

THE SAMENESS OF SEXUAL DIFFERENCE AND THE DIFFERENCE OF SAME-SEX DESIRE

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PSYCHOANALYSIS AND QUEER THEORY – SAME DIFFERENCE?

Amidst the numerous recent efforts of Anglo-American queer theorists to grapple psychoanalytically with the phenomenon of homosexuality, an antinomy has arisen around the tropes of sameness and difference. The most influential queer theorists, including Judith Butler, have argued against the fundamental psychoanalytic concept of sexual difference, which, according to Lacanian theory, belongs to an order other than the cultural and the biological. They view Lacanian sexual difference as an imposture that imprisons the complex manifestations of sexuality within a normative socio-symbolic problematic.¹ Implicit in a number of such discourses is the idea that if a difference qualified as sexual invariably pathologizes homosexuality, then it is by means of the notion of sameness – hence the appellation “same-sex desire” – that homosexuality should be illuminated within the discourse on sexuality.

Two observations can be made at this inaugural point. First, within the horizon of postmodern or poststructuralist cultural theory within which queer discourse has almost without exception articulated itself, with its characteristic emphasis on the unlimited proliferation of differences as in itself of political value, the recourse to an idea of a *sameness in desire* claimed as a *difference* might appear ironic, if not outright contradictory. That the difference with respect to which the sameness of sex-desire is contrasted is itself formulated as a concept implicating difference, namely the sexual one, only adds a further layer of fog to an already clouded theoretical landscape. Second, the queer theoretical protest against sexual difference targets itself most directly against the psychoanalytic assumption that sexual difference stubbornly *remains the same*, in the precise sense that it does not vary – in itself, as it were – according to the vicissitudes and specificities of historical and cultural discourses. Furthermore, queer theory has generally been hostile to the psychoanalytic premise that this same sexual difference remains psychically operative for all subjects regardless of what Freud called their “small differences,” and therefore constitutes a difference

different from, so to speak, the other brands of difference. There is thus quite fundamentally a logic of contradiction at work in the discourse on sexuality that cries out for “deconstruction”: the queer-theoretical notion of the sameness of sex-desire is premised on an idea of a difference with respect to a more primordial sexual difference it tries to denounce; and the primordial quality of this latter difference on which psychoanalysis insists presupposes a fundamental sameness immune to historical change as well as to the manifold predicative differences to which one has recourse to distinguish qualitatively between subjects.

The difficulties surrounding the relation between sexual difference and homosexuality in the theory of sexuality extend, however, well beyond this logic of contradiction, which, incidentally, as I will try to show, may not be as problematic as it might originally seem. More specifically, it is not at all clear that the various voices to be heard in the debate all refer to the same thing when the notions of “sex” and “sexuality” are invoked. Further, as is all too rarely pointed out, the dominant discourses of Anglo-American feminist theory, which have had a decisive impact on queer theory, whether psychoanalytically informed or not, have inherited the social-scientific category of “gender,” a category featuring a primarily sociological meaning whose importation into psychoanalysis has had, in my view, devastating effects of confusion. The concept of gender presupposes a subject fully expressed by social codes and scripts, however heterogeneous, contradictory, ideal, or incomplete, and therefore a subject that *does not square* with the psychoanalytic concept of a subject of unconscious desire, a subject defined precisely by its non-appearance within the forms of recognized sociality. One of the consequences of the hegemony of the sociological framework in contemporary feminist and queer work is that it becomes difficult to find a place for *sex*, considered in the properly psychoanalytic sense, within the realm of the “gendered subject.” To the extent that one conceives of the subject as the sum produced by the addition of the multiple positions in discourse through which it is presented, one can do little in the way of answering the question of how and why this subject desires either same- or other-sex objects, or both. In the Lacanian view, sex has a fundamentally hostile relation not only to gender — the set of means available to the subject regarding its performative representation — but also to the bio-physiological sphere — the amalgam of primary and secondary bodily sex-traits to which culture attempts to attribute meaning.² For psychoanalysis, sex is expressed in neither of these conceptual fields. Consequently, sex bears no relation to voluntarist conceptions of agency, including most consequentially those premised on notions of performativity. Moreover, sex may be represented within the domain of the signifier — the socio-symbolic order, in other words — only by means of tropes of negation: failure, impossibility, and compulsive or unmasterable repetition.

Unfortunately, however, the current level of discourse on homosexuality within the confines of Lacanian theory remains, generally speaking, poor, limited on the one hand by books like

Renata Salecl's otherwise excellent *Sexuation* anthology, which assumes by omission that all sexuation occurs in conformity with the subject's biological sex, and on the other hand, by the clinical work of such figures as Joël Dor and Jean Clavreul, which ultimately subsumes all forms of homosexuality under what both authors refer to as the "perverse structure."³ By contrast, Tim Dean's path-breaking *Beyond Sexuality* has decisively shown that sexuality — "in the defiles of the signifier," as Lacan said — or more precisely the desire upon which it depends, is caused by a real object of jouissance that bears no direct relation to sexual difference, although it is not perfectly clear in Dean's work what relation this object has to what Lacan called sexuation. What Dean calls the object's "impersonal" character and what Freud referred to as its necessarily "partial" quality decisively sever the psychoanalytic account of sexuality from heterosexual normativity, a severance, it is sadly still necessary to say, far from universally acknowledged within psychoanalytic discourse itself.⁴ In spite of its tremendous theoretical value, however, Dean's work is in my view marred somewhat by a conflation of the traumatic, real object that causes desire with the object to which desire necessarily addresses itself within the irreducibly transferential context of "intersubjectivity." It is this latter object that Lacan designates as the phallus in its symbolic dimension, and it acquires crucial significance in the best clinical writing on same-sex desire.

