

# I

## “On the Signification of the Phallus” (1958) According to Lacan

Masculine (Symbolic)	Feminine (Real)
HOMME (L'UN)	FEMME (L'AUTRE)
$\exists_x \cdot \overline{\Phi}_x$ $\forall_x \cdot \Phi_x$	$\overline{\exists}_x \cdot \overline{\Phi}_x$ $\overline{\forall}_x \cdot \Phi_x$
$\S$ $\Phi \leftarrow$	$S(\mathcal{A})$ $a$ $\Upsilon_a$

The idea that either Freud or Lacan can contribute anything new to an understanding of the sexual difference has been rejected by many American feminists and psychoanalysts as well. By retracing the history of one small disagreement, we shall try to put that view into perspective with the hope of redressing a balance that advances the study of psychoanalysis as a theory of how mind is constituted and linked to the body. In his return to Freud, Lacan maintained that not only does conscious thought emanate from unconscious thought, moreover, it bifurcates into four different ways of thinking depending on how the sexual difference is interpreted: (1) the “normative” masquerade, (2) the neuroses (obsession and hysteria), (3) perversion, and (4) the psychoses. These are structurations of desire that join mind to body, and are not meant here as pathologies or descriptions of varying sexual behaviors.

One of Lacan’s principle theses is that while there is a sexual rapport in the animal world that seems to be based on instinct, humans have never had such a rapport because of the perturbations caused by the linkage of fantasy and language to the phallus ( $\Phi$ ) and castration ( $-\Phi$ ), as well as to the objects that first cause desire. Thus, each person’s most basic partner is his or her own unconscious Other, not the other of the relationship. Lacanian scholar and analyst Geneviève Morel goes so far as to call

this an equation and principle thesis in Lacan: “‘Sexual non-rapport’ is an equivalent of the ‘phallus.’”<sup>1</sup> Contrary to Freud, Lacan stressed that the “meaning of the phallus” is linked to the fact that the penis is not the phallus.

The psychoanalytic debates of the twenties and thirties among Karl Abraham, Karl Jung, Karen Horney, Hélène Deutsch, Ernest Jones, Melanie Klein, Hannah Segal, and other post-Freudians could not make sense anymore than could Freud, of his theories on feminine sexuality and the phallus. Each analyst had a different theory of how feminine sexuality differed from masculine sexuality, and what the stakes truly were in what Freud called *Realität* (psychic reality). Although these debates were passionate, they never derived a thesis that elaborated a logic of psychoanalysis, not in Freud’s essays such as “Some Psychic Consequences on the Anatomical Distinction between the Sexes” (1925), “Female Sexuality” (1931), and “Femininity” (1932), nor in those written by his colleagues.<sup>2</sup> Since those days, psychology, sociology and poststructuralism, among others of the “social sciences,” have taken up the question of the meaning of the sexual difference, but have not evolved a logic such as Lacan’s. Lacan sought to make “scientific” sense of the *sexual difference* itself, not only within the field of psychoanalysis but by borrowing from other fields and, thereby, extending the meaning and scope of psychoanalysis, logic, epistemology, and science, among other areas of study.

The three Freud essays just mentioned bring up the question that bothers many readers of Lacan. Why would he return to, or retain, Freud’s use of the provocative word *phallus*? If we scrutinize some of the disagreements regarding the term *phallus*, starting with Lacan’s differing from Freud over the meaning of the word itself, perhaps we can shed light on why some contemporary feminist thinkers such as Luce Irigaray and others have (mis-)taken Lacan for Freud, arguing that he equated the word *phallus* with the biological male organ, as Freud generally did. Lacan maintained that, from early childhood on, individuals distinguish among the penis as a real organ, the phallus as an imaginary object, and the phallic function of “no” as causative of a lack-in-being (or castration). So far-ranging is Lacan’s thinking here that he gradually equates the early perception—within the first few months—of the sexual difference with the construction of a dialectical base of “mind”: The latter emanates, strangely enough, from the structuration of desire between losing an object and wanting its return. Paradoxically, gender-based “essentialist” misreadings of Lacan’s thought remain closer to Freud’s biological reductionisms than to Freud’s continual efforts to separate psychic reality from biological realities and exterior sensory data.

In this regard, Ernest Jones wrote: “I think that the Viennese could reproach us [Freud and his followers] with too high an evaluation of primordial fantasy life, at the expense of exterior reality. To that we will answer that no serious danger exists that analysts will neglect exterior reality insofar as it is always possible for them to underestimate Freudian doctrine on the importance of psychic reality.”<sup>3</sup> In that multiple issues are raised in any consideration of what links psychic reality to the body, Lacan

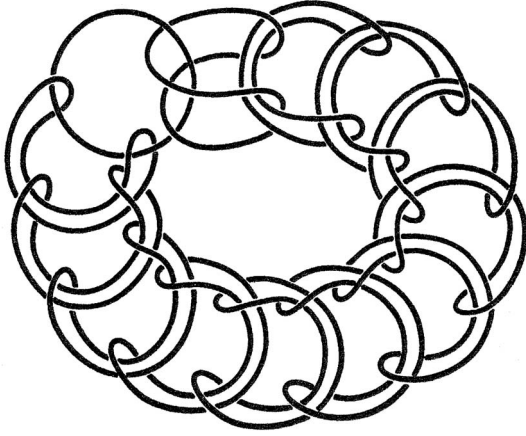
followed Freud’s own efforts to decipher the meaning of the phallus. But Lacan’s attention to Freud here is also merely a touchstone for another investigation—for answering the question of what constitutes “reality.” Lacan points out that even for Freud the concept of reality remained simplistically split between exterior reality of sense data (*Wirklichkeit*) and interior psychic reality (*Realität*).<sup>4</sup>

Freud first made this distinction in *The Project* for a scientific psychology in 1895.<sup>5</sup> By 1889 he had put together the idea of a contrasted pair: *Realität* versus the wish or dream. Equating *Realität* with the *objective* psychic reality that accomplishes a desire or wish, he agreed that human psychism emanates from there. Lacan argued that one sees in Freud’s equation of psychic reality with a fulfilled wish the incipient notion of a reality-based ego that marks Freud’s second topology; there the ego serves as the mediator between the id and the superego. Be it as a wish or an interceding ego, Freud maintained that the nature of psychic *Realität* is specified in its being constituted by the realization of a desire (Westerhausen, p. 34). Moreover, the wish or dream accomplishes an objective concerning the *Realität*. But in what would the realization of dream desire consist? Freud admits in *Traumdeutung* (*The Interpretation of Dreams*) that he does not know.<sup>6</sup>

But Freud had another notion of reality as well, one following a “master discourse” kind of logic. He believed that the observable objects of the world bore the “reality” of the interpretation(s) he attributed to them. For example, he did not doubt that the “ideal couple” was derived from the oneness or unity of the mother and infant dyad and was, indeed, an objective reality. In this, he was a kind of phenomenological “empiricist” who took his own observations and interpretations to be positive facts, although he continually emended his interpretations in footnotes, addenda, and through an essay style of constant correction of his own erroneous views.

