

INTRODUCTION



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Encore, or Seminar XX, represents the cornerstone of Lacan's work on the themes of sexual difference, knowledge, *jouissance*, and love. In this landmark seminar, Lacan maps a critical terrain across philosophy, theology, history, linguistics, and mathematics, articulating certain exemplary points at which psychoanalysis provides a unique intervention into these discourses. Arguing that the subject of psychoanalysis is a consequence of the Enlightenment's rejection of reality in pursuit of the real, Lacan sets out in Seminar XX to articulate how a *psychoanalytic* science of the real might transform accepted ideas about sexual difference, being, and knowledge. With his predictable rhetorical flair, expansive reach, and provocative wit, Lacan exposes the founding fantasies of historically dominant systems of thought, illuminating, for example, the Eros characteristic of philosophical and religious assumptions about the "One" of being or God, the ambivalence about the loss of a synthetic cosmology attending modern science, and other key philosophical and scientific assumptions about the subject, the body, causality, and determinism. Psychoanalysis itself is not exempt from scrutiny in *Encore*, as Lacan finds many of these same preoccupations haunting both Freudian and various neo-Freudian texts. By the end of the seminar, it is clear that *Encore* contains significant revisions of Lacan's own ideas as well.

Historically, Seminar XX has been known to many (if not most) readers as Lacan's treatise on feminine sexuality. While this fact is clearly overdetermined by current disciplinary and broader cultural preoccupations, it can be attributed in large part to the delay in *Encore's* complete translation. Existing English-language scholarship on Seminar XX has been based, until quite recently, on the snapshot of the Seminar provided by partial translations of two chapters in

Feminine Sexuality,¹ hence, its almost exclusive popularization as a text on sexual difference to the neglect of its other interventions into philosophy and science. With the advent of the recent translation of *Encore* by Bruce Fink,² English-speaking audiences now have access to a complete translation of the Seminar, one informed by recent scholarship and including detailed footnotes explaining Lacan's more obscure cultural and theoretical references. Its complete version³ reveals as much concern on Lacan's part with the post-Cartesian status of the subject—and the implications of this status for the limits and possibilities of knowledge and jouissance—as it does with sexual difference, and it arguably represents the most sustained and sophisticated work on these themes in Lacan's oeuvre.

The chapters of Seminar XX presented in *Feminine Sexuality* have come to occupy a prominent place in contemporary debate concerning sexual difference across an impressive range of disciplines. In fact, they are routinely cited in contemporary psychoanalytic, philosophical, literary, political, and film theory discussions of sexual difference—of which the most obvious example is the ongoing debates between Lacanian psychoanalysis and feminist theories concerning feminine sexuality. Given the limited perspective on *Encore* that these chapters represent, their prominence among the texts informing these debates is profoundly ironic and problematic. While the debates have obviously had a certain use-value for both psychoanalysis and feminism, the overreliance in feminist scholarship on such a circumscribed familiarity with *Encore* has made it a “straw-text” for feminist critique. This circumstance is additionally complicated by the relative lack of Anglophone scholarship on Lacan's engagement with his “Other” (Freud), particularly scholarship that does justice to Lacan's uncanny knack for reading Freud beyond himself.

While feminist suspicions about the impact of Freud's patriarchal legacy are quite legitimate, in the case of Lacan they too often have been enacted in the form of a superficial glossing and dismissal of what—in contrast to classical analytic appropriations of Freud—is a quite nontraditional reading. Hence, we encounter the unfortunate, though not unrelated, consequence that the best known of Lacan's remarks on femininity also are some of the most easily misread out of context. Readings of Lacan that persevere on the more scandalous sounding of Lacan's claims to the exclusion of their context and meaning-effects domesticate the more radical moments—of which there are many—in Lacan's text. Invoking statements such as, “Woman cannot be said. Nothing can be said of woman” (Seminar XX, 75/81), or, “A woman can but be excluded by the nature of things . . . [and] if there is something that women themselves complain about enough for the time being, that's it. It's just that they don't know what they're saying—that's the whole difference between them and me” (Seminar XX, 68/73), and citing them as evidence of Lacan's phallicism short-circuits the potential for a more engaged and potentially fruitful exchange between psychoanalysis and feminist theories. Doubtless such remarks betray that Lacan took a certain surplus satisfaction in being provocative. How-

ever, when closely read in its entirety, Seminar XX represents a serious and profoundly original attempt to go beyond both the patriarchal dimensions of Freud's corpus and the banalities concerning feminine sexuality characteristic of neo-Freudian revisionism.

Beyond the the translation lag, the reception of *Encore* in the United States has been complicated by the fact that it is among the more difficult of Lacan's quintessentially challenging seminars. In particular, his arguments often revolve around relatively obscure philosophical references (e.g., Bentham's *Theory of Fictions*) and theories (e.g., number theory, set theory, topology) that are inaccessible to one uninitiated into the idiosyncracies of Lacan's later work. The difficulty of the Seminar also underscores the importance of understanding the evolution of Lacan's ideas across the span of his seminars. For example, Lacan's arguments concerning sexual difference in Seminar XX rely integrally on his work on ethics and the structure of courtly love in Seminar VII, as well as on his treatment of anxiety in Seminar X. His conceptualizations of sexual difference, *jouissance*, and the body develop significantly over the course of his oeuvre, beginning with a position more closely allied with Freud⁴ and ending up with a position that diverges from Freud's in critical ways.⁵ Finally, Seminar XX assumes some familiarity with Lacan's shift in emphasis from desire to drive; this shift is most clearly marked beginning with Seminar XI, and it involves significant transformations in his understanding of the subject, causality, and *jouissance*. Hence, some understanding of the developmental trajectory of Lacan's ideas across his seminars is indispensable for grasping how he situates himself vis-à-vis traditional philosophy and science in Seminar XX.