It is helpful to examine in some detail Dean's account of how the object of jouissance supersedes sexual difference by specifying the roles of Lacan's three registers in his theory of the subject of desire. Dean's argument about sexuality, put in the most basic terms, is that fecal matter works psychically as a prototype for the phallus. "The phallus is less a figure for the penis than, more fundamentally," he writes, "a figure for the turd."⁵ With this contention Dean implies, or at least comes perilously close to implying, that the subject's relation to its libidinal object occurs entirely within the real, in other words, outside a transferential socio-symbolic and imaginary situation in which the traumatic substance of jouissance is veiled by a consoling image of amorous knowledge that lures the subject's desire. Dean effectively suggests that the real eclipses the symbolic medium for intersubjectivity when he appropriates Lacan's distinction between the phallus *qua* signifier and *objet a qua* real object of jouissance. "The logic of [the] concept [of] object *a*," he avers, "demotes or relativizes that of the phallus: whereas the phallus implies a univocal model of desire (insofar as all desiring positions are mapped in relation to a singular term), object *a* implies multiple, heterogeneous possibilities for desire, especially since object *a* bears no discernible relation to gender."⁶ Given his reservations about Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's anti-Oedipal theory of the deterritorialization of desire, it is unclear how Dean's own non-dialectical model of a queer brand of sexuality "beyond" sexual difference would differ in its fundamentals from the one he opposes.⁷ Additionally, given that the anatomical reference for the phallus, even in Freud's passages on the "phallic stage," was originally *both* the penis *and*

the clitoris, it should be remarked that a degree of ambivalence with respect to biological sex is already at work in the concept “phallus” itself; this observation uncovers the overhasty quality of the queer-theoretical cliché that denounces the allegedly privileged relation psychoanalysis upholds between the phallus and “masculinity” or biological men. Moreover, Lacan eliminated the remaining Freudian ambiguity by stating that “clinical facts” demonstrate that there exists “a relation of the subject to the phallus that is established without regard to the anatomical difference of the sexes.”⁸ These observations render problematic Dean’s assumption that the elimination of the agency of the phallus in sexualization is a necessary condition of the elaboration of a genuinely anti-homophobic psychoanalytic account of sexuality.

Indeed, in my own view, the properly psychoanalytic position is that the homosexual subject is *not* immune to the effects of the fantasmatic comedy of being and having the phallus, and consequently *must* attempt to situate itself within the terms of the Oedipus, that is to say, within the existing socio-symbolic grid into which this subject is born. To state, as one should, that all non-psychotic forms of subjectivity bear some relation to the phallic function is not tantamount to the imposition of an allegedly “univocal” model of desire. In the comedy of sexuality the subject stages an interpretation of the enigma of sexual difference by “placing” the phallus at some point among the terms of the psychical representation of the members of its familial network and by imbuing this point with an identificatory investment that puts in place its fundamental fantasy. It is not a question, then, of *objet a* eclipsing the phallic function, but rather of the real *disrupting* the security of the subject’s symbolic identification by means of the agency of jouissance. Put differently, the real does not get rid of the subject’s dependence on the symbolic order, of the requirement that this subject establish a more or less functional — but necessarily failed — place for itself within the terms of language.

Furthermore, the agency of *objet a* does not prevent the subject from associating its separation from jouissance to a phallic “third party” who serves to represent the impossibility of the subject’s fusion with its object. The imaginary phallic object and the real object of enjoyment are therefore mediated for the subject by some form of the Oedipus, in other words an elementary, familial or quasi-familial socio-symbolic grid that, for Lacan, is necessarily anchored by a phallic reference, by an instance of authority to which the mother’s or mother figure’s desire normatively addresses itself. Above and beyond any sociological or political consequences of this premise, it is necessary to point out that, for Lacan, there is no form of sexualization devoid of a relation to the phallic function and therefore to the position of the father — the metaphor for paternity, in other words — which every subject requires to escape from the lethal maternal enjoyment. Crucial to underline here with respect to the concerns of queer theory, or more generally in the context of today’s complex sociological realities, is that the paternal function is *precisely a function* for Lacan, and therefore will be linked within any given subject’s psychic

structure with a representation that may or may not correspond to the biological father or even to the concrete subject who performs the paternal role within a given familial unit. It is likely no great secret that the discourse of the male homosexual — and it is predominantly the male form of homosexuality that will preoccupy me in what follows — is profoundly marked by an interrogation, often charged with intense quantities of affect, and often more or less classically hysterical, of that instance of paternal symbolic virility, and it is precisely this problem of the relation between male homosexual desire and the phallic function that, in my view, Dean fails to interrogate and that, in consequence, most urgently needs to be addressed in Lacanian analytic discourse.

For these reasons I undertake in what follows an interrogation of the inter-implication of sameness and difference in the theory of sexuality through the lens of the Lacanian clinical discourse on male homosexuality, more specifically with reference to Serge André's important clinico-theoretical work, which is in my view the most consequential to have appeared thus far to the interrogation of male same-sex desire within the Lacanian field. In the process I will revisit a number of classic problems in the history of psychoanalytic thinking about homosexuality, including the relation of the perverse "structure," often referred to as "fetishism," to male homosexual object-choice, not to mention the deeply vexed, often outright censored, problem of the psychogenesis of homosexual desire.⁹ I will pose two fundamental questions. First, what distinguishes the male homosexual from the male, predominantly heterosexual, fetishist? Second, if male homosexuals are not necessarily perverts, in the Lacanian clinical sense, what distinguishes the neurotic from the perverse homosexual? Nearly a century of analytic discourse has prevaricated, often in a patently and obscenely phobic manner, on these two questions, but in what follows I will suggest an answer to both. In reply to the first question, I will aver that the only theoretically consistent way of distinguishing the neurotic male homosexual from the fetishistic pervert is to insist that the former, unlike the latter, "agrees" to assume what Lacan describes as feminine castration. And in answer to the second, I will suggest that only the neurotic homosexual is, properly speaking, a subject. I hope that the reader will encounter in what follows not only something of the stubborn insistence of sameness which distinguishes sexual difference from other differences — ethnic, cultural, racial, economic, and so on — but also a perhaps surprising indication of a distinctly sexual difference at work in what we call same-sex desire.

DANY, OR THE PARADOX OF HETERO-TRANSSEXUALISM

Dany is a young male analysand who for some years has anxiously asked himself if he is a transsexual. Though the idea of a sex-change operation horrifies him, he testifies to having felt more like a girl than a boy for most of his life. At the time of his entry into analysis at the age of twenty,

Dany had been taking female hormonal supplements that had provided him with what his analyst Serge André calls “a few curves.”¹⁰ A low-level white collar worker, Dany married a female colleague at age nineteen but, even after the wedding and up to the time of his analysis, he continues to spend on average one night a week at the home of his father, a widower whose wife died when Dany was sixteen. Dany unselfconsciously describes to his analyst some key details of the unusual domestic relationship he entertains with his father. The day after the mother’s death, Dany’s father invites his son to sleep with him in his bed every night, rationalizing this invitation with reference to his desire to convert Dany’s room into a memorial for the deceased. According to André’s narration of his patient’s discourse, the father subsequently adopts the role of “housewife” in this unconventional domestic arrangement, insisting on dressing his sixteen-year-old son every morning before leaving for work. For his part, Dany takes advantage of his mother’s death to increase the frequency of his transvestite practices, which began at age six and were silently tolerated by his mother until her demise. Dany says he knows his mother passionately wished for a girl during her pregnancy with him; he explains that after the delivery, she refused to touch her baby for two days and, though she eventually, on the surface at least, accepted her newborn’s sex, she nonetheless insisted on dressing him in girls’ clothing and buying him girls’ toys. Moreover, she gave her son the diminutive form of the name she had chosen for a girl. As André informs his reader, the name “Dany” (not the patient’s real name) is used to designate both boys and girls in the patient’s cultural context (André’s practice is in Brussels and his patients are, one presumes, francophone). Further, Dany reluctantly undergoes surgery at age twelve to lower the testicles that, as he says, had “remained inside” his body (34).

