

# PROSTITUTION

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Given the general definition of prostitution (for example, an exchange of sex for a payment), would a psychoanalyst have something to say on it? We could reflect on what is it that makes a prostitute inhabit the analysand's dreams and fantasies. Freud was aware of this. He described how men could construct castles and bridges, as long as no confusions occur: the saint mummy at home, the prostitute in the street. The one woman, who would allow the unification of the affectionate current with the sensual current, remains on the level of contingency.<sup>1</sup>

However, it is essential to be aware of to what extent the mother condenses two roles: that of the primordial object elevated through sanctification or debased through commercialism.<sup>2</sup> Lacan generalizes and calls the elevation of the object of desire “breaking it down into two irreconcilable halves”<sup>3</sup> the oedipal normalization. Then the mother officially loses her erotic powers as she appears submitted to the desire of the father.

Many of those women who come subsequently will inherit this “dispossessed” mother.<sup>4</sup> Some however, will condense the forces of the sensual current originally directed at the mother, such as Freud characterizes a prostitute.

She would appear endowed with the libidinal powers of the supreme object. Yet, the impossible jouissance of the mother only becomes reality through her debasement. It is not only as the result of payment, but of the credit given to the “perverse components” of sexuality, that the perversion does not define a structure or a sexual deviation, but rather a “parcialization”.<sup>5</sup> The prostitute is a part of the maternal *Thing* and she

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<sup>1</sup> Freud, S. Edition of the Complete Psychological works of Sigmund Freud, Vol. 11, Contributions to the psychology of love. Vol 11 p. 182-3.

<sup>2</sup> Miller, J. A. *Logicas de la vida amorosa*, Buenos Aires, Manantial, 1991, p. 27.

<sup>3</sup> Lacan, J. *O Seminário, Livro 5*, Rio de Janeiro, JZE, 1998, p. 339. Lacan, Jacques, *Le Séminaire, livre V, Les formations de l'inconscient*, Editions du Seuil, Paris, 1998, p. p. 328.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Freud, S. *Ibid*, p. 185.

represents it through metonymy, the way Freud characterizes a fetish. Thus Lacan says that “the phallus inhabits a prostitute”.<sup>6</sup>

The equation prostitute-phallus appears clearly in male fantasy of the sexual act with a woman provided with a penis, and it led many to seek a travesty and many travesties to engage in prostitution. This goes further, as the reference to the feminine figure which is still at play in transvestism, can even be eclipsed. The phallus, as in masculine prostitution, could condense in itself the whole *jouissance* of the object.

However, Freud permits us to reach beyond the male fantasy when he recognises in prostitution something present in “virtually all civilized human beings” who seem to have “a uniform aptitude for perversion”.<sup>7</sup>

In this sense we have to follow Lacan and distinguish between two “perversions”. Apart from relating the prostitute to the phallic mother, of the male perversion pattern, Freud also relates her to the infantile polymorphous perversion: a “disposition” which “the prostitute exploits in her occupation”.<sup>8</sup>

We find at play in prostitution both: “parcialization” and the split of repression on one hand plus the presence of the no-form, which refers to *jouissance* without a pre-defined object, on the other.

It is not in vain that W. Benjamin links the figure of the prostitute to the doorways in their function of threshold (*Swelle*).<sup>9</sup> It signals the crossing from the domain of the phallus, from the partial and limited *jouissance*, to the object which has no form, introducing a supplementary *jouissance*, not localised, which Lacan calls not-whole. Though submitted to the function of the fetish, the prostitute keeps the secret of an exteriority to repression.

In the times of the paternal decline, it is necessary to consider the repression and its partition between love and desire through the prism of a “mode of adaptation to survival.”<sup>10</sup> It makes things function as it drains the excess of our *jouissance* alternating

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<sup>6</sup>Lacan, J. *Le Séminaire livre X L'angoisse*. Seil, Paris 2004, p. 109.

<sup>7</sup> Freud, S. *Ibid*, p. 167. Wrong, see instead “Tree essays on the theory of sexuality”. *Op. cit.* vol., VII, p. 191.

<sup>8</sup> Freud, S. “Tree essays on the theory of sexuality”. *Op. cit.* vol., VII, p. 191.

<sup>9</sup> Benjamin, W. *Passagens*, Belo Horizonte, UFMG, 2009 p. 535.

<sup>10</sup> Lacan, J. *op. cit.*, *Livro 19*, Rio de Janeiro, JZE, 2012, p. 77.

between the ideal and the deject. Nevertheless, this would be but one of the various modes to allow space for the inhuman within the human species' jouissance.

There is an apprehension that other modes will prevail, such as, for example, an iron cast order which would substitute the paternal rule. Indeed, the tendency to perceive castration, not in its contingent essence (in which almost any object could incarnate jouissance) but instead through rigid imaginary protocols is frightening. In the present fundamentalism, instead of "any woman could be a prostitute" or "has something of ...", it is assumed that she is and that she has to accept to have her supplementary outside the law jouissance restricted through cruel procedures of castration.

From the capitalist perspective, in order to stabilise the objects of desire, there is an appeal to include them in the infinite chain of consumption. The body, as the smallest unit of private property, can (and has to) be transformed in a merchandise, which gives origin to the tendency to legalise prostitution. However, women always have something more: that which they keep in silence, for example. Thus, their erotic fantasies, when given life in dreams or in reality, turn into best sellers.

Maybe the question for the analyst is indeed to proceed on turning silence feasible for somebody. It is not the silence of secrets or of the sacred, but the one which does not reveal the thousand meaning of a story as it maintains itself in the so singular fragments that they resist being published. It is a discourse without Other except for, sporadically and temporarily, the analyst. Analysis might be one of the few possibilities somebody has today, to truly keep one's secrets, given the certainty apprehended in analysis that there would not exist the last word on pleasure. This is what women always taught us, as they know how unimportant are all the alcove secrets, compared with the singularity of jouissance – no words except for those which are heard when there is nobody interested to hear them.