That said, however, it is obvious that the different readings of *Encore* both within and beyond the United States cannot be reduced to differential access to the text in translation or to its conceptual density and complexity. As Lacan himself never tired of reminding his audience, knowledge and *jouissance* are inextricably related; even in an ideal communication situation (e.g., a "complete" text or an "entire" oeuvre), interpretation confronts the limits constituted by the particularity of the subject's *jouissance*—the way in which a given subject "gets off" on (in this case) a text.⁶ Lacan's caveat underscores the obvious point that readers come to his texts with very different interests, motivations, and strategies of reading. Even when readers are defined by a common interest—for example, those interested in questions of feminine sexuality—they approach the text with quite different preoccupations. A clear example of this can be seen in the significant differences in the preoccupations of French feminist readings of *Encore* (and the Anglophone readings inspired by those readings) and those emerging from the *Ecole de la Cause freudienne* (ECF). Many of the theorists writing from within the context of the ECF have been a part of the French academic culture in which Lacan was a major figure, and they continue to participate in the clinical subculture in which he played a primary structuring role. Consequently they are more often preoccupied with questions of sexual difference as they emerge out of or are relevant to clinical

praxis. While French feminist theorists—Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigaray, for example—have been immersed in much the same academic, clinical, and cultural milieu, they have been relatively more concerned with the relationships between sexual difference and epistemology, as well as between sexual difference, social structure, and politics. As many Anglophone theorists have approached Lacan's work via French feminism (suggesting a certain *jouissance* found there), they have tended to mirror its concern with sociohistorical and political influences on the theorizing of sexual difference.

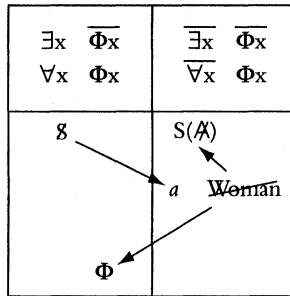
While French feminists, particularly Kristeva and Irigaray, are well acquainted with the “later Lacan,” their more accessible readings of his work center on the problematics of sexual difference prior to *Encore*.⁷ As a result, Anglophone feminists have focused more on the role of the imaginary and symbolic in the constitution of sexual difference and less on the role of the real. This trend has been reinforced by the way in which the imaginary and symbolic dimensions of sexuation lend themselves to correspondence with terminology in dominant discourses of sex and gender in the United States, discourses that are almost always framed in terms of either natural science, phenomenology, or forms of sociohistorical analysis and cultural studies (or some hybrid of these perspectives). Within some of these perspectives, the imaginary can be understood as correlative to constructs such as gender identity and embodiment (i.e., the “lived body”) and the symbolic to aspects of the body and sexuality that are “socially constructed.” However, there is no concept in these discourses that aims at anything like the Lacanian real (hence, the common misconception of the “real” as biological sex). As a result, Lacan's account of sexuation cannot be grasped via dominant academic discourses of sex and gender. In fact, the Lacanian real can be understood precisely as the traumatic cause on account of which any attempt to reduce sexual difference to biology, phenomenology, or cultural construction is doomed to fail. Seminar XX ultimately represents Lacan's attempt to trace the impact of this trauma—manifest as the gap between the symbolic and real—on the functioning of the symbolic itself. For him, then, the question of sexual difference is coextensive with the question born of the rupture between reality and the real produced by modern science, a rupture Lacan frames as the “frontier” between “knowledge and truth” (*Écrits*, 797/296).⁸ It is because Lacan understands psychoanalysis to provide a unique intervention into the space of this question that he claims, “[I]t is perhaps here [at the border between knowledge and truth] that psychoanalysis signals its emergence, representing a new seism that occurred there” (*ibid.*).

It is in the spirit then of unsettling the prematurely familiar ground from which Lacan has been interpreted, and (re)introducing readers to the compelling originality and use-value of his later work on sexuation, knowledge, *jouissance*, and love that the contributors to this book “read” Seminar XX. With these ends in mind, many of the chapters offer a simple point of entry to Seminar XX and present clear exposés of basic concepts deployed therein—gestures sure to be appreciated by readers less well acquainted with Lacan's work. How-

ever, the chapters operate on several levels at once, clarifying elementary notions while simultaneously offering the reader familiar with Lacan the reward of a sophisticated working-through of the more challenging and obscure arguments in *Encore*—often through tracing their historical development across Lacan’s oeuvre and/or by demonstrating their relation to particular philosophical, theological, mathematical, and scientific concepts. For example, the chapters collected here cover much of the terrain necessary for understanding sexual difference—not in terms of chromosomes, body parts, choice of sexual partner, or varieties of sexual practice but in terms of one’s position vis-à-vis the Other and the kind of jouissance one is able to obtain. In so doing, they make significant interventions into the more recalcitrant structures of debate regarding sex, gender, and sexuality in feminist theory, philosophy, queer theory, and cultural studies. The chapters also address the intertwining of Lacan’s account of sexual difference with the approaches to ethics, epistemology, and the science of “being” that he articulates in Seminar XX, particularly through articulating the specific relationships between knowledge, jouissance, and the body that emerge from the “splitting” of the Other into its “whole” and not-whole parts. In the process, they also engage with certain questions central to current discussions in the philosophy of science and science studies.

Each chapter also elaborates (more or less extensively) on the logic of Lacan’s formulas of sexualization and the elements in the accompanying schema.

FIGURE 1
The Formulas of Sexualization



For the uninitiated, the intelligibility of these terms can be approached from several possible directions, each of which is taken up by one or more of the authors represented here. For some, the formulas of sexualization and the relations that obtain between them will be most accessible through understanding their connections to Lacan’s broader discussions of subjectivization, being, jouissance, and the body. For others, they will be most easily grasped via Lacan’s interventions into theories of causality, ontology, and epistemology. For more clinically inclined and/or feminist readers, Lacan’s formulas of sexualization are perhaps most easily engaged by beginning with Lacan’s reading of Freud’s

account of sexual difference, particularly the latter's discussion of femininity, and proceeding to Lacan's discussion of the failure of the sexual relationship and its implications for masculine and feminine structure. Whatever one's initial point of engagement, the book as a whole provides a comprehensive and studied introduction to the complexity of Lacan's ideas in Seminar XX. In the end, it is our hope that this book will facilitate important exchanges already begun between French, broader European, Latin American, and English-speaking readers of Lacan, as well as advance the ongoing interdisciplinary dialogues between psychoanalysis, feminist theory, and queer theory, between the philosophy of science and science studies, and between philosophy, political theory, and cultural studies.

