

XXII ACP and FORUM of MELBOURNE SYMPOSIUM  
28th August 2021  
9:00am Australia/Melbourne

## The trauma of sexual difference: questions of sex and gender in today's clinic

### Join Zoom Meeting

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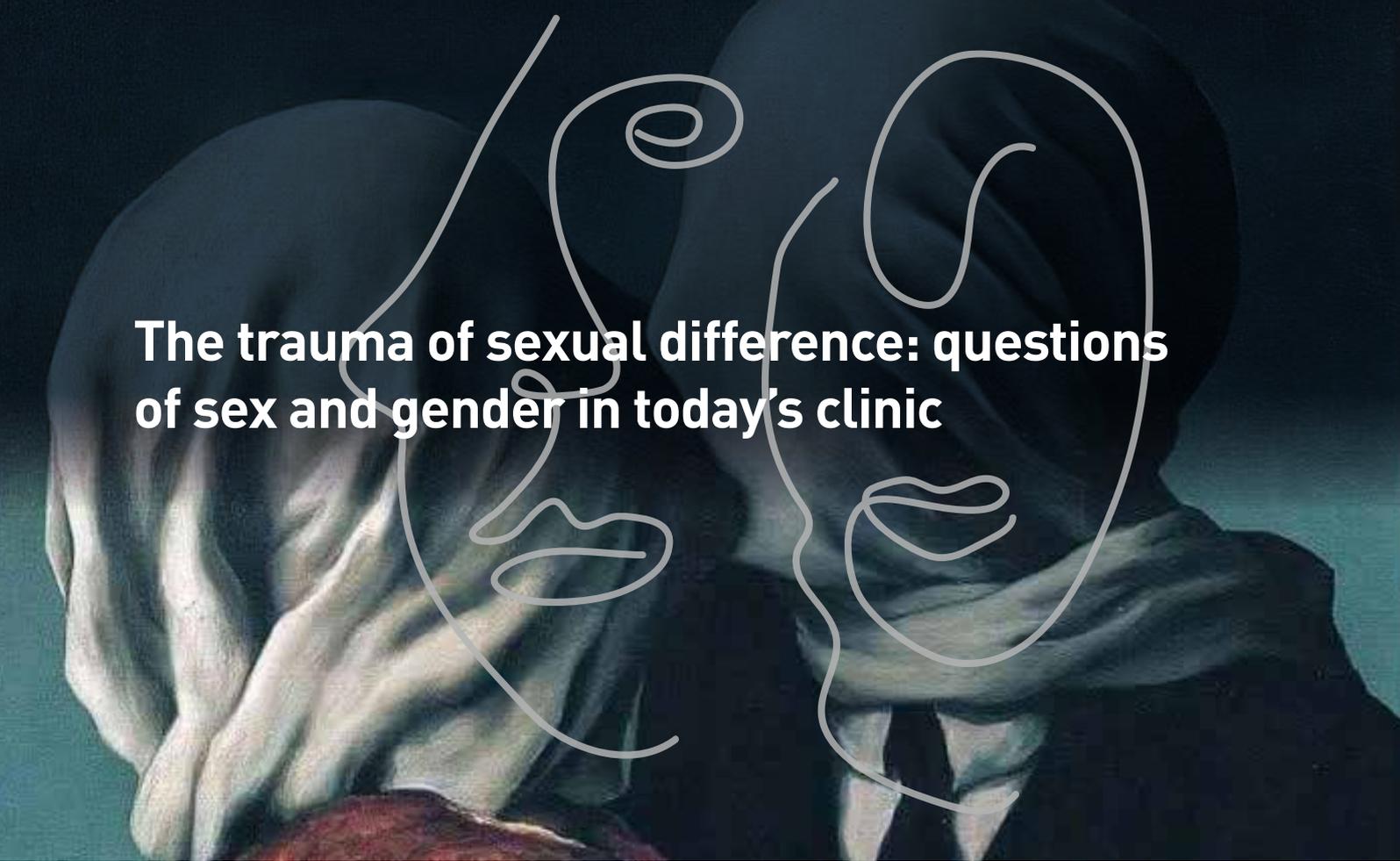
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# The trauma of sexual difference: questions of sex and gender in today's clinic