From the start of his teaching, Lacan began to restructure Freud’s binary splits between reality and fantasy, (biology and psyche, and so on). This culminated in his own equation of fantasy with reality, wherein he proposed that unities of “natural” rapport between mother and infant only exists at the level of imaginary fantasy. So strong is this fantasy, Lacan insisted, that it eventually becomes the pervasive myth of a totalized essential Woman—a kind of Ur-mother—who is thought (in Kleinian fashion) to contain the object(s) that Lacan says cause desire—the gaze, the breast, the urinary flow, the feces, the voice, the (imaginary) phallus, the nothing, and the phoneme. The mother’s constant temporal comings and goings are experienced by her infant, not so much as organ losses, but as a fading away of the grounding whose force field is the surface of the infant’s own skin. The infant takes its body to be an imaginary consistency or a surface cut into by the real of the holes created by maternal absences and disappearances.

Jeanne Lafont refers to this simple topology of the one-dimensional border (or edge) and the hole as being written like this:



The hole and its edge are the base grammar of the real. In other words, the real is the “reality principle” which one is always pushed to retrieve, refind, and expel because it “ex-sists” outside the pleasures of imaginary bodily consistency and is felt as a rupture of well-being and homogeneous comfort.<sup>7</sup> Because the real was first created by the traumatic effects of loss, it must continually be mastered in that it is the central structure of being. Thus, its first form is that of a central void ( $\emptyset$ ) that continually shatters or, at least, perturbs an incipient ego’s sense of consistency and continuity. Insofar as language gradually fills the holes, as well as being disrupted by them, it contains its own material referent in the “letter” (*l’être*) of being, as opposed to the signifier of language. No pre-given metalanguage serves as the source of thought and memory, then. Rather than emanating from deep thought, language ties itself to the unary traits of imaginary identifications, real affects, symbolic conventions, and symptomatic sublimations of an ideal “Father’s Name” linked to a mother’s enigmatic desire and *jouissance*—Lacan’s formulae for the “Oedipus complex.”

The Lacanian phallus is an imaginary copula, then, seeming to join the two sexes for reproduction and/or love. But in the unconscious, the phallus is not inscribed as a link to language. It is, rather, an effect of difference. Patients of Freud’s attested, in fact, to its imaginary properties of semblance or fantasy, Lacan taught. But they did not conceptualize the phallus as lying behind the masks that make the visible seem to be itself, and behind the words that try to name the real, while, instead, they repress, deny, repudiate, or foreclose it. For this reason alone, Lacan denounced Aristotle for basing logic on the grammar of language (Morel, pp. 97–98). The reality of language lies in its duplicity, not in its truth. In the late fifties Lacan portrayed the phallus as a mask, and “normative” sexual prescriptions of a given culture as a comic masquerade. One sees why he would claim that we see the masquerade at work more clearly in Greek and Roman art, or in Rabelais in the French Renaissance, than in contemporary Western

art where the Father’s Name signifier has come unhooked from the law, thus forestalling comedy at its own expense (Morel, p. 21). Such comedy is to be found, nonetheless, in television sitcoms and in other genres as well.

Later, we will return to the importance of Freud’s efforts to distinguish between a truly *real* psychic reality (*Realität*) and one that accounts in a radically different way for external reality (*Wirklichkeit*). He makes the distinction precisely on the issue of the phallic phase. Indeed, Freud’s claims regarding the phallus are responsible for the furor regarding such a notion that raged within the psychoanalytic movement of his day. For the moment, we will leave aside what Lacan called Freud’s connections of desire to reality, to focus, rather, on Freud’s first mentions of the phallus in 1923, 1924, and 1925 when he added the idea of a new libidinal stage of evolution he called the *phallic phase*, common to both sexes. In the heated debates that took place among analysts from 1920 to 1935 regarding the phallic phase, the key issue was their attempt to understand the true nature of the phallus in relation to the action of accomplishing a desire. As we know, the disagreements were wide flung: Karl Abraham and Melanie Klein viewed the phallus as an imaginary part-object that could just as easily be symbolized by the breast as by any other organ; Karen Horney, Ernest Jones, and Karl Jung argued for equal and equivalent principles of male womb envy and female penis envy, the Elektra complex equaling the Oedipus complex, and so on.

Lacan returned to these biologically oriented debates to note that the organ was always erroneously taken to be the-thing-in-itself. He argued that this phenomenological view kept the analysts in question from answering their own queries. Approaching the question of the sexual difference, not from the viewpoint of organ reality, but as something to be understood from the representational and libidinal registers of the imaginary, the symbolic, and the real, Lacan, nonetheless, paid honor to Freud for having seen and articulated the idea that unconscious phenomena are at issue in the enigmatic meaning of the sexual difference. Beyond serving as a mask over the sexual difference, or as an abstract signifier that marks it—that is, as a propositional function—the “meaning of the phallus” is also a real sexual genital jouissance ( $\Phi+$ ) that links the body to conscious acts and thoughts via an everflowing unconscious language of fantasy and desire.

However, Lacan’s linking of the body to language by way of unconscious fantasy, is never a light-hearted notion. He calls the fantasy a “canker” that appears in the guise of enjoying the body—enjoying the Other as body, as well—in such a way as to disorganize one’s experience of one’s own body. This is a very different idea of the body as fantasized (imaginary body) from Descartes’s concept of it as a *res extensa* imagined in a pregiven space. For Descartes’s whole body, Lacan substitutes a body that necessitates another kind of space: a topological space that is not limited to the three dimensions of the imaginary, symbolic, and the real (Morel, pp. 22–23.)

Stressing that Freud never clarified his many thoughts on the phallus, Lacan points to “The Infantile Genital Organization: An Interpolation into Theory of

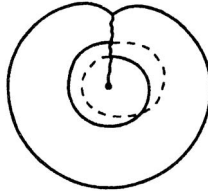
Sexuality" (1923) where Freud called the phallus an imaginary object. Throughout all his texts commenting on the phallus, Freud alternated between describing it as illusory—an imaginary object or illusory psychic reality—and as the masculine genital organ. Like Elizabeth Grosz and others, psychoanalytic theorist Anne Berman has, somewhat accusatorially, suggested that it was Lacan—not Freud—who introduced the distinction between the penis and the phallus.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, in many English mistranslations of Freud's precise terms, one would not necessarily know that the distinction is Freud's own. In his article "The Infantile Genital Organization" (1923), for instance, one easily sees that Lacan's literal and correct reading of Freud's German would never have resulted in his claiming to introduce contrasts between the penis and the phallus if they had not already been clearly present in Freud.<sup>9</sup>

However, it was Lacan who added the proposition that the phallus orients "sexuality"—and, thereby, mentality—in a minimal number of interpretations of the sexual difference that are based on how a child identifies with the signifier and "agency" of the Father's Name, as transmitted by the mother's unconscious desire. This proposition claims that one's sexual identity has a (phallic) basis in terms of which the sexual difference has been interpreted as a castration to be repressed, denied, repudiated, or foreclosed. For example, the obsessional (neurotic) takes knowledge as his master signifier— $S_2$  reduced to  $S_1$ —as the phallic mark of his power. The hysteric (neurotic) identifies with her father, or a very close replica of him, in an equation of identity, knowledge, and "being" with sexuation:  $\$ \rightarrow S_1$ . The "normative" subject of a given social order takes the values and masquerades of the reigning symbolic Other as the "phallus" to please, or to be:  $\emptyset/\Phi$ . The perverse subject identifies with being the object (*a*) that would fill the Other's lack, which he equates with bringing jouissance to The Woman, or her feminine stand-in:  $\emptyset/a$ . The psychotic forecloses the phallic "no" which imposes a lack-in-being on other subjects, resulting in the identification of a whole subject with a whole Other:  $S \cong O$ .

