madness, instead, he sought to identify madness within the symbolic structures of the 'typical' subject, as we grow up

and face our inculcation into the Symbolic Order. The overarching theme in this chapter has been to demonstrate the necessity of this inculcation. Concerning the Law, we touched on some, we suggested, erroneous examples of those attempting to overcome symbolic obstacles. We contended that Lacan's psychoanalysis always already anticipated the strategies by which subjects would try and perturb its law, *les non-dupes-errent*. The big Other, or master signifier, is much too powerful to be dethroned in this way. Instead, it is the subject who is dethroned, the inability to be one's own master, as Lacan puts it, the impossibility to '*m'être*' (*SXVII* 178).

The desolation of the subject was further compounded in our discussion in part two with our analysis concerning the strategy of *qui perd gagne.* In a way, *qui perd gagne* still holds. However, the wish to abandon symbolic coordinates was the wrong demand because, for Lacan, the desire to exit language altogether would mean that subjects are not be able to articulate themselves at all — *les non-dupes errent.* Therefore, subjects do win, however, winning comes at a price, the subject's freedom to choose not to be in the Symbolic. Lacan describes a closed, almost claustrophobic, social field, and the result is a kind of social understanding that identifies few means of escape; for Lacan, a door ajar is simply another entrance into symbolic structures. The wish to love, and be loved, as well as the related impulse of reaching *en soi pour soi* seems to be, for Lacan, just another impossibility. However, the difference with Sartre's position is that the path of subject formation, reaching desire and trying to access *jouissance*, though 'voué a l'échec,' is always necessary. The subject is coerced and convinced to re-enter the fantasy, to accept the power of the big Other. And this is what we might call *living a human life.*

CHAPTER 4 — *ENCORE, L'AMOUR*, AND LACAN'S FINAL HERESY

Puis je me suis aperçu que ce
qui constituait mon
cheminement était de l'ordre
du *je n'en veux rien savoir*.

Lacan, *Encore*

i. R.S.I (*l'hérésie*)

As we have seen, the three psychoanalytic realms, the Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary (R.S.I), foreground most of Lacan's various teachings, and these three registers are never too far from Lacan's considerations at any given time.[84] As Malcolm Bowie noted in *Lacan* (1991), these three registers seek 'to extend psychoanalytic discussion into a fully intersubjective dimension' (91). After a long break from straightforwardly advancing the three registers individually, the late Lacan, around seminars *SXXII*, *R.S.I,* and *SXXIII*, *Le Sinthome,* explicitly returns to R.S.I to join them in the Borromean knot. We can better understand why Lacan refashions the Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary into R.S.I by reconstructing Lacan's Borromean knot which preoccupied him in the final years of his life.

The Borromean knot not only shows the three different registers (R.S.I) interlinking, but the schema also demonstrates the interdependence of each realm upon the others, while maintaining each register's relative autonomy. A central feature of the

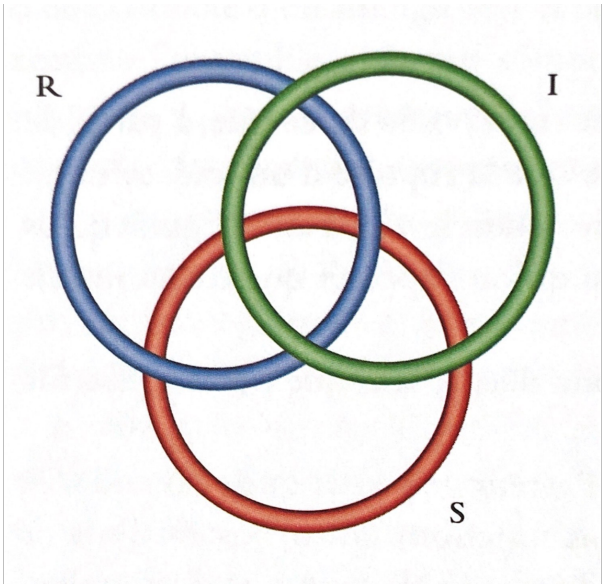
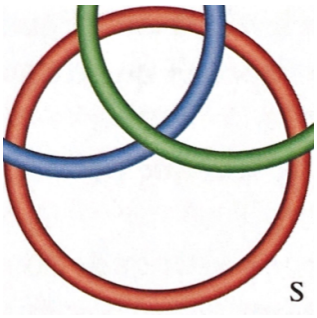


Figure 4.1: Borromean knot

[84] In French, RSI is pronounced *hérésie* (Rabaté 2003: 155) which is a neat Lacanian formula for the heretic nature of the signifier in relation to the three registers, or, put another way, *les-non-dupes-errent*. See also: *SXXII*.

Borromean knot is that if any of the rings are ruptured, the whole knot is undone, thereby stressing the interdependence of the three registers (*SXXIII* 19). If we isolate the Symbolic ring, we notice that the Real and the Imaginary registers cleave through the Symbolic Order at four different points:

Figure 4.2:
Symbolic Ring Isolated



If we maintain our focus on the Real (the blue ring), we notice that this section of the Real is *within the Symbolic* from the perspective of the subject. The same insight also applies to the Imaginary ring (the green ring). Lacan chooses to focus on the Symbolic, and this is neither an arbitrary nor an accidental choice since the symbolic *is* the means by which subjects comprehend the world. This ring, the Symbolic Order, is the only bit of the world subjects have a handle on, since it is the only ring that contains language, and is the only means by which subjects can intelligibly make sense of the world. Therefore, Lacan sees the 'middle' circle, the symbolic, as worthy of special notice for the subject. The entire Lacanian formulation of subject development that we have thus far described: the second mirror stage, the process of identification, symbolic castration, the partial renunciation of *jouissance*, the subject's desire and leftover desire, the articulation expressed in the graph of desire, the master signifier, all take place *within* the Symbolic Order. As Miller put it:

> Symbolique, imaginaire, réel, c'est la psychanalyse pensée à partir du symbolique. Lacan introduisait, cahin-caha, son stade du miroir déjà en donnant à l'image des vertus symboliques. Cette primauté de l'Autre se marque au plus profond de l'identité du sujet, elle la constitue (Miller 2007: 134).

In other words, the subject's relationship with the big Other is the foundation for all three realms.

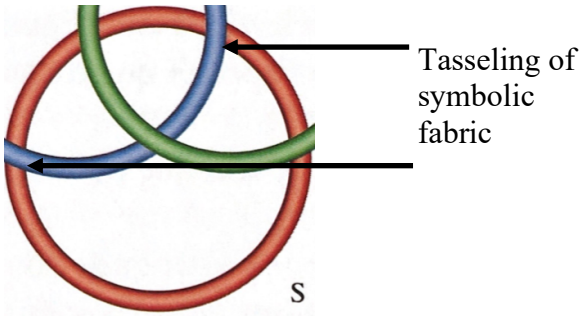
As we have seen, Lacan spends an inordinate amount of time speculating on the relationship between the Symbolic and the Real using a series of respective pairs: conscious/ unconscious*, le langage/ lalangue, être parlant/ parlêtre,* signifier/ *jouissance, jouissance phallique/ jouissance féminine,* (*a*)*mur/ amour, symptôme/ sinthome,* where the former is symbolically recognisable, and the latter is speculative. In previous chapters, we suggested that subjects had an inkling about the unconscious, and argued that subjects could learn about the concept but not much about its content.[85] Through the Borromean knot, we can now better appreciate how subjects interact with the unconscious; the blue ring carries the knowledge of the unconscious, which cleaves through the symbolic field. However, a large section of the Real is not in the Symbolic Order and is, therefore, unintelligible for the subject, which is why the Real's uncanny manifestations in the subject's daily life can make us feel uneasy. Lacan confirms this by stating: 'encore faut-il le *démontrer*, pas seulement le *montrer*! Le démontrer relève du *Symbolique'* (*SXXII* 207). Therefore, the Symbolic is the only medium through which subjects can have any knowledge of the Real, or the Imaginary, since all discussions about R. and I. are necessarily mediated by language and, so, necessarily from the perspective of S. The only clue subjects have of what might exist on the other side of the Real: *unconscious, parlêtre, jouissance,* and *lalangue,* rests with the limits of language itself. It is for this reason that Lacan continually relates 'necessity' with 'impossibility,' characterising them as antagonistic partners.

[85] See also Lacan's discussion of syntax in (*SXXIII* 117). Furthermore, there is a strong link between Lacan's contention that we can know the form of the unconscious but not its content and the concept of the "unfathomable" we discussed in our first chapter in relation to Schelling. We had said that for Schelling man was privy to a glimpse of the origins of the world. Schelling had called this 'the unfathomable' (*Weltalter,* 14). See discussion in chapter 1, part two, section ii.

Some interpretations of Lacanian psychoanalysis have suggested that Lacan located the Real outside the Symbolic. For example, Bowie argued that 'the Real is that which lies outside the symbolic' (1991: 94). However, this is not, strictly speaking, true since as Lacan's Borromean knot has clearly shown, the Symbolic mediates a significant part of the Real (*SXXIII* 20).[86] Lacan deliberately placed a vital component of the Real within the Symbolic, and he substantiated this aspect of the Real by associating it with *il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel*. As we will see, this connection to the *non-rapport sexuel* qualifies the Real as impossible. The Real's role is partly to reveal the difference between the conscious/ unconscious, *le langage*/ *lalangue*, and signifier/ *jouissance.* Which is to say that the Real is one of the words that Lacan employs to describe the differences between the two opposing concepts that we can sum up thus: 'knowledge [savoir]' and 'truth' (*É* 797), where knowledge is *necessarily* mediated through language for the subject, and where truth is always only half-said [*mi-dit*], and, therefore, *impossible*. For Lacan, this dualism between knowledge and truth expresses the difference between the Symbolic and the Real (Barnard 2002: 4).

More precisely, the Real in the Symbolic (as observable in the isolated Borromean knot):

Figure 4.3: Isolated Symbolic annotated



describes the tasseling of the symbolic fabric at the limit of the Symbolic, which is to say that it represents the beginning of the disintegration of symbolic meaning, and this is

[86] Of course, this critique is unfair because Lacan's later seminars were not as widely available in the late 1980s and early 1990s as they are today.

strictly correlative to the beginning of *jouissance*. Although it might still seem odd that Lacan had placed a significant aspect of the Real in the Symbolic, as Lacan had explained in *Écrits*, the Real reveals itself in the Symbolic as the '*bruit où l'on peut tout entendre*' (388). This noise means that the Real is audible from inside the Symbolic, which is why Lacan represents the Real as slicing through the Symbolic field in the Borromean knot. Therefore, the Real describes the moment symbolic coordinates begin to disintegrate, or, in other words, the Real is the name Lacan gives to the limits of the Symbolic from the subject's perspective.

Moreover, this disintegration of symbolic meaning, which the Real describes, is, *stricto sensu*, an impossible process (*AÉ* 573), since, from the subject's perspective, this disintegration is an attempt to surpass language, and language is a crucial pillar of the Symbolic. Therefore, transcending the Symbolic is incomprehensible from the standpoint of language, which is to say from the perspective of the Symbolic itself. Bowie correctly identified this impossible paradox when he stated: 'language has powers over the Real' (1991: 94), which is why it is odd for him to have argued, as quoted above, that the Real is outside the symbolic process. However, Bowie got tantalisingly close when he wrote: 'for Lacan, the Real thus comes close to meaning "the ineffable" or "the impossible"' (95). Close but inexact, because, for Lacan, the Real *does* refer to an impossibility of signification. And, therein lies the fundamental research problem of Lacanian psychoanalysis: how can we understand the unstable relationship between the Symbolic and the Real? As hinted at above, this is a problem otherwise known as the *non-rapport sexuel*, or, put differently, how can we understand the relationship between knowledge and truth? (Barnard 2002: 4). Lacan says, 'nous voilà donc porté sur cette frontière sensible de la vérité et du savoir dont après tout l'on peut dire que notre science, d'un premier abord, paraît bien avoir repris la solution de la fermer' (*É* 797).

The Real is impossible to support because it points to what might exist beyond language; it highlights the absolute limit of linguistic comprehension, and it is this supposition that is expressed in the formula: *il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel*. A sexual relationship between subjects is impossible to pronounce or enunciate in language, and, for Lacan, that is why it is impossible: because it cannot be symbolized:

> L'impossibilité c'est le réel, tout simplement, le réel pur. La définition du possible exigeant toujours une première symbolisation. Si vous excluez cette symbolisation, vous apparaîtra beaucoup plus naturelle cette formule: *"l'impossible c'est le réel"* (*SXIV* 443).

