

# The sword and the bridge

## The anatomical and the political in conceptions of sexual difference

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Although texts dating from antiquity, particularly those of Aristotle, see the issue of sexual difference as one of a set of themes relating to sovereignty – domination of the other or self-control – it is generally recognized today that these domains are relatively separate. Questions concerning the differences between men and women have been left, in the main, to the anthropological disciplines: sociology, ethnography, psychoanalysis or medicine. A question arises, however, in relation to psychoanalysis in particular: in retranscribing what it has learnt from scientific disciplines, is psychoanalysis entirely free of all philosophical prejudice or ideological choice? Has the question of sovereignty been surreptitiously reintroduced in the presumptions of psychoanalysis in relation to sexual difference?

### **Anatomy and legality**

Far from recapitulating the official, culturally imposed version of the division between men and women, Freud's approach was, from the outset, attentive to 'the feminine protest'. In particular, he contested the line of thinking which saw the social role attributed to women as linked to the notion of an unchanging essence. Thus, in "'Civilized" Sexual Morality and Modern Nervous Illness' (1908), he undertook a radical critique of the aims attributed to the cultural differentiation of sexual roles, reproaching them for producing an anaesthetized type of woman:

these women who conceive without pleasure show little willingness afterwards to face the pains of frequent childbirth. In this way, the preparation for marriage frustrates the aims of marriage itself. [That is, the satisfaction of sexual needs in a form 'serviceable to civilization'.] As a reward for her

previous docility, she is left with the choice between unappeased desire, unfaithfulness or a neurosis.<sup>1</sup>

Freud made a connection between this anaesthesia and the prohibition forbidding women to enjoy intellectual activity and to apply it in the sexual domain:

Their upbringing forbids their concerning themselves intellectually with sexual problems though they nevertheless feel extremely curious about them, and frightens them by condemning such curiosity as unwomanly [*unweiblich*] and as a sign of a sinful disposition.<sup>2</sup>

Such a 'prohibition of thought' (*Denkverbot*) would extend its influence to the capacity for initiative as a whole, having a paralysing effect. Now it is significant that, on this same point, one of Freud's disciples, Jacques Lacan, also adopted the old prohibitive verdict:

Becoming a woman and wondering what a woman is are two essentially different things. I would go even further – it is because one does not become one that one wonders and, up to a point, to wonder is the contrary of becoming one.<sup>3</sup>

This position is justified *if* one considers certain bodily movements – in this case, phallic penetration – as a paradigm that is valid for behaviour as a whole. If intellectuality is penetrating and phallic, it is simply proof in a woman of usurpation, fraught with castrating effects. Activity falls to the lot of men and passivity, or at least receptivity, to women. It was only after medical studies had been carried out on the contractile capacities of the vagina that women were permitted to show their ability for cerebral prehension.

Thus psychoanalytic theory found itself pulled, on the one hand, between its endeavours to reflect critically on the damaging effects of cultural 'repression' – a

critique that was efficacious, first and foremost, at the point of its inauguration – and, on the other, creating new norms that were no longer supposed to be based on arbitrary decisions but on exigencies assumed to be inscribed in the nature of things. Buttressed by these new assurances, corporeal conformation was promoted as a reference point for activities that could then be justified by the very design of bodies. And so it was that Freud, varying a well-known saying of Napoleon, declared: ‘Anatomy is destiny.’

It is true that in the Lacanian uptake of the Freudian legacy, the normative function is attributed not to natural factors but to the symbolic dimension. Nevertheless, given the close connection between the key element of the symbolic order – the phallus – and what Lacan calls ‘the prevalence of the phallic *Gestalt*’, emphasizing the symbolic still leads us back to a system of references centred on masculine privilege. Woman, accordingly, is mainly placed under the sign of lack: ‘strictly speaking there is no symbolization of woman’s sex as such. ... The imaginary only furnishes an absence where elsewhere there is a highly prevalent symbol.’<sup>4</sup> This does not, however, lead us unproblematically back to archaic cults, to phallic processions devoted to celebrating fecundity, in so far as the role given to the phallus in psychoanalytic theory is essentially one of a principle of power – thus remaining within the logic of domination – rather than a principle of fecundity or of proliferating life. It is this historical dislocation in the genealogy of the masculine that I shall be examining here.<sup>5</sup>