SEXUATION

Perhaps the most (in)famous of the claims that Lacan makes in Seminar XX is the one regarding the impossibility of founding (*poser*) a sexual relationship (Seminar XX, 14/9). Despite its centrality in Lacan's teachings on sexuation, it is commonly misread as referring to the "reality" of the relationship between the sexes. For example, in an otherwise lucid entry on Lacan in a literary theory guide, one finds the statement, "Thus Lacan claims flatly in Seminar XX that there is no such thing as sexual relations!"¹⁹ That such remarks appear in print with regularity is symptomatic of a certain fundamental confusion about key concepts in Seminar XX. When Lacan suggests that there is "no such thing" as the sexual relationship, he is *not* referring to sexual relations. Rather, as presented by Lacan in his formulas of sexuation, the impossibility of founding the sexual relationship is strictly coextensive with the conundrum of sexual difference. Indeed, one can best understand the formulas of sexuation as the product of Lacan's attempt to formalize and articulate the specific implications of the sexual relationship's *impossibility*.

Why has such a basic thesis been so susceptible of misreading? Perhaps the most obvious reason is the aforementioned incommensurability between the Lacanian logic of sexual difference and the logic subtending the sex-gender debates. While psychoanalytic theory in general is recognized as warranting conceptual distinction from both natural scientific and sociohistorical modes of analysis, this distinction often is cashed out in terms of a hybrid "part-biological/part-cultural" discourse, hence, the disenchantment with psychoanalysis voiced by biomedicine (it is not "scientific" enough), feminist essentialism (it does not offer an autonomous definition of woman), and feminist constructionism and cultural studies (it is too biologically, psychologically, and/or socially deterministic). It is not that the sex-gender distinction has not been useful in many obvious ways, but when applied to understanding Lacan's framework for articulating sexual difference, it creates more confusion than clarity. This is all too apparent in the long-standing debates concerning the status of the phallus in Lacan. Thus just as sexual difference is refracted through

the lenses of sex and gender, so is the phallus read in terms of the opposition between the biological and the symbolic.

In their respective chapters, Colette Soler (“What Does the Unconscious Know about Women?”), Renata Salecl, and Geneviève Morel demonstrate—albeit with different emphases—the manner in which Lacan’s translation of Freud’s discourses on femininity and sexuality into the language of the symbolic, imaginary, and real renders problematic the accepted logic of sex and gender, particularly as these terms have structured the essentialist–constructionist debates among American feminist and gender theorists. In so doing, they clarify how Lacan’s “translation” of Freud can be applied toward understanding the formulas of sexuation, as well as the particular modes of failure of the sexual relationship characteristic of subjects with masculine and feminine structure. Morel’s and Soler’s focus on Lacan’s earlier work on feminine sexuality in “Signification of the Phallus” and “Guiding Remarks for a Convention on Feminine Sexuality” also serves as a bridge in understanding the significant revisions in Lacan’s own position, found in Seminar XX.

In her chapter “What Does the Unconscious Know about Women?” Colette Soler notes several important parallels in Freud’s and Lacan’s accounts of feminine sexuality, while simultaneously elaborating on critical points of Lacan’s departure from Freud’s ultimately patriarchal account. So, for example, while Lacan is consistent with Freud in positing the partial nature of the drive, the importance of castration for sexual difference, and the absence of a feminine mark of difference in the unconscious, the logic of Lacan’s formulations of these concepts diverges acutely from Freud’s. Soler traces the logic behind Lacan’s reconfiguration of Freud’s binary between “having or not having” (the penis) to that of a “having or a being . . . the phallus” (*Écrits*, 694/289); she also articulates Lacan’s rejection of Freud’s exclusive definition of woman in terms of her relation to a male partner. In her reading of Lacan’s earlier work on feminine sexuality, Soler discerns an affirmation of and implicit response to certain feminist critiques of Freud. She develops several of the more compelling aspects of these critiques, as well as the gist of Lacan’s response—in particular highlighting the way in which his distinction between the symbolic and the imaginary facilitates a differentiation between the aspects of women’s sexual alienation that are a function of demand and those that are a function of desire, hence her claim that “Lacan succeeded more than Freud in isolating the logical constraints of structure and their difference from ideal norms.”

In “Feminine Conditions of Jouissance,” Geneviève Morel takes up more specifically one of the controversial aspects of Freud’s account of sexual development—the function of castration—in order to articulate its role in Lacan’s discussion of feminine conditions of jouissance. Lacan’s own account has been the target of much scrutiny and criticism, as he maintains the language of both castration and the phallus in his theory of sexuation. In her discussion of what psychoanalysis has to offer regarding the ways in which a woman (a feminine subject) experiences jouissance with a man (a masculine subject), Morel focuses

in particular on the condition of *jouissance* that Lacan describes as the figure of the “castrated lover” or “dead man” (*Écrits*, 733/95). Her argument engages Lacan’s claim that the phallic function and castration are required for a woman to experience *jouissance* in relation to a man. She mobilizes central elements of Lacan’s discussion of frigidity in support of this claim. In contrast to Freud, Lacan understands frigidity—or the absence of “sexual” *jouissance* in a feminine subject—to be a structural, epistemic dilemma rather than an anatomical dysfunction or sign of an underdeveloped sexuality. More specifically, Lacan understands frigidity as consequent upon an imaginary identification with the phallus, an identification that inhibits the circulation of *jouissance*. Morel demonstrates the role of castration and the phallic function in women’s sexual *jouissance* by elucidating the rather complicated set of structural relations between the feminine subject, her sexual partner, and the symbolic Other that Lacan presents in “Guiding Remarks for a Convention on Feminine Sexuality.”¹⁰ In so doing, she sheds light both on the sense of Lacan’s remark in Seminar X, that “only love allows *jouissance* to condescend to desire” (March 13, 1963), and on his rewriting of this structure in Seminar XX via a splitting between ϕ (desire) and $S(\bar{A})$ (love). What is at stake in this shift in emphasis is, essentially, the elaboration of what Lacan refers to in *Encore* as the “other” face of the Other. In other words, what he discusses in “Guiding Remarks” as a form of sexual *jouissance* related to the figure of the dead man (or castrated lover) is further differentiated in Seminar XX into two modes of possible *jouissance* in women—phallic (sexual) *jouissance* and Other *jouissance*, the latter being related to the real or the “God” face of the Other.

