

Original Article

Title: Masculinity in Crisis: Myth, Fantasy and the Promise of the Raw

Abstract

In unravelling the question of sexual difference and the (non-)relation between the sexes, Jacques Lacan alludes to, draws on and restages Freud's infamous myth of the primal horde. Core to this myth is, of course, the figure of the father. The contemporary suspicion of a crisis in masculinity – variously linked to a toxic (sexual) aggression, de-masculation, dislocation and failure of identity – would suggest that the myth has lost its relevance and its explanatory value. This paper revisits Lacan's reading of the myth, linking it to his earlier discussion of Antigone, from his *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* seminar, to show how Lacan had not only succeeded in excavating the logical core of Freud's myth, but also presented us with a radical new way of understanding the binary of sexual positions, an understanding which refigures the choice of sexual position as an ethical choice.

Keywords: masculinity; gender; sexuation; ethics; Antigone

It has increasingly become something of a commonplace to allude to a crisis in masculinity. On the one hand, such a supposed crisis is celebrated as the harbinger of the downfall of patriarchy. On the other, the crisis points to a lamentable loss of faith in the 'true male'. Yet others would argue that the crisis is a fabrication, a poisonous cultural lie; paradoxically, then, asserting the crisis in the very act of denying it. The positions here tend to ground themselves in convenient axioms, branded as truths. While there is a tendency within these arguments to appeal to science – either in terms of the biological givens of the body or evolutionary behavioural traits – the debate itself might be understood to concern the meaning of masculinity. Such meaning then articulates to a mode or function of identification. What is often missed in such arguments, however, is the (logical) fact that identification cannot be reduced to biology. This point is comparable to Hume's guillotine – the fact that you cannot derive an ought from an is. Whatever the biological givens (and no matter how contested or otherwise these are), the movement to identify with any one characteristic or set of traits, whether physical or behavioural, is necessarily distinct from the facticity of that characteristic or set of traits. This is clearly illustrated in cases of transgenderism where the 'obvious' biological markers do not line up with the subjective identification. But it is, then, just as clearly illustrated in cisgenderism, where they do. To reduce identification to an aspect of the biological given is simply to move the point of subjective embrace further down the line, resulting in a *reductio ad infinitum* (see Neill, 2016, chapters 9 and 10). If I am biologically determined to be *that*, what accounts for my embrace of this position? If the answer is my biological determinism, then what accounts for my embrace of *that* position? And so on, and so on. The answer here necessarily points in two directions. First, there is the point or process of identification and the logic that governs this. Second – but supposedly chronologically prior to this – there is the necessity of positing some ground which would cover the impossible origins. That is to say, if the point of

identification cannot be accounted for through the scientific, then something else is required to halt this drift, something that will cover over the impossibility of the absence of a fixed ground. This function of covering over is the very definition of myth. The process of identification which articulates with this is what we would call fantasy.

This article returns us to Freud's (1913/1955) myth of the Primal Father and considers this in the context of Lacan's (1975b/1999) reworking of the myth in his *Seminar XX*, showing how Lacan's version helps to productively separate the logical moments of myth and fantasy. The effect of this separation is to allow us to appreciate the properly ethical moment implied in this movement. Here we will turn to Lacan's discussion of Antigone in his *Seminar VII* and show how his discussion of Antigone links with his graph of sexuation some thirteen years later. The conjunction of these two points of Lacan's *oeuvre* allows us to posit a response to the current debate around the crisis of masculinity (and sex and gender more widely) which is neither hopelessly reduced to the biological, nor conveniently tethered to convention, but is, rather, uncomfortably, but hopefully, located in the ethical.