### **The ‘decision’ and the celebration of patriarchy**

It is not enough to question the origins of the ascendancy of the phallus; it is also necessary to set out and examine the different interpretations which have read fundamentally different capacities into the phallic model. In *Moses and Monotheism*, for example, Freud did not see the privilege of the phallus as imposed by the nature of things, but related it instead to the ‘decision’ (*Entscheidung*) accompanying the historic turning point of the transition from matriarchy to patriarchy. Opting for the hypothesis of a primitive matriarchy, Freud presupposed a period of historical mutation in which he discerned a certain ‘progress’ (*Fortschritt*):

An advance in intellectuality consists in deciding against direct sense-perception in favour of what are known as the higher intellectual processes – that is, memories, reflections and inferences. It consists, for instance, in deciding that paternity is more impor-

tant than maternity, although it cannot, like the latter, be established by the evidence of the senses, and that for that reason the child should bear his father’s name and be his heir.<sup>6</sup>

The difference between paternity and maternity was thus related, not to social roles, but to cognitive operations – perception and intellection – placed in a hierarchical relation to each other and related to the development of causal thought. The ‘*geistig*’ dimension, signifying both the spiritual and the intellectual, was said to be ‘more important’, making it possible to consider this transition to the primacy of paternity as ‘cultural progress’ (*Kulturfortschritt*), opening up ‘the new realm of intellectuality’ (*das neue Reich der Geistigkeit*).<sup>7</sup>

This theoretical moment had the double effect of both an opening and a closing. On the one hand, as the anatomical verdict had been abandoned, it was possible to adopt a historical perspective. At the same time, however, the historical rupture was mapped onto a speculative division rooted in an idealistic tradition of Platonic origin: the assumption that sensory perception gives rise to the representation of maternity, whereas the intelligible domain allows accession to the idea of paternity.

If accession to the idea of paternity is supposed to represent ‘cultural progress’, can it be said that the transition to this definition of paternity represents progress for psychoanalytic thought? Not necessarily, particularly if, following Jacques Le Rider,<sup>8</sup> it is pointed out that the location of women in the sensory domain and the attribution to men of the aptitude for the intelligible correspond to one of the most frequent themes of anti-Semitic and anti-feminine thought, as developed, for example, by Otto Weininger as well as a large number of his contemporaries.

We find ourselves, therefore, at the crossroads of different lines of thought. Far from being based on a set of observations, the psychoanalytic theory of sexual difference seems to have incorporated speculative dichotomies inherited from the Western philosophical tradition. Is it possible, moreover, in this superimposition of two dichotomies, to differentiate between what is related to cause and what to effect? According to Françoise Héritier, the debate on sexual difference is the driving force behind the structuring of thought as a whole around various antithetical dualities: hot/cold, solid/fluid, vertical/horizontal, and so on.<sup>9</sup> From this point of view, the need for differentiation and coupling leads to the projection of the criteria governing sexual difference onto the categories of thought more generally. It is also possible, however,

to postulate a circular process by which these same categories of thought would have the function, retrospectively, of hypostasizing and rigidifying the criteria that make it possible to elaborate sexual difference.

One gesture seems to dominate in this theorization of difference: the act of cutting or of otherwise separating two dimensions. Jean Laplanche has drawn attention to the obsessional aspect of this as it is specific to a system of thought governed by a ritual of separation, as if it were a matter of urgency to transform into a pair of antithetical and isolable agents that which, at first sight, is indivisible. The representation of any human body, even the individual human body, consequently becomes the object of a work of differentiation, on the basis of which each region of the body is given a sexual value. Thus in Freud's *Three Essays*, as well as in numerous anatomical representations, the skin is figured as paradigmatic of maternal envelopment. This epidermic covering, the exposure to exteriority, is connected with an element of vulnerability that the male is obliged to deny. Thus, for example, Juan de Valverde's *écorché* (1560) holds his arm outstretched, his own skin hanging from the ends of his fingers.