While Morel focuses on the dynamics of sexual *jouissance* in the feminine subject, Renata Salecl provides an analysis of the specific ways in which the sexual relationship *fails*. More particularly, she examines the ways in which it fails differently for masculine and feminine subjects, and thus how they are each traumatized in exclusive ways. Beginning with Lacan’s schema of masculine and feminine structures, she elaborates on the consequences of the fact that men and women do not relate to what their partners relate to in them. She links these consequences to certain hyperbolic expressions of masculinity and femininity as they are manifest both at the level of the individual—for example, vulnerability to certain modes of psychic distress—and at the level of social norms. In taking object *a* as his partner, that is, taking as object of desire that which he is not, man becomes especially vulnerable to the perceived inability to assume his symbolic role. In the language of the formulas of sexuation, he seeks to maintain his existence in the symbolic through obsessive labor in service of the “One” of the phallic exception. Woman, in contrast, is concerned with “what she doesn’t have as such”; what she does not have is the object that man sees in her, and which thus constitutes her object of desire. Salecl suggests that the fear of not possessing this object provokes a ceaseless questioning of the Other’s desire, leading the feminine subject to “wonder what is in her more than herself.” The feminine subject, then, is likely to respond to loss of love

not by ever-greater attempts to shore up the symbolic but by withdrawal and “immersion in melancholic indifference.” Why? Again, in terms of the formulas of sexualization, one could say that the lack in the symbolic that her loss reveals becomes fixed in the imaginary, becoming an obstacle to the establishment of the signifying bonds that might mediate her sadness. However, for Salecl, this latter explanation raises the interesting question of the difference between the feminine mystic and the feminine melancholic. Salecl hypothesizes that this difference can be understood through articulating the ambiguous potential of Other jouissance for mediating the loss of herself as Other, a loss that the loss of her partner may represent. While Lacan clearly underscores the way in which feminine loss exceeds the phallic loss of the object, his account of the potential for feminine jouissance to compensate for this “plus of melancholy” is less definitive. Salecl suggests that the plus of sadness of the feminine melancholic might be accounted for by the fact that feminine jouissance does not pass through the unconscious and, therefore, cannot support the woman finding herself there.

Through tracing the development of Lacan’s early work on feminine sexuality to his sustained engagement with the question in *Encore*, Salecl’s, Morel’s, and Soler’s chapters illuminate certain distinctions between “reality” and the real that are critical in understanding Lacan’s account of sexualization. To begin with, Lacan argues that what we take to be the reality of the sexual relationship depends for its integrity on a function of “seeming” or semblance, a phantasmatic propping up necessary to sustain the illusion of sexual complementarity within a closed circuit of desire and exchange. This assertion of the phantasmatic dimension of sexuality is one of the ways in which Lacan’s treatment of sexual difference diverges markedly from Freud’s account, as well as from contemporary essentialist approaches to sex and gender. For example, while Freud was clearly aware that the various essentialisms of his time had obscured certain interesting and persistent questions concerning sexuality and sexual difference, his own conflation of the phallus and the penis ultimately condemned him to share many of their blind spots. Hence, Freudian theory, while taking important steps toward a “denaturing” of sex and gender (as both Morel and Soler suggest), ultimately maintains a naive reliance on just the sort of phantasmatic grounding of reality that Lacan renders problematic.

In his own work, Lacan proposes that the fantasy-support of reality, especially where accepted notions of sex and sexuality are concerned, operates as a defense against the intrusion of the real into our everyday experience. Given this claim, it is ironic that readers of Lacan have often confused the “reality” of biological sex with his notion of the real. Under this misreading, the real is assumed to be a kind of material bedrock that either fundamentally resists symbolic inscription or is given shape through symbolic construction. However, in Lacan’s formulation, sexual difference is not the manifestation of a fundamental materiality or an immutable biological difference but a function of one’s position with respect to the Other. Hence, he unambiguously claims that

“in the psyche, there is nothing by which the subject may situate himself as a male or female being . . . the human being always has to learn from scratch from the Other what he has to do, as man or woman” (Seminar XI, 204). Because they are inadequate to specify the real of sexual difference, and its implications for the subject’s situation vis-à-vis the Other, the terms *sex* and *gender* are rarely used in Lacanian parlance. When they are referenced, *sex* is usually understood as an imaginary-symbolic construct deployed in certain contexts to mark the subject’s “civil status” as a sexed subject, or else to refer to concrete sexual acts; *gender* is typically understood as a function of identification with idealized norms regarding sex. While anatomical differences are not irrelevant to the manner in which cultural ideals regarding sex and gender are transmitted and reproduced, they are not the foundation of sexual difference.

One of the more important implications of Lacan’s argument that sexual difference is a function of one’s position vis-à-vis the Other is that there is no stable basis for sexual complementarity or psychic harmony between masculine and feminine subjects. Morel, Salecl, and Soler all elaborate on the important consequences of Lacan’s claim that there exists no unmediated, direct relationship between masculine and feminine subjects. Lacan describes the obstacle to such a relation as a function of the Other, where the Other comes between men and women in the form of a signifier; he designates this as the phallic signifier. However, rather than denoting any positive meaning (e.g., as related to cultural ideals regarding the *meaning* of phallic sexuality, etc.), the phallic signifier functions as an empty signifier that effects a “difference.” This difference is not a difference between the sexes as such but the difference between the One and the not-one. In other words, the phallic signifier does not signify essential sexual difference but is an empty signifier that stands ultimately for the impossibility of signifying sex. As such, it can be understood to represent both a traumatic failure of meaning and the impossibility of ever fundamentally anchoring or positivizing the symbolic order. Revolving as it does around the signifier of the One, the symbolic also is irretrievably asymmetrical. This asymmetry marks the lack of reciprocity or harmony of structure between sexed subject positions and determines that masculine and feminine subjects relate to each *other* in terms of what they lack in relation to the *Other* (the Other here as the Other of the signifier). This asymmetry in the symbolic also illuminates Lacan’s claim that sexual difference hinges on either a “having” or a “being” the phallus and, hence, that “strictly speaking, there is no symbolization of woman’s sex as such” (Seminar III, 176).