Therefore, the Real in the Symbolic highlights the impossible task of resolving the structural antagonisms that are present in the Symbolic. Put differently, the Real describes the structural failure of symbolisation itself, which is why an aspect of the Real is symbolically oriented. The Real describes that moment when things seem "off" in our daily lives, and, to deal with this instability, subjects raise a fantasy screen in their subjective economy to overcome this structural failure of the Symbolic. Without the fantasy, the Real of the *non-rapport* prompts the total disintegration of symbolic markers in the subject's psyche.

ii. *L'(a)mur / L'Amour*

In our second chapter, we saw how the subject's inability to develop a successful sexual relationship in Lacan's sense [the *non-rapport sexuel*] presented subjects with an impossible ontological problem (*SXIX* 186). According to Lacan, this impasse describes the sex act's inability to fuse two subjects into one, in language. In Plato's *Symposium*, Aristophanes infamously articulated Plato's philosophical position by arguing that love accomplished the final reunification of two partial subjects:

> The two parts longed for each other and tried to come together again […]. Love [*eros*] of one person for another has been inborn in human beings, and its role is to restore us to our ancient state by trying to make unity out of duality and to heal

> our human condition […] we are continually searching for our other half (2008: 24 [191a; 191d]).

Plato characterises the human condition as something that requires healing ['restore us to our ancient state … to heal our human condition'], which is a philosophical position that both Schelling's 'contraction of being,' and Sartre's '*une maladie*' inherit and develop, as we have seen. Lacan, too, imagines an ailing subject who is irredeemably marked by various pathologies and symptoms. However, for Lacan, the afflictions that impress upon our human condition do not require a cure. As we will see, the Lacanian position is to accept the subject's terminal state and demonstrate to the subject that *loving* necessitates that we acquiesce to our *maladie.* Lacan's psychoanalysis only offers the subject a palliative remedy which invites them to confront their desolation by *holding it together* — Lacan's *le sinthome.*

Plato's dialogues are clearly in the background to Lacan's considerations in the introductory lesson of *SXX*, *Encore*, when he asks: 'l'amour, est-ce de faire un?' (*SXX* 12).[87] And, in contrast to Aristophanes, Lacan's ambition in *Encore* is to insist against the alleged unification of two subjects in love, instead emphasising the disharmonious quality of all intersubjective relationships in language. When Lacan advances the *non-rapport sexuel,* he does not suggest that sex is physically impossible. Rather, Lacan proposes that it is impossible for subjects to relate to each other in language through sex, which is to say that it is impossible to enunciate or inscribe the sexual relationship, and concomitantly this impossible relationship prevents two subjects from ever forming a "One." 'Il est strictement impossible de considérer la copulation de deux corps comme n'en faisant qu'un,' Lacan says (*SXIX* 126). At this early stage in *Encore,* Lacan is advancing the argument he made in *SXVI*, *D'un Autre à l'autre,* where he had asserted:

[87] NB: Lacan often discusses Plato's *Symposium*, notably in *SIX*, *L'Identification,* and *SXIX*, *Ou pire…*. We know Lacan is referring to Aristophanes in this section of *SXX* since he says in *SXIX*, *Ou pire…*: 'c'est Aristophane qui invente la fameuse bipartition de l'être' (*SXIX* 127).

‘dans le champ qui est apparemment le nôtre, nulle harmonie, de quelque façon que nous ayons à la désigner, n’est de mise’ (*SXVI* 12). Thus, the ontological rupture which the *non-rapport sexuel* describes is a cornerstone of the psychoanalytic understanding of intersubjective relationships, and these relations are necessarily qualified as antagonistic and disharmonious, which is why Lacan picks up this conflict again in *SXXI*, *Les Non-dupes errent,* where he will, as we have already seen, rebrand it: ‘*dysharmonie*.’

The subject’s necessary exposure to the *non-rapport sexuel* emerges at some point in their life and triggers the subject’s awareness of their ‘dysharmonious’ psychic state. However, the subject’s experience of this ontological deadlock (which is *langagière*) is not easily noticeable because, for Lacan, the *non-rapport sexuel* does not necessarily involve the physical, sexual act, since the *non-rapport sexuel* primarily refers to a linguistic problem — as we have seen. And, if that is so, what does Lacan mean by the sexual relationship in language? And moreover, what is it about the sexual relationship that is impossible? Why should it prevent two subjects becoming One, as it had for Aristophanes? To clarify these questions, Lacan distinguishes (*a*)*mur* from *amour,* and *jouissance* from sex. The distinction he draws between (*a*)*mur* and *amour* partially clarifies the differences between sex and *jouissance* as they relate to the Symbolic Order, further developing the impasse at stake in the *non-rapport sexuel.* Foregrounding Lacan’s discussion of the *non-rapport sexuel* is a sustained treatment of the various modes of *jouissance,* and, in his characteristically spasmodic style, Lacan examines *jouissance* in order to establish the differences between (*a*)*mur* and *amour.*

The most fruitful way to enter into Lacan’s discussion of love in *SXX* is through Lacan’s treatment of *jouissance.* Lacan attempted to clearly define *jouissance* in “La place de la psychanalyse dans la médecine,” published in 1967 in *Lettres de l’École freudienne de Paris*. In this text, Lacan describes *jouissance* as a kind of corporeal

'tension,' a bodily 'forcing,' that is inextricably linked to a 'spending,' or it would be better to say 'costing,' for the subject. Lacan goes so far as to claim that *jouissance* is both exploitative and unbearable for the subject:

> Que nous dit-on du plaisir ? Que c'est la moindre excitation, ce qui fait disparaître la tension, la tempère le plus, donc ce qui nous arrête nécessairement à un point d'éloignement, de distance très respectueuse de la jouissance. Car ce que j'appelle jouissance au sens où le corps s'éprouve, est toujours de l'ordre de la tension, du forçage, de la dépense, voire de l'exploit. *Il y a incontestablement jouissance au niveau où commence d'apparaître la douleur*, et nous savons que c'est seulement à ce niveau de la douleur que peut s'éprouver toute une dimension de l'organisme qui autrement reste voilée. (1967: 46: my emphasis).

Therefore, pain is a central feature of *jouissance*, and not only is this pain embodied [*en-corps*] but the subject always demands more [*encore*] (*SXX* 11), and it is in this precise sense that Lacan connects *jouissance* to (*a*)*mur*. In Lacanian psychoanalysis, the '*encore*' [again/ more] quality is a central aspect of what Lacan calls '*ne cesse pas de s'écrire*' (*SXX* 86), which is the lover's demand par excellence. Love, then, is an always unfinished task. It is for this reason that some children apoplectically rail against their parents, for there will never be enough love conveyed, transferred, or shared by the parent – it will never be enough to satisfy their demands to be loved. Therefore, a necessary absence will always mark love, and the fact that this lack cannot be readily filled is why a lover might continuously ask their lover: *do you (still) love me*?

The *encore, encore, … encore* is a key feature of *jouissance,* the subject's thirst for love is never satisfied, and, for Lacan, the relationship between *impossibility* and *necessity* finds its locus here in our discussion of the subject's demand for more love from the Other. Lacan says, 'le nécessaire, lui, nous est introduit par le *ne cesse pas de s'écrire.* C'est bien à cette nécessité que nous mène apparemment l'analyse de la référence au phallus' (*SXX* 86). For Lacan, the necessary aspect of the subject's articulation in relation to the phallic function is identical to the structure of *jouissance* and love, and Lacan characterises it as a continuous demand, or '… *encore.*' Whereas its

obverse is the impossible aspect of the subject's development (outside the phallic function) which is identical to the *non-rapport sexuel*:

> Le *ne cesse pas de ne pas s'écrire*, par contre, c'est l'impossible, tel quel je le définis de ce qu'il ne puisse en aucun cas s'écrire, et c'est par là que je désigne ce qu'il en est du rapport sexuel – le rapport sexuel ne cesse pas de ne pas s'écrire (*SXX* 87).

Therefore, the subject is trapped between over-articulating their demands for love [*ne cesse pas de s'écrire*], and not being able to articulate them at all [*ne cesse pas de ne pas s'écrire*].[88] Which is why a subject will necessarily want to ask the person they love: *do you (still) love me*? because it is impossible in both speech and writing to eloquently articulate love in measured terms, it is either excessive or inexpressible.

Lacan captures, in an uncharacteristically clear passage from *Encore,* the relationship between necessity and impossibility:

> Vous écrirez *Sade* comme vous voudrez — soit avec une majuscule, pour rendre un hommage à ce pauvre idiot qui nous a donné là-dessus d'interminables écrits […] soit, mieux, *çade*, pour dire que la moralité, il faut tout de même bien dire que ça se termine au niveau du ça, et que c'est assez court. Autrement dit, ce dont il s'agit, c'est que l'amour soit impossible, et que le rapport sexuel s'abîme dans le non-sens, ce qui *ne diminue en rien l'intérêt que nous devons avoir pour l'Autre* (*SXX* 80-1: my final emphasis).

Sade, Lacan believed, demonstrated the paradox inherent to articulating our love. Lacan, the master of homophony that he was, explained that he preferred to denote the core of Sade's contribution to philosophy and psychoanalysis as '*çade*' which succinctly captures the role of the id [*ça*] in the loving relationship. The final three lines of the extract, quoted above, explain the complex relationship between necessity and impossibility. It is also worth noting that the insight expressed here, in relation to love, is almost identical to the argument we unearthed in our discussion of *qui perd gagne* in our previous chapter.

[88] In many ways, Lacan's description of love's bipolarity between insufficiency and excess resembles Schelling's discussion of time that we developed in our first chapter. We had said: 'Schelling argues that to understand the Absolute Past we need to appreciate that time itself is constituted by two motions. One which propels time forwards, the other a slowing mechanism that attempts to prevent it from going too fast.' See: chapter one, part 2, vi..

Lacan says that love is impossible as it relates to the ontological impasse in the *non-rapport sexuel,* which does not placate [*ne diminue en rien*] the necessary interest the subject owes the big Other [*l'intérêt que nous devons avoir pour l'Autre*]. Lacan is arguing that even though love is impossible, it is a necessary impossibility, which is the same Lacanian argument I developed earlier as *qui perd gagne, oui mais quand même!* The subject's demand for infinite *Amour* ('*Encore*') always refers the subject to (*a*)*mur* since this demand is impossible.

One of Lacan's major contributions to the history of philosophy rests in this dualism he highlights between necessity and impossibility, which is, in turn, related to the psychoanalytic task of elucidating the relationship between knowledge and truth. Indeed, in *SXIX*, *...Ou pire*, Lacan says, not in relation to love but concerning the relationship between *jouissance phallique* and *jouissance féminine* that: 'd'un côté, on a l'universel fondé sur un rapport nécessaire à la fonction phallique, et, de l'autre côté, un rapport contingent, parce que la femme n'est *pas toute*' (*SXIX* 105), further demonstrating the connection between the two sides of the duality he develops. To borrow Sartre's language, the task of reuniting the two sides is 'voué à l'échec' (*EN* 437) but that does not mean that subjects do not try to love, 'ne diminue en rien' […] 'qu'on coure après' Lacan had said (*SXX* 81; *AÉ* 571). This fundamental Lacanian insight is crucial to understanding the concept of the *sinthome*, introduced in *SXXIII*, which I have formulated as *holding it together*, and to which we will return.

iii. *Plus-de-jouir* on the Cusp of (*a*)*mur*

In *D'un Autre à l'autre,* Lacan introduced the concept of *plus-de-jouir* which he connects to object small *a* (object cause of desire), and later will rename *jouissance phallique* in *SXX*, *Encore.* Lacan culls the concept of *plus-de-jouir* [surplus enjoyment]

from Marx's notion of *plus-value* [surplus value] (*SXVI* 17). It is worth noting that Lacan's discussions of *jouissance* in *Encore* are heavily indebted to his many preparatory comments from *L'Éthique de la psychanalyse* to *Ou…pire.* However, Lacan confused matters in *Encore* by referring to *jouissance* without qualifying which of the various modes of *jouissance* he was developing at any one time (Tricot 2006: 152). It is for this reason that *Encore* is a notoriously difficult work to understand because it presumes a large amount of familiarity with Lacan's previous teachings. In order to clarify our discussion of *jouissance* as it relates to (*a*)*mur/ Amour*, we have arranged the many formulations of *jouissance* into two main modes which Lacan deploys most frequently — *jouissance phallique* and *jouissance féminine*. Nothing prevents the interplay between the two sides of this table so that desiring the impossible does not preclude it from showing up as necessary for the subject.