From this perspective, it is not so much the body's internal structure that is apprehended; rather it is the possibility of its division that is being explored, as if the body were the product of two powers, coupled together indefinitely. Lévi-Strauss's anthropological research reveals an analogous duality:

From Tibet and Assam to Siberia, throughout China, we have met, as the 'Leitmotiv' of the indigenous theory of marriage, the belief that the bones come from the father's side and the flesh from the mother's side.<sup>10</sup>

The introduction of the two antithetical dimensions of bone and flesh does not merely serve as an explanation of origins. This differentiation is also supposed to show how *each sex* is formed from this or that part of the body. A vertical bone structure, the spinal column, is paradigmatically representative of virility. Accordingly, Héritier draws our attention to various figures reflecting 'the image, generally masculine, of half a man cut vertically, seen more often than not from the right side'.<sup>11</sup> In these, the penis is an extension of the spinal column, the masculine representing an axial function which constitutes the central line, the principle of unity, around which the human body organizes and erects itself.

Far from being relegated to the past as an exotic line of thought, this representation of

the body was to have an impact on the foundation of psychoanalysis. The rupture between Freud and Fliess occurred when the biologist, Fliess, added the theory of bilaterality to that of bisexuality. Although Freud was won over to the theory of bisexuality, he protested against the attribution of sexual duality to each half of the body: 'But where then', she asks, 'is the femininity, for instance, of the left half of a man if it carries a testicle'?<sup>12</sup> Once the body was considered to be bilateral, and therefore symmetrical, it no longer represented a purely vertical axis but became, as it were, vulvar, feminized. The emphasis which psychoanalysis, both in Freud and Lacan, has laid on the phallic *Gestalt* has prolonged the anthropological version of the masculine as fundamentally axial and vertical, whereas everything in the body that is organized according to the principle of symmetry, of reduplication around an axis, has constituted a stigma of femininity in which the whole body is apprehended as the juxtaposition of two lips.



## The masculine divided

Resorting to what may be called a ‘logic of the sword’, the passion for division has not merely separated that which symbolizes either the masculine or the feminine in the human body; it has even gone further to introduce a partition within the male genital organ itself. In his theory of castration, Freud only links this threat with the penis, not taking into account the meaning of this process when performed on an animal (that is, it concerns the testicles, thus having a sterilizing effect). He presumes, furthermore, that men take only the penis, and not the testicles, into account where their own body image is concerned:

It is, incidentally, remarkable what a small degree of attention the other part of the male genitals, the little sack [*das Säckchen*] with its contents, attracts in children. From all one hears in analyses, one would not guess that the male genitals consisted of anything more than the penis.<sup>13</sup>

This statement is based, moreover, on things that had been heard and then forgotten; in particular, the speculations of a boy who feared for his testicles, which he identified with ‘eggs’, while wondering ‘how the contents of the scrotum could be constantly renewed’.<sup>14</sup>

It is also true that from the Lacanian point of view the testicles are considered to be of less worth, since they play no part in the symbolization of the masculine emblem:

The phallus is not the masculine genital apparatus as a whole; it is the masculine genital apparatus apart from its complement, the scrotum. The erect image of the phallus is what is fundamental here. There is no other choice but a virile image or castration.<sup>15</sup>

How are we to understand that a part of the male genital apparatus is thus condemned to oblivion, declared unsuitable for symbolizing the masculine emblem? Far from being dictated by anatomy, this decision arises from an ideological interpretation. It separates that part of the body which is suitable for representing the centralizing power – the erect penis, able to represent the royal sceptre, the sword, the ferule, all symbols of authority – from that part related to potency or fecundity – the testicles, where semen is stored. Furthermore, it is significant that Freud and Lacan’s equation of the virile with the phallic runs counter to popular language, which speaks, instead, of ‘having balls’ to emphasize the attribute of real virility.