In Seminar XX, Lacan relates this impossibility of signifying sexual difference to the structure of a double loss in the subject’s potential for being. In his early work, he elaborates primarily on the loss correlative to the subject’s accession to the symbolic. Beginning with Seminar XI, he becomes increasingly preoccupied with a logically prior loss, one he characterizes as a consequence of sexed reproduction. The loss associated with the former corresponds to what Lacan calls the subject of the signifier, and that associated with the latter to the

subject of drive. In each case, however, it is not a matter of the subject losing a form of being that he or she already possessed but of retroactively losing the possibility of becoming a certain sort of being. Thus sexual difference must be understood in terms of a loss *inherent* in the structure of the subject rather than something that is imposed on the subject from the outside. It is, then, the nature of the losses constituting subjectivity as such that precludes one ever wholly becoming one's sex, ever achieving one's gender, or ever accomplishing one's sexuality. Hence, sexual difference can be understood to stand for that which forever eludes the grasp of normative symbolization. The obsessive individual and cultural reiterations of the "surface" of sexuality—the seeming reality of the sexual relationship, as it is divided into binaries such as male and female, masculine and feminine, hetero- and homosexuality, and so on—only cover over this fundamental dehiscence of the sexual subject.

SUBJECTIVITY, KNOWLEDGE, AND JOUISSANCE

In Seminar XX, Lacan engages in a sustained interrogation of the implications of the subject's "double lack" for understanding jouissance and knowledge. Bruce Fink's, Colette Soler's ("Hysteria in Scientific Discourse"), and Slavoj Žižek's chapters present some of Lacan's most innovative interventions on these themes by first situating his account of sexuation in relation to the shifts in his conceptions of subjectivity and the Other, which can be discerned beginning in Seminar XI. Each author traces certain important nuances in Lacan's distinction between the subject of the signifier and the subject of drive; Fink, in particular, focuses on the relation between the forms of jouissance and knowledge production that Lacan associates with each. Lacan links the synthetic and universalizing tendencies of Western philosophy, religion, and science to the "phallic" attempt to make a knowledge adequate to the One. However, his development of the logic of feminine structure in Seminar XX suggests a knowledge and a jouissance "beyond the phallus"—a relation to the not-whole part of the Other that allows for what Lacan calls the "path of love." These authors discuss the implications of this Other jouissance for science, culture, and ethics.

In "Knowledge and Jouissance," Bruce Fink begins with a lucid discussion of Lacan's distinction between the subject of the signifier and the subject of drive in Seminar XI. He then links the subject of the signifier to the fantasy implicit in Antiquity's "prescientific" worldview of adequation or harmony between elements composing the world (say, form and matter), or between its governing principles (say, masculine and feminine). As Fink suggests, this subject also is characterized by a certain (phallic) jouissance, one that never quite makes good on its promise, which always comes up short in relation to the fantasy of a "whole" jouissance. This fantasy—which Fink argues is, in the end, the fantasy of copulation or "of an inscription of the sexual link" (Seminar XX, 76/82)—motivates a particular kind of knowledge formation. This is the kind of knowledge motivated by a deficiency of jouis-

sance. However, Lacan claims that the “revolutions” modern science attributed to Copernicus¹¹ introduced the possibility for a kind of “knowledge” beyond fantasy, an “unknown” knowledge that can only be discerned in and through its effects. This “other” knowledge is one that Lacan describes in Seminar XX as a “reduction to letters”—that is, a reduction to the sort of formalization found in number theory, set theory, and topology—which he believed provided the basis for a nonimaginary approach to the field of the subject. Lacan associates the subject of affect, or drive, with the potential for this other form of knowledge production—the form made possible by the “decentering” effect of modern science. And while the subject of drive and feminine structure are not one and the same, the Other *jouissance* that Lacan suggests is possible for the feminine subject is associated in Seminar XX with this new science of the letter. Thus one finds the feminine subject as represented in the formulas of sexuation by the possibility of a *jouissance* sustained not in relation to object *a* as a “stand in” for the “One” of Antiquity but, paradoxically, by a lack in the Other as real. This *jouissance* does not exist because it cannot be represented; it can, however, be traced in the history of its effects.

Soler’s interest in “Hysteria in Scientific Discourse” intersects Fink’s in its engagement with sexual difference, science, and the history of knowledge production. Rather than focusing on *jouissance* explicitly, however, she recounts the role played by hysteria as a structural component of shifts in knowledge, both across history and in (post)modern culture. She invokes Lacan’s thesis that the hysteric’s provocation can be found at the heart of the quest for knowledge from which science emerged. Soler also marks the reemergence of hysteria as a symptom paralleling—not coincidentally—the increasingly obvious cracks in the Enlightenment project manifest in Vienna between the two wars. As such, we also find hysteria at the root of the psychoanalytic desire to know. The sequelae of this intervention, this “breathing life” into science at its moments of imminent demise, are numerous. One of the most compelling, according to Soler, is the current happy intersection between science and capitalism—the universalizing tendencies of science being reinforced by capitalism’s investment in the proliferation and hyper-dissemination of goods. Citing Lacan’s early recognition of this paradox, Soler thus underscores how the hysteric’s complaint—associated ultimately with the alienation attending the emergence of the speaking subject—can now only be compounded by the increasing instrumentalization of life. While this instrumentalization is not new, it penetrates the body of the individual and the social field more directly and completely than ever, to the detriment of a *jouissance* not amenable to the structure of production. This latter *jouissance* is antithetical to that produced by being the object of desire (i.e., by being man’s symptom, what hysterics refuse). Thus Soler questions the consequences of this paradox both for the hysteric and for science. She suggests that the outcome will be overdetermined by the fact that all subjects, but most significantly women, are increasingly interpellated as uni-

versal, unisexual workers; as a result, women have greater access than ever to the phallic jouissance of “having” and producing. While not all women are hysterics and not all hysterics are women, the effects of cultural and economic shifts towards the unisexual worker decrease the Other jouissance in which the hysteric has a certain stake. Consistent with Lacan’s remarks on hysteria in Seminar XX, Soler suggests that—while the analyst and the hysteric both represent the incarnation of what remains irreducible to phallic jouissance—it remains to be seen whether or not hysterics will be content with the aporia of sex that psychoanalytic science presents as a potential alternative to the phallic circuit of production and consumption.