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|--------------|--|------------------------------|
| <b>9.00</b>  | <b>ZOOM ROOM OPEN</b>  |                              |
| <b>9.15</b>  | WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION   | <b>Carmelo Scuderi</b>       |
| <b>9.30</b>  | IF THAT IS THE ANSWER, WHAT IS THE QUESTION?                       | <b>Susan Schwartz</b>        |
| <b>10.00</b> | IS IT POSSIBLE FOR PSYCHOANALYSIS TO LEARN FROM THE TRANS SUBJECT? | <b>Bitia Riazati</b>         |
| <b>10.30</b> | DISCUSSION AND QUESTIONS   |                              |
| <b>10.45</b> | MORNING BREAK  |                              |
| <b>11.00</b> | A GLIMPSE OF A BLISS OR THE MIRAGES OF THE NON-SEXUAL RELATION     | <b>Silvia Rodriguez</b>      |
| <b>11.30</b> | LGBT? YES, BUT WITH PSYCHOANALYTIC DISCOURSE, \$, Φ AND A          | <b>Rostik Bershadsky</b>     |
| <b>12.00</b> | DISCUSSION AND QUESTIONS   |                              |
| <b>12.15</b> | LUNCH BREAK  |                              |
| <b>12.45</b> | THE PROBLEM OF "THE LITTLE DIFFERENCE"                             | <b>Esther Faye</b>           |
| <b>1.15</b>  | WHAT MUSIC DO I HEAR...OH, THESE SAD FACTS OF DISCOURSE?           | <b>Carney Lee</b>            |
| <b>1.45</b>  | SEXUATION AND ITS VICISSITUDES                                     | <b>Leonardo S. Rodríguez</b> |
| <b>2.15</b>  | DISCUSSION AND QUESTIONS   |                              |
| <b>2.30</b>  | CONCLUDING REMARKS   | <b>Nicol Thomas</b>          |
| <b>2.45</b>  | <b>FINISH</b>  |                              |



## The trauma of sexual difference: questions of sex and gender in today's clinic

As analysts, how do we respond to the questions related to sexuality and gender that our patients raise in our time, the time of LGBTQI+? The short answer is with the precise and incisive conceptual tools that Freud and Lacan have given to us. Patients bring their suffering, a suffering that is now often shaped by the terms of contemporary discourse around sexuality and gender identity. The latter in particular, which is significant as identity, in the first instance, directs us to the imaginary and symbolic axes of subjectivity, whereas sexuality directs us to the real of jouissance and the symptom. In last year's Symposium we addressed the question of the unconscious choice of sex. This year we are focussing on sexual difference as a trauma for the subject. Why is it traumatic? Because sexual difference is founded on lack, both what the subject lacks and the lack in the Other. This is the horror of knowledge: the subject is castrated and that is pre-requisite for both desire and jouissance. The subject's very condition is to want-to-be.

Lacan tells us in Seminar XVIII that man and woman are facts, effects of discourse and pertain to the logic of sexuation based on their particular relation to the phallic function. The gender designations that currently proliferate are also facts of discourse. Discourse is semblance, and as truth is spoken, it is also semblance and thus can only ever be half-said. This gives us our orientation even when the discourse that couches a patient's suffering appears to go beyond traditional notions of man and woman. It also raises a question about the nature of belief and conviction.

This Symposium gives us the opportunity to think in Freudian and Lacanian terms about questions raised in the contemporary clinic of sex and gender which might appear to challenge those terms. For Lacan, psychoanalysis is not a normative practice, and it is defined by the analytic discourse which puts the object a in the place of agent.

Regardless of the patient's gender identification, as analysts we listen to the subject of the unconscious, the speaking being, tell of their experience, their history, and thereby, their relation to the Other. That relation is shaped by the question, "Che vuoi": What do you want? What do you want of me? How have a patient's childhood experiences and interpretations of the Other's desire determined both their sense of their own identity and the direction of their own desire? How does a patient's relation to the Other give an indication of the structure and its real? And most importantly, what is the symptom – necessary according to Lacan – with which the subject enjoys its unconscious? These are the questions that continue to orient our work. (prepared by Susan Schwartz)



### 9.00 ZOOM ROOM OPEN

**9.15 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION. CARMELO SCUDERI** President of the Australian Centre for Psychoanalysis and member of the IF-SPFLF

### 9.30 IF THAT IS THE ANSWER, WHAT IS THE QUESTION? SUSAN SCHWARTZ

The mirror stage establishes the imaginary and symbolic co-ordinates of the subject in relation to an identity of wholeness, an imaginary One. It is a fictive wholeness that covers the division between the little subject and the virtual image. This image enables him to find himself lovable but it is contingent upon the Other's guarantee of that loveliness. Hate is also lurking there. In the process of becoming, this subject will sustain other losses including the real loss of jouissance in the encounter with language and the symbolic loss that is castration, another loss of jouissance upon which desire is made possible. These moments are contingent upon the relation of the little subject to the Other, and the way that subject, caught in his want-to-be, interprets the enigmatic question of the Other's desire: what do you want? This paper will consider the answer of the transsexual, or now more commonly, but not insignificantly, referred to as the transgender subject.