These are the different pathways desire may take vis-à-vis the castrating "no" pronounced by the real father of jouissance, thereby dividing the sexes by placing an incest taboo on the infant/mother dyad. In his later seminars Lacan argues that the "no" creates holes in the symbolic, placing gaps or impassés between signifiers, and "cuts" in(to) the supposed consistency of the imaginary body, cuts whose effects create erogenous zones of desire at the surface of the real of flesh.<sup>10</sup> In other words, the losses of the primary object-cause-of-desire bring together the "psychic" operations of the desire to replace a lost trait or pleasure and the construction of the field of the partial drives (the invocatory, oral, and anal drives), all referred to the primary scopical one.<sup>11</sup> The second-level effect of the phallic interdiction is a "no" to being All One sex, an androgyn.

The result of the anatomical difference is interpreted in the imaginary and symbolic such that neither sex "has" the phallus, and neither sex "is" it. The masculine/feminine opposition is not a binary difference then. Rather, a subtle dialectic of desire

organizes itself around the phallic signifier whose effects are primary, but which functions subsequently as a third term: a signifier without a signified Lacan says  $(\Phi)/-$ . Moreover, the third-term effect produces a quadrature, mathematically speaking. That is, three cannot cohere topologically at the place or site where the third category (the real) “ek-sists” on the inverse side of a cross-cap



or Moebius strip [8] without making a kind of hole *and* knot at the point of the twist or turn. Lafont says:

The cross-cap is a Moebius Strip where the hole would be reduced to a point, ignored and invisible. It is also the adjunction to a Moebius strip of a particular stopper, named  $[(a)]$  by Lacan, and which has the particularity of being bilateral itself both in carrying, not only the central point which structures the cross-cap, but also the double buckle of a Moebius strip. That is to say that it is at the center of this dialectic between the hole and its edges. (*Topologie lacanienne . . .*, pp. 18–19)

Indeed, any male or female may well *pretend* not to have “it” (“phallic” power or its desirability) even though one has “it”—be it as a corporation president or the mother in the kitchen running it (Morel, p. 26). In this sense, the phallus is commensurate with the master signifier ( $S_1$ ). By reading on the obverse of the power/desire dialectic, by aiming askew, one sees the Freudian distinction between the penis meaning a biological organ and the phallus taken as a psychic reality. Lacan first valorized this concept of the phallus, not realizing, perhaps, that it would lead him to found a new concept of the phallus. Lacan’s reconceptualization occurs, paradoxically, not at the point where the terms *penis* or *phallus* are used interchangeably, but at the points where Freud used the terms interchangeably in trying unsuccessfully to distinguish between *Realität* and *Wirklichkeit*.

Freud’s concept of *Realität*, Lacan argues, shows the phallus to be an imaginary representation of an object of desire—the penis, the father himself, or a baby—and in *Wirklichkeit*, the phallus is a datum of biological reality in the sense of an organ that enjoys: that is, the penis itself. Lacan argued that Ernest Jones’s errors were good examples of how all the post-Freudians of the twenties and thirties made egregious mistakes in proposing their own imaginary delineations. Indeed, their interpretations reduced psychoanalysis to the positivistic study we now call psychology.<sup>12</sup>

Jones, Lacan said, simply could not figure out how to give a symbolic status to the phallus. For Lacan, “symbolic status” always implied a logic of the signifier as that which implies lack ( $\$$ ) by representing a subject for another signifier. Going back to Aristotle’s logic of class and attribute, Lacan argues that language remained insufficient and an obstacle to explaining the questions Aristotle raised. Lacan stressed, rather, Gottlieb Frege’s, Ludwig Wittgenstein’s, and Ferdinand de Saussure’s findings: That the signifier always differs from itself—( $a \neq a$ ); “a” does not equal “a”. “I” does not equal itself from one speech act to the next; Frege, for example, was discontent with the linguistic expression “subject attribute.” Lacan returned to Freud’s laws of the unconscious—condensation and displacement—and Jakobson’s discovery of metaphor and metonymy as the two principle axes of language, to demonstrate that the laws of the signifier *are* those of metaphor and metonymy. This means, as Geneviève Morel puts it, that “according to its context, the signifier can take on any value” (Morel, pp. 29–31). By exchanging the logical terms *function*, *argument*, *agent* for the grammatical ones, *subject*, *verb*, *attribute*, Lacan also borrowed “arms” from Frege for showing how logic unsticks itself from grammar. In this context, in the 1970s, Lacan proposed the phallus as a function of a sexuated subject ( $\Phi$ ) where “x” represents the subject (Morel, p. 31).

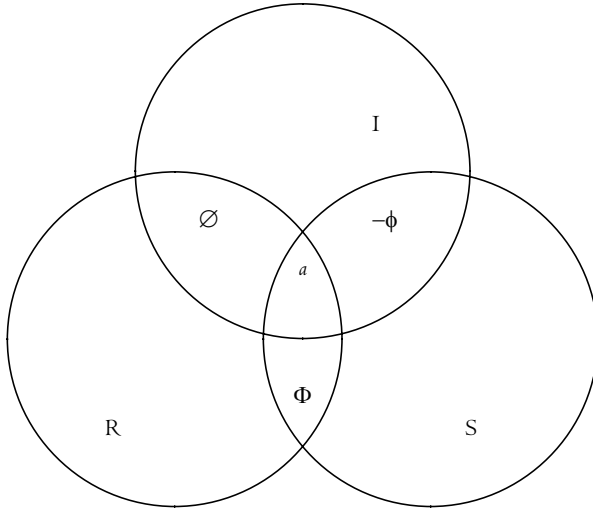
By not imagining the quadratic complexity of psychic reality, Jones claimed one can reconcile the irreconcilable: One could easily join *Realität* to *Wirklichkeit* in a simplistic, analogical reductionism. In his articles on feminine sexuality, for example, Jones takes the phallus to be a penis and reduces the function of the organ to penetration. Desire—conceived of as the accomplishment of a reality or a wish as Freud implied in describing *Realität*—was relegated by his followers to the level of a real (as in factual reality) or natural satisfaction. Thus, Jones’s concept of wish as desire has nothing to do with the unconscious desire Lacan intuited in Freud, and defined as the gap or splitting between the need for satisfaction and the demand for love in “The Signification. . .”.<sup>13</sup> Lacan wrote in 1958:

By a reversal that is not simply a negation of the negation, the power of pure loss emerges from the residue of an obliteration. For the unconditional element of demand, desire substitutes the “absolute” condition: this condition unties the knot of that element in the proof that love is resistant to the satisfaction of a need. Thus desire is neither the appetite for satisfaction, nor the demand for love, but the difference that results from the subtraction of the first from the second, the phenomenon of their splitting.