When, in the fourth chapter of *Totem and Taboo*, Freud presents us with the myth of the primal horde, he describes it simply and eloquently, allowing it, as with all good myths, to unfold as a story, but also to resonate with a power and sense beyond its surface. Freud is careful to emphasise that what he is relating has never been the object of observation (Freud, 1913, p. 141), that the story does not emerge from something witnessed and passed down, and yet he tells it as though it has been told countless times before. Already shrouding its own origins, the story concerns an impossible moment of the origins of society. This moment is impossible because the terms through which the story would emerge as comprehensible are only set down in the aftermath of the story itself. Freud neither aims 'at exactitude' nor insists

‘on certainty’ (Freud, 1913, p. 143). His imprecision, his spare telling, leaves the story open to embellishment. It appeals to our imagination and we are drawn to fill in the colour for ourselves. Through Freud’s scant detail, we find ourselves imagining the Neanderthal tribe. We see the silverback jealously guarding the females. When Freud suggests some ‘cultural advance, perhaps, command over some new weapon’, we may recall the opening scenes of Stanley Kubrick’s *2001: A Space Odyssey*, in which the *homo erectus* discovers that a femur makes a rather good bludgeon.

The danger in Freud’s sparsity is that it invites our own particular images to rush in. We imagine the scene and, in so imagining, we add distorting and obfuscating detail of our own, often shaped by prevalent cultural images and, thus, by prevalent cultural assumptions. When, in his *Seminar XX*, Lacan translates Freud’s myth into logical notation, he is effectively separating the underpinning logic of Freud’s story from the picture we paint on top. Abstracting the logic from the myth, or representing the myth as logic, Lacan performs two vital tasks. First, he makes it more difficult for us to abscond to the imaginary and overload the story with points of identification. When we watch Kubrick’s film, while we see ourselves as distinct from the *homo erectus* squabbling at the waterhole, the very possibility of this distinction relies on a presumed lineage. We are not that, but we are from that. Similarly, despite Freud’s insistence that his self-authored myth is posited and projected onto a pre-history, the narrative nature of the tale – ‘One day ...’ (Freud, 1913, p. 141) – invites the imaginary, and thus invites an identification. The subtle effect of this is a naturalisation of the truth of the story. Myth becomes history. This brings us to Lacan’s second vital task. In rewriting the myth as logic, Lacan is able to emphasise the logical, rather than pseudo-empirical, basis of the myth. The myth is a construct which describes a construction.

In Lacan's reinscription, the myth takes the form of two pairs of logical statements:

$\exists x \overline{\emptyset x}$	$\overline{\exists x \emptyset x}$
$\forall x \emptyset x$	$\overline{\forall x \emptyset x}$

The pair of logical statements on the left side can be understood as the stripped-down version of the core of the Freudian myth. Gone is the back story. Now we simply have the point.

Read in terms of formal logic, the first of these two statements could be rendered, $\exists x \overline{\emptyset x}$, as there exists one instance of x which is not determined by \emptyset . \exists here is simply the standard logical notation for the existential, meaning, 'there exists'. The second statement, $\forall x \emptyset x$, can be read as 'all instances of x are determined by \emptyset '. The \forall here simply indicating the universal, meaning 'all'. The apparent contradiction here – that we are simultaneously being told that there is an exception and that there are no exceptions – is resolved when we focus on the logical process being described. In order to establish the set of those x which are determined by \emptyset , it is necessary that we posit an instance of x which is not determined by \emptyset . Without this external determiner, the set of x would be logically inconsistent, insofar as there would be no limit condition to allow it to function as comprehensible. Put simply, without the conceptual exception to a rule, the rule is not a rule. For the claim that all x are y , there has to be, at least in theory, the possibility of an x which is not y . Without this limitation, the statement is merely an analytical tautology, as in the classic 'all bachelors are unmarried'. This rather abstract but crucial point is perhaps illuminated if we recall the original myth. The one who is not determined by \emptyset is the primal father; he who was murdered, consumed, and elevated. Here we begin to translate terms once again, and already lose something of the paramount abstraction of Lacan's representation. The Greek letter \emptyset is taken here to represent

