

## B. Two Lacans and the Immanent Negativity of Gender

Raise Boys and Girls Skirts the Same Way.

Raise Boys and Girls the Same Way.

Raise Boys and Girls the Same Way (Ghengis Khan Autobiography).

Raise Boys and Girls the Same Way and You Lose Life.

Raise Boys and Girls the Same Way but Rear Sheep Differently.

Raise Boys and Girls the Same Way, Damn it!

Raise Boys and Girls the Same, Then Reject the Null Hypothesis.

Raise Boys as Girls and Girls as Boys.

Raise Boys to Kill Girls and Eat Them.

Raise Boysenberries the Same Way You Raise Blackberries.

Roast Boys and Girls the Same Way.

[Jenny Holzer, <http://www.adaweb.com/project/holzer/cgi/pcb.cgi>]

### Positive and Negative

There are two Jacques Lacans whom we might call the “Kantian Lacan” and the “Hegelian Lacan;” or in a similar vein, the “Positive Lacan” and the “Negative Lacan” (or perhaps the “Structuralist” versus. . . well, versus what!? [hint: not ‘Post-Structuralist’]). On the one hand, there is the Lacan criticized by Felix Guattari [Guattari, 1972/84; 1992/95; Deleuze and Guattari, 1972/83], Luce Irigaray [Irigaray, 1988], Judith Butler [Butler, 1993; 1990], and many others, defended by Samuel Weber [Weber, 1991], Jane Gallop [1982], Jacqueline Rose [Rose, 1982] in a special way Louis Althusser [Althusser, 1971], and most everyone in French and Comparative Literature departments in the USA. This positive, Kantian Lacan is the radical structuralist critic of ego-psychology, for whom “subjectivity is structured like a language” [Lacan, 1978], and who can cast an identification with the phallic law as the structuring principle past which identities cannot be thought. This Lacan is the one who gives a profound glimpse into the functioning of totalization, where positive limits—Ideology writ large—foreclose speaking at the horizon of being. It is this Lacan who can be well criticized for falsely universalizing a particular set of historically located sexual relations, who

imagines as binding on all human beings a few conventions of power/knowledge which date not more than a few centuries in a few places, and who grandiosely touts patriarchy. It is probably this Lacan whom I shall most want to defend.<sup>26</sup>

On the other hand, in the last few years another Lacan has come forward from his grave, firstly in the books of Slavoj Zizek, but also in the associated writing of thinkers like Joan Copjec [Copjec, 1994, “Sex and the Euthanasia of Reason”], Mladen Dolar [Copjec, 1994; Zizek, 1992a], Jacques-Alain Miller [Miller, 1997], (perhaps) Ellie Ragland-Sullivan [Ragland-Sullivan, 1991] and Renata Salecl [Salecl, 1994]. Against the positive Lacanians—either advocates or critics—who see subjectivity as determined by sexuation, by the nature of one's relation to a Symbolic phallic identification, the negative Lacanians see sexuation as occurring precisely with the *failure* of identification, i.e. with the *loss* of subjectivity. Copjec writes of this

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<sup>26</sup>I shall, however, have to forego rehabilitation efforts for the positive Lacan until the section *Hegemony and Significance*, later in this chapter, and through certain parts of other later sections and chapters. To foreshadow, I might note that the rehabilitation I will later hope to accomplish concerns not any falsely ahistorical patriarchal assumptions per se, but rather the fundamental structure of Ideologies which are rather well exemplified (critically) by the positive Lacan.

radical antagonism between sex and sense.<sup>27</sup>

As Lacan puts it, 'Everything implied by the analytic engagement with human behaviour indicates not that meaning reflects the sexual, but that it makes up for it.' Sex is the stumbling-block of sense. This is not to say that sex is prediscursive; we have no intention of denying that human sexuality is the product of signification, but intend, rather, to refine this position by arguing that sex is produced by the internal limit, the failure of signification. [Copjec, 1994, p.18]

For all the Lacanians, sexual difference has the form of a fiction; none imagine the sexual categories are achievable as fixed identities within subjectivity. Sexuation is for all a contradictory, *negative*, incomplete act at the core of subjectivation. But this *negative* is of a different sort between the two Lacans. In Hegelian terms, we might say that for the positive Lacan, sex is the abstract negation of language; it expresses merely abstractly the failure of language to complete the cycle of signification which might ground subjectivity. For the negative Lacan, the negation of language by sex becomes a determinate negation. Rather than merely occupying an external limit of signification, sex *is* immanently the very negativity at the core of signification. As Copjec writes distinguishing her position from Butler's,

