



Il «mistero del corpo parlante»

Le «mystère du corps parlant»

O «mistério do corpo falante»

The «mystery of the speaking body»

El «misterio del cuerpo hablante»

The Mystery of the Glorious Body

*Jouissance requires a body. Even those who promise eternal beatitudes may do so only because they suppose that there the body is made into a vehicle: glorious or not, it must be present.*¹

Our epigraph places us fully in Rome, the spiritual centre of Catholicism, where eternal beatitudes are promised; the city is also called eternal, and eternal is the body that the word inhabits—which is the theme for our work.

The reference to the glorious body implies Lacan's phrase concerning the mystery of the speaking body, since the speaking body is the condition of the glorious body. Why is it that man has held the ideas of the soul, spirits, reincarnation, the transmigration of the souls, metempsychosis, resurrection? Man does not identify with his body; he is not a body: he has a body, and this is why—as Lacan says in *Joyce le Symptôme*—from that premise he has deduced that he was a soul, and with his squint has interpreted from it that he also had a soul.

All the explanations that have been offered as to why man believes in the soul, in the spirit or in resurrection perhaps have something to do with that real that Lacan laboured on towards the end of his teaching, which emphasizes the capture of the body by the signifier. The signifier is body, not soul or spirit; it is a subtle body.

The theme of our Rendezvous, 'The mystery of the speaking body' is an opportunity to speak about those bodies which, as Lacan put it, in Italy drip. A body cut up by the knife of the signifier, and not only because it inhabits language, but also because the signifier becomes incarnated in the body and it is inhabited by the body, serving as the bed for the Other. From the moment the theme of our Rendezvous was announced, I have remembered Freud's reference to the frescoes of the cathedral at Orvieto, in his famous 'Signorelli' case. Lacan called 'original lapsus' that formation of the unconscious, the forgetting of a proper name, a sprout of Freud's unconscious that emerged at a very special moment of his life.² His father had died a year earlier, and he had commenced his self-analysis.³ This event pushed into the foreground the images that Freud called 'grandiose frescoes on the ultimate things': the frescoes at the Orvieto cathedral, on death, judgement, resurrection, heavens and hell. In these frescoes the enjoying substance appears to us with great realism. Signorelli found inspiration in Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy*, which is a narrative of the human condition as traversing three territories: Hell,

¹ Lacan, J. The Knowledge of the Psychoanalyst. Conversations in Saint Anne, 1971-72. Unpublished transcript.

² Lacan, J. (1998) *Le Séminaire, Livre V, Les formations de l'inconscient, 1957-1958*. Paris: Seuil. Chapter II.

[Also unpublished English transcript]

³ Jones, E. (1953-57). *Sigmund Freud: Life and Work* (three volumes). London: Hogarth. Volume II.

Purgatory and Paradise. There is also Virgil's *Aeneid* and Aeneas travel through Averno. It is always a question of what happens after death; but also of travelling—or rather, of a displacement, being somewhere else.

The perception of poets since ancient Greece has imagined heavens, purgatory and hell—Homer in the *Odyssey* and Plato in the *Republic*, in the myth of Er. The theme is also present in religion, which promises happiness and beatitude in heavens, and punishment in hell. Literature, as well as painting, have represented or depicted those that receive punishment as robust bodies, so as to make us imagine their suffering; they are bodies that are capable of enjoying. Since *jouissance* requires a body, an enjoying substance, as that which can be experienced.

Resurrection is the condition that enables the possession of a body beyond death; a body that does not become carrion and which does not return to dust, as the ritual of the Catholic Church expresses, at the moment of imposing the ashes: 'Dust you are, and dust you will become'. The body must be there, if it is to enjoy beatitude and the marvels of heavens; a body capable of experiencing the pain and suffering to be inflicted as punishments in hell.

In the Catholic religion, the glorious body refers to resurrection. There are several Biblical passages in which this is clearly expressed. In his Letter to the Corinthians, Paul says that the dead will be resurrected; at its burial the body will rot; when resurrected it will be something that cannot die. While buried it is something despicable; after resurrection it will be glorious: the spiritual body will be full of vigor. The resurrected body is glorified or made incorruptible (*The First Letter of Paul to the Thessalonians*, 4:16-17; *The Letter of Paul to the Philippians*, 3:21). It will not be able to die or perish, and it appears to have supernatural qualities, since Jesus himself was able to traverse walls and willingly ascend to heavens in his resurrected body (*The Gospel according to John*, 20:26; *Acts of the Apostles*, 1:9-10). They will be incorruptible and immortal (*The First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians*, 15:53-54). As Colette Soler puts it, the glorious body of Christ is a subtle body that can traverse the walls and does not have the bodies' property of opacity.

'The symbolic captures the body, it makes the body by incorporating itself in the body, and the incorporeal acquires permanence': in this sentence of *Radiophonie*, Lacan plays with the words—'incorporation' and 'incorporeal', which include the word *corps* ['body']. It is a question of both a within and a without, and a fantasy escapes, as in the myth of the *lamella*. Thus, what Lacan called a subtle and glorious body is produced. The signifier is the trace of a *jouissance* that becomes embodied, incarnated. The incorporeal and the subtle body emerge at the same time.

In the body deserted by *jouissance* as an effect of language, *jouissance* returns to the body only through the symptom, as a letter or inscription. In illness and pain, too, *jouissance* can only affect a body, a surface body, which is enjoying substance, by means of letters or inscriptions. The letter is an incarnate signifier that has to be extracted from the symptom. What symptom are we referring to? Is it the same symptom that we are used to consider, or is there a difference with the symptom conceived of in relation to that real, the speaking body? We hope to build up an answer between all of us in our Rendezvous of Rome.

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(translated by Leonardo Rodríguez)