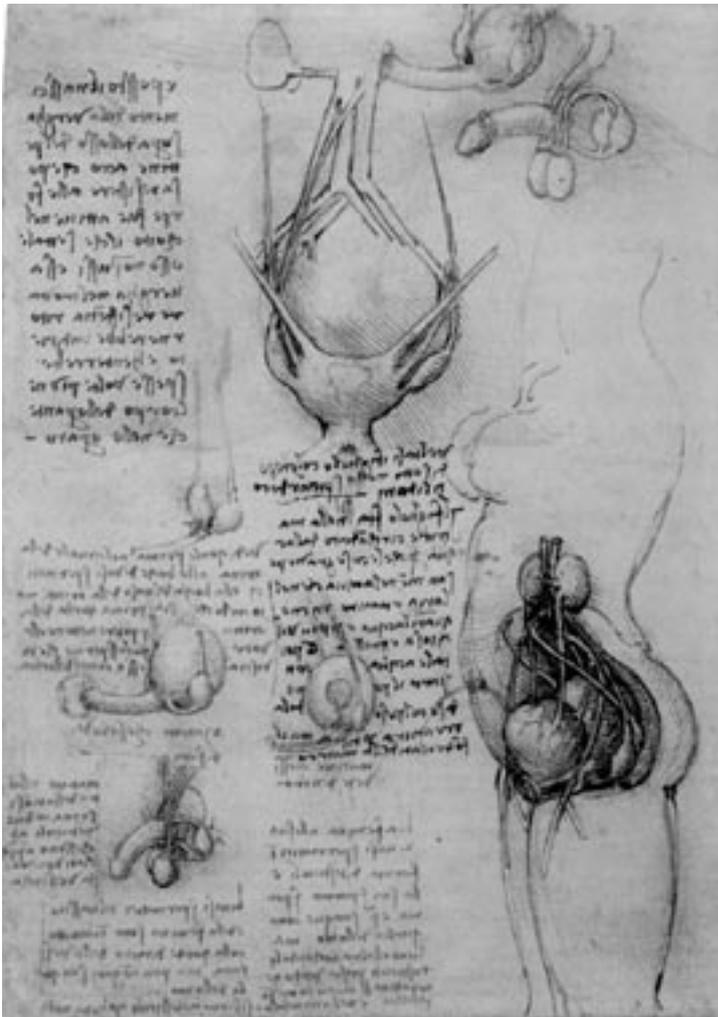
What we are confronted with, then, are several interpretations which reveal a stratification of mascu-

line specificity. This is reminiscent of the Dumézilian tripartition of Indo-European culture. If we descend the social scale in Dumézil’s hierarchical conception of social structure, we find priests, then warriors, and finally producers. The two upper levels of the hierarchy are possessed of and able to display powerful (*tranchant*) symbols, instruments of sacrifice or war. The producers, on the other hand, bent over the soil, become the emblems not of verticality but of *fecundity*. In subscribing to the primacy of the phallus, psychoanalysis too adopts an aristocratic, even monarchical, conception of power, regarding the emblem of political power as sacred and delegitimizing the power of giving life.

The very term ‘proletarian’ acquires its significance at the point where politics and life meet. According to Alain Rey, the Latin *proletarius* denotes ‘someone who is only considered useful for the children they beget’. As Augustine comments: ‘*proletarii illi, qui eo quod proli gignendae vacabant*’, ‘the proletariat were those whose task it was to bring children into the world’.<sup>16</sup> In contrast, the term *patres* was used to designate the senators – that is, those who held political power. One may argue, then, that in seeking to place exclusive value on the ‘symbolic father’, the psychoanalytic approach to paternity has been influenced by the aristocratic point of view, thereby rendering the ‘biological parent’ inessential, or relegating him to the same semantic field as the proletarian.