These are the basic facts of Dany’s case history as André presents them. What is most crucial for my purposes in this essay, however, is to examine not only how André interprets these facts, but also how his interpretation informs his theorization of the relation between the idea of the perverse structure in Lacanian theory and the phenomenon of male homosexuality. During his childhood Dany’s mother would knowingly allow her son to wear a pair of her pantyhose after school before the father’s return from work, and André suggests that this fact evinces that “a complicity, never explicitly formulated, was established between Dany and his mother,” and that the father, though “not invisible [*pas inexistant*],” was “systematically deceived, cuckolded by the couple formed by the mother and her son.” And, as if the feminine position of the father and the mother’s phallic attributes were not by now sufficiently apparent, André adds, in perhaps too flippant a tone, that not only did the mother “wear the pants” in the household, but she would also, when the father’s back was turned, “share them with her son” (35).

Those familiar with the *grandes lignes* of psychoanalytic writing on male homosexuality will immediately recognize this “classic” aetiological scenario: the retiring, absent, or feminine father symbolically castrated by the mother; the latter a permissive, almost obscene figure who

lends herself with gusto to clandestine enjoyments with her son, enjoyments that undermine the triangulation of desire in the Oedipal symbolico-familial situation. André implies in his analysis of the case that the sex-specificity of the mother's desire for a child virtually guarantees the feminine quality of Dany's future symbolic identifications. Given that the patently odd particularities of Dany's familial circumstances appear from all angles to ensure a "perverse" outcome of one sort or another, it is striking that this case, though hitting all the right notes in the melody of dominant analytic thinking about the psychogenesis of male homosexuality, ends up having very little to do, according to André himself, with homosexuality properly speaking. Things, in other words, are not quite right. First, according to the details André provides about the case, Dany never claims to be a homosexual, never speaks of desiring another man, never reports sexual contact of any kind with men, and marries, after all, a woman. Second, Dany's primary concern in his discourse appears to lie not with the sex-attributes of his object, but rather with his own sexual identity, with what André calls "the enigma of his sex" (34). The question Dany formulates in response to the enigma of the Other's desire is not "Am I homo- or heterosexual?" but rather "Am I a man or a woman?"

In addition to his worry over his ambivalent sex identity, Dany provides evidence for the agency of sado-masochistic fantasies in his unconscious life. He tells his analyst, for example, that he is in the practice of hiring female prostitutes, who enable him to stage a particular fantasy scenario. During its *mise-en-scène* Dany dresses in tight-fitting women's clothing and pretends to do housework while his paid female partner aggressively insults him. The fantasy-scene reaches its climax when the prostitute ties Dany up and flogs him to orgasm. Dany gradually introduces his wife to his masochistic fantasy world and, though complying with his less extreme requests, she refuses to engage in any activity that would cause her husband direct physical harm. Central to Dany's fantasy is the requirement that his partner enjoy her involvement in its enactment; only in this way can he present his ecstasy to the Other as the fulfillment of its desire. Eclipsing himself as a divided subject of the unconscious, Dany shifts subjective division to his partner and offers himself as the object that accomplishes its re-unification. Here we encounter a version of Lacan's definition of the perverse structure: the subject offers him- or herself as the object-cause *and realization* of the Other's enjoyment, which requires not only that the subject actively manipulate the object in order to experience masochistic jouissance "passively," but also that the subject receive unambiguous proof that the Other is not simply "pretending" to be a sadist, but actually derives obscene satisfaction from causing pain.

Though not explicitly noted in André's interpretation of Dany's discourse, it is important for my purposes to observe that the self-instrumentalization with respect to the Other's enjoyment in Dany's fantasy occurs in tandem with the physical manipulation of his own body, a manipulation designed to blur the clarity of his bio-physiological sex characteristics. Not only does Dany's

fantasy phallicize his female partner by attributing to her the superegoic voice whose command must be obeyed, but it also serves to assuage his anxiety regarding his own sexual identity by “performing” the lack of coincidence between the biological manifestation of sexual difference and its representation in domestic social roles. The sado-masochistic sequence makes irrelevant Dany’s question about his position with respect to sexual difference, and it may no longer be answered one way or the other. Or, perhaps more precisely, the fantasy functions to “answer” the question of sexual difference before it can be asked: if Dany, a man, can adopt a “passive,” “feminine” role, and if his female partner can voice the perverse paternal command, then sexual difference ceases to be a function of *subjectivity* proper — of the subject’s attempt and failure to find a symbolic “home” in the discourse of the Other — and becomes instead a matter of self-objectification, of “solving” the enigma of sexual difference by impeding its traumatic emergence as a question. Where the neurotic “worries” about the sex of its object, and therefore about the “meaning” of sexual difference with respect to desire, the pervert presents himself as the object that inhibits the manifestation of sexual difference in the first instance, quite literally “blocks,” in other words, the emergence of the problem of its symbolic representation.

In my view, André correctly “diagnoses” Dany not as a “repressed” homosexual but as a heterosexual pervert. And crucially, he underlines that Dany’s perverse structure functions psychically as a defense against homosexuality. *Dany becomes a pervert in order to avoid becoming homosexual.* In so doing Dany saves himself from the difficulty of acknowledging the possibility that a biologically male subject is capable of desiring “like a woman.” According to André, the “complicity” between Dany and his mother allows Dany to feign submission to the symbolic law of paternal authority. But when his mother dies and the father adopts his “feminine” position within the familial structure, Dany is directly placed for the first time in a relation of passivity with respect to his father, the erotic seductiveness of which, André contends, the masochistic fantasy of the dominatrix-like phallic mother is designed to shield. Dany resists the form of symbolic castration that would lead to homosexual desire in at least two ways. First, the sado-masochistic fantasy scenario supports Dany’s desire to fuse into a kind of unified or self-sufficient phallic object with his partner — to embody, in other words, the imaginary phallus the mother lacks on the level of anatomical actuality. And second, as if to defer the structural instability that the difficulty of finding an authentically sadistic partner brings about, Dany hormonally feminizes his own body, effectively protesting to the Other that in any case his desire cannot possibly be of the male homosexual variety because he is not really a man. Indeed, the psychodynamic significance of Dany’s fantasy constructions finds clear expression in his response of absolute conformity with respect to his mother’s desire for a female baby. In spite of the mother’s acceptance at the level of her statement that her infant is in fact a boy, it is nonetheless clear that the young Dany was traumatized by his mother’s unconscious desire, made manifest at the level of

her enunciation, for a child of the other sex. Dany's entire unconscious life appears to structure itself around a dynamic of self-instrumentalization with respect to this desire articulated "between the lines" of his mother's discourse. Ultimately, André explains Dany's perversion with reference to his passionate quest for perfect fusion with what he interprets as the Other's desire, to the extreme point that he willingly submits to torture and humiliation and undertakes the sexual transformation of his own body.