Slavoj Žižek also is concerned with feminine jouissance, particularly in its role in subjectivization and what Lacan describes as the path of love. In “The Real of Sexual Difference,” he suggests that one finds two points in Lacan’s later work at which the status of the Other is significantly altered. Reading the formulas of sexuation with a particular emphasis on the illusory nature of the phallic exception and on the feminine logic of the not-whole, Žižek underscores how Lacan’s interest in the real represents a passage in priority from the masculine logic of law and transgression to the feminine logic of love. Žižek’s elaboration of the logic of feminine jouissance lays the groundwork for an understanding of Lacan’s identification of the feminine subject as the subject *par excellence*. His exposé of feminine jouissance also clarifies the role of the real in producing what he refers to as the “deadlock” of sexual difference. By working through several examples of this deadlock—for example, Levi-Strauss’ notion of the zero institution—Žižek sketches a framework that allows him to differentiate between Lacan’s positing of the real dimension of the Other (and its implications for an “a-historical-ness” of sexual difference) and certain historicist critiques of Lacan (most notably that of Judith Butler);¹² this framework also allows him to distinguish between Lacan’s “ethics of the real” (and its implications for ethical and political action) and common “postsecular” conflation of Lacan’s ethics with Derridean- and/or Levinasian-inspired versions.¹³

Together, Žižek’s, Fink’s, and Soler’s chapters clarify what is at stake in claiming specificity for a Lacanian response to certain questions concerning subjectivity, epistemology, and ethics dominant in contemporary interdisciplinary debates. While Lacan’s emphasis on the subject’s positioning vis-à-vis the Other is consistent with current interdisciplinary trends, his introduction of the subject of drive and its real Other reorients the structure of such debates significantly. It suggests that one cannot consider questions of, say, epistemology or ethics, without also considering their founding fantasies and attendant modes of jouissance. Regarding ethics, Lacan cites as a historical example the inherent despotism of Bentham’s relentless and interminable cataloguing of human utility. He raises the question of the jouissance that at once motivates and eludes such a project, a question concerning the invincible optimism of the utilitarian reformer. Lacan’s analysis of Bentham’s project ultimately suggests that within the circuit of pleasure and pain there emerges an excess—a certain *en plus* of

jouissance that cannot be reduced to utility. This is jouissance of the sort that “serves no purpose” (Seminar XX, 10/3). Lacan poses the jouissance behind Antigone’s (decidedly nonutilitarian) gesture as a counterexample to the phallic jouissance implicit in Bentham’s project. Žižek takes up the question of Antigone’s jouissance to illustrate the specificity of Lacan’s “ethics of the real,” particularly in relation to contemporary debates in philosophical ethics. Lacan claims that it is only a refusal to recognize the negativity or gaps in being corresponding to gestures such as Antigone’s that has allowed ethics to ground itself in ontology. In taking this position, Lacan is closely allied with philosophical positions such as Derrida’s or Levinas’. However, as Žižek elaborates, contemporary articulations of Derrida’s and Levinas’ ethics often subtly retrieve this negativity in favor of a subject who “decides” (e.g., on a particular course of action), albeit as a response to the Other’s decision “in” the subject. Žižek’s Lacanian reading of Antigone’s act—as one in which she does not merely relate to the Other-Thing but, in a sense, *becomes* it—underscores the specificity of the Lacanian subject’s relation to the real for current work in philosophical and political ethics.

With respect to epistemology and jouissance, both Fink’s and Soler’s analyses suggest that modern science remains, at best, deeply ambivalent about its inaugural gesture of rejecting reality in favor of the real. Hence, we find fantasies of a “whole” jouissance alive and well in the academy and behind recent theoretical impulses as diverse as the attempts at grand synthesis in science and some of the more utopian formulations of identity politics in interdisciplinary theory. Perhaps most significantly, the recent partnership of science and capitalism referenced by Soler has produced the conditions for pursuit of the One on a hitherto unprecedented scale; the human genome project is perhaps the paradigmatic instance of this recent trend. For Soler, the question that arises in the wake of this science-capitalism merger is one concerning the role of the hysteric’s provocation, specifically in its function as the real’s “representative.” As noted above, science has historically manifested the structure of the master’s discourse, presented as a (dogmatically) metaphysical system of Truth. However, the hysteric’s challenge to its integrity, and her revelation of its lack, has, paradoxically, often rejuvenated a flagging scientific enterprise, allowing for a perpetual reincarnation of science as the “whole” Truth. Ironically, this dialectic between hysteria and science also is well suited to reproducing the kind of jouissance mobilized within increasingly globalized, capitalist modes of consumption. However, as Lacan suggested in 1975, the structure of the hysteric’s discourse is closely allied with the structure of scientific discourse as alternatively constructed within quantum physics and formal mathematics—disciplines that exemplify what Lacan calls a “science of the real.” The question that remains to be answered, then, is whether hysteria will be co-opted by the phallic jouissance of capitalist science or whether it will remain invested in the Other jouissance that drives the science of the real.

THE BODY, BEING, AND THE LETTER

As one delves more deeply into Seminar XX, it becomes apparent that Lacan's reformulations of the drive, the object, and *jouissance* also perform a radical subversion of the classical Western binary between mind and body. Historically, most approaches to ontology, epistemology, and ethics have left this binary intact, neglecting in particular a consideration of the body's stake in knowledge. Feminist theories have by now rendered commonplace the notion that this binary is implicitly gendered and hierarchical. However, feminist theories of the body have been haunted by a related binary—that between essentialism and constructionism—and have expended significant labor in attempting to work it through. Paul Verhaeghe's, Andrew Cutrofello's, and my own chapters address the specificity of Lacan's engagement with the intransigence of these binaries, particularly via his use of number theory, set theory, topology, and other figurative means of indicating the role of the real in their subversion. Using these means, Lacan ultimately articulates what Verhaeghe calls a "non-homologously structured" model of the subject—one that subverts both traditional notions of causality and conventional distinctions between mind and body, self and other, essential and constructed, and so on. The genesis of this alternative model is supported by Lacan's further articulation of feminine structure, particularly in its relation to the lack in the Other as real. By the end of the seminar, this development allows Lacan to adumbrate the sort of knowledge and being implied by a psychoanalytic science of the letter.