I should point out in passing that, although this is the dominant orientation of the Lacanian heritage, several passages in Lacan’s work underline the importance of the paradigm of vital growth. A certain tension can be detected, moreover, between two representative elaborations of masculine performance in its contribution to paternity. That is, body functioning, in its specific capacity for erection, is itself the object of several unconscious re-translations. Its capacity for movement can be traced to two models. First, that of the manual worker, to whom little Hans refers when, in his fantasy, he asks the plumber to unscrew his own genital apparatus and to screw it on again. Second, the vegetal model, evident in the numerous men’s dreams which represent the springing up of the male sexual organ as a phenomenon of uncontrollable vegetal growth, analogous to the development of a plant. These models lead to two interpretations of bodily metamorphoses, imputing the latter to either a voluntary operation or to the dynamism of life itself.

The notion of power thus split in two gives rise to two representations of the relation to the body. The bodily metamorphosis associated with erection, for



example, can be interpreted either as a manifestation of power or potency (and, thus, lack of erection as ‘impotency’), or as evidence of a *lack* of control, and hence a lack of power – at least, that is, if one expects power to conform to a model of mastery, a model which exhibits a second degree of reflexive power, the capacity to control oneself.

In relation to the speculative dichotomies that are often applied arbitrarily to sexual difference, Freud located the first figure of power, the spontaneous potency of the body, on the feminine side. In the parodic poem sent to Fliess to celebrate the birth of his son, Freud contrasted the domain of ‘calculation’, an instrument of contraception and a task allotted to the father, with the domain of ‘living’ (*leben*), allotted to the mother (a dichotomy that reappears in *Moses and Monotheism*). Seen from this point of view, masculine turgescence, in its spontaneity, arises from the feminine. This is translated figuratively by Freud in his dream of the ‘great exploit’ (*grosse Leistung*), in which penile erection is the phantasmatic equivalent of giving birth.

The pairing of the dichotomies life–spirit and feminine–masculine also governs Augustine’s reflections

on the erection in *The City of God*. The erection, as we are familiar with it, is related to the consequences of original sin: disobedience towards God is believed to have been punished by the inscription – on the male body, and, in particular, on the virile member – of a dimension of disobedience. ‘A very different being from what he was in paradise before his sin’,<sup>17</sup> Augustine declares, attributing the present scandal to the fact that ‘our members are stirred up against our will’. In the Edenic state, however, the penis, just like the hand, was under the control of the will:

The will would have received the obedience of all the members, including the organs of sex. Then the instrument created for the task would have sown the seed on ‘the fields of generation’ as the hand now sows seed on the earth.<sup>18</sup>

Thus did recourse to the veil and to clothing become necessary in the post-lapsarian state, to hide ‘the secret hidden under the cloak’.<sup>19</sup>

Augustine’s interpretation likens the principle of power to that which is capable of exercising a function of domination. With no room left for vital spontaneity, the body ought to obey the will as a slave obeys his master. The power ‘of moving of one’s own accord’, a capacity that Aristotle attributes both to the heart and to the male sexual organ, becomes, paradoxically, the equivalent of impotence. It is quite possible that Western culture still subscribes to this interpretation today, since the possibility of a bodily appendage ‘moving of its own accord’ is considered to be a somewhat shameful mark of childhood or illness. This, indeed, was the misfortune that befell Pinocchio’s nose, the sudden and uncontrollable lengthening of which was regarded either as insolence or as a symptom of lying.