the phallus. In the context of the formulae, when combined with x as $\emptyset x$, we can read this as the phallic function. $\forall x \emptyset x$ thus describes, according to Lacan, ‘that it is through the phallic function that man as a whole acquires his inscription’ (Lacan, 1975b/1999, p. 79). Without the phallic function, man cannot be written. The bar placed over $\emptyset x$ in the upper formula indicates a negation. As such, $\overline{\emptyset x}$ describes a negation of the phallic function. Taken as a whole, Lacan paraphrases the upper formula, $\exists x \overline{\emptyset x}$ as *la fonction du père* (Lacan, 1975a, p. 101), which could variously be translated as ‘the father function’, ‘the father’s function’ or ‘the function of the father’, the subtle shifts in meaning that the English brings forward being not insignificant (Lacan, 1975b/1999, p. 79). Here we can begin to appreciate the danger in superimposing Freud on Lacan. While Lacan’s logical statements perform the task of elevating the core of Freud’s myth out of the wash of the imaginary, any superimposition risks reversing this elevation and, moreover, confusing the precision at which Lacan aims.

Where we might understand $\exists x \overline{\emptyset x}$ to represent the primal father, insofar as he is, himself, the anchor of the phallic function, rather than being subject to it, this recuperation to Freud places too much emphasis on the father and not enough on the function. What Lacan is concerned with is the function, the father function. Again, while $\overline{\emptyset x}$ might helpfully be understood to represent castration (there exists one who castrates, and is thus not subject to castration), this again separates the terms with the effect of implying an agency. It is not, for Lacan, that the father castrates. It is rather that the father function effects a castration. We need to remind ourselves that where Freud is presenting a myth that easily slips into a supposition of a prehistory, Lacan seeks to achieve a logical atemporality.

Reading Freud into Lacan, we can see the set of $\forall x$ which is determined by \emptyset as the band of brothers. As Freud tells it, the murder of the father heralds the process of foundation of law

and culture. Having murdered the father, the band of brothers experience remorse and consequently prohibit the very thing they sought to gain through his murder; access to or possession of the women of the tribe. This prohibition of incest (they are presumably free to pursue women of other groups, if they can) marks the inauguration of law. In commemoration of the father, they proceed to feast on his remains, thus instantiating culture, as well as engaging in a very literal internalisation of and direct identification with the father. Thus, Freud's myth accounts for the impossible origins of law and culture, and the emergence of society and group functioning, cooperation, communion and identity.

In stripping the core point of the myth back to its logic, Lacan seeks not only to dispense with the lure of colourful detail, but also to emphasise the direction in which we read the elements in play. In Freud's version, there is a series of explicit and implied moments of cause and effect. The father's greed and possessiveness, aided by their own lust, causes the brothers to revolt. The father's death causes the brothers to experience remorse (although it is never entirely clear why). This remorse inspires a totem feast and an instantiation of law.

Everything works in a conventional, narrative chronology. Lacan's logic, however, is retroactive; the terms must be read backwards. Hence, when he comes to comment on his own backboard scribbles, it is $\forall x \emptyset x$ to which he turns first (Lacan, 1975b/1999, p. 79).

Only after explicating $\forall x \emptyset x$ does he add an explanation to $\exists x \overline{\emptyset x}$. Underpinning Lacan's strategy here is a core element of his theory which had been in place for decades by this point (Lacan, 1949/2006, 79). It is only from within the confines of language that we can come to posit that which would have preceded or founded the possibility of language. All x are determined by the phallus, without which they could not be inscribed within the symbolic. It makes no sense to talk of a chronology here, as any positing of a 'before' of this inscription would be to impossibly assume the possibility of an inscription before inscription. This is