Dany's analysis lasts for only a year and a half, culminating in what André calls an "affirmation" of the patient's masochism. Though he does not, according to his analyst, experience the subjective destitution which would allow him to traverse his fantasy and disengage from its dynamic, Dany does nonetheless manage to undertake a sublimating writing practice that grants him some protection from the drive. Writing also allows Dany to gain access to a form of labor (in both senses of the word) that provides the satisfaction of realizing the Other's desire without requiring the acting out of his masochistic fantasy and the suffering to which it gives rise. The significance of Dany's case history as regards my concerns lies in the way it presents a concrete instance of the relation of the fetish structure to a defence against homosexuality, a relation Freud himself intuits, without spelling it out in detail, in his own work on perversion. "The fetish," Freud writes, "saves the fetishist from becoming a homosexual, by endowing women with the characteristic which makes them tolerable as sexual objects."¹¹ If the "successful" male quasi- or pseudo-heterosexual pervert is in some sense a "failed" passive homosexual (at least on the level of the passive fantasy *vis-à-vis* the imaginary father), then what does the clinical picture of the "successful male homosexual" look like? If a certain kind of male homosexual desire is in fact not related to the phallicization of the mother and the "denial of sexual difference" implicated in fetishism proper, but rather is situated around a "feminine" position of passivity with respect to the imaginary or symbolic father, then what does this imply in terms of this presumably neurotic subject's castration? To put it in simpler terms, *from where does the neurotic male homosexual desire?* It is not clear, I would suggest, if André's book provides any unambiguous answers to these questions, but it is certainly worth the effort to look at another example from his casework to initiate this inquiry. In so doing, the field will be cleared for the presentation of my own views concerning both the relation of perversion to male homosexuality and the agency of sexual difference in male same-sex desire.

PHILIPPE, OR THE "IMAGINARIZATION" OF CASTRATION

Male homosexuality organizes itself, according to André's pleasingly historicized psychoanalytic account, around what he calls an "initiation" to virility in which the accession to sexualized masculinity is non-normatively aligned with the maternal genealogical line. In André's view,

such a psychical orientation evinces what he calls a “difficulty with respect to castration,” a difficulty which plays a role in the formation of the male erotic subcultures he describes as “more or less codified and cloistered” (159). The question is open, it seems to me, as to whether such an image of the gay world as a kind of parallel universe outside the dominant social law and narcissistically enclosed in its own collective enjoyment either bespeaks a traumatic unconscious fantasy of a kind of homosexual primal father — a gay version of Lacan’s *père-version* — common to numerous heterosexual male analysts or, alternatively, betrays authentically perverse vectors of the gay libidinal economy in utter subservience to the dictates of a consumerist, apolitical, superegoic Other. It appears to me that both alternatives are, to varying degrees, valid.¹² But it will doubtless prove more theoretically productive to focus on the details of André’s theory of male homosexuality and the facts of the case of Philippe.

Despite its often patently phobic limitations, André’s concern with homosexual virility has the tremendous merit of re-inscribing the vectors of male homosexual desire within a phallic orbit, emphasizing in the process the agency of a symbolic phallus in the discourse of the male homosexual, and rectifying the tendency in recent queer-inflected Lacanian criticism (*pace* Dean) to theorize homosexuality strictly in relation to the real object-cause of enjoyment. André’s account usefully underscores how the male homosexual psychic structure features a determinate link to the symbolico-imaginary nexus connected to the narcissistic dynamic of identification and the interrogation of the paternal metaphor. Indeed, one could say that the universal *queerness* of sexuality, psychically operative in both homo- and heterosexually-oriented subjects, does not do away with the need for a (necessarily failed) process of *oedipalization*. I would in fact suggest that one should read Lacan’s famous formulas of sexuation as the formalization of precisely this tension between the means by which the subject is inscribed within the symbolic order and the queer “residue” of the real that fails to appear within the terms of the phallic function. To return to André’s concern with the male homosexual’s virility, however, it appears to me that the crux of the matter lies in the way the theorist chooses to frame the question of the “location” of the symbolic phallus in the psychical economy of male homosexuality. How does the male homosexual orient himself with respect to the Oedipal figuration of masculinity and femininity? Or, in Lacanian terms, how are we to theorize the male homosexual’s sexuation?

In André’s view, the elaboration of Oedipal identifications and the installation of the phallic signifier as the emblem of castration are susceptible to two modes of “failure [*ratage*]” associated with the forms of male homosexual desire, one causing the formation of a perverse structure, the other creating a neurotic brand of subjectivity. Perverse “homosexuality,” as became apparent in the Dany case history (I again underline that the term “homosexuality” is problematic in this context), bespeaks “a failure to realize castration [*un ratage par défaut de réalisation de la castration*]”; and neurotic homosexuality predicates itself on what André calls an “excessive

imagarization of castration [*un ratage par excès d'imaginarisation de la castration*].” Tellingly, however, Marc, whose case history André uses to illustrate the neurotic variation of male same-sex desire, never ceases to bear witness during his analysis to a “nostalgia, which grows in intensity over the years, for a real relationship with a woman” (171). Indeed, it appears to me that very few self-identified gay readers would likely consider André’s allegedly neurotic analysand homosexual — I certainly do not.¹³ And further, the only case material André presents in his book featuring a patient who speaks of being anally penetrated by another man is Philippe, who not only serves to represent within André’s typology the perverse version of the two possible homosexually-inclined psychic structures, but also dies after only five sessions with his analyst in a car accident with a likely suicidal intent, however conscious or unconscious. I would risk suggesting, in fact, that André gets his diagnoses mixed up, and it is Marc, with his sexual ambivalence but overarching heterosexual orientation, who most closely fits the model of perversion André elaborates, and Philippe who exemplifies the neurotic profile. On my reading of the admittedly scant case material, Philippe’s tragic death — his car crashes into a median at the fork of a freeway, one route leading to one of his male partners, the second to his girlfriend — likely has more to do with his failure to extricate himself from his capture by a socio-imaginary constellation that caustically abjects male sexual receptivity than with an inability to resolve the effects of a perverse or fetishistic psychic structure. But such an assertion no doubt requires a closer look at the case of Philippe. I will try to show that cases like Philippe’s are often mistaken for instances of perversion because of both an ambient (even patriarchal) analytic phobia of male anal eroticism and the irrational resistance within the Lacanian clinical environment to the notion that many subjects of both bio-physiological sexes are *cross-sexuated*, in other words confront the impasse of *jouissance* within linguistic structure in a manner associated with the opposite sex.

