

Congreso Convergencia Barcelona, mayo 2023

Presentación Individual

LIDIA MATUS (EFBA)

## THE VARIETY OF WOMEN

To call oneself a woman, to call oneself a man, is that saying it all?

In times when we talk about women and men in terms of a "common discourse," it is worth broadening our perspective on the feminine positions in our clinical practice, which are often facing dead ends as the discourse of the current era becomes consistent.

Feminine women, masculine women, lonely women, battered women, defiant women, "trans" women... what is it that is so inarticulable there, that when in trying to define them we end up multiplying them? What do they all have in common to be called "women"? It is necessary to question the theoretical nature of those phrases repeated to the point where they become worn-out metaphors, to recover the flow of a seemingly coagulated discourse.

To approach the enigma of femininity, we will start from Freud's text "The Economic Problem of Masochism," where he mentions three types of masochism: erotogenic, moral, and feminine, considering the third as close to the infantile, creating the feminine/masochism conjunction as a syntagma, closing the question of femininity under an imaginary weight of consequences. Lacan questions this, defining feminine masochism as a "masculine phantasy", even if the subject were a woman. He points out the paradox of defining femininity in relation to the infantile, that is, in a time prior to the possibility of a sexual choice, breaking that bond and proposing on the feminine side the

logic of privation and not masochism, allowing to unlock dead-end paths of imaginary readings, accentuated by the era when speaking about "women" and their claims, or even about sex as "self-perception."

In the seminar "Encore," Lacan proposes formulae of sexuation, placing phallic logic on the masculine side and the logic of not-all on the feminine side. Femininity would not be a complement to masculinity (it would not be its opposite) but a supplement since it is beyond, beyond the phallic "all."

On the feminine side, there would be a double aspect, one towards the drives, phallic enjoyment, and the other in direct relation to that which in the Other is a privileged signifier  $S(A/)$ , the signifier of lack, which implies feminine enjoyment or Other enjoyment. A mute enjoyment, a silence that becomes a sign of femininity, beyond the phallic but not without it, as there would be no beyond without a here.

The way in which the feminine subject would relate to that place beyond would be through the mediation of the masculine side. Lacan states that the man takes over so that the woman can be Other for herself as she is for him, but he can also damage her. This allows us to think about different clinical issues, since this takeover, when there is one, is not a point of arrival but a passage where the possible outcomes will be varied.

Taking into account the difference between thinking femininity from a masochism point of view or thinking it in relation to the logic of privation has clinical consequences.

If a man leaves the Oedipus complex due to the threat of castration, in order to preserve 'what he has,' does it mean that a woman does not leave the Oedipus complex since she has nothing to lose? This is what I previously referred to as a dead end in the

theory. The logic of Deprivation implies that a woman must find a way to 'lose' something in order to escape the clutches of the Other, even to access that Other *jouissance*. If she does not have the limit or significant boundary, it may appear overwhelming to her or she may not differentiate it from the Other's *jouissance*. Being 'Other to herself' is a place of passage like a *plaque tournante*; it is not a place to stay. Alternative exits mark the course of the Oedipus complex in women.

Lacan speaks to us about the duplicity faced by women, the one between the dead father and the castrated lover, and the duplicity of men between the mother and the degraded woman. The solution Lacan proposes for female duplicity is to "condescend" from embracing the dead father to the sensitivity of the sheath, that is, to the living man. This passage is not possible without going through Deprivation. Just as for a man, a woman is the Other sex, she expects that by being everything to a man, he will be everything to her. When she discovers that this was only her own fantasy, she falls from the position of being the woman who is missing for her man, towards the position of the rest. In that logical moment, she needs to recover her being, 'I am not valued for what I have, but for what I am.' However, if she is not burdened by the threat of castration, how can she lose what she does not have to make herself present? By destroying, like Medea, what is most valuable. At that moment, Lacan says, the most reasonable women can be the most unreasonable because reason is at the service of *jouissance*.

I refer to this moment as a *plaque tournante* because the possible paths of exit lead to different 'solutions' that can be either an exit, stagnation, or regression.

I refer to "stagnation" as the hysteric subject's solution, where they place "the other" in the position of the Other and identify themselves with the man. For example, the woman

who is damaged by the man as a failed attempt to escape from maternal damage, that is, the enjoyment of the Other, or the phallic woman who is entirely immersed in phallic *jouissance* and self-sufficient.

Regressive solutions, the sexless tenderness in some couples.

A passage that we could call an 'exit' would involve the partner being able to respond to the feminine call, bringing her closer to the paths of discourse, 'mistaking' the certainty of the request with his responses: 'be my Other as I am yours.' Bringing her closer to the paths of discourse would imply offering a significant limit to that vertigo of encountering the Other *jouissance*, which implies saying 'there is no Other of the Other'. But it is necessary that this be enunciated by an 'other' who goes through the paths of enunciation.

Small examples

Pilar arrives at the session confused. Her boyfriend has just left her, and she doesn't understand what happened, but his words echo in her head: "You have to separate from your parents, be more independent. I can't be there all the time. We've had good times, but now I need to focus on my own things." Pilar is going to live with her parents to "save money," but her ex's words keep resonating with her, and she starts looking for a place to move to on her own. In the meantime, she reconnects with her stable lover, who "can't commit to anything because his father was a mess, and he's not capable of

supporting anyone." Pilar leaves him and feels relieved. She's tired of the passivity of a lover with whom she now feels like the provider instead of a woman.

Ana is on a weekend trip with her "better than being alone" partner after insisting for a long time that he agrees to her request. During their stay, Marcos goes from reading the newspaper to staring at the horizon or responding ironically to her comments. Finally, Ana falls silent, enraged by his disrespect. Upon their return, they stop to buy chocolates, and she, "for her own dignity," buys one for him as well. When she hands it to him, Marcos says, "I don't accept it." On the brink of anger, Ana asks, "Why?" Marcos replies, "If you don't give me a kiss, I don't want the chocolate."

Both examples, although different, show the value of the partner's response as an 'act.' Pilar cannot appropriate her ex's words, but they 'resonate' with her and leave a mark. Ana humorously takes note of the limit through which Marcos reintegrates her into the loving scene.

The love that 'is needed' always involves two. Born of Chance and Necessity, Love is neither god nor human, but a true 'demon'.