Susan Schwartz is a Registered Practicing Analyst of the ACP, Analyst Member of the School of Psychoanalysis of the International of the Forums of the Lacanian Field and co-translator with Esther Faye of Colette Soler's *Lacan: The Unconscious Reinvented* and Luis Izcovich's *The Marks of a Psychoanalysis*.

### 10.00 IS IT POSSIBLE FOR PSYCHOANALYSIS TO LEARN FROM THE TRANS SUBJECT? BITA RIAZATI

If psychoanalysis is about human subjectivity, somehow as analysts we have managed to alienate ourselves from this important clinical and social discourse regarding sexuality, and we have left psychoanalysis open to misinterpretations even by psychoanalysts. Patricia Gherovici author of the book *Transgender Psychoanalysis, A Lacanian Perspective*, suggests that according to her observations 'there is no clinical evidence that all trans people are psychotic'. Furthermore, it's often a common complaint of transgender-identified subjects who report that Lacanian analysts are often resistant to trans identifications. For the psychoanalyst, identity and any identification may inherently act as a defence against the symbolic separation and sexual difference. This may have inadvertently resulted in a transphobic historical misunderstanding between psychoanalysis and transsexualism.

Gender identification or surgery is a shield/solution against the real of sexual difference, and may actually be protective for the subject, but how to consolidate this with the Lacanian concept of sexuation (sexual position is neither determined by sex-biology nor gender - how society sees the subject - but rather an unconscious choice). How to distinguish desire from jouissance? How to stay true to the fundamental premise of psychoanalysis and what a psychoanalyst does, as Freud recommends, that by selectively applying our attention, one begins to select from the material, and one will soon be following expectations, and placing the psychoanalyst in danger of never finding anything but what one already knows.



Can sexual difference be thought of in other ways? Psychoanalysts have an ethical responsibility to clarify and respond to historic misunderstandings. We can learn about sexual difference from trans subjects to further understand Lacan.

Bitia Riazati is a psychologist and psychoanalyst in her clinical practice in Hawthorn. She sees analysands for psychoanalytic therapy and Lacanian psychoanalysis in English and Persian. Prior to commencing in private practice, she consulted in a range of clinical and professional settings such as in schools, public and private health, outreach, community drug and alcohol mental health treatment as well as university and corporate settings. Other than her desire and ongoing development in Lacanian psychoanalysis, she has a Masters in Psychology, and also a Masters in Arts, Journalism. She has previously investigated research topics in attention and memory, as well as humanities and culture topics, looking at socio-political factors influencing change in a society.

## 10.30 DISCUSSIONS AND QUESTIONS

### 10.45 MORNING BREAK

#### 11.00 A GLIMPSE OF A BLISS OR THE MIRAGES OF THE NON-SEXUAL RELATION. **SILVIA RODRIGUEZ**

This paper will take "...the fundamentally dissident nature of Freud's notion of the drive, the theoretical disjunction between the tendency, its direction and its object, and not only its original "perversion" but its involvement in a conceptual systematic, a systematic Freud indicated from the beginning of his work, under the heading of the sexual theories of children." (Lacan *Écrits* p. 455)

It will also relate it to Lacan's later work, from Seminar XVII onwards, where he sharpens the Freudian "dissidence" to an unseen precision. This conceptual trajectory will be used to comment on an Israeli controversial mini-series (5 episodes) *Transkids*, produced and directed by Hilla Medalia (available at Izzy-Stream Israel).

Silvia A Rodríguez is a psychoanalyst, founding member of the ACP and an Analyst Member of the School of Psychoanalysis of the Forums in the Lacanian Field.



**11.30 LGBT? YES, BUT WITH PSYCHO-ANALYTIC DISCOURSE, \$, Φ AND A. ROSTIK BERSHADSKY**

In the broader context that reaches cultural and political horizons of our community, the movement signified by this peculiar initialism constitutes a grouping of groups. Logic of which may already be indicative what kind of discourse is it governed by. How is it evident that the multiplicity as such (although indeed could have been a defiant response to the One of order) does not render the same mastery of discourse it tries to abolish? The unfortunate case would result in multiplicity that covers the co-existence of several master discourses, which in turn will offer nothing to confront the principle of universality.