Philippe is a young, university-educated man who interrupts his post-secondary studies to become a fashion model for industry magazines and *couture* houses in Milan and elsewhere. Though he enjoys tremendous professional success, a state of paralyzing anxiety brings him to the analytic chamber, causing him to formulate the following question: “Am I or am I not homosexual, and must I live in this manner?” (180). Though left without comment by André, Philippe’s formulation of the question concerning the nature of his desire betrays the extent of his interiorization of dominant value judgments about what is called sexual orientation. Nonetheless, Philippe speaks of frequenting what André calls “hard” homosexual establishments, and the patient states that he regularly engages in oral sex with a number of his male acquaintances in the fashion world. Though he considers such acts of fellatio and mutual masturbation with male friends a “normal” component of life in his professional environment, Philippe experiences sharp intuitions of guilt in response to his desires with respect to other men. He also

provides evidence suggesting that his sexual life is characterized by a significant degree of compulsiveness. André relates that throughout this period of homosexual activity Philippe maintains a “more or less stable” relationship with a woman; successful sexual relations with his female partner often require, however, the conjuring of a fantasy of a man in briefs (180). A crisis of anxiety and confusion strikes Philippe when he receives an invitation from the male partner of a female friend to participate in an evening of fist-fucking; the invitation both fascinates and repulses him. He responds noncommittally, proceeding to wander through the streets of Milan in a state of acute disorientation, impulsively giving the entire contents of his wallet to a woman who asks him for money. Philippe manages to direct his ambulation toward Milan’s Duomo cathedral where he finds himself thrown into an even more acute attack of panic while gazing upwards at a statue in the cathedral’s dome of the Lord placing a crown on Jesus’ head.

André’s interpretation of this sequence of events provides crucial evidence of the clinical criteria to which the Lacanian clinician will allude in diagnosing a patient as perverse. Moreover, as I have already intimated, this interpretation bears witness to a widespread theoretical resistance in the Lacanian field that mars the analyst’s ability to come to terms with the logic of sexuation of some subjects who think they might be, or explicitly identify as, homosexual. As André explains, if Philippe had accepted his friend’s sexual invitation, he would have definitively placed himself, in his own view, “among the homosexuals.” For Philippe, in other words, the prospect of anal penetration implies “an acceptance of castration, here understood on the most real level.” It should here be noted that André does not state at this point what form of castration — masculine or feminine — such an acceptance would imply. Concerning the impulsive monetary offer Philippe makes to the woman on the street, André avers that his patient here “behaves as a man” because he “gives the gift of what he has (the phallus) to the one who lacks it” (182). As for the final segment of Philippe’s tripartite narrative, namely the patient’s panicked viewing of the coronation statue, André suggests that this event calls into question a second time Philippe’s masculine identification. Though God’s crowning of his son allegorizes on one level the generational transmission of paternal symbolic authority, this transmission occurs in the context of the bodily sacrifice of the passion, and therefore suggests on another level both a refusal of God’s phallic gift and the adoption of a passive stance with respect to the father. Significantly, since the episode in the Milan cathedral, Philippe is subject to recurring panic attacks, engages in compulsive and anonymous sexual encounters, and testifies to fantasies of anal penetration that incite violent self-accusations. According to André, the emphasis Philippe places on sensations of anal excitation during his attacks of anxiety provides evidence suggesting “an identification with the hole, on the model of the female genitalia (or a cesspool [*cloaque*]).”

Like Dany, Philippe entertained during his childhood what André refers to as a relation of “complicity” with his mother. Additionally, André qualifies his analysand’s choice of profession

as a response to the lavish attention Philippe's mother accorded to her son's boyhood body: his mother insisted on bathing him well into his adolescence, taking care, André underlines, not to call attention through her soapy touch to his penis. In this manner Philippe's mother treats her son like an incarnation of the imaginary phallus — a self-enclosed, asexual unity embodying an impossible and obscene enjoyment. Further marginalizing the agency of the father's word in the familial symbolic environment, Philippe's mother confesses to her son that her marriage was a forced and desperate attempt at self-preservation in the face of a difficult material situation stemming from her mother's death. At this crucial point of the case history, André begins to explore the dynamic of what he calls Philippe's "fetishism," insisting that the patient's homosexuality is structurally tied to a denial of "the anatomical difference between the sexes" and "the castration that revealed to him the female sex organs [*le sexe féminin*]." Philippe relates to his analyst that he experienced his first orgasm while inhaling the odor of a pair of briefs his father had left on the bathroom floor. André then adds, in a searching if not desperate tone, that a few moments earlier his analysand had been viewing the female genitalia in a book of sexual education his parents had given him. In André's view, this first orgasm is the instigating moment of a "central perverse fantasy" involving an acute "desire to see men in briefs." André rationalizes the perverse or fetishistic quality of this fantasy with the idea that men's briefs, "more surely than a woman's bikini," reassure Philippe that there is "something behind the veil," even if this something remains hidden from sight (186).

On my reading of this case history, however, it is not at all clear why André chooses to qualify Philippe's enthusiasm for images of men in briefs as perverse in the clinical sense, namely as a "denial" of sexual difference and the form of castration that would lead to its recognition. André describes Philippe's anxious ambivalence during his desperate ambulation through the streets of Milan as a consequence of the "literal" castration the prospect of fist-fucking presents to his patient. Philippe's marked discomfort at the moment he receives the invitation evokes a deeply traumatic fantasy structure involving anal receptivity. Surely the psychological agency of such a fantasy logically presupposes an experience of castration and, given the later development of Philippe's underwear "fetish," it is necessary to ask whether or not the latter fantasy scenario should be linked with a "feminine" sexualization, which would then imply that the phallic object of fantasy veiled by the briefs is not a "perverse" manifestation of the maternal phallus, but rather the imaginary "paternal" phallus supporting a desire for the one who "has it." To assert unequivocally that André misdiagnoses his patient is less important than to notice that the logic of the analyst's interpretation not only fails to acknowledge the possibility that Philippe has indeed undergone feminine castration — in other words, does not "have," on the level of unconscious fantasy, the phallus and experiences a form of *jouissance* "beyond" it — but also effectively renders unthinkable the existence of what we might want to call an "actually existing" form of neurotic

male homosexuality. As I have already underlined, the patient André refers to as the homosexual neurotic — Marc — not only never has sexual relations of any variety with another man during the period of his analysis, but also never gives evidence of a consistent desire to do so, framing his erotic ambitions, as if to dispel all doubt, around an explicitly heterosexual telos. And in this instance, with Philippe, André qualifies a male subject's adoption as his object of fantasy a veiled image of the male member as, by definition, a fetishistic phallicization linked to a denial of a sexual difference framed in anatomical, as opposed to enunciative-linguistic, terms. Indeed, at the crucial moment when he diagnoses Philippe as a pervert, André rather conveniently forgets Lacan's fundamental lesson about sexual difference, namely that it is "situated" on a level other than that of anatomical reality.