Jouissance Phallique	***Jouissance Féminine***
Necessary	**Impossible**
Jouissance [dite] phallique	*Jouissance de la femme*
Plus-de-jouir	*Jouissance de l'Autre*
Phallus	~~*La*~~ *femme*
Ne cesse pas de s'écrire	*Ne cesse pas de* ***ne pas*** *s'écrire*
Dupe	*Non-dupe*
(*a*)*mur*	*Amour*

We know from our previous chapters that *jouissance* plays a crucial role in negotiating the subject's exposure to the *non-rapport sexuel*, and if, as we have argued, the physical act is not necessarily the aim of the statement *il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel*, then why does Lacan deliberately use a phrase suffused with overtly sexual connotations? Moreover, why does Lacan choose a slogan which is so prone to misinterpretation?

Following his longstanding method of wilful misunderstanding, misdirection, and dislocated meaning,[89] Lacan believed that psychoanalysis should differentiate between sex as it appears in 'l'acte génital' (*SI* 151) where 'ce qui apparaît sur les corps sous ces formes énigmatiques que sont les caractères sexuels — *qui ne sont que secondaires* — fait l'être sexué' (*SXX* 12), and sex as it relates to *lalangue.* Indeed, *lalangue* plays a role in Lacan's schema. He says:

> La question enfin*, très intéressante,* c'est de savoir comment quelque chose que nous pouvons – momentanément – dire corrélatif de cette disjonction de la jouissance sexuelle, quelque chose que j'appelle "*lalangue,*" évidemment que ça a un rapport avec quelque chose du réel, mais de là que ça puisse conduire à des mathèmes qui nous permettent d'édifier la science, alors ça, c'est bien évidemment la question (*SXIXa* 53).[90]

This latter view of sex as related to *lalangue* is crucial to understanding the late Lacan's philosophical project since this difference resembles the many distinctions that Lacan developed throughout his teaching; as evidenced by the distinctions drawn between, for example, the *conscious* and the *unconscious.* Once again, it is worth noting that Lacan's focus is neither on biology nor empirical reality, *qui ne sont que secondaires*. And so, we can begin to understand why the sex act differs from both *l'*(*a*)*mur* and *l'amour.*

According to Allouch's *L'Amour Lacan,* we can trace Lacan's (*a*)*mur* to his early work "Écrits inspirés" published in 1931 in the *Annales médico-psychologiques,* around the time he was working on his doctoral thesis *De la psychose paranoïaque dans ses rapports avec la personnalité suivi de Premiers écrits sur la paranoïa* (2009: 251). In the 1931 "Écrits inspirés," Lacan writes: 'il est mûr dans l'amur de l'autre monde, tu feras, je crois Jésus dans l'autre monde encore, pourvu qu'on inonde le pauvre de l'habit du moine

[89] 'Il y a ici de la confusion, ce qui n'est pas inhabituel, car nous vivons dans la confusion.' (*SXIX* 118).
[90] During the 1971-1972 academic year, Lacan held his main seminars (*...Ou pire*) as usual. However, that year, he also gave parallel lectures at *La chapelle de l'hôpital Sainte-Anne* under the title *Le Savoir du psychanalyste.* It is during the 6th January 1972 session of this parallel seminar series that Lacan re-introduces the concept of (*a*)*mur*. This context is important because the official *Seuil* edition of *SXIX*, *...Ou pire,* does not include this 6th January session of *Le savoir du psychanalyste*, therefore, I will quote from the unofficial stenograph transcript (*SXIXa*) when discussing this particular session.

qui l'a fait' (Lacan in Allouch 2009: 252). This is a remarkable passage because, although it is almost meaningless, it foreshadows many of the notions Lacan will pick up again in the later seminars. Notice Lacan's use of 'amur,' 'l'autre monde,' 'l'habit du moine,' and 'encore.' If we did not understand this excerpt, we are in good company since it is equally incomprehensible for Allouch, who says 'on reste largement incapable de lire cette phrase,' and so, Lacan intends for it to remain inaccessible. Allouch argues that this is simply a *brouillon*, an incoherent series of codes for Lacan to pick up and formalise later on (251).

In the 1930s, Lacan related (*a*)*mur* to *un monde,* and in "Fonction et champ de la parole et du langage" from the *Écrits* (1966) Lacan again picks up this theme, and develops it by reproducing a fragment of a poem from Antoine Tudal's *Paris en l'An 2000*:

> *Entre l'homme et l'amour*
> *Il y a la femme.*
> *Entre l'homme et la femme*
> *Il y a un monde.*
> *Entre l'homme et le monde*
> *Il y a un mur* (Tudal in *É* 289).

Allouch explains that Lacan had chosen to selectively quote Tudal's poem since Lacan omits the final verses: *Aux emmurés tout est mur/ Même une porte ouverte,* and these lines seem to contradict Lacan's intention for (*a*)*mur* in "Fonction et champ de la parole et du langage." Whereas Tudal ends his poem with an open door, Lacan chose to end on a closed wall [*il y a un mur*] (Allouch 2009: 253). Moreover, Lacan does not comment further on the poem in "Fonction," leaving the poem's inclusion in this chapter ambiguous and open to interpretation (253). Allouch states:

> En lisant jusqu'au bout les pages qui suivent, où il n'est question ni de l'amour, ni de la femme, ni du monde, on est amené à conclure que leur présence ne peut tenir qu'à leur chute, à leur dernier mot, au "mur" (253).

Years later, in …*Ou pire, le savoir du psychanalyste*[91] Lacan seemingly remembers Tudal and his *Écrits*, picks up on this poem fragment again, and flips the order of the poem to make his point about (*a*)*mur*:

> *Entre l'homme et la femme, il y a l'amour…*
> -Mais bien sûr! Il n'y a que ça, même,!
> *Entre l'homme et l'amour, il y a un monde,…*
> C'est toujours ce qu'on dit: "*il y a un monde,*" comme ça "*il y a un monde*" ça veut dire: *Vous! vous y arriverez jamais*! Mine de rien, au début: "*Entre l'homme et la femme, il y a l'amour*," ça veut dire que [Lacan frappe dans ses mains] ça colle, un monde ça flotte, hein! Mais avec "*il y a un mur*" alors là vous avez compris que "*entre*" veut dire "*interposition*." Parce que c'est très ambigu, le "*entre*" (*SXIXa* 37).

Lacan comments that '*entre*' can mean both 'between' and 'interposing,' which suggests that there might be something blocking, or preventing, a connection between the two sides: 'il y a un mur,' Lacan says. Lacan then appeals to an image of Melanie Klein's bottle drawn on the blackboard behind him to illustrate the relationship between man, woman, and love (which is needlessly complicated to reproduce here), and finally, Lacan reaches his conclusion:

> Ce qui nous permet de voir topologiquement tout à fait ce dont il s'agit, c'est que ensuite quand on nous dit: "*entre l'homme et le monde*" ce monde substitué à la volatilisation du partenaire sexuel – comment est-ce que c'est arrivé, c'est ce que nous verrons après — ben "*il y a un mur*," c'est-à-dire l'endroit où se produit ce *rebroussement*, ce *rebroussement* que j'ai introduit un jour comme signifiant la jonction entre *vérité* et *savoir*. J'ai pas dit, moi, que c'était coupé, c'est un *poète de Papouasie* qui dit que c'est un mur.
> C'est pas *un mur*: c'est simplement *le lieu de la castration*. Ce qui fait que *le savoir* laisse intact le champ de *la vérité*, et réciproquement. Seulement ce qu'il faut voir c'est que *ce mur il est partout* (*SXIXa* 38).

Lacan's philosophical programme is an attempt to show the incongruity between knowledge and truth, as we have seen; to put it in Lacanian terms: how are we to understand the unstable relationship between the Symbolic and the Real? For example, in the *non-rapport sexuel* (Barnard 2002: 4). In *Écrits,* Lacan says: 'nous voilà donc porté

[91] *cf*:: footnote 90. …*Ou pire, le savoir du psychanalyste* refers to the unpublished edition (*SXIXa*).

sur cette frontière sensible de la vérité et du savoir dont après tout l'on peut dire que notre science, d'un premier abord, paraît bien avoir repris la solution de la fermer' (797). Lacan is picking up this thread once again in advancing the concept of (*a*)*mur,* and he suggests that between Man and Woman is Love, yet, between Man and Love is the World, and, worse, between Man and the World is a Wall. Put another way we could say, love blocks the relationship between man and woman because love is the world itself, and the world is just a wall. Lacan calls this mode of love *l'*(*a*)*mur.*

The 'wall' that Lacan is talking about *is* the process of symbolic castration [*c'est pas un mur: c'est simplement le lieu de la castration*], which is, as we know, the renunciation of *jouissance* and the installation of the power of the master signifier in the subject's psychic life. Therefore, the wall which separates knowledge from truth is nothing other than the same wall which separates Man from Love, Man from Woman, Man from the World. Moreover, Lacan qualifies the features of this mode of love in the process of castration, he says 'l'endroit où se produit ce *rebroussement*, ce *rebroussement* que j'ai introduit un jour comme signifiant la jonction entre *vérité* et *savoir.*' This *rebroussement,* a concept Lacan has borrowed from mathematics, is a point at which a line hits a wall and rebounds forming a *cusp*. Therefore, (*a*)*mur* is a dead-end, sending subjects who hit its wall flying in the opposite direction, to demand more love: *encore, encore, …encore*, and 'ce *mur il est partout.*'

When Lacan picks up (*a*)*mur* again in *SXX* we can now better follow what he means; love is janus-faced, as our table above had anticipated. On the one hand there is a mode of love, (*a*)*mur,* which is characterised as necessary because it follows the process of symbolic castration [*c'est simplement le lieu de la castration*], and the proper development of the subject within societal norms. This is the form of love that is constantly demanding more, *encore*, because in this mode of love the subject faces a wall,

and is never satisfied, and the subject keeps hurtling themselves against this wall, it is something which *ne cesse pas de s'écrire*. However, the subject can sense that (*a*)*mur* is merely a placebo for the real thing: *Amour* – (*a*)*mur* merely placating the subject's desolation in the face of the failed sexual relationship. On the other hand, Lacan suggests that there is *Amour* which is characterised as impossible, unsayable, and related to *jouissance féminine*. Lacan states:

> C'est même pour ça qu'on a inventé l'*inconscient*, c'est pour s'apercevoir que "*le désir de l'homme c'est le désir de l'Autre*," et que l'*amour* c'est une passion qui peut être l'*ignorance* de ce *désir*, mais qui ne lui laisse pas moins *toute sa portée*. Quand on y regarde plus près on en voit le *ravage*.
> Alors bien sûr ça explique que *la jouissance* du corps de l'autre – elle – ne soit pas une réponse nécessaire. Ça va même plus loin, c'est pas non plus une réponse suffisante parce que l'amour – lui – demande l'amour, il ne cesse pas de le demander, il le demande *encore*. *Encore*, c'est le nom propre de cette faille d'où dans l'Autre part la demande d'amour. Alors d'où part, d'où part *ça* qui est capable, certes... mais de façon non nécessaire, non suffisante ...de répondre par la jouissance, jouissance du corps, du corps de l'autre ?
> C'est bien ce que l'année dernière, inspiré d'une certaine façon par la chapelle de Sainte-Anne, qui me portait sur le système, je me suis laissé aller à appeler l'(*a*)*mur* (*SXXa* 8-9: my underlining).[92]

Confirming our reading of *SXIX*a, *Le Savoir du psychanalyste*, Lacan is suggesting that *l'*(*a*)*mur* describes a necessary mode of love which is adopted by the subject in the process of symbolic castration, where *jouissance* is mostly renounced. However, Lacan qualifies (*a*)*mur* as something specifically related to the form of *jouissance* which is connected to the superego injunction: *Jouis!,* shorthand for *jouissance phallique,* that emerges from the body of the other [*corps de l'autre*]. Therefore, *Amour* and (*a*)*mur* are circular and work in tandem. *Amour* only exists outside the process of symbolic