Indeed, the unique constitutive reference for unconscious desire is that language be oriented by the primordial objects-cause-of-desire whose symbol—the *a*—lies at the heart of the three jouissances whose logic Lacan formalized in the Borromean knot where orders of the real, symbolic, and imaginary intersect. Between the symbolic and the real, he placed the symbolic phallus ( $\Phi$ ), equated with the language and concepts of reality given by a local/universal order. Between orders of the symbolic and imaginary,



he placed the imaginary phallus ( $-\phi$ ) by which he marked castration as a gap between a thing and its name, thereby representing a point of lack in the subject that gives rise to a “sense” (*sens*) beyond signification ( $\$$ ). And between the imaginary and the real, he situated the Other *jouissance*, sometimes marking the primary real of chaos and fragmentation, with a void at its center ( $\emptyset$ ):<sup>14</sup>



In the 1950s, desire becomes the unconscious question in the mother’s discourse that refers itself to the signifier of the Father’s Name, in reference to the third part of this dialectic: The child as phallus, or object of desire. In his last formula for the paternal metaphor (or Oedipal complex), Lacan rewrote Freud’s Oedipus complex to argue that one “identity” solution to the lack-of-being-whole, created by the sexual divide, is to seek to fill the void left in its wake by simulacra of the lost object ( $a$ ) through identifications.<sup>15</sup> The object ( $a$ ) is proximate to unary traits ( $S_1$ )—indivisible, single strokes of identification—taken from the real, imaginary, and symbolic orders. Thus, the unary trait’s own absolute density is a coalescence of traits from each of these orders, with a preponderance of emphasis given to the “force field” of which every drive is in ascendance over another.

And the drives emanate from what Lacan, in 1960, described as the first eight objects-cause-of-desire, which are both constitutive of an Ur-lining of the subject and without specularity or alterity. In “*Le sinthome: un mixte de symptôme et fantasme*,” Miller describes the barred subject as a void: One goes from the hole made by the perception of the sexual difference, the imaginary  $-\phi$ , to the subject emptied of enjoyment ( $\$$ ); that is, one goes from the hole made by the loss of the object  $a$  to the lack of enjoyment (from  $\emptyset$  to  $\$$ ), insofar as its absence reflects traits of a positivized identity, but without representation.<sup>16</sup> In his Seminars on James Joyce, Lacan maintained that Joyce sought to fill the void by making the real voice suture all the crevices in being and body:  $\emptyset/a$ .<sup>17</sup>

Indeed, the object  $a$  in the center of the Borromean unit articulates, as well, the  $\Phi$ ; the  $-\phi$ ; and the  $\emptyset$ : three castrations or negations. These are the three holes connected to each of the three jouissance(s). Lacan's innovation lies in his showing that the hole of the unconscious is inserted by the symbolic, which leaves positivized traces at the site of the object. Giving radically new meaning to any "materialist" theory of language, Lacan argues that the hole made by the phallic divide is one no imaginary fantasy can ever repair. The split between the sexes— $\Phi/-$ —makes the "object" itself only ever "partial"—the negativized phallus is imaginary ( $-\phi$ ); the word can never equal the voice or the "letter" in saying it all in the symbolic; the hole in the Other ( $\emptyset$ )—the Other not existing as such—acquires a pseudoexistence of alienation, given that language names affects, images, and concepts (Lafont, p. 116).

Ernest Jones depicted the phallus as an imaginary object, structured in the same mode as any other object. Thus, Jones's "phallus" has no properties of lack in the image ( $-\phi$ ); in what the word depicts ( $S_1 \rightarrow S_2$ ), nor in some supersexual libidinal phallic function ( $\Phi x; \exists x; \Phi$ ). Lacan gives three meanings of lack to the phallus, meanings on which its privilege depends. In this sense, Jones's "imaginary" is not Lacan's: Symbolizing the lack in the image  $I(\text{mage}) (\sqrt{I})$  by the *square root of the negative*, Lacan makes the image that which only partly represents what it is trying to incarnate. This matheme states the proposition that part of its meaning is always lacking in the image.<sup>18</sup> While Jones opened the door wide to object-relations theories by making of the phallus a positivized partial object—the-things-in-itself, marked by moral attributes, both external and internal, and good or bad—Lacan argued that such an inside/outside distinction is always a subjective imaginary modeled on a false image of the body. The body's seeming wholeness is divided by the image of an outside and inside, giving one the idea of volume, of the container and the contained. "In their complexity," Lacan writes in 1973, "knots are well-designed to make us relativize the supposed three dimensions of space, founded solely on the translation we give for our body in a solid volume."<sup>19</sup> Lacan pointed out that the place of the object ( $a$ ) is not *in* the mother's body, as object-relations theories claim, but *in* the fantasy. Jones's error, paradoxically, is that of any critique that attributes to the phallus qua penis the *function* of properties equatable with character attributes. Lacan accorded the phallus a function, proposing for it the status of the key signifier by which both sexes interpret their sexuality as lacking (or not) in reference to the mother's unconscious desire regarding her own sexual difference.

Giving new meaning to Freud's "The Ego and the Id" (1923), Lacan also redefines Freud's invention of an imaginary order by equating its formation with that of the ego. He follows Freud in viewing the ego as first and foremost a bodily ego. Unlike Freud, however, he argues that the ego is not merely a surface "entity," but is itself the projection of a surface.<sup>20</sup> Lacan's rethinking here is of a piece with his explanation for why we see the body in a solid body form. Although anatomy lends itself to such an interpretation, the body actually takes on that form "for the sake of our gaze" (*S. XX*, p. 133). By that he means that we see the body as whole in order to avoid seeing it as lacking, lack, paradoxically, being precisely that which the gaze shows. In "Painting,"

G erard Wajcman writes that thought and space are, indeed, coherent and homogeneous in that both are extensions that cannot be thought outside of thought. Thus, space measures thought at the level of geometry, equating proof with the visible and the quantifiable.

Even though Descartes, like Irwin Panofsky, later, uproots the object from its representation by proposing that all space is homogeneous, Lacan removes the logical flaws from Descartes’s *partes extra partes* proposal that all parts are identical, even in being different. In 1966, Lacan introduced the notion of value which can suppose an imaginary identity that is actually a measurable equality. But thought does not introduce measure—conceived of as separating things—into space. Rather, thought constitutes and builds space. But what are geometry’s measures, Wajcman asks, answering that the body is its own image given meaning: Spatial extensions and thought are reducible to the imaginary/symbolic body—to its space. Descartes’s impasse lay in his reducing visual structure to a metrical geometry that made it impossible for him to think the opposition between the desiring subject and the world of objects, enveloped as they are in the seemingly unified “clothing” of skin. Descartes’s “Body,” thought of as extended space, is as imaginary as Ernest Jones’s phallus.