In "Lacan's Answer to the Classical Mind/Body Deadlock: Retracing Freud's *Beyond*," Paul Verhaeghe addresses Lacan's attempt in Seminar XX to move beyond the mind/body dualism of modern science and philosophy and to articulate the consequences of this move for understanding knowledge, *jouissance*, and the body. He focuses explicitly on the dynamics of "incarnation" of a *jouissance* "beyond" the phallus (i.e., what the hysteric represents). Verhaeghe illustrates—via a measured tacking back and forth between Freud and Lacan, and between texts within Lacan's oeuvre—the nonhomologous structure that Lacan produces in place of the classical binary between mind and body. Verhaeghe argues that, inspired by the topological models that confound accepted corporeal terms of "inside" and "outside" (e.g., the Möbius strip), Lacan articulates a "circular but non-reciprocal relationship" between the two terms. He invokes Lacan's formulation of the impossible but necessary relation of *tuché* and automaton as producing the retroactivity and incompleteness of this circuit from "a to body, to ego, to subject" to sexualization. In Seminar XX, *tuché* and automaton, correlated with the real and symbolic, respectively, are translated by Lacan into the deadlock of formalization represented by the "being" of the letter and the truth of the signifier.

In "The Ontological Status of Lacan's Mathematical Paradigms," Andrew Cutrofello takes up the notoriously difficult "Rings of String" chapter in

Seminar XX in order to explicate the status of the late Lacan's "mathematical" project. By a deceptively simple maneuvering through key moments of modern science and philosophy, Cutrofello proceeds to reconcile Lacan's seemingly contradictory claims that "[m]athematical formalization is our goal" and "[t]he analytic thing will not be mathematical." He provides a series of incisive examples of the central preoccupations of modern science, rendering the various attempts at mapping the possible relations between *aisthesis* (being) and *noesis* (thinking) as a response to anxiety over the ontological status of the sexual relationship. In so doing, Cutrofello sheds light on Lacan's interpretation of Cartesian doubt as "caused" by anxiety over the loss of the sexual relationship, this loss being implied in the shift from a science of reality to a science of the real. He claims that Cartesian science introduces a mathematical signifier whose destination is a science of the real—a destination that forces a choice between *aisthesis* and *noesis*. In its radical break with the realm of perceptible being, the Cartesian "thought experiment" produces the cogito as a being of pure *noesis*. Cutrofello ultimately invites us to frame psychoanalysis itself as the staging of a thought experiment that subjects the cogito to something wholly other. In other words, Cutrofello challenges us to think the psychoanalytic situation (and the social link it produces) as one in which something happens via a "revelation of a radical dis-affinity"—or, the emergence of an uncanny real that the subject cannot deny.

The relation between the "revelation of a radical dis-affinity" that Cutrofello invokes and the feminine subject's relation to $S(\mathcal{A})$ is one I explore in my chapter, "Tongues of Angels: Feminine Structure and Other Jouissance." I begin by introducing the overlapping lacks that Lacan proposes¹⁴ to situate the subject of desire in relation to the subject of drive. In addressing the structure of drive, Lacan emphasizes the "death in life" that the advent of the subject via sexual reproduction represents. Through invoking the metaphor of meiosis—a process in which creation of "life" emerges in simultaneity with the expulsion of "dead" remainders—Lacan suggests that the subject of drive comes into being in relation to an object whose ontological status is situated somewhere between death and life, in a zone of the "undead." I mobilize this characterization of object *a* to facilitate a certain reading of the formulas of sexuation in Seminar XX—particularly as they are relevant in understanding Lacan's situation of the feminine subject as radically Other in relation to man, and in the feminine subject's relation to $S(\mathcal{A})$. Lacan claims that exploring the implications of the "not-whole" of feminine structure might put us on a path toward understanding how "that which until now has only been a fault (*faillie*) or gap in jouissance could be realized" (Seminar XX, 14/8). With this in mind, I suggest several implications of his engagement with the figures of the *être-ange* (angel-being) and the spider web—figures he uses to suggest the structure of such a "real-ization." These implications allow for a further articulation of the feminine subject's relation to the signifier of the lack in the Other, a relation

that—again following Lacan’s lead—might be characterized as the space of *poesis*, or the production of a knowledge of the letter.

In their shared interest in Lacan’s intervention into the radical gap that Descartes introduced between truth and being, Verhaeghe’s, Cutrofello’s, and my own chapters each speak to a dimension of Lacan’s subversion of the mind/body binary historically sustained by this gap. Traditionally, Descartes’ dualism has been understood as an especially flagrant instance of the body’s denigration in Western philosophy. According to Lacan, however, in its disassociation with the “reality” of the body (as sensing and as an object of perception) and its retreat into the realm of pure thought, the Cartesian cogito actually opens up a space within which the *real* of the body (and, hence, a different sort of “being”) might emerge.

As Cutrofello underscores, the split between being and truth can be seen as an attempt by modern science to deal with its anxiety over the ontological status of the sexual relationship. In Descartes’ assertion of the heteronomy of this split, however, Lacan reads a certain recognition that, apropos of sexual difference, “when one gives rise to two, there is never a return. They don’t revert to making one again, even if it is a new one” (Seminar XX, 79/86). Hence, staking his claim with the mathematical signifier introduced by Descartes, and with the impossibility of the sexual relationship with which it is coextensive, Lacan takes up the question of the cogito’s implications for the subject of psychoanalysis. In Seminar XI, Lacan reads the split between *aisthesis* and *noesis* not as a dualism but in terms of an internal splitting produced by a forced choice between the two. In other words, the loss in being implied by the repudiation of the link between being and truth produces an inherently divided subject, albeit a subject divided in one of two possible ways. Here (Seminar XI) Lacan articulates the forced choice between being and truth as one that comes down on the side of thought; access to the realm in which “we can permit everything as a hypothesis of truth” (Seminar XI, 36) is paid for by a loss in being.¹⁵ However, in Seminar XIV (1966–1967, unpublished), Lacan suggests that the cogito also can come down on the side of being, where the choice of being necessitates the exile of thought to the unconscious.

As Žižek elaborates elsewhere,¹⁶ these two ways of reading the split can be mapped onto Lacan’s formulas of masculine and feminine structure. Ironically, the properly Cartesian choice is ultimately the latter one; the rendering of the cogito as a thinking substance, as *res cogitans*, can be read as a “saving” of the subject by choosing existence as thinking “being” (“I am, therefore it thinks”). This corresponds to Lacan’s formula for masculine structure, where the subject exists within the realm of the symbolic, but only on the basis of an exception that founds it—an exception that is itself not subject to symbolic law. The former version of the cogito, the choice of thinking over being, corresponds to feminine structure. In this instance, thinking is not substantialized but represents the vacant point of the pure “I think” (“I think, therefore it ex-sists”).