[92] The published version *SXX* (1975) is highly misleading and problematic; therefore, I have chosen to cite the stenographed version, (*SXXa*. As my underlining shows in the above quote, the context implies that Lacan is referring to 'le corps de l'autre' with small 'a' instead of 'A' – which the stenographed version, *SXXa*, captures accurately. Whereas, the 1975 Seuil version has it as: 'le corps de l'Autre' (*SXX* 11), and by changing the meaning to 'big Other,' the official version fundamentally altered what Lacan meant. See footnote 48, p.120.

castration, whereby the subject continuously misrecognises *Amour* in the Other as a never-ceasing reservoir of infinite love, and the Other merely refers the subject back to the dead end of (*a*)*mur*. Lacan had said, '*Encore*, c'est le nom propre de cette faille d'où dans l'Autre part la demande d'amour.' Therefore, *Encore* is the proper name for the place where the demand for love comes from, and, as we will see in our final section, this place resembles the object *a* in the impossible *en soi pour soi*.

iv. *Jouissance Phallique / Jouissance de l'Autre*

In *D'un Autre à l'autre, …Ou pire,* and *Encore,* Lacan elaborates at considerable length the distinctions between *jouissance phallique* and *jouissance de l'Autre* [/ *feminine*], and particularly in *Encore,* Lacan develops this notion alongside the French legal concept of *usufruit.* In French Civil Law, *usufruit* is the right to use a property or a good, codifying a process where a freeholder might let an individual *use* a property in question. As the French Civil Code puts it: 'l'usufruit est le droit de *jouir des choses* dont un autre a la propriété, comme le propriétaire lui-même, *mais à la charge d'en conserver la substance*' (Code Civil, Article 578, Crée par Loi 1804-01-30: my emphasis). Lacan's 1972-73 seminar, *Encore*, was held at Paris 2 (Sorbonne Panthéon-Assas), part of the Law faculty, and Lacan is half-jokingly applying this legal concept to *jouissance*:

> L'usufruit […] – réunit en un mot ce que j'ai déjà évoqué dans mon séminaire sur l'éthique, à savoir la différence qu'il y a de l'utile à jouissance. […] L'usufruit veut dire qu'on peut jouir de ses moyens, mais qu'il ne faut pas les gaspiller. Quand on a l'usufruit d'un héritage, on peut en jouir à condition de ne pas trop en user (*SXX* 10).

For Lacan, the value of *usufruit* for psychoanalysis rests in its capacity to regulate, modulate, and moderate the subject's enjoyment, where the law [*droit*] enters to apportion *jouissance* (*SXX* 10). For Lacan, the importance of the *droit-à-la-jouissance* is to stress the role of the superego in distributing any leftover [surplus] *jouissance* to

further cajole the subject to remain within the bounds of the master signifier. *Jouissance* belongs to the master signifier, and, as the Code Civil had put it, 'le droit de *jouir des choses* dont un autre a la propriété.' Which is why Lacan says: 'qu'est-ce que c'est la jouissance? *Elle se réduit ici à n'être qu'une instance négative*. La jouissance, c'est ce qui ne sert à rien' (*SXX* 10: my emphasis). Notably, Lacan states that *jouissance* is reduced to being only a negative instance; which means that *jouissance*'s role in the subject's psychic life is to frighten the subject into controlling their subjective economy. However, Lacan also means that *jouissance*, in its specific form here [note that Lacan says: 'ici' — which is to say as 'droit-à-la-jouissance' (*SXX* 10)], is the birth [implied by '*n'être*'] of the negative aspect of *jouissance* in the subject's psyche, which is that aspect of the law which keeps the subject within the realm of the signifier. Therefore, Lacan's concept of *jouissance* evinces multiple meanings and functions, on the one hand it is a regulative function, and on the other, *jouissance féminine* offers something highly ambiguous [*équivoque* (*SXXIII* 117)]. As Howells put it in *Mortal Subjects*, 'Feminine *jouissance* cannot be known because it cannot be spoken' (Howells 2011: 143).

As we said, in order to develop the various meanings of *jouissance,* Lacan splits love in two [*l'*(*a*)*mur* and *l'Amour*], and this division also resemble the two modes of *jouissance* [*phallique* and *féminine*]. Clearly, the mode of *jouissance* that Lacan cast as an 'instance négative' which seeks to regulate the partial pleasure of unregulated *jouissance*, founding the symbolic law in the eye of the Subject, refers to *jouissance* in its *phallique* variety (*plus-de-jouir*). This seems like a very complicated idea, but it is neither complicated nor counterintuitive. For example, in our previous chapter, we had argued that the paradigmatic form of unregulated *jouissance* was incest. We demonstrated that, in the process of subject formation, the subject was expected to renounce incest (thereby installing the incest prohibition), which necessarily implied that the subject accepted the

symbolic law. The incest prohibition states that subjects must not partake in acts of incest. However, what the subject mostly forewent in accepting the incest prohibition did not amount to a total proscription of the concept of incest itself; the subject *is* able to continue enjoying incest as a *partial* pleasure in language, should they so wish. In fact, Lacan seems to be arguing that incest (unregulated enjoyment) is actually solicited by the superego injunction: *Jouis!,* but with the usual caveat that the line between fantasy and reality should not be crossed. This logic of surplus enjoyment [*plus-de-jouir*] of *jouissance phallique* is not exclusive to the incest prohibition, incest is merely one example which demonstrates the logic of this form of *jouissance*. Nonetheless, our Western cultural obsession with incest, as evidenced by incest's continued relevance in the arts, attests to the continued relevance of Lacan's idea of *jouissance phallique,* for, although acts of incest are prohibited, they nonetheless continue to found the superego injunction *Jouis*!.[93] Incest, as a sexual perversion, is solicited so long as it is libidinally *regulated;* which is to say, prohibited physically and empirically, but partially solicited linguistically or intellectually.

The 'renunciation of *jouissance,*' as Howells put it in *Mortal Subjects* (137), in the process of symbolic castration is, for Lacan, a kind of bet with the big Other, homologous to a Pascalian wager, where some of the subject's *jouissance* is staked in exchange for the 'surplus value' inherent in the big Other's command to *Jouis!.* Lacan says, 'le pari de Pascal […] illustre excellemment le rapport de la renonciation à la jouissance à la dimension du pari. La vie dans sa totalité s'y réduit elle-même à un élément de valeur' (*SXVI* 18). In our previous chapter, we inadvertently demonstrated this logic of the *plus-de-jouir* in our analysis of "Kant avec Sade," where we argued that Kant's ethical

[93] For example: Sophocles's *Oedipus Rex*, Marquis de Sade's *Juliette*, Michele Haneke's *La Pianiste* (not exhaustive).

demand (or, the categorical imperatives) produced the very result it had sought to restrict, producing what we had called a kind of 'surplus enjoyment' inherent to violating the categorical imperatives. About ten years after having developed that argument, Lacan says in *D'un Autre à l'autre*:

> Mais aussi bien n'est-ce pas là chose si nouvelle à vos oreilles si vous m'avez lu, car c'est l'objet de mon écrit *Kant avec Sade.* La démonstration y est faite de la totale réduction du plus-de-jouir à l'acte d'appliquer sur le sujet ce qu'est le terme *a* du fantasme par quoi le sujet peut être posé comme cause-de-soi dans le désir (*SXVI* 18).

Therefore, *plus-de-jouir* is another name for the *jouissance phallique;* the unregulated desire which subjects renounce in the process of symbolic castration is merely transformed into an acceptable, even solicited, form of desire, one which is *regulated,* and whose establishment enables the subject to articulate a form of subjectivity which is acceptable to society's symbolic formations.

For Lacan, surplus *jouissance* in the subject's libidinal economy is all that is left after the majority of *jouissance* is renounced in the process of the subject's symbolic castration. The leftover *jouissance* grants the subject 'l'usufruit d'un héritage' which acts to regulate the subject's drives when they re-integrate the coordinates of symbolic regulations. Which is why Lacan says: 'rien ne force personne à jouir, sauf le surmoi. Le surmoi, c'est l'impératif de la jouissance — *Jouis!*' (*SXX* 10). Lacan's concept of *jouissance*, as we have stated, evinces multiple meanings. The *jouissance phallique* which Lacan is talking about here in the opening pages of *Encore* is the form of *jouissance* that all subjects who have been symbolically castrated can access, and it is related to (*a*)*mur*. Lacan clarifies:

> La jouissance phallique est l'obstacle par quoi l'homme n'arrive pas, dirai-je, à jouir du corps de la femme, précisément parce que ce dont il jouit, c'est la jouissance de l'organe. C'est pourquoi le surmoi tel que je l'ai pointé tout à l'heure du *Jouis!* est corrélat de la castration (*SXX* 13).

All human beings fall prey to the *jouissance phallique* that describes only a partial enjoyment of the organs of others, or one's organ, which leads to (*a*)*mur*. Therefore, (*a*)*mur* is a form of masturbatory enjoyment; the other side of *jouissance* (*jouissance féminine*) is inaccessible to all subjects, it is both impossible and unsayable:

> Que tout tourne autour de la jouissance phallique, c'est précisément ce dont l'expérience analytique témoigne, et témoigne en ceci que la femme se définit d'une position que j'ai pointée du *pas-tout* à l'endroit de la jouissance phallique (*SXX* 13).

For Lacan, all subjects (all human beings regardless of gender) find themselves on the side of *jouissance phallique*. The other side of *jouissance* is inaccessible, it is not-all [*pas toute*].

> En voilà le dit pour ce qui est de la jouissance, en tant que sexuelle. D'un côté, la jouissance est marquée par ce trou qui ne lui laisse pas d'autre voie que celle de la jouissance phallique. De l'autre côté, quelque chose peut-il s'atteindre qui nous dirait comment ce qui jusqu'ici n'est que faille, béance dans la jouissance, serait réalisé? (*SXX* 14).

The entire discussion of *jouissance féminine, pas-toute,* and *non-rapport sexuel* takes place in the context of a discussion of the Symbolic Order's relationship with the Real. Lacan, quite earnestly, sets himself the speculative task of trying to identify and elucidate what might be 'de l'autre côté' of *jouissance phallique. Jouissance phallique* is total (*tout*) in the process of subject formation, there is no mystery, it is structured around the lack (or, object *a*), it has a defined role and function in regulating the subject's libidinal economy, yielding the *plus-de-jouir* and (*a*)*mur.* Beyond this form of *jouissance* is the not-all and *amour* itself. However, *pas-toute* in relation to what? Lacan says:

> Que devient pour la femme cette seconde barre que je n'ai pu écrire qu'à la définir comme *pas toute?* – elle n'est pas contenue dans la fonction phallique sans pourtant être sa négation. Son mode de présence est entre centre et absence (*SXIX* 121).

Without the *jouissance phallique, jouissance féminine* cannot exist*,* and concomitantly, there can be no *tout* without the *pas-toute* — no Man without Woman, and *vice versa.* For

Lacan, *la femme* is *pas-toute* in relation to the big Other. It is also notable that the structure of the *jouissance féminine* is the opposite of the *non-rapport sexuel*; in which sexual relations ('l'acte génital') are possible, but a linguistic relationship is impossible (*SXX* 14), which is why the *non-rapport* signals to the subject the possibility of another form of *jouissance,* the Other's jouissance which Lacan calls the *jouissance de l'Autre,* or the *jouissance féminine.*

As we saw in chapter three, the difference between Scudéry's *Mer dangereuse* and the *Terres inconnues* (we can now more accurately say) mirrors the difference between *jouissance phallique* and *jouissance féminine* respectively. However, these two realms work to support each other, and the *jouissance phallique* inaugurates the superego injunction: *Jouis!*; it is the regulative power that guarantees the power of the master signifier (the big Other), and pushes the subject to accept the norms and terms of social life – which are undoubtedly patriarchal for Lacan (hence: *phallique*). This interplay between *jouissance phallique* and *jouissance féminine* is part of Lacan's focus in *Encore.* The discussions from this period are foregrounded in the earlier discussions on the graph of desire, which help explain the formation of the subject. In order to acquiesce to the desires of the Other, the subject accepts the fantasy of (*a*)*mur*, and accepting *l'*(*a*)*mur* reinforces the symbolic wall which surrounds the subject.[94] The subject demands love, and this insatiable demand is *corporeal* 'c'est de là que vient *l'en-corps*' because *l'*(*a*)*mur* is a dead end encountered in '*le corps de l'autre*' not in *l'Autre* (*SXXa* 8-9: my underlining).