Jacques Derrida’s poststructuralism imputes to Lacan a teaching based on phallo-phono-logo-centric principles. From this premise, Derrida views the Lacanian phallus, not as a part of the body which is, in turn, re-presented in perception, but as a privileged signifier whose function would be transcendental; a nondetermined metaphysical element among heterogeneous elements. For Derrida, the phallic function would be that of ending the eternal sliding of the phonemic signifier. We know, of course, that words do not continually slide arbitrarily into one another, either as proper nouns, verbs, adjectives, and so on, nor as phonemes. Words anchor sound in points of fixity in the imaginary, symbolic, real, and the symptom, fixities that constitute the meanings one lives from. They organize the “serial” (a,b,c; 1,2,3) that Lacan calls “the serious.” Indeed, where there is fixity, Lacan argues, one finds the real.

Beyond merely communicating, or, more often, miscommunicating, words also seek to decipher the ineffable object (*a*), the enigmatic essence of one’s own being which language seeks to cover, discover, conceal, or reveal as one’s “true allure,” one’s desirability. The phallus is not the transcendental signifier Derrida calls it, but a key organizing signifier whose functions are manifold. It masks the real of sexuality and trauma by linking language to the law of difference—not only insofar as one sound or one meaning always differs from another—but also insofar as phallic “law,” by delineating this from that, the masculine from the feminine, for example, orients desire. In this sense, the phallus can be said to construct the *Realit t* Freud sought to describe, a psychic reality whose laws also have the formal properties of the already formalized functions of language.

Thus, the phallus’s referents differ from the sense-data realities of biological life. Put another way, the phallus functions to structure biological realities by the processes of identification that govern desire. The form of the imaginary body, Lacan proposes, is

composed of a set of identifications with mirror-stage other(s) in all three orders. It becomes a symbolic body by incorporating language as the Ideal ego construct Lacan places at the base of his *che vuoi* graph.<sup>21</sup> In “Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego” (1921), Freud called the Ideal ego a primordial identification.<sup>22</sup> Lacan interpreted Freud to mean that the primordial identification of a child is to difference or Otherness whose referents are symbolic-order signifiers.

The *phallic* signifier, in turn, orients the Other as a corpus of Language that interprets the imaginary body as the real desires of the mother referred to the Father’s Name. This is the sense in which Lacan equated difference with language. Language, when taken as a signifier for the “father,” becomes *the name* of that which divides the mother and infant, by substituting a name for an image or an effect that produces lack; that is, metaphor. Meanwhile, the mother is identified by the infant with the real body, which enjoys, not the Cartesian body that thinks. In Morel’s phrasing, the Cartesian symbolic body thinks, and is, indeed, an equivalent of thinking against the real (Morel, “*La différence des sexes*,” p. 28).

Beyond orienting the drives within thought, Lacan’s concept of the phallic function answers the question Freud posed concerning the difference between the accomplishment of a reality and the accomplishment of a dream desire: “The phallus as a signifier gives the reason of desire,” Lacan wrote, “an image whose reality is its incompleteness (“The Signification . . .,” p. 273). The word *qua word* (*parole*) describes an image of something whose dynamic is that of the *Fort! Da!* movement of the “Here”/“There”—the gap, the lack—of the bobbin reel, rather than the imaginary stasis of an organ reality. Later, Lacan will describe speaking as an act that creates its own signifieds, while the interlocutor forgets the real trenchency of the act: *dire* (*saying*)/*dit* (*said*). And this is not John Austin’s speech act, or Judith Butler’s performative. It is the act of speech as real. This idea of the phallus moves us from figuration to abstraction, to a logic of lack(s). Freud could never explain the link between *Realität* and dreams in his effort to join dream desire to sexual desire. So, he dropped his efforts to prove an unconscious, opting, rather, to attribute psychic cause to biological organs and to propose genetic developmental stages (oral, anal, and genital) as explicative of that in the human which is opaque and enigmatic.

But even though Freud made biology a first-cause mover of psychic *Realität*, he, nonetheless, vacillated throughout his career in his various efforts to explain what causes human sexual identification along lines that are not gender specific. He advanced several theories in trying to figure out how children could imaginarily attribute the penis to the mother in ways that refused the evidence of sexual difference. Elizabeth Grosz wonders why Freud did not simply stick with the idea of a psychic *Realität* which would equate penis=phallus=sociologically-powerful-or-culturally-successful man.<sup>23</sup>

What truly baffled Freud was the ineffable effect of the presence or absence of an organ, taken as a basis for assessing superiority or inferiority, and activity and passivity. Lacan turned Freud’s concern into a problematic concerning “having” or “being.”<sup>24</sup> Insofar as “having” phallic attributes simply means being associated with power—a

family name, a career, and so on—such identifications are not gender or organ specific, Lacan stressed. One believes oneself to be powerful based on “what” a given society values, which becomes an equivalent of “who” one “is.” Again, the issue is not the phallus as organ, but as a referent of the meaning attributed to a person at the level of identity in terms of where he or she is thought to “be” within the Other’s gaze.

Luce Irigaray misconstrues the early Lacanian idea of a mirror-phase, logically deducible moment, in which the imaginary ego identity is constituted by the images of the first body parts with which one identifies. These are assumed from the introjective-projective mirror of the human form, as if one “put them on.” The first forms refer to the primary caretaker, usually the mother. Irigaray confuses Lacan with Freud, arguing that Lacan viewed the mother’s body as depreciated because it “lacks” a phallus. Indeed, Freud described the way his patients viewed the sexual difference, while himself maintaining an air of surprise and shock at their prejudices against women, and against the mother in particular, prejudices manifested by both sexes. Irigaray also clings to an object-relations theory, assigning judgmental capacities of good or bad to the infant as a kind of innate knowledge possessed long before he or she has the language that will let him or her discern whether he or she “has/is” the symbolic phallus (or not); this is an interpretative judgment bequeathed in an acquired descriptive (imaginary) language. Irigaray, thus, misunderstands that Lacan’s theory of the mirror stage refers to the structural moment in “normative” or typical physical/mental development when a child integrates its own inchoate (pre-mirror fragmentation) body parts into a *seeming* unity, modeled on identifying with the perceived whole body image of another: The infant takes on its sense of being one in reference to another; or two. The small child’s first sense of being whole is identified with the mother counterpart who, as a seemingly whole body, becomes the paradigm for an *imaginary* unity, applicable to boys and girls alike.<sup>25</sup>

At the point where Lacan seeks to explain why Freud might have imagined a voracious phallic mother, he encounters Freud’s own inability to see the mother as lacking anything. Despite the evidence of what his analysts said to him, Freud could not envision the mother as *imaginarily* lacking an organ. Still, he was always certain that this was an *illusion* children extrapolated from their discovery of the sexual difference, each in reference to the same-sex parent.