Consequently, the classic post-Freudian qualification of perversion as a "denial of sexual difference" — upheld by even the most open-minded of clinicians with respect to homosexuality, such as Joyce McDougall¹⁴ — must be nuanced in such a way as to take account of the possibility of what I have called cross-sexuation. If, in other words, sexual difference psychoanalytically conceived is indeed *not* of the same order as anatomical sexual difference — a point which André, as an "official" Lacanian, would surely be forced to concede — then it must be said that he is simply incorrect to presuppose that any male subject's libidinal investment in the male body is a displaced manifestation of the perverse denial of the mother's castration. Homosexual desire under the conceptual horizon of cross-sexuation would then potentially be fully inscribed within sexual difference, in the precise sense that, insofar as, psychically, the male homosexual is or can be "feminine," what he seeks in his partner is indeed the "other sex." Paradoxically, perhaps, this critical comment with respect to André's interpretation of the case of Philippe lends support to his figuration of male homosexual subcultures as cults of virility. It was after all Lacan who said that the phenomenon of the virile parade appears as a manifestation of "femininity."¹⁵ Additionally, it is not clear why gay cultures would be so concerned with the acquisition of the accoutrements of an idealized masculine embodiment if masculinity were not precisely an object of desire, rather than something already "acquired" through sexuation itself. Moreover, the hypercathexis of embodiment in male homosexual subcultures gains further in psychoanalytic significance when one considers that, in imaginary terms, the idealized object of desire and the narcissistic ego are not sexually differentiated in corporeal terms for gay men, which means that the pursuit of virility acquires a plastic, mobile quality that distributes its aims between the body of the desired object and the subject's own body-image. On the level of the imaginary, in other words, the sexy body the male homosexual desires "out there" (at the disco) and the one he "wants for himself" (by working out at the gym) are one and the same.

FROM "I" TO "a": THE BEYOND OF (SEXUAL) IDENTIFICATION

In anticipation of a couple of the more obvious objections to what I have suggested here concerning the implication of (one type of) male homosexuality in feminine sexuation, a number of remarks should be made. First, it is crucial to point out that my hypothesis does not equate male homosexuality with transsexualism. The male homosexual, though clearly vexed in childhood and adolescence by intuitions of difference with respect to other subjects who share his bodily sexual traits, does not question his *biological* sex. Philippe does not ask himself, as does Dany, if he is a man or a woman; his question of the Other is framed, rather, within the terms of today's post-sexological discourse of "sexual orientation." Furthermore, the notion of cross-sexuation I here propose is *indifferent to "gender."* This means that a subject's being cross-sexuated carries no necessary consequences for this subject's "behavior," for the manner, in other words, in which he or she appears to others with respect to socially dominant ideologies of masculinity and femininity. The difference of the cross-sexuated subject is therefore to be located on the level of his or her speech, more specifically with respect to the way this speech stumbles upon the real of sex — the "rock" of sexual difference — and not in terms of the positive qualities (attributes or predicates) of this subject. Provided we divest the notion of "inversion" — which Marcel Proust, for one, deemed a moniker more desirable than that of "homosexuality" — of its personalist reference to a soulful essence and take the reference to woman not as confirmation that every gay man is at some deep-psychological level a closet drag performer but as a signifier for the mode in which some male homosexuals desire, we may agree with Leo Bersani when he writes *à propos* that prolific, hypochondriacal French novelist that "homosexuality" can't describe the attraction of one male to another male if, according to the popular notion that Proust appears to accept, such men have a woman's soul. As others have noted, this rules out the same-sex desire it claims to account for. Homosexuality is just an illusion; what looks like a man desiring another man is actually a woman longing for sex with a man."¹⁶

Undoubtedly, the Proustian discourse on femininity in male homosexuality is burdened by the psychological rhetoric of inversion that the modernist ideologies of sexuality inherited from mid- to late nineteenth-century German sexology.¹⁷ Indeed, the idea of a "female soul in a male body" to which "inversion" gives expression is in conceptual terms linked more closely, in the field of contemporary sexuality theories, with the notion of "gender" than with the psychoanalytic concept of "sex." Inversion, in other words, takes for granted socially determined meanings for "masculinity" and "femininity" and then defines the male invert along behavioural lines as the subject who "expresses" a feminine soul. The Lacanian concept of sexuation, in contrast, situates itself in another realm, at the "impossible" intersection of speech and the real — in other words, at the level of desire — which by definition remains inexpressible within the terms of the socio-symbolic contract. Whereas the discourse of inversion defines the manifestation of desire

it wants to describe with reference to the positive qualities of the subject expressed through behaviour, speech, and other concrete attributes of the “personality,” psychoanalysis insists that sex is what remains after all such expressions of the subject’s attributes have been exhausted. Nevertheless, Bersani’s comments on the Proustian understanding of inversion make tangible the paradox that though, indeed, the male homosexual loves “the other as the *same*,” and therefore bears witness to a desire inscribed “in homo-ness,”¹⁸ this desire is subject to the real of sexual *difference* if one considers that what is “inverted” is this subject’s *sexuation*, and not his soul, personality, or other such metaphysical construct. If it is supposed that the psychodynamic trajectory of the male subject who will come to experience homosexual desire is marked by the immediate and actualized experience of castration Freud discusses in relation to the young girl’s unconscious life,¹⁹ then in speaking of the gay man’s *sexuation*, André must qualify castration as imaginary only because he has made this erroneous assumption: since the male subject bears a penis, he must necessarily enter the symbolic order in a fashion that positions him as “having” the phallus.