Moreover, for Lacan, it is this aspect of sex which is pacified by the illusion of love. 'L'amur, c'est ce qui apparaît en signes bizarres sur le corps.'[95] Therefore, love

[94] Additionally, in French, 'mur' also describes fruits that are ripe [*mûr*]. We could say that subjects that are confronted by (*a*)*mur* are ripe for inculcation into the Symbolic Order.
[95] Lacan is clear that the subject he is describing is not tied to gender in an essentialist sense: 'l'être du corps, certes, est sexué, mais c'est secondaire, comme on dit' (*SXX* 11).

[*l'Amour*] is not bodily, rather, it is ontological, which aligns love closely with the *non-rapport sexuel,* 'autrement dit, ce dont il s'agit, c'est que l'amour soit impossible, et que le rapport sexuel s'abîme dans le non-sens, ce qui ne diminue en rien l'intérêt que nous devons avoir pour l'Autre' (*SXX* 80-81). Lacan's formulas of sexuation, the *non-rapport sexuel*, the subject as it relates to *jouissance* are ontological problems as they affect beings in our world, which is why it is not surprising that Lacan claims so forcefully that we need to abandon the sexed body as only a secondary consideration. The primary question concerns the status of sex and love at an ontological level. For Lacan, *l'Amour* eludes the subject's reach, it escapes the subject's grasp with the *pas-toute* of the *jouissance de la femme,* qualified as both impossible and unsayable. Therefore, Lacan's concept of love falls squarely on the side of the impossible Real, and his concept of *l'*(*a*)*mur* falls on the side of the Symbolic necessity.

v. Object *a*, love, and the One

As we saw in chapter two, the impossibility expressed in the *non-rapport* is primarily related to language, and it describes how the speaking subject [*l'être parlant*] is unable to formulate sex in speech or enunciate the sexual relationship, as such. For Lacan, when the subject is confronted with this insurmountable deadlock, the subject's first wish is to try and transform their relationship into One, in order to attempt to resolve the problem of the un-enunciable sexual act. These subjects might be tempted by Aristophanes's allegory, explored earlier. However, in a striking echo to the question Schelling asked himself in *Die Weltalter* explored in our first chapter about the beginning of the beginning, Lacan says in *SXX*:

> On parle que de ça depuis longtemps, de l'Un. *Y a d' l'Un,* c'est de cet énoncé que j'ai supporté mon discours de l'année dernière, et certes pas pour confluer dans cette confusion originelle, car le désir ne nous conduit qu'à la visée de la faille où se démontre que l'Un ne tient que de l'essence du signifiant. Si j'ai

> interrogé Ferge au départ, c'est pour tenter de démontrer la béance qu'il y a de cet Un à quelque chose qui tient à l'être, et derrière, à la jouissance (*SXX* 12).

As we saw, for Lacan, the idea of the One belongs to the realm of the Signifier (or, the big Other), whereas outside symbolic structures, in the realm of the *jouissance de la femme,* the One multiplies.[96] What does this mean? If we contrast Lacan with Schelling, this becomes clearer. For the middle Schelling, as we saw, the philosophical quest was to identify the 'beginning of the beginning,' which in simple terms is how did God himself come to be? For Schelling, the position of the world was irrevocably tied to the central tenets of the Abrahamic religions, namely Christianity, so that inside this worldview no other truth exists. Therefore, for Schelling, if we adopt an Abrahamic perspective on the world, it is evident that the human story begins with Adam and Eve. Schelling's deceptively naïve question was to ask: how would God have told his version of the human story?[97] This prelapsarian credulity is Schelling's heresy; Schelling wished to imagine God's world from the perspective of God himself, and this logical reasoning forced Schelling to dream up a split in God himself – forcing God to divide into two distinct thoughts.

Similarly, we could say that for Lacan, the Abrahamic perspective resembles the perspective of the Symbolic Order where the "One" is tied up with the master signifier. The *jouissance phallique* mostly remains within the Symbolic from the subject's standpoint, whereas Lacan's suggestion with *jouissance féminine* is to think about the world without symbolic coordinates; which is to say, God's perspective of the world. It is in this "outside" the Symbolic Order that the One multiplies to become not-One (*pas-toute*), for precisely the same reason that it did for Schelling two centuries earlier.

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[96] See: chapter 2, part two, vii.

[97] Schelling's question echoes Lacan's naïve question posed in …Ou pire, *le savoir du psychanalyste,* 6 January 1972, 'parce que c'est assez curieux, c'est une question qui n'a jamais été posée à ma connaissance "Est-ce que Dieu croit en lui?"' (*SXIXa* 33).

Schelling forced God to break up — one half of God had to fall to earth, and as I suggested earlier, this half of God washed up on the beach, hidden and afraid, as a decorator crab, imperceptible and ambiguous.

In *Encore*, Lacan aligns *jouissance phallique* with the Symbolic and explains how the subject's insatiable demand for love stems from having tied their demand for love to the essence of the One. This identification is impossible, as we have seen, and that is why it forces the subject towards *l'*(*a*)*mur.* For example, earlier, I stated that a child might always demand more love from their parents, and in that case, the child is mistaking their mother or father for an infinite well of love. Whereas the parent is not the material embodiment of the Other, they merely represent it for the child (*SXXa* 8). Therefore, while the child might think that the parent is "One" in the sense that all meaning and signification stems from the parent, this is not the case. Therefore, the demand for infinite love (or, '*Encore*') just refers the child back to the wall of (*a*)*mur*. Lacan explains by referring to a parakeet:

> Je peux vous dire un petit conte, celui d'une perruche qui était amoureuse de Picasso. A quoi cela se voyait-il? À la façon dont elle lui mordillait le col de sa chemise et les battants de sa veste. Cette perruche était en effet amoureuse de ce qui est essentiel à l'homme, à savoir son accoutrement. Cette perruche était comme Descartes, pour qui des hommes, c'était des habits en … *pro-ménade.* Les habits, ça promet la ménade — quand on les quitte. Mais ce n'est qu'un mythe […]. Jouir d'un corps quand il n'y a plus d'habits laisse intacte la question de ce qui fait l'Un, c'est-à-dire celle de l'identification. La perruche s'identifiait à Picasso habillé. (*SXX* 12)

According to Lacan, Picasso's parakeet loved his owner, but clearly, the parakeet loved him dressed as Picasso ['à savoir son accoutrement']. The signifier's essence lies in its regalia, which is to say its external appearance makes recognising the signifier possible as such – as 'One' Picasso. 'Car le désir ne nous conduit qu'à la visée de la faille où se démontre que l'Un ne tient que de l'essence du signifiant' (12). The clothes Picasso wore identified him as the "One" for the parakeet in the realm of signification, which is to say

Picasso's dress describes the place from where the parakeet's demand for infinite love stems. Whereas under his clothes, Picasso is simply one in a series of other human bodies (or, *not-one*), and the parakeet would no longer be able to identify with Picasso's desire. Lacan develops this idea further by returning to the incomprehensible phrase from the "Écrits inspirés" we saw earlier; Lacan says about monks: 'l'habit aime le moine, parce que c'est par là qu'ils ne sont qu'un' (*SXX* 12), which is to say that, in their case, their habits and dress make them a "One." The One is the essence of the signifier, and the subject attempts to locate in them their demand for infinite love. The subject believes that there is a mythical place in the One, which is the source of their love. This mistaken view of the location of infinite love in the One is nothing other than the *object a* (the object cause of desire):

> Autrement dit, ce qu'il y a sous l'habit et que nous appelons le corps, ce n'est peut-être que ce reste que j'appelle l'objet *a.* Ce qui fait tenir l'image, c'est un reste. L'analyse démontre que l'amour dans son essence est narcissique, et dénonce que la substance du prétendu objectal — baratin — est en fait ce qui, dans le désir, est reste, à savoir sa cause, et le soutien, de son insatisfaction, voire de son impossibilité (12).

As we have seen, for the subject, love is tied to castration – (*a*)*mur.* The One only exists as an essential component of the signifier, and outside this nexus, in the realm of the Other's *jouissance*, the One is two, or three, or four, or, simply uncountable. 'L'amour est impuissant, quoiqu'il soit réciproque, parce qu'il ignore qu'il n'est que le désir d'être Un, ce qui nous conduit à l'impossible d'établir la relation d'eux. La relation *d'eux* qui? — deux sexes' (*SXX* 12). Lacan is seeking to develop a model of love which moves subjectivity beyond the entrapment by the signifier One to the impossible relationship between *d'eux* (that is to say: "them," which is at least more than one). The fact that the *d'eux* exists means that there is a certain ambiguity at the heart of the "One," which Lacan will further develop in *Le Sinthome* (117). Therefore, the opposite of (*a*)*mur* is the *Amour* that is connected to the other side of object *a,* which is ~~*La*~~ *femme.* Lacan says 'du

côté de ~~La~~ femme, c'est d'autre chose que de l'objet *a* qu'il s'agit dans ce qui vient à suppléer ce rapport sexuel qui n'est pas' (*SXX* 59).

Many of Lacan's slogans from around this period (*jouissance phallique, jouissance féminine, il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel, non-rapport sexuel, ~~La~~ femme n'existe pas*) concern and describe the subject's ontological difficulties in language, and do not describe empirical relations between people. Throughout the present work, I have often alluded to the conviction, wrongly held in my judgment, that Lacan was a prescriptive patriarch.[98] Lacan, some allege, was a heterosexist theoretician of human oppression.[99] The problem with such a view is that it fails both to understand the intricacies of Lacan's particular brand of psychoanalysis, nor does it account for Lacan's irony in his written statements, style, and presentation.[100] Moreover, Lacan's detractors almost exclusively miss the auto-critique that Lacanian psychoanalysis carries. For example, Jane Gallop states in *Reading Lacan* that:

> This is, I believe, what Lacan means by the phallus. The phallus "designates as a whole the effects of signification" […]. If I had the phallus, then I would know what all my signifiers meant, I would command the play of signification (Gallop 1985: 112).

As we discussed in chapter two, all human beings, no matter their allegedly empirical, desired, or incorrectly assigned gender, sexuality or race are subject to the same psychoanalytic investigations applied to *$*, which is to say a subject entrapped by the signifier and whose *jouissance* is said to be '*phallique*.' Gallop recognises this, saying: 'for women, Lacan's message that everyone, regardless of his or her organs, is "castrated," represents not a loss but a gain,' and later Gallop argues again that 'Lacan

[98] For example, see Irigaray's misleading argument in "Cosi fan tutti" in *Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un* (1977).
[99] Merrill Cole states: 'it is crucial to critique Lacan's lapses into sexism and heterosexism, as well as his tendency to make all meaning depend on the phallus' (2018: 85). Elements of this critique can also be found in: Gallop 1985; Edelman 1994; Warner 1998; and St. Pierre 2017.
[100] This does not apply to Scott St. Pierre's *Psychoanalytic Thinking and the Sexual Politics of Style* (2017), who does discuss this Lacanian particularity p. 93-94.

says that everyone is castrated, I understand that to mean not only do men no more have the phallus than women, but psychoanalysts have it no more than literature professors' (20 & 112). This view of the subject is not heterosexist since, as we have seen, '*phallique*' is meant to be taken ironically. The centrality of the phallus in Lacan's system is a comical self-critical notion, a reminder designed by Lacan to provoke in his audience the heteronormative symbolic limits of a patriarchal society. Gallop states: 'if I had the phallus,' but for Lacan, no human being possesses 'the phallus.' As we saw in chapter two, the phallus is a fraud, a lie, an absent organising principle, and yet, it symbolically functions to regulate, oppress, and contain subjects.

Moreover, when Michael Warner writes, for example, 'my point, however, is not simply that we should depathologize the homosexual' (Warner 1990: 195), what Warner misses is that, for Lacan, all subjects are characterised by their numerous pathologies, and to move beyond one's pathologies is to seek to be superhuman. Lacanian psychoanalysis's default position is to presume we are all sick. No one subject is more especially pathological than anyone else. Moreover, in an admission of defeat, Lacan's abandonment of the cure is a tacit acceptance that psychoanalysis does not offer any solutions to these pathologies:

> C'est la seule fonction véritablement décisive du père. J'ai déjà marqué que ce n'était pas l'Œdipe, que c'était foutu, que si le père était un législateur, ça donnait comme enfant le président Schreber, rien de plus. (*SXIX* 208).