Freud’s theory here is far from Lacan’s idea that a *repudiation* of the sexual difference links epistemology to the fetish, while *foreclosure* of the difference results in psychosis that produces delusions and hallucinations. Simply stated, every child will not interpret the meaning of the sexual difference in the same way, despite the gender difference. Put in other terms, no set (as in mathematical set theory) contains all the answers within itself. Thus, Freud’s symmetrical argument could seem to fall within the incompleteness theorem (Gödel’s, for example) implied by set theory. Lacan pointed out that, logically speaking, mathematicians uncovered the same functional principle as Freud in discovering that a null set in number set theory grounds the next number, which denotes the absence of number: the 0. Zero, in turn, is bracketed—[0] to distinguish it from the null set. The next number will be the first countable number,

either 1 or 0 bracketed twice. Set theory continues by a series of ever-expanding bracketed zeroes. But the null set is designated by a barred zero. (Frege's  $\emptyset$ ).<sup>26</sup>

Closer to Gottlieb Frege than to Freud, Lacan's discovery of the functionality of asymmetries differed from set theorists in his find that every set does not include the previous one. Frege's successor relation theory "is a minimal logic in which are given those pieces only which are necessary to assure it a progression reduced to a linear movement": Zero grounds one plus one more  $0[I+n]$ . But the "n" splits, inferring a gap or lack following "1," when taken as a natural number.<sup>27</sup>

Additionally, Lacan picked up on Georg Cantor's notion that one could not rethink space topologically via whole numbers, for they are countable. Rather, an infinite continuum can be made via countable fractions, which are transfinite or irrational. Equating the unary traits of identification (Freud's *Einiger Züge*) with the real and symbolic (the +I of countable traits), Lacan emphasized that such traits can be added to the unthinkable imaginary number— $-\phi \rightarrow \sqrt{-I}$ —but without producing sense. Rather, real numbers ( $S[\emptyset]$ ) that decomplete a set allow subtraction, which gives rise to the -I as negative and absent, albeit intrinsic to an ensemble of signifiers. Thus, Lacan wrote the unary trait ( $S_1$ ) as  $\sqrt{-I} + I$  where nonsensical being ( $\emptyset$ ) which decompletes a set allows subtraction, which gives rise to the -I as negative and absent, albeit intrinsic to an ensemble of signifiers. Thus, the unary trait ( $S_1$ ) coalesces with the real and symbolic of thinking:  $-I/\sqrt{-I}$  comes from  $S(\emptyset)/-\phi$ . That is, the paradigm of the detachment of the image from the word that creates a gap in meaning is precisely the  $-\phi$ , or negativized image of the phallus interpreted as a separable body part.<sup>28</sup>

Like Freud, Irigaray leaves out the negative grounding of thought, which is, then, derived from the body. She positivizes what Lacan interpreted as the child's *imaginary* representing of an organ evaluated in reference to loss. In Lacan's thinking, the *imaginary* problem concerns grappling with a difference between a cosimultaneous presence and absence in image, word, and real effect. This logic works from quite another "logic" than biology. While biology classifies species and assigns attributes according to the positive traits of visible having or not having, Lacan symbolized the particular problem of the null set or split "number" by the negative *phi* ( $-\phi$ ) meaning imaginary castration. The cut is between a specular image of an imaginary phallus that is there, and, then, potentially, not there because the little girl—the boy's counterpart—does not have it. Freud believed that little boys look in the mirror of identification and see that they have a visible organ the mother does not have; they impute sexual difference to themselves, or sexual sameness, if they identify with the mother. In Freud's interpretation of the words of his female patients, when little girls understand that the mother is like themselves, without the male genital organ, each one interprets this difference in terms of loss ( $-\phi$ ) which is, in turn, filtered through substitutive fantasy.

Jacques-Alain Miller reminds us that fantasy is imaginary and that once one has crossed the plane of identification, fantasy becomes pure drive ("Le *sinthome* . . .," p. 12). When the unary trait links up with its "being" of jouissance in the Ideal ego (I), one can see under or behind the fantasy that generally masks the real of the drive.

Indeed, one can go so far as to say the structure of the transference implies the identificatory unary traits, not the object (*a*) (p. 13).

Paradoxically, Irigaray argues that her picture of the sexual difference critiques Lacan’s theories, while she actually follows Freud’s theories of biological reductions to organs, ending up in a logical bind that has led critics to describe her as a biological essentialist. Irigaray does not depict the Freud who finally decided that the only explanation he could find for what he called “wounded narcissism” lay in the experience of having undergone a psychic trauma.

In “The Germs of Empires,” Tim Dean distinguishes between physical and psychic trauma. In his delineation, the former ruptures the body’s surface, while the latter ruptures the ego’s boundaries. Stressing the links among sexuality and retroactive relation of prepubertal sexuality to postpubertal fantasy, Dean writes that “trauma names *the absent cause of history*, the force of the real in any symbolic network (cf. Althusser, 189),”<sup>29</sup> Cathy Caruth writes that “traumatic experience, beyond the psychological dimension of suffering it involves suggests a certain paradox: That the most direct seeing of a violent event may occur as an absolute inability to know it; that immediacy, paradoxically, may take the form of belatedness.”<sup>30</sup>

Lacan’s depiction of the body as an imaginary constellation first incorporated from the Other, then returned into the symbolic as a projection of ego identifications, can be brought together with Dean and Caruth to describe different aspects of the psychic trauma, which Lacan considered as a splitting that occurs when an imaginary consistency of Oneness is broken. Lacan argued that this is not the trauma Freud was seeking to understand. Rather, Lacan, “translated” Freud’s “phallic phase”—common to both sexes—into a logic of phallic signification that sets up an asymmetry between the sexes, and whose referent is the phallus, taken as a propositional function. Lacan hypothesized that the sexual asymmetry concerns, not one’s libidinal “object” choice, but submission (or not) to the (phallic) law of difference. The symbolic order is represented by the signifiers of “ideal” Father’s Names on the masculine side of sexualization from which males and females take their identity:  $\exists x \overline{\Phi x} / \forall x \Phi x$ .

Insofar as a male identifies primarily with another male—not with the mother—he will achieve this identification by supposing an abstraction: A male who incarnates the law while being an exception to it, be he “Daddy,” some omnipotent river spirit, the mother’s brother, the signifier for “the stranger,” or some other. Since girls are not required to identify away from the first Other, they have the freedom to ignore or subvert this phallic injunction to difference, this “no” to being all One sex:  $\exists x \overline{\Phi x} / \forall x \Phi x$ . The male identifies with a logic of accepting to be *all* under the law of the Ur-father, exception to the law which also grounds it, while the female identifies a part of herself as *not* [being] *all* under the law of a conventional reality one might describe as patriarchal/phallic/symbolic “law.”