Sex is, then, the impossibility of completing meaning, not (as Butler's historicist/deconstructionist argument would have it) a meaning that is incomplete, unstable. Alternatively, the point is that sex is the structural incompleteness of language, not that sex is itself incomplete. . . . For sex is here not an *incomplete* entity, but a totally empty one—i.e. it is one to which no predicate can be attached. . . . *Sex serves no other function than to limit reason, to remove the subject from the realm of possible experience or pure understanding.* [Copjec, 1994, p.20-21, emphasis in original]

The contrast between the language of the

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<sup>27</sup>Here, and throughout this section, *sex* should be read in terms of 'sexual identity', that mostly of a binary gender self-identification rather than a preferential sexual partner, and not as sexual acts or their ancillaries.

positive Lacanians and negative Lacanians is clear. For example, positive Lacanian Rose, even while characterizing the fictional nature of sexual categories seems to treat them as *fait accompli*, or at very least as contradictions postponed,

For Lacan, the unconscious undermines the subject from any position of certainty, from any relation of knowledge to his or her psychic processes and history, and *simultaneously* reveals the fictional nature of the sexual category to which every human subject is *none the less assigned*. . . sexual identity operates as a law—it is something enjoined on the subject. [Rose, 1982, p.29; second emphasis added]

Or,

The subject *is therefore constituted* in language as this division or splitting. [Rose, 1982, p.31; first emphasis added]

Or,

[S]exual difference is a legislative divide which creates and reproduces its categories. [Rose, 1982, p.41]

For Rose, the division or splitting between sexual positions and/or between ego and Other may uneasily constitute subjects, but it *is* such a constitution. For the negative Lacanians, sexual positions are immediately the immanence of the *failure* of constituting subjects.

### ***A Digression on the Antithesis of Sex and Reason***

Luis Buñuel's last film, *That Obscure Object of Desire* [Buñuel, 1977], makes a gesture to the negative Lacan (quite likely Buñuel was even aware of Lacan). In a great number of films we might find an argument for the positive Lacan. A protagonist, or some other character, struggles with her (sexual) identity<sup>28</sup> throughout the film, being drawn first one

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<sup>28</sup>The sexual identity of concern, on first brush, is that identity as male or female (or neither, both, etc.), but as we see in the Buñuel's character Conchita, this *gender identity* is rather inextricably entangled with both an imaginary and symbolic sexual object choice—not just in the sense of a male vs. female sexual object, but also in senses such as many vs.

way, then another. Or perhaps a film shows the unfolding of an identity thought already complete at the beginning of the film, but revealed to have greater depth and additional facets which were brought out either through events portrayed or through self-reflection on the limits of a previous identity. After this portrayed process of identity expanding and unfolding, we may be left with the implicit or explicit moral at the end of the film that untold additional possibilities lay inside the character's identity. This sort of analysis, which in many cases need be little more than a scene-by-scene description of a film's events, is the stuff of many feminist, cultural-studies, or post-modern essays on film, which often, though not necessarily, make explicit reference to Lacan. Many of Butler's analyses, for example, take roughly this form.

Buñuel's film does not well lend itself to such an analysis. *That Obscure Object of Desire* carries out a story of the "affair" between Mathieu and Conchita, in which although Conchita agrees to live with Mathieu, at his request, she insists on remaining chaste from any sexual activity with him.

Throughout the film, Conchita insists on the importance of her virginity, although throughout suggestions are made that Conchita is promiscuous, and perhaps a prostitute. With the ongoing refusals of his advances, Mathieu becomes more and more obsessed with Conchita; but each *rapprochement* he tries to reach with his own desires toward her—whether acceptance of a Platonic relationship, sexual fulfillment, or complete abandonment of the relationship—is rebuffed by Conchita. She alternates between an apparent sexual desire for him and a complete indifference or repugnance, but in every event, her feelings are precisely opposite those which Mathieu approaches acceptance of. Conchita herself makes remarks to the effect that she changes so continuously in order that Mathieu not pin her down to a concrete nature.

All of this so far lends itself easily to a positive Lacanian/Butlerian analysis. The nature of woman, or of feminine identity, a positive Lacanian might argue, cannot be pinned down in a single category, but must remain open and contradictory. A woman might try to have a virginal identity, but this identity

might overflow to promiscuity and prostitution. She might be consumed by sexual desire for a man, but have desire spill over to repugnance. A man might have sexual desire for a woman, but it might be in the nature of this desire that she remain unavailable to him. These are perfectly ordinary positive Lacanian observations, ones contained in a pair of familiar slogans. From Freud, "There is something fundamental to desire which is antithetical to its satisfaction." From Lacan, "There is no sexual relation."