As we saw, the Oedipus complex creates psychotic subjects, and a necessary characteristic of the father is that they are legislators, they lay down the symbolic law, which Lacan admits 'donnait comme enfant le président Schreber, rien de plus.' Therefore, the signifier *phallus* only creates psychotic subjects. So, for Lacan, that is why all subjects share psychotic tendencies, as defined in *Les Psychoses* as the foreclosure of central elements of the signifier (in symbolic castration), and this is also why Lacan had a

difficult time within the medical establishment.[101] For Lacan, the psychotic element exists in us all as subjects of an oedipal structure. As Lacan will further develop in *SXXIII*, *Le Sinthome*, the latent psychotic tendency of subjectivity is not something he prescribes but merely describes.

All human beings are subject to the same process of inculcation by the big Other into the Symbolic Order, unless, of course, they seek to babble outside grammar or any system of language, cultivating their animal voice in an attempt to suppress the coordinates of human language. Lacan's conclusion, which could be caricatured as a kind of fatalism inherent in *les non-dupes-errent,* is a final claim which suggests that a subject cannot live outside of language, symbolic rules and norms, and without a Master. Any attempt to found a life outside a form of symbolic mediation, is not a human life; in short, it is impossible, and in merely seeking to express itself will necessarily found its own symbolic. Lacan is not seeking to privilege one system over another; he is only pointing out the structural limits of life and language.

We might hesitate to accept this view since it is hopeless and asphyxiating if misunderstood. Lacan says:

> Assurément ce qui apparaît sur les corps sous ces formes énigmatiques que sont les caractères sexuels — *qui ne sont que secondaires* — fait l'être sexué. Sans doute. Mais l'être, c'est la jouissance du corps comme tel, c'est-à-dire comme asexué, puisque ce qu'on appelle la jouissance sexuelle est marqué, dominé, par l'impossibilité d'établir comme tel, nulle part dans l'énonçable, ce seul Un qui nous intéresse, l'Un de la relation *rapport sexuel.* (*SXX* 13).

For Lacan, subjectivity describes a being who only exists insofar as they are symbolisable, which is why *La femme n'existe pas* because ~~*La*~~ *femme* resists any symbolisation, or inculcation into the Symbolic Order. In other words, Lacan is contrasting the barred subject (*$*) with an impossible subjective image that opposes this

[101] See for example: Meyer 2005.

form of subjectivity: ~~*La*~~ *femme*. Concomitantly, the *non-rapport* works in the same way; it is something which is outside symbolization.

Jouissance is mostly inaccessible for the subject, which is why the minimal access to the enjoyment that subjects possess is the 'jouissance du corps comme tel,' and this has nothing to do with gender, it is an ontological point about the limits of being. Lacan's discussions about the different forms of *jouissance* which exist beyond the asexual limits of being are, strictly speaking, merely speculative — as was God's failure for Schelling earlier. The real of the *non-rapport sexuel* states that 'la jouissance sexuelle est marqué, dominé, par l'impossibilité d'établir comme tel […] ce seul Un.' For Lacan, there is only the concept of being — the subject — and evidently, Lacan is not suggesting that women do not exist empirically. Lacan sets the coordinates for an exact ontological problem, which he summarises in the final section of the first lesson from *Encore*:

> Tout ce qui s'est articulé de l'être suppose qu'on puisse se refuser au prédicat et dire *l'homme est* par example sans dire quoi. Ce qu'il en est de l'être est étroitement relié à cette section du prédicat. Dès lors, rien ne peut en être dit sinon par des détours en impasse, des démonstrations d'impossibilité logique, par où aucun prédicat ne suffit. Ce qui est de l'être que se poserait comme absolu, n'est jamais que la fracture, la cassure, l'interruption de la formule *être sexué* en tant que l'être sexué est intéressé dans la jouissance (*SXX* 16).

What can we say about being? For Lacan, we can only say something through detours and through impasses, what appears to us as a fullness of being [*comme absolu*] is only ever a fractured being, a subject marked by a rupture at the core of its being. To understand this division, Lacan uses *jouissance* and an elaborate scheme to show how subjects believe themselves to be whole, or One. The psychoanalytic challenge is to question this perceived wholeness in the first place.

vi. *Le Sinthome*, or How to Hold it Together

Though it is not as explicit, in many ways *SXXIII*, *Le Sinthome,* revisits the central theme of *SIII* — psychosis. *Le Sinthome* marries two of Lacan's longest running interests: psychosis and James Joyce,[102] and, to put it in simple terms, Lacan argues in *Le Sinthome* that Joyce's writings exude psychotic features. However, Joyce, unlike Schreber, for example, *was* able to hold his symptoms together, 'Joyce embodied the "symptoms" as such' (Rabaté 2014: 165). Lacan, transfixed by Joyce's remarkable capacity to *hold it together* despite foreclosing key elements of the Symbolic Order, elevates this Joycean capacity for subjective survival into the final insight of his entire psychoanalytic practice — the subject's identification with the *sinthome* itself. In so doing, Lacan sanctifies Joyce as the *saint homme* (*sinthome*) of literature (*SXXIII* 162). Allowing the patient to recognise and identify with their *sinthome* is the moment the patient is, finally, *sent home.*

In an echo to Schelling and Sartre, Lacan begins his analysis of the *sinthome* by relating it to the Fall*,* arguing that *le sinthome* has a connection with the word sin in English.

> C'est la faute, le *sin,* dont c'est l'avantage de mon *sinthome* de commencer par là. Ça veut dire en anglais le péché, la première faute. D'où la nécessité du fait que ne cesse pas la faille qui s'agrandit toujours, sauf à subir le cesse de la castration comme possible (*SXXIII* 13).

We can extract the gist of Lacan's *SXXIII* argument from this short excerpt. In psychosis, as we saw in chapter two, the subject forecloses the signifier, a crucial part of the process of symbolic castration. Which is to say that the psychotic subject does not undergo the process of symbolic castration, and ends up misidentifying the big Other. This misidentification is the psychotic subject's original error [*première faute*] in their process of typical subject development, and this original error, then, only festers as the subject

[102] Rabaté explains Lacan's long running fascination with Joyce which began with Lacan's chance encounter with Joyce at the age of 20 in Adrienne Monnier's bookshop in Paris (2003: 158).

gets older [*la faille qui s'agrandit toujours*]. The misidentification grows until such a time as a certain life-event triggers the psychotic's decompensation, as we saw with Schreber, where his election to the position of a Judge precipitated his mental collapse. Except, Lacan says, 'la faille qui s'agrandit toujours *sauf à subir le cesse de la castration comme possible*' (*SXIII* 13: my emphasis). In effect, Lacan is putting forward the possibility of surviving a life outside the nexus of identification with the big Other. According to Lacan, Joyce identified with his *sinthome* and cheated the master signifier, he lived between the Symbolic Order and the Real, bridging the gap between necessity and impossibility, or knowledge and truth, and, for Lacan, *that* is the Joycean lesson, and that is why Joyce is central to the elucidation of the concept of *le sinthome*.

> Tout cela n'a portée que d'approcher ceci, que ce n'est pas la même chose de dire *Joyce le sinthome* ou bien *Joyce le symbole*. Si je dis *Joyce le symptôm*e — c'est que, le symptôme, le symbole, il l'abolit, si je puis continuer dans cette veine. Ce n'est pas seulement *Joyce le symptôme*, c'est Joyce en tant que, si je puis dire, désabonné à l'inconscient (*SXXIII* 164).

Lacan believed that Joyce's writing abolished symbolic constraints [*il l'abolit*], or we could say Joyce's writing outplays ['*déjoue*' (*SXXIII* 22)] the Phallic function, or master signifier. Lacan highlights the game-like quality of the *sinthome* when he says that language could at some stage 'consiste à jouer de cette *équivoque* qui pourrait libérer du sinthome' (*SXXIII* 17: my emphasis). Joyce's radical move was to revoke his relationship to the unconscious, effectively uncoupling himself from the restrictive forces which clip the subject to the Symbolic Order.

So far, we have only highlighted Lacan's radical statements on the *sinthome*; however, *how* is Joyce's writing an example of the *sinthome*? What is it about Joyce's writings that abolish, or outplay symbolic constraints? As we might have expected, Lacan explains that Joyce's power rests in his ability to manipulate language, to bend words, phrases, and expressions into an almost coherent translingualism [*translinguistique*]

which manages to outplay the rigid and permanent structure of the Symbolic. 'Lisez *Finnegans Wake,* vous vous apercevrez que c'est quelque chose qui joue, pas à chaque ligne, mais à chaque mot, sur le *pun*, un *pun* très, très particulier' (*SXXIII* 165). It is no surprise that Lacan chooses to focus on *Finnegans Wake* in his attempt at elucidating the *sinthome,* since, as Rabaté notes, *Finnegans Wake* is 'a book that Joyce declared to be founded on one main mythical paradigm: original sin' (Rabaté 2014: 153). Moreover, in *Finnegans Wake*, Lacan finds a convincing example of how Joyce realised the *sinthome*:

> Le plus extrême, je peux vous le dire […] c'est — *Who ails tongue coddeau aspace of dumbillsilly?* Si j'avais rencontré cet écrit, aurais-je ou non perçu — "Où es ton cadeau, espèce d'imbécile?" (*SXXIII* 166).

Joyce's '*who ails tongue coddeau aspace of dumbillsilly?*,' pronounced in almost the same way in French, gives: '*où es ton cadeau, espèce d'imbécile,*' which, for Lacan, shatters the entire relationship between signifier and signified. 'C'est le signifiant qui vient truffer le signifié' (*SXX* 37), Lacan says. The sheer fabric of language, grammar, systems of communication, collapse under the inventiveness of Joyce's translinguistic art, 'au point qu'il finit par dissoudre le langage même […] il finit par imposer au langage même une sorte de brisure, de décomposition, qui fait qu'il n'a plus d'identité phonatoire' (*SXXIII* 96), and for a brief moment the artist (Joyce) has stumbled on the truth.

> J'ai dit que l'inconscient est structuré comme un langage. Il est étrange que je puisse aussi dire *désabonné de l'inconscient* quelqu'un qui ne joue strictement que sur le langage, quoiqu'il se serve d'une langue entre autres qui est, non pas la sienne — car la sienne est justement une langue effacée de la carte, à savoir le gaélique, dont il savait quelques petits bouts, assez pour s'orienter, mais pas beaucoup plus —, mais celle des envahisseurs, des oppresseurs (166).

Lacan ties the *sinthome* to his infamous statement 'l'inconscient est structuré comme un langage,' and, although acknowledging the potential conflict between his early theory and later theory, Lacan claims there is no disunity between them. For Lacan, the uncoupling from the restrictive power of the unconscious *is* possible through punning and

homophony, and, in an echo to Deleuze's *minor language,* there is a sense by which subjects can bifurcate language, and make language vibrate in the way Joyce did (*Critique* 142). Furthermore, in an obvious allusion to the bits of the real ['Comme je l'ai dit tout à l'heure, nous ne pouvons atteindre que des bouts de réel' (*SXXIII* 123)] that we discussed earlier, Lacan says that the 'petits bouts' of Gaelic that Joyce possessed could be used to outplay the master signifier (which Lacan aligns with colonial oppressors and invaders) (166). In a way, language is the subject's tool of resistance to the power of the big Other, which, if masterfully deployed, can sow confusion in the enemy and allow the subject to break free. However, this masterful use of language is also a feature of psychosis, and Lacan purposefully casts the *sinthome* in ambiguous terms.