where Freud's myth starts to come a little undone. While a casual skip through the myth appears to hold together well enough, when we start to consider some of the key moments seriously, the story starts to fall apart. The myth is intended to describe the origin of society but appears to rely on the existence of some -- at least proto- -- social organisation from the outset. The brothers react to their murderous deed with remorse, suggesting that this remorse is an effect of guilt and, thus, a moral conscience is at the same time the source of law, and, hence, guilt and the possibility of a conscience. Lacan's atemporal telling makes sense of this narrative collapse. The conditions of possibility of the myth are only ever posited back from within the conditions for which the myth seeks to account. Where the colourful, mythic dimension of Freud's story, as well as his quasi-scientistic appeal to Darwin, encourages us to posit the myth in a prehistory such that it becomes a case of *that then explains something of us now*, Lacan's logical refashioning allows us to appreciate the atemporality of the logic. From the position of being under the sign of the phallus, the necessity of one not under the sign of the phallus must be posited.

But that is not all. The other side of Lacan's table presents an alternative conundrum. Here, we read, there does not exist one who is not determined by \emptyset ($\overline{\exists x \emptyset x}$) and, yet, not all x is determined by \emptyset ($\overline{\forall x \emptyset x}$). The standard reading of the two pairs of statements, the left-hand and the right-hand side, is that one describes the male position and the other describes the female position. We should be careful, however, to avoid the lure of any naturalism here. Lacan repeatedly emphasises the act of inscription. What we are concerned with, then, is an *écriture*: what can be put down, articulated, formalised.

It is in introducing the second side that Lacan makes the crucial statement which is at one and the same time staggeringly obvious, and so counter to our experience as to encourage us to

glide over it entirely. Where the first, left-hand side is ‘the side of man’ (Lacan, 1975b/1999, p. 80), when it comes to the second side, the side we would typically describe as woman’s, he tells us that ‘Any speaking being whatsoever [...] whether provided with the attributes of masculinity [...] or not, is allowed to inscribe itself in this part’ (Lacan, 1975b/1999, p. 80). So, we have two positions available. One entails the inscription of ‘man’, the other the inscription of ‘woman’ and yet, this latter side is open to all.

The core distinction between the two positions is not, then, the nature of its occupants. Lacan is at pains to make the point that there is nothing natural in play here. This is the obvious point. However, if we move beyond the still commonly accepted naturalism of the masculine / feminine binary and grasp the seemingly evident point that, not only is not everyone born with a clearly defined external genital manifestation which would satisfy the criteria of standard categorisation -- added to the fact that even ‘deeper’ biological markers prove no more amenable to a strict binary positioning that much of what we consider masculine and feminine is not directly rooted in biology – then the originality and significance of Lacan’s point begins to emerge. If the sexual binary is a convenient, but ultimately unjustified, construct, then, in unmasking it, is not the rational conclusion that we ought to embrace a thoroughly non-binary perspective? Clearly Lacan, in presenting his table as having two sides, is not doing this, however. He simultaneously rejects the naturalism of binary convention and, literally, reinscribes a binary.

Lacan’s point is that within the particular context of this discussion, and structurally speaking, the fact of two positions is what is available. Not because these two positions are naturally what there is, but rather because the positions available are defined in relation to a single term. It is then, after all, a black and white issue. Or, perhaps more accurately put, it is

a black and not black issue. For Lacan, we are not concerned here with alternative positions, each of which would be determined in its own way. Were we, then the possibility of multiple positions would easily open up. Rather, we are dealing with an either/or which is predicated on a single notion. This single notion is the possibility of universality.

Returning to the logical notation, the left-hand side of the graph describes, as we have seen, the formation of a stable set: $\forall x \emptyset x$. The stability of the set, its condition of possibility, requires the positing of that which would be excepted: $\exists x \overline{\emptyset x}$. Phrased otherwise, the so-called male side is defined by the uniformity of its participants, a uniformity gained or established on the basis of the One who is excluded. But there is necessarily another exclusion here. We might say that the left-hand side of the graph depicts a theoretical model. For this model to be operationalised, it needs to be applied in practice. This application is to the variety of speaking beings, the actuality of those who find themselves ‘in the position of inhabiting language’ (Lacan, 1975b/1999, p. 80). While, theoretically, it is possible that the entirety of those who find themselves in the position of inhabiting language, as the formula suggests, might fall under the sign of $\emptyset x$, in practice this is not likely. Thus, another side is imperative. If the first side, the male side, is defined in terms of universality, then the other side indicates the non-universal.