*That Obscure Object of Desire* successfully resists this interpretation through a brilliant anti-interpretive gesture by Buñuel. In a manner reminiscent of Brecht's efforts to block the suspension of disbelief, Buñuel has the role of Conchita (whose character is Spanish) played by two different actors, French Carole Bouquet and Spanish Angela Molina. Both actors are in turn overdubbed with the voice of a third French actor. Likewise, Buñuel modifies Pierre Louys' novel *La Femme et le Pantin* to have a French rather than Spanish male protagonist, but then casts Spaniard Fernando Rey as the French Mathieu, but with Rey's lines overdubbed by French actor Michel Piccoli. The differences between French and Spanish characters or actors are not in themselves necessarily of any significance (in other films it would be merely a matter of accident), but the imagined differences between French and Spanish identities is one of the subcurrents of the story of *That Obscure Object of Desire*. If Buñuel chooses these particular combinations of French and Spanish actors to play and speak his roles it is as a gesture against the fixity of meaning which his characters imagine in national identities.

The immediate response of a positive Lacanian interpreter of Buñuel's film might be to try to read the use of the two/three actors portraying Conchita in the light of her own hypothesis of the non-fixity of sexual identity. Indeed, a viewer can hardly resist hypothesizing in this framework until the film itself slaps us down for trying. What seems natural as an interpretive strategy of the two/three Conchitas is to imagine that Buñuel intended to convey the notion that Conchita's identity was sufficiently unfixed or multiple that its different sides might well be portrayed by entirely different actors. The interpretive hypothesis springs immediately to mind, and we try merely to fill in the symbolisms of the two Conchitas. Perhaps the two actors represent the

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few vs. no sexual object and different meanings of sexual object choice.

different characters of the French and Spanish, we speculate. When that proves untenable, we try to see how the two Conchitas represent virgin and whore within the character's identity. Failing any consistency in that interpretation we suggest that the two symbolize the sides of Conchita affirmative and critical of a relationship with Mathieu. But each hypothesis of the difference in "meaning" of the two Conchitas unravels to inconsistency with Buñuel allowing absolutely no consistent "interpretation" of his use of two (three) actors in the role.

What makes Conchita desirable to Mathieu, and what makes this desire so obscure, is precisely that she, as a sexual being and sexual object, lacks an identity. She is ineffable (and therein desirable) *not* because her identity is so transcendent, so ambiguous, or so transgressive. She is ineffable because she simply does not have an identity (with herself). In playing through all the different "sides" of Conchita, Buñuel is just playing a jest on his audience, pretending that her sexual identity might lie in the unity, synthesis or conjunction of virgin/whore, French/Spanish, intimate/unattainable, or the like, when, in fact, her sexual identity (what makes her a being of desire) lies precisely in her absolute non-(self-)identity.

### Various Negativities

The type of negativity pertaining to gender subjectivity flows in the circuit of the Symbolic Order. The positive Lacanians (perhaps with the exception of Felix Guattari, particularly in his last book [Guattari, 1992/95]) cast the Symbolic Order as a kind of *indefinite* negotiation of intersubjectivity. The Symbolic Order, for them, like the subject, is a book in the process of being written. However, this *postponed* Symbolic Order is still much too ontologized for Lacanians of a negative cast. Ragland-Sullivan, for example, writes,

[W]e are surrounded by primordial losses that reappear as effects in every human act. There is no *the* symbolic order then, no totalization of anything, not even drives. [Ragland-Sullivan, 1991, p.64]

She continues, interestingly, in a strikingly Deleuze/Guattarian tenor,

Repetitions prove to us that we exist, although we fade from continuities. By retrieving pieces of thought from an Other,

an opaque *savoir* just out of grasp, we speak and act, drawing on the signifying structures that in-form us in lightning flash instances. Yet, using words means canceling them from memory *as they speak us*. [p.64, all emphases in original]

Ragland-Sullivan states the negative Lacanian case for the centrality of gender in Symbolic identification, "Gender fictions are at the base of the illusion that one has or is a being" [Ragland-Sullivan, 1991, p.51]. Since under Ragland-Sullivan's reading of Lacan, the phallus is precisely the signifier of *difference as such*, lacking signified, and since masculinity is defined by an identification with this purely differential signifier, she concludes,