We would be hard-pressed to describe the *sinthome* in only positive terms. For example, Žižek argues in *Looking Awry* that the *sinthome* is a 'psychotic kernel that can neither be interpreted (as symptom) nor "traversed" (as fantasy)' (1991a: 137), as being characterised as a 'fragment of the signifier permeated with idiotic enjoyment' (128-9). However, Žižek also clarifies, *le sinthome* 'is the leftover of enjoyment, beyond meaning, resisting symbolization, which is why, as Lacan put it, woman is "the sinthome of man"' (137). The *sinthome* is the process of identifying with the impossible real we discussed at the outset of this chapter, those *bouts du réel,* which resist any symbolization. *Le sinthome* describes the same deadlock that Sartre identified in *L'Être et le néant* when he stated that 'le désir est lui-même voué à l'échec' (*EN* 466). Which is why, Lacan says, 'une femme est un sinthome pour tout homme' (*SXXIII* 101) because ~~*La*~~ *femme* represents the *jouissance de l'Autre* that is both impossible and unsayable.

> La toute nécessité de l'espèce humaine était qu'il y ait un Autre de l'Autre. C'est celui-là qu'on appelle généralement Dieu, mais dont l'analyse dévoile que c'est tout simplement *La* femme (*SXXIII* 128).

Lacan stresses that human beings necessarily wish for the existence of an Other of the Other, some higher power which could guarantee the guarantee, and as Lacan had been insisting for some time: 'le grand A est barré [(Ⱥ)] parce qu'il n'y a pas d'Autre de l'Autre' (*SXXIII* 127). For Lacan, that desire for 'un Autre de l'Autre' is the wish for God to exist, or we could say in Sartre's language, to actualise *en soi pour soi*, and Lacan's branch of psychoanalysis reads *La* femme as God herself, which is why she does not exist. Lacan asks rhetorically: 'et pourquoi ne pas interpréter une face de l'Autre, la face de Dieu, comme supportée par la jouissance féminine?' (*SXX* 71). So, 'in the last Lacan, in contrast, the analysis is over when we take a certain distance toward the fantasy and identify with the pathological singularity on which the consistency of our enjoyment depends' (Žižek 1991a: 138) which is to say the inexistent God herself.

Earlier we explained that Lacan believed that *jouissance* should not be wasted [*gaspiller*], and in another echo to *Encore*, Lacan says in *Le Sinthome*:

> Mais il est un fait que Joyce choisit, en quoi il est, comme moi, un hérétique. Car *haresis*, c'est bien là ce qui spécifie l'hérétique. Il faut choisir la voie par où prendre la vérité. Ce d'autant plus que, le choix une fois fait, cela n'empêche personne de le soumettre à confirmation, c'est-à-dire d'être hérétique de la bonne façon.
> La bonne façon est celle qui, d'avoir bien reconnu la nature du sinthome, ne se prive pas d'en user logiquement, c'est-à-dire d'en user jusqu'à atteindre son réel, au bout de quoi il n'a plus soif (*SXXIII* 15).

We will remember that the mode of *jouissance* that Lacan aligned with *usufruit* was the *jouissance phallique,* the *jouissance* that I suggested was necessary for the process of symbolic castration whose byproduct was the *plus-de-jouir.* In this excerpt, Lacan is seemingly imbuing *le sinthome,* that *stricto sensu* ought to be impossible*,* with the characteristics of *jouissance* (*phallique*) which is necessary. Lacan is endowing the *sinthome* with a contingent structure [*il faut choisir la voie par où prendre la vérité*] even though it describes something which ought to be necessary. Which is to say, Lacan is arguing that the subject is able to cheat the big Other [*c'est-à-dire d'être hérétique de la*

bonne façon] in order to reach one's real [*d'en user jusqu'à atteindre son réel*], to drink from *le sinthome* until we are no longer thirsty. This radical move runs counter to almost everything Lacan had built up to this point, and he says '*il est, comme moi, un hérétique*.'

Previously, Lacan had been adamant that no subject was able to exist outside the process of symbolic castration, and now Lacan is seemingly arguing that Joyce was a *non-dupe* who did not err. The *non-dupe* argument required the subject to accept the total power of the *Nom-du-Père* which, even as a mere *semblant*, had to be protected and respected by the subject. Lacan seemingly suggests that although the symbolic coordinates are deceptive and insubstantial, we should accept them in order to prevent social and psychic chaos. However, with the *sinthome* a different *non-dupe* arises, and Lacan is seemingly amending the concept of *les non-dupes-errent* (Žižek 2012: 971). Joyce's writings demonstrate that it is the impossible Real of *jouissance* that is deceptive and insubstantial, that we do not need to believe in its impossibility to sustain our deceptive *semblant* of symbolic reality (971). Identifying with the *sinthome* demonstrates to the subject the power they possess is in the Symbolic Order, through language, which might give them the tools to tear down the wall of (*a*)*mur*. Effectively, the real *dupes* are those who believed the Symbolic was but an unchangeable rigid total power, and instead sought the impossible Other *jouissance*. Žižek summarises thus:

> In other words, those who err are precisely those cynics who dismiss the symbolic texture as a mere semblance and are blind to its efficacy, to the way the symbolic affects the Real, to the way we can intervene into the Real through the symbolic (971).

For Lacan, Joyce duped the master signifier by intervening in the Real through the Symbolic. Joyce demonstrated the power of the Symbolic on the Real, and we can now better understand Bowie's earlier statement: 'language has powers over the Real' (1991: 94). In *SXXIII*, Lacan accomplishes his final heresy; Lacan is a heretic to his own earlier doctrine.

Lacan's *sinthome* strikes a highly personal note, and Lacan deliberately aligned it with Joyce's person [*son réel*]; Lacan has moved so far away from the prescriptive clinical blueprinting that characterised aspects of his early work, and is instead arguing in the most speculative, philosophical, terms the result of a subject's analysis.[103] For Lacan, the heresy (R.S.I) we explored at the outset of this chapter is the only way of potentially reuniting knowledge and truth, or necessity and impossibility. Heresy is cast as a positive quality of truth, if the truth is expressible it is a heresy, since truth is only ever half-said, *mi-dit* (*SXXIII* 13). 'Il n'y a pas de vérité qui, à passer par l'attention, ne mente. Ce qui n'empêche pas qu'on coure après' (*AÉ* 571). The key, for the subject, is to choose the most appropriate path to truth [*il faut choisir la voie par où prendre la vérité*], and, for Lacan, the right way is by having recognised and identified with the *sinthome.*

The *sinthome* is perhaps the most hopeful of Lacan's many theoretical positions which he develops in his refashioning of Freudian psychoanalysis. The subject's identification with the *sinthome* allows the subject to live on the margins between the

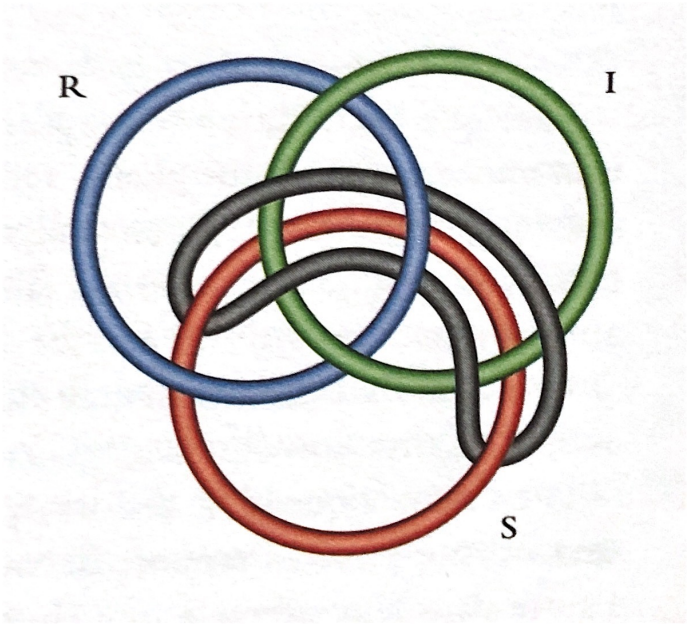


Figure 4.4

[103] Of course, Lacan was always somewhat speculative, in a review of his doctoral thesis, the *Journal of the American Medical Association* stated 'the third and final part of the book discusses, in a manner that is admittedly speculative, the significance of the paranoid states.' (JAMA 1934: 285).

Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary (see Lacan's updated Borromean knot, below, which encircles the *sinthome,* the fourth ring). The *sinthome* allows the subject to drink until their thirst is satisfied. But what does Lacan mean?

Traditionally, the symptom was thought to be something which necessitated a cure, and in many ways Lacan's early psychoanalytic task was to develop a psychoanalytic cure. However, the late Lacanian gambit is to ask: what if after analysis the subject still clings to their symptom? The moment after the subject has concluded the process of subject formation, when a psychotic subject has gone through the process described by Lacan, recognised their symptom, and the parts of the signifier that have been foreclosed, what if they are still not any better? In *SXXIII*, *Le Sinthome*, Lacan seems to argue that all subjects are pathological, marked in one way or another by psychosis. In a sense, Lacan is universalising the psychotic experience, he says:

> Il fut un temps, avant que je sois sur la voie de l'analyse, où j'avançais dans une certaine voie, celle de ma thèse: *De la psychose paranoïaque dans ses rapports,* disais-je, *avec la personnalité*. Si j'ai si longtemps résisté à la republication de ma thèse, c'est simplement parce que la psychose paranoïaque et la personnalité n'ont comme telles pas de rapport, pour la simple raison que c'est parce que c'est la même chose (*SXXIII* 53).

Lacan finally makes the argument that has lurked in the background to so much of his work. It was clear but not explicit in *SIII, Les Psychoses*, that all subjects are psychotics, those the medical establishment label "psychotics" have merely misrecognised a slightly different form of generalised psychosis. Moreover, Lacan's wish to totalise madness across subjectivity follows the impulse already present in his doctoral thesis, where he intimated that madness is not somehow outside humanity and language but a vital part of it, saying: 'avant la psychose, ces tendances sont latentes' (*Rapports* 348). It is this impulse that led Frantz Fanon to describe Lacan, as we saw earlier, as the 'logicien de la folie' (*Aliénation* 268). Lacan's theoretical impulse had always been to read madness *in* reason, as we saw in our discussion with "Kant avec Sade." Lacan dedicates substantial

intellectual space to diagnosing what Deleuze and Guattari in *l'Anti-Œdipe* call the '*socius*' (18), and it was only much later that Lacan began thinking, not of a cure, the quest for which he abandoned quite early,[104] but how to offer patients a palliative response to their subjectivity, the *sinthome.* For Lacan, Joyce seemed to offer the closest approximation of a subject whose work demonstrated clearly the subject's ability to *hold it together.*

The subject is characterised by *une maladie* as Sartre had said, marked by a 'contraction of Being' as Schelling had put it, and the Lacanian mode of life, in the end, is simply a process of *keeping it together* in the face of our madness. And, *stricto sensu*, *that* is the nature of the *sinthome*. This conclusion is striking in its reverberating echo to Sartre and Schelling. We are all ontologically sick but somehow, we *hold it together.* The subject's original sin is that we are all guilty, characterised by a *maladie* at the heart of our being. We 'necessarily' wish for *en soi pour soi,* or ~~*La*~~ *femme,* to exist, attempting to reunite with God, but this 'impossible' desire to unite *en soi* with *pour soi*, to marry permanence and contingency, impossibility and necessity, or simply to love, always seems impossible unless we identify with our madness. *L'Amour* is simply another word for this madness; it denotes the psychotic subject's *modus operandi,* how to try and fail to identify with the impossible object cause of desire found in *en soi pour soi.* To put it in Lacanian terms: we drink until we are no longer thirsty, and although drinking will never quench our thirst, we keep drinking. *Encore, encore, …encore.*

[104] Lacan says: 'être débarrassé d'un symptôme, je ne leur promets rien' (*Scilicet* 32).