Of course, we should be careful to distinguish between experience and ideal here. Lacan is not claiming that there is a uniformity to the male experience. All men are not, after all, equal. What he is seeking to describe is what is inscribed: the ideal of the masculine. But whose ideal? The ideal of culture, of society. The ideal of a culture which operates with a headless will, insofar as culture is not something determined by accountable individual consciousnesses. Insofar as each actual speaking being who would call himself ‘man’ necessarily fails to attain the ideal, so the many variants of walking, talking masculinity

emerge. But the ideal remains in place ... or at least it did. Or perhaps it did. Recent headlines would seem to suggest that there is at the very least a shaking of faith in this ideal (see, for a few examples from very many, Dupois-Deri, 2018; Mishra, 2018; Raisin, 2017). Whether these discussion pieces explicitly claim to identify a crisis in masculinity or seek to deny one, either way they raise the question of such, which then necessarily indicates a wavering of the ideal. When Jordan Peterson complains that men are being 'pushed too hard to feminize', the pushback here clearly indicates a crisis of masculinity (Peterson in Sanneh, 2018).

If this so-called crisis appears to describe a faltering of the ideal of masculinity, it is not a terribly new thing. Already over thirty years ago, Anthony Easthope described this crisis, pointing back to the classic era of Hollywood cinema. According to Easthope, the classic leading man, such as Cary Grant or Rex Harrison, simply acts, embodying without fanfare the masculine ideal. They, as Easthope (1986) puts it, simply do 'what a man's gotta do'. In contrast, by the 1970s Dirty Harry is loudly describing his phallic symbol, as he insists on spelling out the specifications of his hardware before putting it to use, thus indicating the ideal's slippage. When the masculine ideal has to be exclaimed to be noticed, when the phallic symbol has to be proclaimed and quite literally shoved in our faces, its power is clearly on the wane.

This is not, then, a crisis in the sense that it is difficult to be a man. It has always been difficult to be a man, insofar as the ideal of masculinity is precisely that; an ideal. This can be seen in exemplary fashion in the split between the titular character and the father in George Stevens' *Shane*. Where the father portrays loyalty, love and dependability, his admirable characteristics are inseparable from his weakness. Shane, on the other hand, as the

embodiment of the masculine ideal, is fearless, but without being reckless. He is resolute and morally unwavering. Yet, in this very disambiguity, Shane is unattainable. He is unsustainable both within the domestic context and, ultimately, within the *mise-en-scène* of the film. As Shane eventually rides off into the proverbial sunset, Joey, the boy, calls after him, already, before he has even quite gone, reconfiguring events, mythologizing him, then beseeching him not to leave, and then issuing his final plea: “and mother wants you. I know she does!” Shane is here posited as the ultimate object of feminine fantasy; the one who will not disappoint. But, crucially, he is posited as such by the son, by he one who would aspire, hopelessly, to become that ideal.

The outmoded nature of the ideal as presented in *Shane* is brought to the fore in James Mangold’s *Logan*. Mangold’s film not only explicitly references Stevens’, but restages crucial aspects of it, presenting itself as a reboot of the classic western but with necessary changes. If we are to read the central character as a reimagining of Shane, then the striking shift is that he is no longer merely the ideal man but, as with Dirty Harry, his status as ideal man overtly exceeds the supposed natural and is supplemented with prosthetic elements. Where Shane was modestly ideal, stolidly portraying the fantasy and then quietly riding off at the end to allow the fantasy to subsist, Logan inverts this operation and is boldly, undeniably, fantasmatic. He, and the film itself, is also undeniably brutal in its violence, where both *Shane* the film and Shane the character are understated, Shane’s moment of violence resonating precisely because it only erupts after a prolonged series of provocations in the face of which he maintains his composure. Logan lacks from the outset this self-control and this lack of containment is evident throughout the entire film. In *Shane* we are presented with the domestic father and then, by way of comparison, with Shane, in keeping with Freud’s myth, the unattainable ideal father. In *Logan*, on the other hand, we are bombarded with a surfeit of