Sexuality is clearly affected by the degree to which male jouissance is fettered by the “law” of what Lacan called the obscene superego. Insofar as a man is *all* under the symbolic law, his guilt for any transgressions will be the inverse face of his trying to

obey social-symbolic order (superego) demands. This particularly male burden is placed at the intersection of thought and enjoyment, as is male dependence on the unary character of his genitality. Guilt joins the compulsion-to-enjoy with yet another control or castration placed on the meaning(s) of the phallus that structure male sexualization. Moreover, the requirement of erective performance places an additional castration on men that women do not have. That feminine sexuality is *not all* under symbolic (phallic) injunctions, means that women are less enslaved to the Other's superego dicta. Lacan's explanation of the female superego makes more sense than Freud's deduction that women have weaker superegos than men and are, thereby, characterologically inferior. What Freud considered male superego superiority is what Lacan calls the enslavement to a master discourse logic wherein reality and language are "measurable" as clear communications made within conscious meaning.

In the last paragraph of her article on the phallus in *Feminism and Psychoanalysis*, Elizabeth Grosz says: "Freud and Lacan have been strongly defended by a number of feminists, most notable Juliet Mitchell and Ellie Ragland-Sullivan, who claim that psychoanalysis merely describes rather than participates in the social subordination of women. For both, it is the anchoring term which 'saves' the subject from psychosis by granting it a social position outside the incestual web of desire in the nuclear family. However, the phallus cannot be a neutral signifier, as Ragland-Sullivan and Mitchell claim; the relation between the penis and the phallus is not arbitrary, but is clearly socially and politically motivated" (*Feminism and . . .*, p. 322).

One might respond to Grosz in several ways. First, that such a relation would be politically and socially motivated does not per se make the relation arbitrary. Lacan's concern was to discern the difference between cause and effect in the larger ramifications of the sexual difference. Secondly, in the common biological sense, the etymology of the word *phallus* is taken from the Greek *exllos*, which associates the penis with the phallus, referred to as the biological organ. But at the level where meanings of the phallus are interpretations or representations that give rise to symbol and structure as themselves first causes (rather than organs), they determine the particularity of sexuality and subjectivity by constructing fantasy as a relation of signifiers ( $S_1 \rightarrow S_2$ ) and jouissance ( $a$ ) that fill the lack ( $\$$ ) in the subject.

In "*Le sintome: un mixte de symptôme et fantasme*," Miller describes the symptom as that which resists knowledge in that its jouissance and truth are linked to *Thanatos*, to fixities of repetition (-compulsion). The symptom resides in the real of "what does not cease writing itself. . . [as] the way each one enjoys his or her unconscious insofar as the unconscious determines him or her" (pp. 16–17). In other words, the symptom is a mode of enjoyment at the level of the master signifier—( $S_1; \Phi$ )—that represents the symbolic order by elements one can measure or count.

Miller's formula is an advance over Lacan's early descriptions of the phallus as having the status of a simulacrum or a representation. Insofar as one of the meanings of the phallus is that it designates or stands in for something else—be it object of value or



desired child—its first effect is, even then, to introduce the reality of difference into the seemingly holistic rapport between a meaning and an (immediately visible) object. Any effort to interpret this difference gives rise to questions that assume answers that become “fixed” representational meanings.

We see that Lacan’s definition of the signifier as that which represents a subject for another signifier quickly becomes inadequate to define the subject as *sinthome*. After thinking of the subject’s ( $\$$ ) first value—that which is represented by a signifier for another one:  $S_1 \rightarrow S_2$ —one can assess its second value. Minus the unary traits ( $S_1$ ) and the jouissance ( $a$ ) that fill it, the subject appears, both in language and affects, as emptied of enjoyment:  $\$; \emptyset$ . That is, the *sinthome* localizes the subject as a barred subject distinct from the field of language and representations while still being made up of language ( $S_1, S_2$ ). One can then see that  $S_1$ , ( $a$ ), and  $S_2$  (or the Ideal ego) are formations of the unconscious that place themselves *in* the gap made by lack. This dynamic shows that the subject “is [exists] only as represented” (Miller, p. 11). That is, it doubles itself.

If someone argues literally, as Ernest Jones, Karen Horney, and others in the twenties and thirties, or as some theorists do today, that any disparity resulting from the discovery of the sexual difference is a simple matter of corrective education that can only produce a final equality and equivalence between the biological sexes, such theorists will fail to admit to the radical difference of images and body experience that confronts boys and girls in their first efforts to ground identity in bodily realities. And this occurs long before conscious awareness of the sexual difference becomes something to interpret. Little girls know that their genital sexual parts are hidden or enclosed within the folds of their skin—clitoris, vagina, labia lips—in imaginary comparison between themselves and little boys. And these parts are not experienced as breaks or cuts, but as parts of a whole that relate to jouissance. Rather, what is “natural” to one becomes an image of the measurable or visible as a standard for the norm, that, in turn, is equated with social reality.

In mathematical terms, one could describe imaginary awareness of the sexual difference as having the weight or dimension of the line, whose topological density is that of an absolute real, a unary trait, or unbroken line. Yet, paradoxically, it takes an infinite number of extensionless points (i.e., 0) to add up to a infinite distance, such as that of a real number whose value is exactly 1.4. This is, indeed, Zeno’s fifth paradox of plurality, which allows us to deduce the reason Descartes failed to solve the mind/body problem with his theory of the body as an “extended thing”: An extended body consists of a number of parts that have no extension, as does distance (or it would be infinitesimally small). Yet, Descartes’s idea presupposes the infinite as macrocosmic. Zeno, Descartes, Kant, and Freud are some of the thinkers who have tried to solve problems of how to quantify difference and distance by means of visible reductions to size. Zeno gives us Achilles and the tortoise who will never be congruent, thus suggesting a limit within infinity, just as Descartes’s notion of extension implies something in reference to

which a body would be extended. Kant adheres to the notion of macrocosm and microcosm in his *Third Critique* where one finds his aesthetic of the beautiful in his distinguishing the beautiful from the sublime.<sup>31</sup>

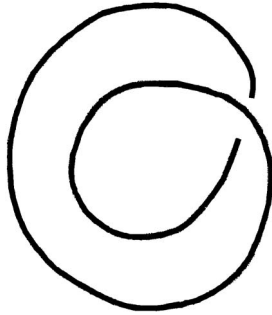
Freud argued that precisely such imaginary effects produce the real of trauma for the female who compares her genital structure to the male's. Lacan argued, rather, that each sex takes the penis as a phallus, a representation of what can be lost. He also argued that each sex takes his or her organ(s) as the standard for what is "natural" in the imaginary and real. Moreover, the girl has recourse, within Lacanian topology, to less anxiety regarding the sexual difference than the male. Insofar as the feminine genitalia constitute many marks on a plane—the border (of the vaginal split or the labia) seen or felt at the surface of the skin (and so on), she thinks of her sexuality in terms of a profundity, or as the backdrop of a base against which a thing is seen as "other" in reference to something else.