The celebration of the phallus at the heart of Freudian psychoanalysis is, then, only concerned with the phallus from one particular perspective. Value is attached to the petrified emblem, while the transformation leading to erection is no longer considered a masculine prerogative. Thus it is anatomy, with its immobile drawings, that is promoted, and not physiology, which emphasizes circulation, exchanges and transformations in the body. Freud’s poem sent to Fliess ends with a contrast between a Parmenidean and a Heraclitian reign, the first entrusted to the father, the second to the mother:

May calculation be precise and, as work inherited from the father,

Be passed on to the son and, through the decision of centuries,

May that which, in the course of life disintegrates, find unity in the mind.<sup>20</sup>

There is a contrast, then, between ‘unity in the mind’ (*Einheit im Geist*), binding father and son, and, on the maternal side, a world in perpetual transformation, a world of growth and destruction, which ‘in the changing course of life disintegrates’ (*was im Wechsel des Lebens zerfällt*). The last word emphasizes the threat of destruction connected with the feminine world.

Although the masculine regularly functions as a principle of sovereignty in these binary oppositions, it is possible to assign it another function if, instead of restricting itself to the space of the couple man–woman, the analysis refers to another authority. Thus, surprisingly, we may note in the consideration of male anatomy in the field of religion the emergence of different values from those governing psychoanalysis. In his research on Pope Joan, Alain Boureau has reconstructed the elements involved in the ceremonial ritual of verifying the Pope’s virility. According to the legend, this ritual was created in order to ensure that the episode involving Pope Joan – a woman said to have disguised herself as a man in an attempt to occupy the papal seat – was not repeated. The ritual of verifying the Pope’s masculinity ended with the following proclamation: *Habet duos testiculos et bene pendentes*.<sup>21</sup> No doubt the valorization of what, in men, is linked to fecundity was permitted in this instance precisely because the principle of sovereignty was located elsewhere. Whereas in the political arena it was incarnated in the sovereign, in the religious sphere it lay with God. Where virility ceases to be defined purely in terms of sovereign power, then, a place is left in it for the power of fecundity.

Plato proposes an analogous distribution of power at the end of the *Timaeus*, where the masculine appendage is not confined within the representation of a function of sovereignty, in so far as the authority presiding over the whole of being is situated beyond the human:

We should think of the most authoritative part of our soul as a guardian spirit given by god, living in the summit of the body, which can properly be said to lift us from the earth towards our home in heaven; for we are creatures not of earth but of heaven, where the soul was first born, and our divine part attaches us by the head to heaven, like a plant by its roots, and keeps our body upright. As regards the supreme form of soul in us, we must conceive that the god has conferred it upon each man as a

guiding genius – that which we say dwells in the highest point of our body and lifts us from earth towards our celestial affinity, like a plant whose roots are not in earth but in the heavens.<sup>22</sup>

Far from coinciding with any masculine privilege, the capacity for verticality here is related to a transcendent origin situated beyond the difference between masculine and feminine. Masculine bodily performance can then be envisaged in terms of its potency of egress rather than being identified with a regulating authority. Plato describes the germinative instinct in man (‘a living creature itself instinct with life’) in terms of movement of the ‘marrow’ or ‘life substance’ containing ‘seed’ as follows:

This marrow, being instinct with life, [on] finding an outlet caused there a vital appetite for emission, the desire for sexual reproduction. So a man’s genitals are naturally disobedient and self-willed, like a creature that will not listen to reason, and will do anything in their mad lust for passion.<sup>23</sup>

This diverges sharply from the arbitrating power of the father in the familial trio, as it is portrayed by the structuralist-inspired psychoanalytic emphasis on the function attributed to what Lacan calls the ‘Law of the Father’. From this latter point of view, relations with the mother are supposed to trap the child in a state of alienation linked to the specular relation, the relation to which the father must put an end through his third-party intervention. Might there be a connection, then, between the decline of religion and the transfer to the father of what may be seen as a transcendent function, which, moreover, is based on a monarchical model?