father figures. Not only do we have the titular character with whom Laura, the partial counterpart to *Shane*'s Joey, can identify (they share the same mutancy), but we have the, in many ways, more obvious father figure of Charles Xavier, the once all-father of the X-Men, with his psionic powers which shape the very perception of reality. Supplementing this imaginary and real father, the symbolic father appears in the figure of Dr Rice, the arch rationalist who wishes to preserve the clean functional utility of the mutants without the bothersome interference of their desire. Where, for Joey, the model Shane proffers functions precisely because he leaves, *Logan* documents the demise of father after father, from Will Munson's domestic father to, eventually, Logan himself, and leaving, ultimately, the primal horde, the children, to ride off at the end. Curiously, at the close of the film, having buried Logan, Laura recites a section from Shane's closing monologue. The film dissects the father and ends with an appeal to the good old days, the classic ideal man but now he is clearly receding, submerged in levels of diegesis, a character within a film within a film. Put into Laura's mouth, Shane's words cannot carry the same meaning. When Shane tells Joey that 'There's no living with the killing', he is espousing a firm moral code. It has the status of a fact. When Laura uses the same words, she is expressing a choice. Where Shane is declaring an adherence to something which exists outside of himself, Laura is separating herself from what has gone before, but without appeal to another ground. She simultaneously embraces Logan as she announces she is leaving behind what he has stood for. She is describing an ending, but an ending which is resolutely not a reinscription. In Shane's mouth, the words inscribe the function of the father. In Laura's, they mark its obsolescence.

This returns us to the significance of the binary logic outlined above. It is not only the male side which is conditioned by the signifier of the phallus; the other side too falls under this sign, albeit in a different way. On the right-hand side we read firstly, $\overline{\exists x} \overline{\emptyset x}$, and then, $\overline{\forall x} \emptyset x$.

At first glance, the first line here appears to be a straightforward negation of the function of the father; there does not exist one who is not determined by the phallus. This would be to say, for those who choose this side of the line, there is no equivalent of the father function. If we recall that the effect of the father function is to establish the possibility of definition and a stable set, i.e. $\forall x$, then the negation of the father function means the absence of the possibility of such a set. The lower line of the right-hand side then tells us that ‘not all’ (pas tout) x (Lacan, 1975a, p. 101) is determined by \emptyset . The ‘not all’ or ‘pas tout’ is crucial here. Where the temptation might be to read ‘not all’ as synonymous with ‘not everyone’ or ‘some of’, the French term can also be translated as ‘not whole’ or ‘not wholly’. This sense of ‘not all’ is consistent with the logic in play here. It is not, then, that those who find themselves on the right-hand side are not determined by \emptyset . Rather, it is that they are not wholly determined by it. Each x on this side retains, as Lacan tells us, a choice: ‘*le choix de se poser dans le \emptyset ou bien de n’en pas être*’ (Lacan, 1975a: 101). They have the choice of whether to position themselves within the set of those who are determined by \emptyset or not. In choosing the ‘not’, they choose to place themselves outside of phallic governance. But what is the cost of such a choice?

