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Note to joy

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She wanted compliments, comments full of praise about their gallop earlier, and to hear him say that this was so et cetera, all the while using the irritating “joy”, more noble and less technical than the other word.²

Lacan’s question, given as subtitle for our next Encounter of the School – “What joy do we find in that which makes our work”,³ – is not without equivocation, and that is not without consequences.

First, the equivocation. In this immense “Treatise on the Non-relation” that *Belle du seigneur* constitutes – a contemporary treatise of Lacan’s formula – we have just read above how it irritates Solal. To state the fact [*le fait*], *lo fag* in Occitan⁴, he thinks he can remove it with his bestiary [*bestiaire*].⁵ Ariane does not choose: “In pleasure, she tries hard to squint, making terrible grimaces in joy so as not to be found beautiful until the antics [*singeries*] were over”.⁶ Often “glowing with

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² Translator’s note: Albert Cohen’s *Belle du seigneur* was first published in 1968, then republished in 1998 by Gallimard. It has been translated into English under the title *Her Lover*. Page numbers are to the French text. Translation of the quotation is by this translator.

³ LACAN, Jacques, *Autres écrits*, Seuil, Paris, p. 369.

⁴ Translator’s note: “lo fag” in Occitan means the sexual act. See http://lengadoc.chez.com/lexic_medieval.htm

⁵ Translator’s note: the author alludes to the mediaeval “bestiary” which are moralising fables employing real or mythical animals.

⁶ *Belle du seigneur*, p. 616.

forbidden joy [*mauvaise joie*]"⁷ in front of Deume, she already knows something of this impurity into which Solal aspires to initiate her.

Even if Solal inverts the *assag*⁸ to prove the contrary, Cohen borrows this theme of the *joy of love* [*joy de l'amor*⁹] and its ambiguity from the literature of courtly love, a literature that Lacan, in his seminar *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, considers to have invented sublimation.

In this respect, if joy is the state where it is impossible to decide whether there is a celebration of a refinding or a commemoration of a loss, *jouissance*, which overmarks the object taking the place of the Thing from the positive regulations of its usage, inherits this ambiguity.

Now, for one of the possible consequences. It touches on the matter of discourses. Indeed, it seems to me that the analytic discourse, and its "determinative"¹⁰ void, is necessary in order to be able to look at our joy in the face, which is not then to cede to the spherophily of hoping that the "round"¹¹ of discourses make exist a consistent universe that does not, but only in order to allow the analyst to jump more freely from one discourse to another.

Besides, can his action, having finally renounced any representation of the end, still be called /work/?

Translated by Susan Schwartz

⁷ Ibid. p. 324.

⁸ Translator's note: in Occitan, "*assag*" denotes, amongst other meanings, a test of love.
http://lengadoc.chez.com/lexic_medieval.htm

⁹ Translator's note: in Occitan these words suggest sexual satisfaction.

¹⁰ LACAN, Jacques (1959-1960). Le séminaire, Livre VII, *L'Éthique de la psychanalyse*. Transcription Paris, Seuil, 1986, p.155. *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book VII, The Ethics of Psychoanalysis 1959-60*. Ed. J-A Miller, trans. D. Potter, London, Routledge, 1992, p. 130.

¹¹ LACAN, Jacques (1972). *L'Étourdit*, in *Autres écrits*. Paris, Seuil, 2001, p. 453.