### Separation or alliance?

In his attempt to inscribe the father as the essential referent of the Law, Lacan is faced with a discrepancy between the anthropological reference, by which he claims to be inspired, and the reference to the Oedipal trio. In so far as the analytic trio is constituted by the mother, the child and the father, the father is required to intervene in order to make the prohibition of incest effective, the father’s message to the mother being: ‘thou shall not reintegrate thy product’.<sup>24</sup> According to Lévi-Strauss, however, the anthropological trio upon which the social system is founded is quite different:

Marriage is an eternal triangle, not just in vaudeville sketches, but at all times, and in all places, and by definition.... Considered in its purely formal aspect, the prohibition of incest is thus only the group’s assertion that where relationships between the sexes are concerned, *a person cannot do just what he pleases*.<sup>25</sup>

In spite of the common reference to a ternary structure, the model proposed by Lévi-Strauss is quite different to the model of the Oedipal trio as elaborated in psychoanalytic theory. The anthropological trio in fact exists *before* the arrival of the child, who, in this scheme of things, takes fourth position. The difference between these two models resides in the fact that psychoanalysis contracts the regulating function into one person alone – the father – whereas for Lévi-Strauss this function is based on an alliance between two men or two groups: ‘Each man receives the daughter or the sister of another man as his wife.’<sup>26</sup> This ‘fellow bonding’ is the basis of social bonding, and also serves as the anchor for familial bonding. The process of socialization thus rests, not on the separation brought about by the father, but on the alliance formed between the self and the ‘other man’.

Drawing on the structure set out by anthropology, structuralist psychoanalysis imposed a model in which the key word is ‘separation’ rather than ‘alliance’. Pierre Legendre takes this approach to its logical limits by opposing what he calls the ‘maternal glue’ to the paternal function, the latter based on the paradigmatic operation of the cutting of the umbilical cord:

In order that man does not die by remaining glued to his mother ... societies have erected the edifices of Truth ... which separate man from himself....

The humanising of man is this: the scaffolding that constructs the image of the Father.<sup>27</sup>

The Father, written with a capital letter denied to the mother, is set up as the principle of transcendence and separation, saving the child from ‘alienation’ and captivity in the mother’s world. The tendency to regard the function of separation as sacred is linked to a certain decoding problem encountered by some ethnologists. Referring to Margaret Mead and her conversations with her Arapesh informants, Lévi-Strauss draws attention to the ‘misunderstanding’ that occurred between the ‘native theory’ and the notion of the prohibition of incest that ethnography had arbitrarily imposed on the processes observed:

they [the informants] do not conceive of the prohibition as such, i.e. in its negative aspect; the prohibition is merely the reverse or counterpart of a positive obligation, which alone is present and active in consciousness.<sup>28</sup>

Imagine, says Lévi-Strauss, the ethnographer asking the informant how he would reply to a man who wanted to marry his own sister. The response to the imaginary dialogue, he continues, would run as follows: ‘What, you want to marry your sister! ...

Don’t you want a brother-in-law? ... With whom will you hunt?’<sup>29</sup> Prohibitions, then, are regarded by Lévi-Strauss as derivatives:

The prohibition of incest is less a rule prohibiting marriage with the mother, sister or daughter, than a rule obliging the mother, sister or daughter to be given to others. It is the supreme rule of the gift.<sup>30</sup>

With the accent thus on bonding rather than on separation we are led to a different interpretation of the masculine emblem. Rather than seeing it in terms of the logic of the sword, the symbol of aristocratic or monarchical power centred on a process of cutting, it can be symbolized, as in the story of Don Juan, by a bridge joining two river banks. In ‘Les âmes du Purgatoire’, Mérimée recounts how

Don Juan ..., warned from drinking wine, was walking along the left bank of the Guadalquivir when he asked a man who was passing by on the right bank, smoking a cigar, for a light. The arm of the smoker (who was none other than the Devil himself) grew longer and longer until it had spanned the river and presented his cigar to Don Juan who lit his own without batting an eyelid.<sup>31</sup>

And one does not have to be the Devil’s accomplice to want to bridge the gap with the person who is passing on the other bank; Ferenczi, for example, referred to this episode in order to establish a link between the phenomenon of erection and the symbolism of the bridge.