The cost of this choice, for those who would seek to establish and maintain order and control, is no doubt high. Those who are contained within the \emptyset set are consistent, stable, universal. They are amenable to routine. They march in time and follow orders. Without those within the set of \emptyset , the machine would not function. They are the utilitarian foot-soldiers, machinic and subservient to pure reason. Those who choose to inconsistently be within the set of \emptyset enjoy a partial freedom from this servitude. But freedom also means a lack of security. It is important to note that the logic Lacan is unfurling here is of a choice, not a decision. Where a

choice (*ceosan*) entails sampling, selecting, and would be particular to an instance, a decision (*de caedere*) is a cut, an irretrievable occurrence.

If we keep in mind that the original Freudian myth of the primal horde was supposed to account for the possibility of society, law and language, then, were the ‘not all’ taken to indicate that some are, some are not, this would be to suggest an irreversible banishing of a portion and an absolutisation of the rest. We would effectively only have one side of the binary. What we have instead is a binary entailing, on the one hand, those who are entirely under the sign of the phallus and, on the other, those who are occasionally or inconsistently under the sign of the phallus. What is established, and maintained, under the sign of the phallus is the law, and those who would identify with the law. The subjective position assumed here is necessarily a lifeless subjectivity, one given over, without will. It is the persistent possibility of choice on the other side which opens up a space of and for something else.

In the first sentence of his twentieth seminar, *Encore*, Lacan builds a direct bridge to his seventh seminar, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, and continues to refer to it and evoke themes from it as the seminar progresses (e.g. Lacan, S20: pp. 1, 52–3, 57, 69, 100, 118). The notion of ethics which Lacan works towards in his seventh seminar is one which stands in conceptual opposition to the law. It is not that ethics is necessarily against the law or diametrically opposed to the substance of the law. It is that ethics, as Lacan develops it, is the necessary subjective supplement to the law. The law contains no choice. In order to be law, it can contain no choice. The only choice we have with regard to the law is whether or not, or how, to adhere to the law. This choice cannot itself be subsumed within the law. Every encounter with the law demands a choice, to be within it or to be outwith it; *de n'en pas*

être. This choice is the necessary supplement of the law. It is not that the choice to be outwith the law, to refuse the law in this or that instance, is somehow essentially ethical. It is rather that maintaining the possibility of choice is the very definition of the ethical. Blind adherence to the law can never, by definition, be ethical. It is in the choice to follow this or that law, or not, that the ethical consists.

Lacan illustrates this point with reference to Sophocles' *Antigone*. Lacan draws attention to the fact that in Sophocles' play the chorus describe Antigone as *ώμώς* (Lacan, 1986/1992, p. 263). The conventional translation for this term in Sophocles is 'unflexible', which results in a rather conventional positioning of Antigone as the difficult or stubborn woman, the one who refuses to conform to the status quo. Lacan offers an alternative translation, suggesting that *ώμώς* might be better rendered as 'raw'. The sense of 'raw' here echoes the title of the first volume of Claude Lévi-Strauss's *Mythologiques*, *Le Cru et le Cuit*, *The Raw and the Cooked*. 'Cru' not only has the sense of 'uncooked', but more broadly of 'unrefined', as in the English word 'crude'. In Lévi-Strauss's text, the point is to do with being brought into culture. That which is cooked is that which has been worked upon, processed in some fashion and given a place within culture. That which is not cooked or processed, that which is raw, is not utterly beyond culture, but neither is it exactly a part of the cultural (Lévi-Strauss, 1964). Antigone is, then, the one who has chosen to be not wholly within the terms of the symbolic order, the one who, perhaps unsurprisingly, refuses the sign of the father. It is in this sense that she is raw.

The temptation here is perhaps to read Antigone as a feminine model, the rebel of the feminist cause *avant la lettre*. This would conform to the straightforward reading of the graph of sexualisation which sees it as describing, and thus reinscribing, the traditional sexual binary:

on the one side, the male; on the other, the female. But, as we have seen, the binary Lacan proposes is of quite a different sort. It is a binary marked not by two positive, but different, positions, positions which would somehow impossibly contain their own foundations.