The boy, by contrast, has one overtly visible and moving apparatus made of three parts. The penis and testicles are assessed as susceptible to loss because the boy has imaginary proof that half the human race does not have the same organ, with its visible obviousness, its exposure. This alone would account for Freud's patients' efforts to equate "difference" with visible size. In "The Signification of the Phallus" (1958), Lacan had already stressed that the phallus does not become an index of power as such on the basis of turgidity, detumescence, or reproductive capacity. Later, in 1960, he placed the (imaginary) phallus in the list of eight objects susceptible to the (seeming or perceptible) cut of separability from the body, giving all eight a *Fort! Da!* quality.

Jeanne Lafont advances the topological mark as the complement of the hole; the point of an enigma. Within the psychoanalytic logic of forms that goes from figuration to abstraction, Lafont gives this definition: These operations "are to be found in the linking of the symbolic with the imaginary [that produces the gap between a word and an image ( $-\Phi$ )]. They transform the symbolic into the imaginary . . . in the measure that they are formulated by figures which put perception [itself] into play. The topological objects in fact, like the sphere, the torus, the cross-cap, the Klein bottle, even the Moebius strip, are considered here as representations of the operations [they perform]. Between the real of the clinic, and the symbolic pertinence of a word, there is an imaginary space of the transference, the obstruction of a reality [by interpretation wherein, for example, an image can serve as an unconscious knot or impasse]. The topological operations situate themselves at this dialectical point" (*Topologie lacanienne*, p. 30).

In the essay drawn from its course *Ce qui fait insigne* (1986–1987),<sup>32</sup> Jacques-Alain Miller focuses on the symbolic/imaginary properties of the concrete identificatory nature of the unary trait ( $S_1$ ) as the basis for the structure of the transference. It is not the object ( $a$ ) that represents the analyst, he maintains, but, rather, a positivization of absolute "traits" (unbroken lines) without representation ("*Le sinthome* . . .," pp. 11 and 13). In other words, it is not topological objects themselves that put representations into play, but, rather, that the *representations represent the operations they configure*—

starting with the constructions of any empty space or hole that is, in turn, filled by objects and master signifiers. At the level of perceptual effect, the Moebius strip represents the gaze, which subtends the other drives as that into which one is already born. One does not gaze. One is gazed at, unconsciously seeing oneself as being seen. Things that present themselves as having mysterious properties are the signifiers of objects hidden in the overlap of the two sides of the Moebius band,



both sides constituting a surface. Lacan compares the twist in the Moebius form to the twist in thought that allows one to drop ideas or associations into the memory bank of the unconscious where knowledge remains hidden. In the gaze elicited by the female genitalia, feelings of desire and jouissance are at play in the space that opens onto the erotogenic field of the apertures and slits on the body’s skin surface (“Subversion . . . ,” p. 315).

Lacan reminds us of this in his interpretation of the burning child dream first narrated by Freud. Only after his son is dead and his shrouded body burning from the candle that had fallen onto it, does the dead boy’s father grasp unconsciously that his son’s words—“Father, don’t you see I’m burning?”—could mean something about his *sexual desire* when he was living. For the father does not know consciously that his son’s bandages are on fire. This “Other” knowledge has been occulted in the overlap of the Moebius strip.<sup>33</sup> This topological form replicates the gaze, one might say, as uncastrated: The real is showing, but not seen. Lacan also called this phenomenon of consciousness a scotoma (a mental blind spot) in *Seminar XI*. A problematic example of such a “reading” of sexuality as one’s hidden (unconscious) desire, is exemplified by Hélène Cixous’s description of Dora’s mother, her governess, and Dora as loving a man, loving difference and disfiguration.<sup>34</sup> The penis, represented as phallus, is “disfigured” in Cixous’s picture of it, in her picture of desire. “Desire is for an organ,” Lacan said, “while love is for a name.”

This is a radically different notion of the *cut* from the feminist equation of Lacan’s concept of *castration* with a literal cutting of the female genitalia as put forth by Laura Mulvey, Elizaberth Bronfen, and others. Throughout his teaching, Lacan raises the biological Freud to the realm of signifying systems where the phallus, as well as

other notions, take on different meanings. Although Lacan's equation of the phallus with language has been widely assimilated, we have seen that he meant many other things as well by "phallus." He also referred to the phallus as the imaginary object of frustration; the real object of privation; and the symbolic object of castration (lack or debt).<sup>35</sup> Indeed, to construct the concept of the phallus, these three registers are required. Thus, early in his teaching, Lacan departed from equating the phallus with language, in the simple sense of the word's naming a thing. The function of naming is attributed to the signifier of the Father's Name. Rather, he depicts the alienated word as residing at one remove from the real. And long before he developed his topological logic, he stressed the fact that a symbol or a figure always stands in for something else, something opaque.

In his essay "Painting" ["*Tableau*"], Gerard Wajcman writes that Lacan the toponymist, the topographer, became a topologist because the unconscious itself is topological. "Things are situated there." But the "things" in question are the "objects" (*a*) that cause desire for symbolic goods, or lure us in the imaginary, or catalyze the drive for enjoyment in the real. Lacan tried to situate this logic with his graphs that inscribe place and correspond to symbolic space, his schema that figure imaginary space and, thus, stratify the planes of the image with the surface prevailing there. As for real space, its representation supposes that one promote, along with the graphs and schemas, a *picture* that represents *sites*, or pure real places. For Lacan, Wajcman argued, topology is not a metaphor that represents the subject as signified or figured. It presents the structure or site where the subject emerges as effect of the trifunctionality of thought.<sup>36</sup>

The *imaginary* phallus becomes an object-cause-of-desire, not at the level of organ per se, but insofar as it denotes perceptual separability or the part that lacks-in-an-image. We remember that Lacan first named this operation negative castration ( $-\Phi$ ): Its cause is the real father of *jouissance*, whose function is to create lack by a symbolic castration of imposing "no" on the infant's thought. Miller points out that this gap later becomes the empty subject ( $\$$ ). Lacan's way of saying this was that the phallic signifier has no signified, only effects that evolve. These are clarified by Miller as the  $S_1$ , the  $\$$ , and the (*a*). The signified or referent of the phallus, in other words, is the imaginary lack ( $\sqrt{-1}$ ) around which fantasy organizes the  $S_1$  (or unary trait), the  $\$$ , and the (*a*). Miller relates symptoms and fantasy thus: "The relation of the symptom is not simply of a meaning, but of a meaning [given] to signifying structure—the fantasy—where there is a rapport of the subject to *jouissance* ("Le *sinthome*: Un *Mixte* . . .," pp. 14–15).

To summarize briefly, Lacan argued as early as 1958 against Freud's thesis that biology causes sexuality, stressing that the phallus is not the real organ, the penis, neither (1) in its role of copulation, nor (2) in its typographical sense as an equivalent of the logical copula, nor (3) by virtue of its turgidity, as the image of the vital flow as transmitted in generation ("Signification . . .," pp. 289–90). Rather, the phallus is the abstract signifier of difference whose function—and this is crucial—is to give a per-