Referring to the clinical discourse, for the subject in question to arise, he cannot but free associate himself away from this or any other initialism. Eventually he cannot tolerate the signifier as such in the position of an agent. Instead of making this age-old error of providing the subject with yet another metaphor, Lacan suggests that the psychoanalytic orientation would send him to find a key to push this chain of signifiers into the shadow of nothingness.

The phallus, privileged signifier of desire, links the realm of words with the 'beyond' of object a and the realm of the drives. It is also, the unnamable signifier, that responds in the place where the lack of the signifier in the Other occurs. This also echoes the traumatic encounter and castration. Implementing this key, psychoanalytic discourse may offer the subject of the contemporary clinic a realization of the crucial gap between defining his position (including that of sexual difference) via identification with signifiers and 'defining' it by drive objects.

Rostik Bershadsky, PhD, Psychoanalyst and Clinical Criminologist. Rostik practices psychoanalysis in a private clinic. He is also a senior forensic clinician, had previously worked in psychiatric hospitals and forensic mental health settings in Israel, and currently working within the corrective services of NSW. He is a member of the Australian Centre for Psychoanalysis and the Forum of Melbourne of the International of Forums of the Lacanian Field. He is also a member of the Australian and New Zealand Society of Criminology (ANZSOC).



## 12.00 DISCUSSION AND QUESTIONS

### 12.15 LUNCH BREAK

#### 12.45 THE PROBLEM OF “THE LITTLE DIFFERENCE”. **ESTHER FAYE**

What might induce a young woman to consent to having her breasts excised (referred to in trans discourse as ‘top surgery’)—with the apparent consent of her parents—and concomitantly to change her name to one that is ambiguously both/neither female nor male? In this paper I want to consider a possible way of understanding such an act by looking at what Lacan says about “the little difference” as he called it in his seminar... .. or Worse, the period when Lacan was beginning to formulate sexual identity in terms of the logic of sexuation. I will also draw on the significant distinction Colette Soler draws from Lacan’s formulation in her Seminar of 2017-2018, *Des hommes, des femmes*, between the a priori phallic attribution of sexual pre-identity deriving from the saying [dire] of the parents, and the a posteriori phallic function distributed to it via socio-political-cultural discourses.

Esther Faye is a registered psychoanalyst in private practice, a member of the Australian Centre for Psychoanalysis, and Analyst Member (AME) of the International School of Psychoanalysis of the Forums of the Lacanian Field.

#### 1.15 WHAT MUSIC DO I HEAR...OH, THESE SAD FACTS OF DISCOURSE? **CARNEY LEE**

Snatches of discourse, impasses of the signifying masters of sexual identity. What arrests us in these necessary and impossible encounters with language and the feminine jouissance which eludes it...

Carney Lee has worked in the early childhood sector for many years. She completed the four-year ACP training course and is currently a member of the ACP and the Forum of Melbourne. She is currently undertaking a Master of Social Work.

#### 1.45 SEXUATION AND ITS VICISSITUDES. **LEONARDO S. RODRÍGUEZ**

Lacan proposed that the analyst must be at the level of his/her times. This does not mean that the analyst must accommodate to the mandates of the dominant discourses. It is not only a matter of being up-to-date, but also, and more importantly, to put psychoanalysis at the service of understanding the new subjective positions and the cultural malaise generated by the evolution of our contemporary society. A psychoanalytic study of the questions arising from the new modalities of human sexuality must consider, on the one hand, what has been established by clinical and conceptual work and is likely to continue to be valid and useful; on the other hand, it must examine without preconceptions what appear to be new developments in sexual life and the process of sexuation. Our clinical praxis has always been our source of inspiration and learning for the indispensable work of reflection and research that sustains this praxis. The paper aims at identifying the questions that clinical experience has brought to us and which we need to address for ethical, clinical and theoretical reasons.

Dr Leonardo S. Rodríguez is a psychoanalyst, a founding member and an Analyst Member of the School of Psychoanalysis of the Forums of the Lacanian Field, a founding member of the Australian Centre for Psychoanalysis, a teacher of psychoanalysis at the ACP and the author of *Psychoanalysis with Children* (London and New York, Free Associations Books, 1999) and numerous book chapters and articles on psychoanalytic theory and practice in different languages.



**2.15 DISCUSSION AND QUESTIONS**

**2.30 CONCLUDING REMARKS-**  
**NICOL THOMAS**, DELEGATE,  
FORUM OF MELBOURNE

**2.45 FINISH**

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