Lacan's binaries function in relation to a single factor: the phallus. This is not to endorse the privileging of the male position. The phallus, for Lacan, is not the anatomical penis, but rather a signifying function. Fundamentally, the phallus is the descriptor of that which institutes the very possibility of difference. In this sense, as already accounted for in Freud's myth, it is the marker of the possibility of language, of law, of culture, of society. The binary that emerges then concerns how one identifies in relation to the phallus, in relation to the possibility of structure, of law. Either one finds oneself on the side of the phallus or one does not. To find oneself on the side of the phallus is not to say one has a privileged access to it. There is no access to it. The act of finding oneself on the side of the phallus is a position of identity. Identity here should be understood as a process, which is to say that it is always, necessarily, incomplete. We are all always in the process of identifying. Which is also, then, to say that the position with which we identify is not what we are. Those on the side of the phallus, insofar as they are identifying with the one who has the phallus, are, then, primarily marked by the fact that they do not have it.

This necessary failure of identity is one way of understanding Lacan's (1975a) claim that *il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel* (p. 21). It is not simply that there is no rapport between the sexes, that the two sides of the binary do not complement each other. It is also that there is no rapport within any one side. If the phallus is that in relation to which sexual identity is forged or adopted, the lack of rapport here is also the failure of that identity. Returning to the question of masculinity, we can see that the choice to identify as male indicates more about what one is not than it could possibly say about what one is. It is perhaps no wonder then that

the male finds himself in crisis. The more light that is shone on this lack, the more the crisis will be felt.

What is more, in exposing the non-essential and non-biological foundation of the position of identification as striving to have the phallus, Lacan indicates a point he was not yet ready to make explicit himself. If the two sides of the graph do not, and cannot, articulate in any natural or necessary way to the convention of two sexes, then it is not only the right side that avails itself to 'Any speaking being whatsoever' (Lacan, 1975b/1999, p. 80). As the characteristics which would conventionally be ascribed to the masculine become more culturally available, the conventional domain of the male, the side of law, becomes available to all. But before we rush to celebrate the storming of the gates, we should recall that this side is the side of the dead, the side enchained to the law, turning in a well-worn rut of rite.

Of course, the other side of the graph is no less lacking. The difference is that the other side never claimed not to be lacking. While those tethered to the male side of the graph identify themselves in the aspiration to have the phallus, those on the other side remain, in a sense, free. Lacan's Antigone is not, then, like Hegel's, committed to an alternative structure or body of law (Hegel, 1835/1975, p. 464). Where Hegel wants to posit Sophocles' drama as staging a binary opposition between divine familial law, on the one hand, and human law or the law of the *polis* on the other, Lacan's binary is more absolute. There is the side of law, of society, of logic, which is represented in Creon's edicts. Then there is Antigone, raw, untamed, uncontained and uncontainable. In this reading, the figure of Antigone emerges as a representative of the other side, the second side of the graph, which is open to all, with the emphasis on 'open'.

What Lacan has presented us with is a way of understanding sexual identity which unmask the available positions, allowing us to appreciate that that with which we identify is not what we are, and, thus, that the positions adopted therein are contingent choices with which we are free to engage. We are not, then, fixed in a traditional binary of, on the one hand, male and, on the other, female, as two radically incommensurate but equally substantial positions. What we are presented with instead is a choice of the conventionally male on the one hand, and on the other, those who refuse this restricted position. On the one hand, the cooked; on the other, the raw. On the one hand, the strictures of the law; on the other, the possibility of ethics. The crisis in masculinity consists in the fact that it is a position predicated on an impossible assumption of self-identity. The notion that this identity is natural, absolute and thus inescapable is perhaps understandable as an emission of and from the obsessive need for certainty and containment which would characterise this position. The fact that the male is never adequate to the male ideal only offers up two options: deny and insist on the lacking certainty; or step out with Antigone and take a walk on the raw side. Here opens up the slide of possibility, but it is a position wherein there is no recourse to an Other who would answer for you.

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