While the masculine is defined in opposition to the feminine, the feminine is not opposed to itself. Although subsequent unconscious signifier do imply relation based on opposition ( $S_1/S^2$ ), the first universally countable signifier for difference *qua* difference is the signifier marking gender difference as a position taken toward language and law. . . The phallic signifier, thus, denotes difference as arising in reference to a null set, in reference to void or loss. [Ragland-Sullivan, 1991, p.57]

It is really Slavoj Žižek here, paralleled in many other places, who succeeds in generalizing and clarifying the more profound anti-essentialist gesture of the negative Lacanians against their "anti-essentialist" critics. Ragland-Sullivan characterizes such a move by Žižek,

While deconstruction and Marxim [sic] define themselves in anti-essentialist terms as affirming an irreducible plurality of theories and studies that depend on the radical contingency of the social-historical process, Žižek says that Lacan, by contrast, 'enables us to grasp this plurality itself as a multitude of responses to the same impossible real kernel'" [Ragland-Sullivan, 1991, p.67; quoting Žižek, 1989, p.4]

### A Recurrence of a Digression: The Asymmetry of Difference

Despite the incompleteness of the above digression, in *That Obscure Object of Desire*, it would be a

mistake to assume that Conchita's female sexual identity is the only one lacking self-identity. Just as much, but in a different, dependent respect, Mathieu is a non-self-identical sexual being. A hint to this non-self-identity is given in Buñuel's gesture of separating the actor who visually portrays Mathieu from the one who vocally portrays him, as well as with the onion-skin construction of Mathieu as a Frenchman within a Spaniard within a Frenchman within a Spaniard, at least reading the meta-narrative of the film's creation. However, we are fortunately able to read the "impossible real kernel" within the film's frame apart from reference to the casting of Mathieu's portrayal.

Ragland-Sullivan in naming the phallus as the signifier of *difference* as such really just iterates the familiar Lacanian slogan that "men claim the phallus, but women *are* the phallus" in negative Lacanian terms. Mathieu, in claiming a male sexual identity, does no more than claim to be self-identical insofar as he desires that *other* identity known as woman. His desire is constituted through the desire of the other. But this other fails to be "pinned-down" as the object of his desire, not just insofar as her desires vacillate in a manner he cannot catch, but insofar as she lacks any kernel of self-identity whatsoever.

Desire is always a relation of non-identity, of *difference*. Mathieu has a sexual identity solely inasmuch as he marks himself as different from, as desiring, a being whose strict nature is non-existing.

A feminine identity is not marked by such a reflection, a woman simply *is not*, she has no need to *not be* something else.

The end of *That Obscure Object of Desire* serves as a comedic-grotesque reminder of the impossibility of Mathieu constituting himself through a desire or relation which marks anything other than pure difference. Throughout the film, Conchita hints that if only Mathieu were to marry her they could have a realized sexual relationship insofar as she could then have a real concrete existence within the Symbolic Law. Finally at the end of the film, Mathieu comes to the point of giving up his desire for Conchita, although it means necessarily a simultaneous abandonment of his illusion of self-identity. During the argument/ *rapprochement* at the end at which Mathieu abandons Conchita the camera moves to a shop window behind them in which a wedding dress is being sewn, then they are all obliterated by a terrorist bomb: Mathieu, Conchita, the dress and

shop. As soon as desire is abandoned, but also as soon as it becomes real concrete rather than pure difference, existence stops.

### **The Antinomies of Gender**

Let us (finally) get right to the point about the negative Lacan and sexuation: Sex has nothing to do with a different relation to signification, or to a "master signifier." Everyone fails equally to relate successfully to signification. The differences between the sexes is precisely in situating this failure, these antinomies of sexuation wherein, paraphrasing Kant, sex inevitably falls into contradiction whenever it seeks to signify itself. The difference between the sexes is rather the difference between the dynamical (male) and mathematical (female) antinomies. Such a diagnosis, which I find *compelling* more than I necessarily do *convincing* was made first (and *only*, so far as I know, except herein) by Copjec in "Sex and the Euthanasia of Reason" [Copjec, 1994] and by Žižek in *Tarrying With the Negative* [Žižek, 1993].