CONCLUSION: ~~ERASURE~~

[L'Amour] est, par essence une
duperie et un renvoi à l'infini.
EN

Le mouvement spontané du Pour Soi
comme manque (sur le plan
irréfléchi) est de chercher l'En Soi
Pour Soi
CPM

Sartre

In our introduction, we remarked on the centrality of the French language to Lacan's psychoanalysis. We implied that Lacan's practice was difficult to understand because it was predominantly designed for a French audience, and we are now in a better position to expand on those remarks. Lacan's manipulation of the French language was creative, for example, as many as seven hundred and eighty-nine of his neologisms have been identified and catalogued in *789 néologismes de Jacques Lacan* (2002). However, more than the many neologisms are Lacan's numerous homophonies, many of which we have touched upon in this thesis, and these suggest much more than we had initially appreciated. For Lacan, homophony highlights the deep connection *le langage* shares with *lalangue* since contained in each homophone is its speculative extra, the Real fiction which creates the Symbolic truth (*Troisième* 63-64), as we explored in our second chapter. For Lacan, the audible speculative extra contained in homophonies signals to the subject that something must exist beyond the confines of language, and, according to Lacan, this is not a coincidence. Instead, it is a structural fact of language itself, giving subjects a clue about the Real. For example, when Lacan says the subject is unable to articulate their subjectivity, '*m'être sujet'* (*AÉ* 473), it is because the subject is a prisoner of the desires of the Other – otherwise known as the *signifiant Maître*; when Lacan says the master signifier is *le-Nom-du-Père*, he means the *Non!* of the Father, but he also means that the subject stood outside the nexus of signification errs – *les non-dupes-errent.* Lacan explains:

> Lalangue, c'est ce qui permet que le vœu (souhait), on considère que ce n'est pas par hasard que ce soit aussi le veut de vouloir, troisième personne de l'indicatif, que le non niant et le nom nommant, ce n'est pas non plus par hasard; ni que d'eux (d'apostrophe avant ce "eux" qui désigne ceux dont on parle) ce soit fait de la même façon que le chiffre deux, ce n'est pas là pur hasard ni non plus arbitraire, comme dit Saussure. Ce qu'il faut y concevoir, c'est le dépôt, l'alluvion, la pétrification qui s'en marque du maniement par un groupe de son expérience inconsciente (*Troisième* 63-64).

For Lacan, it is no accident that *d'eux* [them] implies at least *deux* [two] in French; that *nom* [name] signals *non* [no], and, in another possible figurative connection to the visual aspect of Scudéry's *Carte de Tendre,* Lacan says that homophony is the *dépôt,* or the *alluvion,* of the unconscious. Through an organic force that is a feature of language itself, homophony amasses and deposits signification (*Mer/Mère*), and – like the movements of a river whose continual motion dislodges and sediments bits of earth forming a new riverbank that finally settles and stabilizes [*pétrification*] – language, as brute matter, becomes ripe for excavation and gentle unearthing only once the homophony signals to the subject that they may begin panning for gold *here* [/*hear*], to discover and learn more about what *lies* beneath.

In "Back and Forth from Letter to Homophony," Milner comments on this 'remarkable' passage in *La Troisième* and reflects on its centrality to Lacan's view of language:

> Homophony is not an addition to the various dimensions of language; it is not an ornamental superstructure that does not modify the foundations of the building. On the contrary, it transforms radically everything that can be theorized about the Unconscious and its relationship to the fact of *lalangue* (2017: 84-5).

Recognising the value of homophones is, for Milner, recognising the subject's radical power in the Symbolic, as we had said in our final chapter. Moreover, as we said much earlier, in *Écrits,* when Lacan speaks about the *audibility* of the Real, we can now see that Lacan partly meant *homophony*. Homophony offers that speculative extra which might give the subject a clue of what might lie beneath conscious speech – '*Who ails tongue coddeau aspace of dumbillsilly?*'

In our second chapter, we discussed what I had called Lacan's *temporary detours*, and I suggested that his intellectual strategy was to posit a fiction that, *retroactively,* threw his central object of study into sharp relief. Lacan's metaphysical method, we believe, resembles the onto-theological method that Schelling pursued in *Die Weltalter*,

and, evidently, Lacan's heavy emphasis on God as ~~*La*~~ *femme* makes his later philosophy similarly onto-theological. I suggested that Lacan posited the fictitious *jouissance de la femme* to make clearer the concept of the *jouissance phallique.* Indeed, I suggested with *Clélie* that Scudéry opted for a similar strategy, creating the *Terres inconnues* in order to clarify the prohibition contained in the *Mère dangereuse*. For Lacan, we can never directly access the truth since the truth is only ever *mi-dit* because language itself is an imperfect tool for the truth. Therefore, 'lisez!' Lacan had said about Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, by which he meant that we should not give up trying to reach *lalangue* in language. The odds are stacked against the subject because there is no clear technique for accessing the impossible *lalangue,* but in trying to reach for the impossible, the subject fulfils a necessary aspect of their always already desolate subjectivity.

The subject's strategy of necessarily reaching for the impossible recurs throughout Lacan's work, for example, in our third chapter, we saw how the subject journeys along the path to subject formation, trying to achieve their ideal-ego, however, this process was simply an operation of coming to terms with society's many restrictions, discovering how the big Other creates one's Ego-Ideal. We suggested that symbolic injunctions (or, the desires of the Other) weigh heavily on subjects as they make their way through the process of identification: symbolic castration; the renunciation of *jouissance*; accepting the fantasy; and finally, learning to comply with those desires of the Other. We suggested that, for Lacan, the subject cannot work outside of this symbolic articulation, *le Nom-du-Père*, that any attempt to 'faire chier' the *Père* was always already accounted for [*englobé*] in the subject's articulation within the symbolic frame. We suggested that this was an asphyxiating social theory, with Lacan leaving the subject no escape, since the subject is necessarily a subject in language, and the Symbolic

contains all language. However, we also noted that the speaking being [*l'être parlant*] is happy [*heureux*], because, for Lacan, the subject is ignorant about their imprisonment. The subject is not a subject at all without the necessary *tromperie* of the language they deploy, which imprisons them. The deceit is necessary in order for the subject to survive in the world, and subjects are not supposed to know that they are symbolic prisoners, because, as Lacan puts it: *les non dupes errent.* Which is why Lacan's version of *qui perd gagne* is slightly different to Sartre's version since, for Sartre, the subject needs to experience the loss as a real loss even though they ultimately win, whereas, for Lacan, the loss is not experienced as loss by the happy speaking subject, rather they choose to be ignorant of their loss [*dupes*], and so they suffer peacefully, which is a (linguistic) gain that is finally a necessary loss for the subject: *qui perd gagne, oui mais quand même!*

Crucially, however, traumas and anxieties arise, for Lacan, when subjects are exposed to the Real, for example, in the *il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel,* and anxiety is engendered by the subject's desire for the impossible *objet petit a* immanent to the *jouissance féminine.* Therefore, according to Lacan, from the subject's perspective, the impossible truth [*verité*] is deeply interlinked with the necessity of knowledge [*savoir*] because we are continually forced to confront those *bouts de réel* in, for example: homophonies, the *non-rapport sexuel*, and the cry of *das Ding*. Therefore, the subject is qualified as a continually searching subject, and they become less content as they encounter those *bouts de réel*. As we saw with Lacan's *le sinthome,* the gain that is still a loss of *qui perd gagne, oui mais quand même,* is, at the bitter end, a gain once again, should subjects be able to recognise it as such; because the power the subjects had in the Symbolic was a form of power after all. As James Joyce's pre-psychotic trans-linguistry showed, the entire relationship between signifier and signified was shattered, and the sheer fabric of language, grammar, systems of communication, collapsed under the

inventiveness of Joyce's translinguistic art. Joyce unearthed those bits of [*bouts de*] *lalangue* that we suggested the subject exhumed from the deposited [*dépôt*] material of language that had been fossilised [*pétrifié*], as Lacan had said.

As the Borromean knot showed in our final chapter, the Real and the Symbolic interlink, and, although the subject can only access the *bouts de réel* in the Symbolic, it is enough to make the subject nervous and anxious, revealing something beyond the fences encircling our subjectivity. The subject, we suggested, could hear the cry of the Real from inside the Symbolic. I say cry because, as we saw in our discussion of *das Ding* in chapter three, the subject perceives the unassimilable *Thing* as the infant's desperate cry transmuted onto the mOther. More often than not, the subject's overwhelming reaction is to castrate the desire for this *Thing* – to get rid of it, to not deal with it, and so, the subject makes the wager, as Lacan put it, they are coerced by the big Other into gambling their bits of *jouissance* in order to suffer peacefully. However, the ominous howling follows the subject in the Symbolic, which is why all subjects are necessarily pre-psychotic, because the mental collapse that could befall a clinical psychotic is identical to the mental collapse which threatens all subjects at all times. Because, by its very structure, the Oedipal complex produces subjects who could decompensate in this way, and Lacan's psychoanalysis aims to show that all subjects are vulnerable to such a collapse – that we could all be affected by the structural failures of the Symbolic itself.[105]

[105] Although I am not a specialist in the philosophies of either Deleuze or Guattari, I believe Lacan's criticism of the Oedipus complex, as outlined in this thesis, is one of the reasons that *Anti-Œdipe* is not, as the title might suggest, hostile to Lacanian psychoanalysis, but instead, the works of Deleuze, Guattari, and Lacan may share philosophical connections. As Dan Smith explained in "The Inverse Side of the Structure," Lacan recognised this connection when he summoned Deleuze to his office shortly after the publication of *AO* in 1972, and, recounting their meeting shortly before his death, Deleuze stated that the purpose of Lacan's invitation was to try and recruit Deleuze as one of his disciples. Lacan found *AO* to be a genuinely original breakthrough to his psychoanalytic project; Smith explaining that what Lacan found in Deleuze was a teachable and 'highly original fellow traveller' (2004: 636), and I believe *AO's* impact on Lacanian psychoanalysis would merit further investigation. Indeed, there are numerous such 'impacts' on Lacan's philosophy, and it is worth noting another example, otherwise altogether missing from this thesis, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy's *Le Titre de la lettre.* It would be interesting to analyse the

Therefore, for Lacan, the subject is always hanging in the balance, aiming for the impossible but doing so necessarily since there are too many clues for the subject to ignore. One such clue is the *non rapport sexuel,* which is why Lacan qualifies it as a feature of the Real, since 'l'acte génital' (*SI* 238) is something most subjects will engage in at some stage in their lives, and the subject's bodily awareness of the *non rapport sexuel* resonates with the ontological *disconnection* that Lacan is describing. In their lives, subjects will seek to uncover the object that causes their desires, which the subject necessarily locates in the Other. The Other is the site of their pleasure, the site of all potential answers to all their questions, but nothing guarantees the big Other for the subject, there is no Other of the Other, and when the subject realise this, they are left petrified and alone. Therefore, this Other is a lie, a temporary detour, a fiction, the lie that qualifies the subject as both scared and alone, rather than saying anything substantial about what is (noumenally) beyond – *l'Autre jouissance/ jouissance de la femme*. Therefore, as subjects keep nudging ever closer, hoping to reach the Other, they will never find her, and it is for this reason that love is a demand that is never fulfilled – love is continually cast as *Encore,* and instead, the subject finds (*a*)*mur* in the Symbolic. However, the subject necessarily continues to seek *Amour* in the fiction that is God herself – the Other. The subject should not stop searching simply because it is a futile task since, if s/he did, s/he would be faced with the truly unbearable reality: that there is no God's God, no Other of the Other, which is why, as Scudéry put it, *quand il serait guérissable/ il est bien plus doux d'en mourir*.

The subject searches for *l'Amour,* and this continual search is a symptom for a kind of madness, as we said, it expresses the psychotic subject's *modus operandi,* how to

ways in which Lacan adapted his ideas in the later seminars in light of seminal criticisms of his practice, as Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy imply in the preface to the third edition (1990: 9).

try and fail to identify with the impossible object cause of desire which lies at the heart of *en soi pour soi,* and it is here that we are able to connect our argument back to our first chapter. Sartre said in *L'Être et le néant*: '[l'amour] est, par essence une duperie et un renvoi à l'infini' (445), which, we can now see, is precisely Lacan's double definition of love. Lacan's psychoanalytic gambit was to speculatively imagine *en soi pour soi* as ~~*La*~~ *femme*, since, as Lacan had said, ~~*La*~~ *femme* is another one of the names of God. ~~*La*~~ *femme* is the *sinthome* of Man because ~~*La*~~ *femme* is the impossible and unsayable herself, she is the fictitious marriage of *en soi* with *pour soi* as *en soi pour soi,* and we can now see – *retroactively*, as it were – that that is why Sartre was unable to erase her, because we need to reconcile with her, and identify with her. In a sentence that almost summarises the entire Lacanian paradigm, Sartre says in *Cahiers pour une morale*, 'le mouvement spontané du Pour Soi comme manque (sur le plan irréfléchi) est de chercher l'En Soi Pour soi' (17-8), because, although she might not exist, she *necessarily* persists, and she is forever *impossible* to erase.

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