The bridge and the sword, then, are two paradigms allowing us to symbolize two versions of social bonding. The sociologist and ethnographer Maurice Godelier rejects the hypothesis which makes the ‘law of the father’ – conceived of as a principle of separation – the basis of social bonding. He denounces ‘the vanity of claiming that kinship is first and foremost the father’s invention and that the law is the father’s law. Kinship ... is a network of relationships.’<sup>32</sup> This position is closely akin to that of Lévi-Strauss, making the law of exchange the basis for ‘a vast cycle of reciprocity’.<sup>33</sup>

If we wanted to find, in psychoanalysis, a model that limits this tendency to regard cutting as sacred, we should have to return to the early Freudian paradigms which see woman, not as the place of lack, as is the case in mainstream theory, but as a ‘hollow space’ (*Hohlraum*) capable of expelling or welcoming the ‘foreign body’ (*Fremdkörper*). Although the first Freudian therapeutic method took the form of catharsis, aiming to expel the ‘foreign body’, this model was discarded during the course of *Studies on Hysteria*.

In the final chapter, Freud announces that the model of expulsion is obsolete:

In fact the pathogenic organization does not behave like a foreign body, but far more like an infiltrate. ... Nor does the treatment consist in extirpating something – psychotherapy is not able to do this for the present – but in causing the resistance to melt and in thus enabling the circulation to make its way into a region that has hitherto been cut off.<sup>34</sup>

The fundamental psychical process now becomes the ‘admission’ (*Annahme* or *Aufnahme*) of what has been expelled. One can see the outline here of what I shall call the ‘feminine paradigm’: a hollow space, circumscribed by a boundary, serving as a model for the representation of psychical topography. This model would be repressed in many texts by another reading, defining woman solely in terms of the lack of the phallus.

By way of conclusion, let us note the main lines of force animating the Freudian theoretical space. Far from being governed by a purely positivist imperative, it was preoccupied with the issue of political power, torn between its aims of protest, particularly at the beginning, and the persistence of a classical model, revolving around a principle of sovereignty. An antithetical version was nonetheless in the making. Anti-Semitic propaganda made use of the term ‘foreign body’ (*Fremdkörper*) to describe the status of Jews. By likening the ‘foreign body’ to the pathogenic agent that had to be expelled, Freud revived, initially, the imperative of expulsion of which he himself was the victim. Hence the urgency later on of promoting another exigency: the welcome, the *Aufnahme*, but one which was nevertheless only mutely present. It was an exigency, however, which barely made itself heard. Freud’s thought is thus doubly related with conflict. A theory of conflict, it is at the same time driven by conflict, its own internal conflict, the sexual polarities of which – masculine and feminine – represent the vectors.

**Revised version of a translation by  
Andrew Weller and Monique Zerbib.**

## Notes

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2. Freud, *SE*, vol. IX, pp. 198–9; *GW*, vol. VII, p. 42.
3. Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book III, The Psychoses*, trans. Russell Grigg, Routledge, London, 1993, p. 178; *Le Séminaire, Livre III, Les psychoses*, Seuil, Paris, 1981, p. 200.
4. Lacan, *The Psychoses*, p. 176; *Les Psychoses*, p. 198.
5. For a fuller discussion, see Monique Schneider, *Généalogie du masculin*, Aubier, Paris, 2000.
6. Freud, *Moses and Monotheism, SE*, vol. XIII, pp. 117–18; *GW*, vol. XVI, p. 225.
7. Freud, *Moses and Monotheism, SE*, vol. XIII, p. 113; *GW*, vol. XVI, p. 221.
8. Jacques Le Rider, *Le Cas Otto Weininger: Racines de l’anti-féminisme et de l’anti-sémitisme*, PUF, Paris, 1982.
9. François Héritier, *Masculin/Féminin: La Pensée de la différence*, O. Jacob, Paris, 1996, 1996, p. 166.
10. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, trans. James Bell, Beacon Press, Boston, 1969, p. 393; *Les Structures élémentaires de la parenté*, Mouton, Paris, La Haye, 1967, p. 454.
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