Copjec characterizes the antinomy of signification:

[The] rule of language enjoins us not only to believe in the inexhaustibility of the process of meaning, in the fact that there will always be another signifier to determine retroactively the meaning of all that have come before, it also requires us to presuppose 'all the other signifiers', the total milieu which is necessary for the meaning of one. The completeness of the system of signifier is both demanded and precluded by the same rule of language. Without the totality of the system of signifier there can be no determination of meaning, and yet this very totality would prevent the *successive* consideration of signifier which the rule requires. [Copjec, 1994, p.19]

One recognizes at once the parallel between this antinomy of signification, and Kant's first (mathematical) antinomy [Kant, 1965, p.396 (A426/B454)]. When the question is posed whether the world has a beginning in time, and a limitation in space, both the thesis of such limits and the antithesis of infinite space and time are demanded equally by our conception of the world as an object of experience. On the one hand, the thesis points to the absurdity of

experience synthesizing a simultaneous infinity of experience of an infinite world. On the other, the antithesis points to the symmetric absurdity of finding a limit within experience, past which phenomena end, and which would place the objective world in relation to the non-objects lying outside it. Kant's solution is to assert at once that *there is no phenomenon that is not an object of possible experience* and that *not all phenomena may become objects of experience*. Both the thesis and antithesis are negated, shown false, insofar they share a common illusion in conceiving the world as a thing in itself. Rather, critical reason shows us,

[T]he world does not exist in itself, independently of the regressive series of my representations, it exists *in itself* neither as an *infinite* whole nor as a *finite* whole. It exists only in the empirical regress of the series of appearances, and is not to be met with as something in itself. [Kant, 1965, p.448 (A505/B533)]

Whither the world, thither signification!

### **Does a Brain-in-a-Vat Have a Gender?**

Like the world, woman does not exist in the very Kantian sense that it is impossible (within the Symbolic) to render of woman a judgement of existence [Copjec, 1994, p.34]. “[I]n order to say ‘it exists’, it is also necessary to be able to construct it, that is to say, to know how to find where this existence is” [Lacan, 1975, p.94, quoted by Copjec, 1994, p.32]. One might assume that man, resting on an identical antinomy of signification similarly does not exist. Copjec does not:

[Why is it] assumed that the philosophical subject must be neuter? . . . What grounds it, those who hold it suppose, is the subject's very definition as constitutionally devoid of all positive characteristics. From this we may infer that those who desexualize the subject regard sex as a positive characteristic. . . [But] *male and female, like being, are not predicates, which means that rather than increasing our knowledge of the subject, they qualify the mode of the failure of our knowledge*. [Copjec, 1994, p.24-5, emphasis in original]

A predicative gender would be a mere assignment of traits to define a gender: A woman is a being who cares for children; a man

is a being who wears a corset (as with the Ibitoe of New Guinea); etc. As “sex radicals” like Butler are quick to point out, the particular predicates defining a gender seem to be historically and synchronously open ended: traits being recruited to define gender, traits falling from significance, or even traits reversing their gender meaning. If we start with the *a priori* that gender is predicative, then the sex radicals have a point. The “predicates” ‘(is) male’ and ‘(is) female’ sure do seem open ended. The negative Lacanians radicalize (*find the roots of*) the sex radicals by noticing that the judgment of gender precedes the almost comical and trivial predicative judgements we mistake for gender.

Copjec's surprising difference wherein we have no trouble asserting the existence of man parallels our surprise at finding Kant asserting of the dynamical antinomies that *both sides* are true, rather than neither. For Copjec and Zizek,

Since the existence of the universe was regarded in the case of the woman as impossible because no limit could be found to the chain of signifier. . . . [T]he limit on the ‘sinister’ [i.e. left], or dynamical, side does not produce the possibility of metalanguage, but simply covers over its lack. This is accomplished by adding to the series of phenomena (or signifier) a negative judgement regarding what cannot be included in the series. [Copjec, 1994, p.37]

In Kant's third antinomy precisely the same *negative element as limit* occurs. The complete determination of events by natural laws of causality is, for Kant, *consistent* with the existence of a separate determination by freedom. The consistency of the antitheses, as opposed to their mutual inadequacy rests on the different arithmetic nature of the sets of dynamical and mathematical antinomies. In the mathematical antinomy, the *addition* of phenomena to a series produced contrary false conclusions when this indefinite addition was pushed past its inherent limit to address the question of the totality of existence. However, in dynamical antinomies, what is performed is a *subtraction*. Taken away from the totality of causes is free action, which then allows reason to form a closure of causality by the world's limitation to natural causality. The *world* which could not exist as a totality of phenomena is

brought into existence as a totality of causation through the *exclusion* of non-natural causation. But once the world is so conceivable as a closed totality of causes, its ultimate determination as *object* by other causes (freedom) becomes graspable by reason.