Thus, under the hypothesis that some male subjects experience a properly symbolic castration of the feminine kind, what is “imaginarized” is not the maternal phallus, but rather the paternal one. Consequently, male homosexual desire in the terms of this scenario would feature no relation whatsoever to the fantasmatic logic of the phallic mother. Hence, this male subject would consequently situate *jouissance* in the male body, not only in that of his idealized object of desire, but also in his “own” alienated, imaginary one. And here the fully paradoxical quality of male homosexuality most clearly emerges. Insofar as there is an imaginary convergence between the gay man’s fantasized object of desire and the body he wants to “be,” he is in essence *seeking himself* in his sexual partner, that is, the “same” in the “other.” However, this desire for the (hyper)phallicized male body that captures his desire emerges from the “feminine” space of lack, thereby ensuring that the gay male subject will never actually “find himself” in his Other, will never successfully breach the distance between the point where his desire takes root and the point of the object’s incarnation. That there can be no *relation* between the gay man and his partner becomes clear when one acknowledges that this non-coincidence of desire and object occurs not only “in” the subject but also in his partner, such that the non-relation of homosexuality might be figured in logical terms as a set of two similar non-complementarities, a formula that distinguishes the impasse of homosexuality somewhat from the one which occurs in the heterosexual non-relation. Where heterosexuality reaches an impasse by virtue of the mutually exclusive terrains of the *different* masculine and feminine fantasies, homosexuality hits the rock of the real in consequence of the paradoxical antipathy of two subjects harbouring the *same* fantasy.

This observation goes some way toward explaining not only the persistence within gay fantasmatics of the inaccessible “straight” object who never returns the gay subject’s desire, but

also the mystique of the authentic “top” who would “supplement” the non-relation of two subjects whose erotic economies organize themselves in psychoanalytic terms around primarily passive objectives. Moreover, we are confronted at this point with the prospect that the ideal, pathological coupling of the hysteric and the pervert within the heterosexual fantasmatic universe might find its correlative within the economy of male homosexuality. Is the heterosexually- or bisexually-identified male subject who advertises his sexual appetites in terms of his identity as a homosexual “top” to be configured along the lines of the classic Freudian fetishist, one who nonetheless does not adopt the resistance to desire’s homosexualization the fetish structure makes possible? Does this subject seek to short-circuit the trauma of castration by finding an object that in some manner “combines” the attributes of the masculine and the feminine, attributes that cannot be “synthesized” outside the structure of perversion? Would these observations further imply that the neurotic male homosexual carries a certain vulnerability with respect to male subjects experiencing difficulties *vis-à-vis* masculine sexuation, a vulnerability that only increases in intensity in a male social universe designed precisely to police the castration of male subjects, a universe that by definition must impose the strictest of taboos against boys’ and men’s anal and oral receptivity?

It would be comparatively uncontroversial, I would imagine, to state that the more politically radical wings of the various gay and lesbian movements have faded into relative obscurity during the past two decades or so largely because of broader global political trends resulting from the reaction, beginning in the 1970s, against the achievements of the postwar welfare state as well as the devastating ideological consequences of the collapse of the Eastern bloc and the end of the Cold War. Psychoanalytically, however, it is possible to say, concerning the paradoxical inter-implication of sameness and difference in the psycho-libidinal economy of male homosexuality, that gay men, during the period just evoked, may have succumbed, in response to increased social permissiveness and wider public recognition, to a confusion of the two psychological agencies Lacan called “I” and “a,” namely the idealized symbolic point of identification (what Freud called the ego ideal) and the traumatic, real object-cause of desire.²⁰ If it is indeed the case, as I have suggested, that one of the specificities of male homosexuality is a kind of supplementary narcissistic cathexis of the object, such that gay men might more readily than their heterosexual counterparts try to solder together the point of their symbolic identification (ego ideal) with their imaginary bodily ego (ideal ego) in a manner designed to foreclose in advance on the possibility of the emergence of the object in its traumatic, real dimension, then it might be even more crucial for homosexually-inclined men to work toward the separation to which Lacan refers, namely the disentanglement of the idealized, libidinally invested symbolico-imaginary narcissistic object and the real, traumatic object-cause of jouissance — the object which, very precisely, *impedes* the subject’s self-relation and its ability to feel “at home” within the terms of its own subjectivity.

1. See especially Judith Butler, "Arguing with the Real," in *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 187-222; and *Antigone's Claim: Kinship Between Life and Death* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).
2. Joan Copjec's "Sex and the Euthanasia of Reason," in *Read My Desire: Lacan against the Historicists* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994), 201-236, remains the most sophisticated attempt at distinguishing the psychoanalytic concept of sexual difference from cultural and historical approaches to sex *qua* gender. Concerning the evolution of the inquiry into homosexuality within psychoanalytic discourse, the crucial next step is quite clearly to interrogate the relation of *sexuality qua* object choice to sexual difference, and it is precisely this inquiry that I will inaugurate in this essay.
3. See Renata Salecl (ed.), *Sexuation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000); Joël Dor, *Structure et perversions* (Paris: Denoël, 1987); and Jean Clavreul, *Le désir et la loi: Approches psychanalytiques* (Paris: Denoël, 1987). For a brief consideration of the problematic status of homosexuality within the Lacanian discourse on sexual difference, see my review of Salecl's edited volume in the *Journal for the Psychoanalysis of Culture and Society* 6.1 (Spring 2001): 151-154.
4. "One's partner is the impersonal, abstract Other," writes Dean, "as much as it is the individualized, personal other who ostensibly is loved or desired" (*Beyond Sexuality* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000], 85).
5. *Ibid.*, 267.
6. *Ibid.*, 250.
7. Although he ultimately reproaches Deleuze and Guattari for promulgating a "naive utopianism" of the Marcusean "liberationist" variety, Dean writes that the anti-Oedipalists "aim to depersonify desire. And apart from the vocabulary of desiring-machines," Dean continues, "their contentions...seem...wholly compatible with Lacan's theory of desire as unconscious and originating in the object *a*, which is itself 'both irreducible and prior to anything that may be made to conform to the Oedipal figure'" (*ibid.*, 242). As I have suggested, this comment points toward one of the weak spots of Dean's book: since desire, according to Lacan, is an effect of the speaking subject's "imprisonment" within the structures of language, any assertion about the real's eclipsing the (necessarily failed) representation of sexual difference remains difficult to distinguish from a Deleuzo-Guattarian attack against the symbolic order *as such*. It is much more theoretically consistent, it seems to me, to state that the "beyond" of Oedipus — and hence the "beyond" of sexuality to which Dean wants access — is *internal to* the process of oedipalization itself. One could additionally point out that Dean's scepticism about the value of Marcuse's work for queer theory betrays the rather under-nuanced fashion in which Dean's perspective dismisses a priori any brand of political utopianism, and therefore the potential investment of queer theory in programs for radically transformational social change. A further contrast between my approach and Dean's occurs on the level of the question of perversion. I do not consider it wise for queer theory to eliminate outright the concept of perversion in psychoanalysis as it relates to clinical and political practice.
8. Jacques Lacan, "The Signification of the Phallus," in *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1977), 282.
9. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick is one influential critic closely associated with the emergence of queer theory who has voiced deep political scepticism regarding any consideration, psychoanalytic or not, of the genesis of homosexuality (see her *Epistemology of the Closet* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990], 40-41). However, when the politicization of sexuality reaches the point where it explicitly discourages intellectual interrogation for fear of phobic appropriation, it has, in my view, gone too far. Such a prioritization of political self-interest above intellectual inquiry is characteristic of stances in young oppositional cultural and political movements the logic of which may be traced, for example, to early civil rights discourse and the emergence of Third-World critiques of

colonialism. I would like to think that anti-homophobic criticism has by now reached a state of maturity at which resistance to such facile political posturing is no longer subject to accusations of “internalized homophobia” and heterosexist complicity.