Feminine structure is constituted not on the basis of an exception to the symbolic but on the basis of the feminine subject being in the symbolic “altogether”; as Lacan states, “[s]he is *not* not at all there. She is there in full” (Seminar XX, 71/77). Hence, through her identification with the contingency of the signifier, the feminine subject chooses thought over existence—or, in other words, over the sort of being to be had within the symbolic order.

From this vantage point, we can understand Lacan’s gradual working through of the formulas of sexuation in Seminar XX as marking a return of his preoccupation with the cogito as an inaugural moment in the science of the real. In linking masculine structure to the Other of the signifier, Lacan suggests that it remains limited to the truth that can be articulated via the signifier, a truth always only half told and which tends toward a reduction of knowledge to the One. Lacan links feminine structure, on the other hand, to its exclusion from the “reality” of being (she “does not exist”), as well as to an identification with the signifier in its radically contingent, rather than exceptional, character. As Verhaeghe notes, this articulation of feminine structure simultaneously marks the trajectory in Seminar XX of a radical alteration in Lacan’s understanding of *being* and the body.

In addressing himself to the question of the body’s being, Lacan wants to avoid the imaginary pitfalls that have led philosophy and science to ground the body in a Being “behind” being. Hence, while he recognizes that “in point of fact everything called philosophy has to this day hung by this slender thread—that there is an order other than that along which the body thinks it moves,” he also suggests that “the body is no more explained for all that” (*Feminine Sexuality*, 163–64). Lacan takes up the question of this “other” order of the body with his account of feminine structure. As conditioned by her identification with the contingency of the signifier, the feminine subject “ex-sists” with respect to the signifier of the One. It is in this very ex-sistence, however, that Lacan “locates” another sort of being, a being that requires, not One, but infinity (Seminar XX, 15/10). This being, while it is material and, as such, could be said to be of the body, ex-sists in relation to the material-ized, sexualized body—in other words, the body as signified. Lacan is here indicating that the shape and consistency given to the body (as a “lived” corporeal unity, extended across time) via the imaginary and symbolic are insufficient to fully account for the body. This not-whole of the (sexualized) body is what Lacan suggestively calls the *encore* of the *en-corps*, the enjoying substance that comes from beyond the signifier and its repetitive circuit of phallic jouissance. As I elaborate in my chapter, the “place” of this en-corps cannot be inscribed within a Euclidean geometric frame and must be figured through the elliptical geometric and topological means that Lacan deploys in Seminar XX to trace the effects of the real in the constitution of the body. These alternative means of figuration allow Lacan to relate the en-corps to the “being” of the letter—not in its signifying capacity but in its “signifierness” (Seminar XX, 67/71). In its signifierness, the letter manifests traces of a certain, Other jouissance; while in and of itself, the letter does not

signify anything about this jouissance—“[one should not] too quickly associate its function with so-called messages”—it nevertheless has effects . . . it “reproduces, but never the same, never the same being of knowledge” (Seminar XX, 89/97). In other words, the letter does not transmit a sexualized knowledge of this jouissance but, like the germ cell or the atom, produces what can be called “being effects.”

As Lacan suggests, “[W]riting is thus a trace in which an effect of language can be read. This is what happens when you scribble something. I certainly don’t deprive myself of doing so, for that is how I prepare what I have to say” (Seminar XX, 110/121). It is in a similar spirit, then, that the following chapters are offered—as manifestations of a certain “cross-sighted” reading between the signifier and the letter, articulation and writing, and truth and being. It is our hope that, beyond what they offer of what can be said about Lacan’s Seminar XX, they might also engender certain . . . effects.

NOTES

1. See Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose, eds., *Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the École Freudienne*, trans. J. Rose (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1982).

2. See *The Seminar, Book XX, Encore, On Feminine Sexuality: The Limits of Love and Knowledge*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1998). All page references to Seminar XX in this chapter are first to the French edition (Paris: Seuil, 1975) and then to the English translation.

3. There are eleven chapters in the Seminar.

4. See “Guiding Remarks for a Convention on Feminine Sexuality” and “Signification of the Phallus,” *Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the École Freudienne*, trans. J. Rose (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1982).

5. See “L’Étourdit,” *Silicet* 4 (1973), pp. 5–52, and Seminar XX.

6. In a related vein, Lacan often cautions his audience about the imaginary pitfalls of secondary elaboration, the ensnarements awaiting those who fixate on the knowledge contained “in” language rather than on the effects of language on the subject of jouissance.

7. Luce Irigaray published two essays in direct response to *Encore*, “Così Fan Tutti” and “The ‘Mechanics’ of Fluids.” They are among her more challenging writings on Lacanian psychoanalysis and require the sort of familiarity with *Encore* not common among Anglophone readers. They are translated and published together in *This Sex Which Is Not One*, trans. C. Porter and C. Burke (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1985).

8. All references to *Écrits* here are first to the French edition (Paris: Seuil, 1966) and then to the English translation, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1977).

9. See Michael Groden and Martin Kreiswirth, eds., “Jacques Lacan,” *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), p. 453.

10. See “Guiding Remarks for a Convention on Feminine Sexuality” and “Signification of the Phallus,” *Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the École Freudienne*, trans. J. Rose (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1982).

11. Lacan credits Kepler instead.

12. See, for example, "Arguing with the Real," in *Bodies That Matter* (New York: Routledge, 1993), pp. 187–222 and *The Psychic Life of Power* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

13. See, for example, Simon Critchley's "Das Ding: Lacan and Levinas" pp. 198–216 and "The Original Traumatism: Levinas and Psychoanalysis," pp. 183–197 in his *Ethics, Politics, Subjectivity* (New York: Verso, 1999).

14. See *Seminar XI, The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 1978), p. 205.

15. See also Cutrofello's discussion of Lacan's analysis of the cogito's implications for the subject in this book.

16. Slavoj Žižek, *Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel, and the Critique of Ideology* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), p. 59.