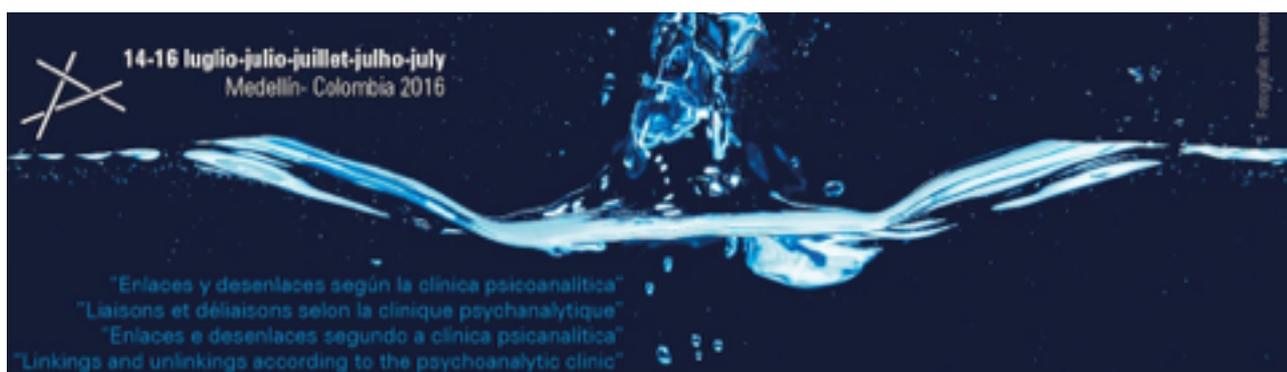


Medellín 2016 - RVI - Prelude - Devra Simiu



CLINIC OF THE SEXED COUPLE

*“...the Freudian operation is the symptom’s proper operation!”
Jacques Lacan, “On the Subject Who is Finally in Question”¹”*

When we meet in Medellín in July 2016 for the IXth Rendez-vous of the International of the Forums, we are invited to explore a number of topics, among them the clinic of the sexed couple. How do we, analysts oriented by the teachings of Lacan, understand this clinic?

I decided it might be important to try to clarify this question. Why? Because here in the United States, for the vast majority of clinicians--psychoanalysts included--the clinic of the sexed couple would be (mis) understood to be a clinic of couples, the two who show up for a session in front of a third, who works hard to train them in “communication skills” and offers them explanations from neuroscience and attachment theory about why they react to each other the way they do. A clinic that postulates a natural, harmonious fit between the partial object of the drive and the object of love and holds this out as a goal.

In a widely practiced form of so-called “couples therapy,” a clinician and his or her spouse, also a clinician, “model” relationship, quite openly encouraging their patients to identify with them. The discourse and images of the prevailing culture support and promote the idea: perfect harmony is possible and you can get it. No impasse here, no subject in question.

The Lacanian clinic of the sexed couple is something else. Perhaps we could approach by going back to...hiccups...the most famous hiccups in history, more precisely, Aristophanes’ hiccups, noted down for posterity by Plato, highlighted for Lacan by Kojève as the very key to

¹ Jacques Lacan. *Écrits*, p. 234. (In the English edition, p. 194, Trans. Bruce Fink).

understanding the *Symposium*, the dialogue Lacan chose for study in his seminar of 1960-1961 on questions love, desire, and the nature of transference.

Lacan recounts for us his conversation with Kojève one Sunday, his desire to talk with this eminent philosopher about Plato and especially about the *Symposium*. Just as they were about to part, apparently without Lacan having gotten what he was looking for, Kojève suddenly offered: “In any case, you will never be able to interpret the *Symposium* if you don’t know why Aristophanes has the hiccups.”²

A key, indeed an opening. Lacan concluded: “...If Aristophanes has the hiccups, it’s because throughout Pausanias’ discourse he’s been splitting his sides laughing--and Plato has been doing the same.”³

Hiccups: Aristophanes’ response to the ridiculousness of Pausanias’ ode to Love. Aristophanes’ hiccups: an irruption that disrupts the gathering’s flow, a kind of atonal prelude to Aristophanes’ own speech, in which Lacan, reading Plato against the tradition, would detect “a *Spaltung* or splitting, which, while not identical to what I have developed for you with the Graph of Desire, is certainly not totally unrelated.”⁴ In other words, what Lacan discovered was that Plato, through Aristophanes, was conveying knowledge of impasse in the field of love and jouissance.

In the context of the ancients, it’s worth noting the words of another writer, the writer of Genesis 2:18.⁵ Named “The Yahwist” by Biblical scholars, and believed to have been active around 950 B.C., this writer makes use of a mere preposition to evoke impasse. Translated literally, the Hebrew text reads: “God said it is not good that man be alone. I will make a helper *against* him.” Many a translator, in many a language, has balked at this, choosing to say “in front of him” (*delante de*) or “corresponding to him.” But in keeping with rabbinic tradition, André Chouraqui, in his lively French translation of both Old and New Testaments, has preserved the original meaning: “*contre lui*” (“*against him*”) and added this note: “*proximité et opposition*” (“proximity and opposition”).⁶

² Jacques Lacan. **Seminar VIII, Transference**, class 4, December 7, 1960. (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2015). Trans. Bruce Fink, p. 61.

³ Jacques Lacan, **Seminar VIII, Transference**, class 4, December 7, 1960 (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2015). Trans. Bruce Fink, p. 62.

⁴ Jacques Lacan, **Seminar VIII, Transference** (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2015). Trans. Bruce Fink, p. 62.

⁵ Thanks to Dr. E. Haviv for calling my attention to this.

⁶ **La Bible: traduite et présenté par André Chouraqui** (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1989).

Two bodies and a gap, a way of saying what Lacan insisted upon: there is no such thing as a sexual relationship.

Yet something--invisibly--keeps two bodies together, as Colette Soler points out. She says Lacan called it the “last symptom” (*“le symptôme dernier”*), while she prefers to call it “fundamental.” And, she adds, it is not to be targeted for cure, insofar as it attests, as a “solution,” to the irremediable gap.⁷ This is our role, too, when we listen to our patients speaking to us about their problems in love.

Our patients speak to us one by one, as they spoke to Freud. One by one, of necessity, because the symptom is always singular and always points to the real of non-rapport.

Here in the United States, the clinic of the sexed couple, which is the Lacanian clinic, is neither prevalent nor popular. It is not mainstream or Main Street. But when has the psychoanalytic clinic ever sought to occupy those spaces?

Devra Simiu. December 8, 2015. Washington, D.C.

⁷ Colette Soler, *Qu'est-ce qui fait lien?* (Paris: Éditions du Champ lacanien, 2012), p. 71.