

WHAT ARE WE TALKING ABOUT WHEN WE TALK ABOUT “WOMEN IN PSYCHOANALYSIS”?

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For the first time, a Cartel question remains with me throughout the work process, yet its quality has changed for me. When I first asked it, I was desperate for an answer. Today, I’m fine with the fact that there can’t be one answer to it. Because Woman does *not* exist in psychoanalysis, which somehow relieves me. But because nevertheless, it is often spoken of, I wanted to get to the bottom of this signifier, “women”, in psychoanalysis.

In a text of Patrick Monribot¹ I can read in all clarity that the sexual relation does not exist. Woman is not the opposite of man. I can approach the content of the formulae of sexuation. There is a side called masculine, where the subject is under the sign of the phallus. Phallic jouissance is represented here: the subject is barred and strives to “have”. This subject is not equal to man. Every subject of the unconscious is on this side dominated by the phallic function. On the other side of the chart of the formulae of sexuation, lies the feminine field, where the Other jouissance is situated. This Other jouissance is not phallic and therefore is not under the sign of castration; it is not limited. Here you can find all those parts of a subject that are not subject to the phallic function: those are “feminine by definition”².

Dominique Laurent³ takes up that Lacan named this feminine jouissance « *feminine madness* », which she illustrates with examples like Medea, Madeleine Gide or Antigone. I can picture something, but continue all the same to wonder what is meant when we talk about these “subjects of feminine jouissance” and who they are.

Seeing the film *Malina*⁴ an adaptation of Ingeborg Bachmann’s novel, I think I am shown something of this “feminine madness” quite unexpectedly. The film shows a woman who is obviously struggling with her life and with loving.

So I bought the book⁵ to get closer to what looked to me like feminine madness and seemed to tell me about “women in psychoanalysis”. Here is a small excerpt that tells something in my imagination about what it is like “not to have” and not be in a phallic position.

But Malina should help me look for a reason for my being here, since I don't have an old father whose support I must be in his old age, don't have children, who always need something, like Ivan's children, warmth, winter coats, cough syrups, sneakers. Also the law of conservation of energy is not applicable to me. I am the first perfect waste ecstatic and incapable of making a reasonable use of the world, and at the masked ball of society I can appear, but I can also stay away, like someone who is prevented or has forgotten to make himself a mask, cannot find his costume because of carelessness, and therefore one day is not invited to dance anymore.



The screenplay of the film was written by Elfriede Jelinek. When I was 18 years old, I asked my mother for the novel “The Piano Player”. I was fascinated and from then on, I constantly received Elfriede Jelinek’s texts from her. I believe that whenever I lack examples to grasp something of this feminine jouissance/madness, then I come back to one of these books. The fact that they are gifts from my mother is perhaps not insignificant.

1. Monribot, P. (2014). “There is no sexual relation» What does it mean? Clinical Consequences of Lacan’s formulae of Sexuation”, *A Real for the 21st Century, Scilicet*. Paris, New Lacanian School, pp.148-164.

2. *Ibid*, p. 153.

3. Laurent, D. (2011). “Death Drive in the Feminine”. In *(Re-)Turn : A Journal of Lacanian Studies*, 6, Spring.

4. Schroeter, W. (1990). *Malina* (Ger/Aut), Kuchenreuther Film, Neue Studio Film.

5. Bachmann, I. (1980[2019]). *Malina*. Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main.