10. Serge André, *L'Imposture perverse* (Paris: Seuil, 1993), 33. Subsequent references will appear parenthetically within the text. All translations are mine; the original French is provided in brackets when necessary. An English translation is forthcoming in 2002 from The Other Press, New York.
11. Sigmund Freud, “Fetishism,” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. and trans. James Strachey et al. (London: Hogarth Press, 1953-1974), 21:154.
12. Parenthetically, it strikes me that psychoanalytic inquiries into homosexuality, particularly when work as rich as André’s is involved, would do well both to show a sensitivity to the transference prejudices that have clouded the clinical tradition on homosexuality and to resist the politically correct temptation to present a clinical picture of homosexuality that conforms to the defensively benevolent self-image (and quickly to dismiss all criticism of the “gay community” as homophobic) that mainstream gay and lesbian discourses like to present of those subjects whom it addresses.
13. Though space does not permit a full interrogation of Marc’s case history in this essay, it is worthwhile underlining the importance of a few of its details, given especially that it serves to represent the neurotic homosexual structure against which Philippe’s allegedly perverse structure is contrasted, and given also that, as I will shortly argue, André’s diagnoses of the two analysands make more sense put the other way round. Qualifying his erotic orientation as “bisexual,” Marc nonetheless desires to get married and have children. Despite a number of homosexual liaisons during his university years, liaisons characterized most con-

sequentially by oral-penile contact, mutual masturbation, and an atmosphere of affective warmth, Marc “has no desire to become a homosexual,” seeking analysis in order to overcome his impotence with women, a condition he associates with a horror of the female genitals (171). Though Marc’s father showed tenderness toward Marc and his brothers in their childhood, his attitude toward them became severe and tempestuous during their adolescence, forcing Marc to seek shelter in the orbit of his mother, with whom he develops the dreaded “complicitous intimacy.” According to André, Marc’s Oedipal conflict is “classic”: “he desires his mother (thanks to the fact that he was initially separated from her through the father’s intervention) and is therefore forced to confront his father as a rival” (173-174). Though the father’s early, caring relation with his son prevents Marc from identifying symbolically with his mother, Marc’s “virility” is marred by his fearfulness before the later, more “primal” version of the father. Though I agree that the form of Marc’s castration complex is of the phallic or masculine variety, I would suggest that André goes wrong when he posits that this castration is “overly successful” (177). In his inability to assume the consequences of masculine sexuation, the resulting abjection of the female sex organs, and the associated fear of “becoming homosexual,” Marc’s psychical economy, it appears to me, clearly instantiates the logic of the fetishistic structure.

14. See, for example, Joyce McDougall, *The Many Faces of Eros: A Psychoanalytic Exploration of Human Sexuality* (New York: Norton, 1995). In my view McDougall’s suggestive work is greatly under-appreciated in anti-homophobic psychoanalytic theory.
15. “The fact that femininity finds its refuge in this mask [which “dominates the identifications in which refusals of demand are resolved”], by virtue of the fact of the *Verdrängung* inherent in the phallic mark of desire, has the curious consequence of making virile display in the human being itself seem feminine” (Lacan, “The Signification of the Phallus,” 291).

16. Leo Bersani, *Homos* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 131.
17. Though not cast in the terms of Lacan's concept of sexuation, Kaja Silverman's suggestive, but virtually ignored, work on femininity in male homosexuality in the Freudian texts should be consulted in this respect. See "A Woman's Soul Enclosed in a Man's Body: Femininity in Male Homosexuality," in *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 339-388.
18. Bersani, 128, italics added.
19. "The girl," Freud writes, "accepts castration as an accomplished fact, whereas the boy fears the possibility of its occurrence" ("Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex," in *SE* 19:178). Similarly, in "Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction Between the Sexes," he writes: "A little girl behaves differently [from the boy who, upon glimpsing the girl's genitals, "begins by showing irresolution and lack of interest; sees nothing or disavows what he has seen"]. She makes her judgement and her decision in a flash. She has seen it and knows that she is without it and wants to have it" (*SE* 19:252).
20. Lacan distinguishes between these two agencies of psychic life in the context of a gloss on Freud's schema of the forms of the ego in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*. "There is an essential difference," he says, "between the object defined as narcissistic, the *i(a)*, and the function of the *a*" (Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Alan Sheridan [New York: Norton, 1977], 272). He underscores in this manner the importance of Freud's thesis that the dynamic at work in both hypnosis and the phenomenon of "collective fascination" associated with the rise of Hitler involves the psychological superimposition of the *ego ideal* — the place in the symbolic order from which the subject views itself in a positive light — and the *object of fantasy*, which vacillates between its consoling but aggression-producing imaginary version and its traumatic, uncanny real one. Lacan will later

say that "the fundamental mainspring [*ressort fondamental*] of the analytic operation is the maintenance of the distance between the I — identification — and the *a*" (ibid., 273; Lacan, *Le séminaire, livre XI: Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller [Paris: Seuil, 1973], 304). I would suggest that the problem of Lacan's use of both the lower-case and capital letter should be resolved by understanding *i(a)* as a reference to the imaginary object of identification (*Idealich* or ideal ego), and *I* as the symbolic object (*Ichideal* or ego ideal). The mechanism of separation or distancing to which Lacan refers as integral to the analytic process and to the dissolution of group fascination implies therefore the extrication of the real object of jouissance from both forms of the ego — symbolic and imaginary. In terms of the working-through of the transference that occurs in the clinical context, this implies for Lacan that the direction of the dynamic of hypnosis be reversed in such a fashion that the analysand be forced to encounter the analyst as a stupid, inert, "hypnotized" automaton devoid of concrete knowledge about its desire. For Freud's own discussion of his schema, see *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, in *SE* 18:65-143.