The same circuit of limitation as in Kant's third antinomy determines *man* as a positive existence (albeit, a fictitious one). Man—whose name names a signifier, a mark, not a being—is defined by *lack* via the castration complex. Man's is the existence which lacks the Phallus. Woman, on the other hand, lacks nothing, and thereby fails every judgement of existence. The limitation of signification by a transcendental signifier he cannot claim to master allows man (the category) to claim a positive totality of signification. That “all pretensions to masculinity are, then, sheer imposture, just as every display of femininity is sheer masquerade” [Copjec, 1994, p.41] does not contradict the existence of man—to the contrary, it is the clearest expression of this existence. Lack is simply the meaning of existence within the Symbolic Order; hence, as previously quoted on page 45,

While the masculine is defined in opposition to [as lacking] the feminine, the feminine is not opposed to itself. [Ragland-Sullivan, 1991, p.57]

### The Logical Structure of the Antitheses

In his lecture, “A Love Letter” [Lacan, 1975/82, p.149], Lacan first presents his *formulae of sexuation*. As Copjec and Žižek each point out, these formulae precisely mirror the forms of the two types of Kantian antinomies:

Dynamical/ Male	Mathematical/ Female
$x \neg F(x)$	$\neg x \neg F(x)$
$x F(x)$	$\neg x F(x)$

The distinction here lies with two quite different negations of phenomena. Žižek writes,

This difference in the structure of mathematical and dynamical antinomies hinges on the double negation which defines the status of phenomena:

noumena is a non-phenomenon, a limitation of phenomena, and, furthermore, the field of phenomena itself is never complete or whole. Mathematical antinomies are antinomies of the “non-all” of the phenomenal field: they result from the paradox that, although there is no object given to us in intuition which does not belong to the phenomenal field, this field is never “all,” never complete. Dynamical antinomies, on the contrary, are antinomies of universality: logical connection of the phenomena in the universal causal nexus necessarily involves an exception, the noumenal act of freedom. [Žižek, 1993, p.55]

So with the dynamical antinomy of causation and freedom, Kant asserts at once that every phenomenal X belongs within the causal order ( $x F(x)$ ) and that there is something (freedom) which lies outside the causal order ( $x \neg F(x)$ ). On the other hand, with the mathematical antinomy of the finiteness or infiniteness of time, Kant asserts at once that it is *neither* the case that there are phenomena not preceded by other phenomena ( $\neg x \neg F(x)$ ) *nor* that all phenomena have precedent phenomena ( $\neg x F(x)$ ). Similarly, in space neither are any phenomena limited by an end to space, nor do all phenomena have phenomena beyond themselves.

Read within the formulae of sexuation, the “predicate” Phi is simply ‘submitted to the Phallic Law’. So whereas in male identity everything is submitted to the Phallic Law ( $x F(x)$ ) just inasmuch as there is there is something in masculinity free of the Phallic Law ( $x \neg F(x)$ ), in female identity not everything is submitted to the Phallic Law ( $\neg x F(x)$ ) just inasmuch as there is nothing free of the Phallic Law ( $\neg x \neg F(x)$ ). We can make an attempt to understand these formulae by way of the Freudian parable of the primordial sons who kill an originary father in a struggle to gain sexual access to women. In the parable, the dead father comes back as the Phallic Law confining the sons' pleasure within Symbolic dictates. In the parable, as well as in the classical Freudian Oedipal complex, all those claiming masculine identity are subject to the Phallic Law, but strictly on the condition that there is *one* representative of masculinity who escapes the dictates of Law, who therein serves as the very foundation of Phallic Law.

On the female side of the formulae the logic is more difficult. Not everything in woman is subject the Phallic Law insofar as the Symbolic is insufficient to name woman. Something in feminine identity eludes every attempt to subjectivize it within a Symbolic frame. However, Lacan does not thereby project a pure domain of femininity outside of Law and language, in the manner certain French Lacanian feminists might (Irigaray, Wittig, Kristeva). This is the

point of the second portion of the formula. Merely because the Symbolic does not grasp feminine identity does not mean that there is some other *positive* feminine identity independent of the Symbolic order. In other words: there is still no *thing* free of Phallic Law ( $\neg x \neg F(x)$ ). The Symbolic cannot encompass woman because she *does not exist*, not because she has another nature parallel to the Symbolic masculine one.