

Sublimation and courtly love: A lesson for art education

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ABSTRACT

Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis offers provocative and effective frameworks for understanding the production and reception of art. By doing so, psychoanalysis widens the scope of art education for the student and the teacher. In particular Freud's theory of sublimation provides an analysis of the artistic process, which is a theory since brought to its fruition by Lacan. Lacan uses the historical and artistic period of courtly love to explain sublimation in art. Involved in this discussion are the elements of fantasy, desire and the sexual relationship which underpins not only psychoanalysis but all of human life.

Introduction

Today in many of our art schools, students are required to learn theory as part of their course. Many different theories and philosophies are offered, from analytic philosophy to postmodernism. In this article I propose that Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis are interpretive frameworks for understanding the production and reception of art. Just how useful is a theory to visual arts education? One way to answer the question of why theory is included in art education is to demonstrate just what a specific theory has to offer to an analysis of visual art. As many psychoanalytic theorists show, the theory of psychoanalysis does not only apply to the clinical situation but has a great deal to say about society at large and its cultural productions.

Freud's discordant theory of sublimation

Although there are works by Freud (1907, 1910, 1939) that are specifically concerned with the visual arts, such as sculpture and painting, of importance to an understanding of art is Freud's theory of sublimation. This is a theory that remained inconclusive in Freud's work and because of this, it is largely through the way the notion of sublimation has been developed by Lacan that we can comprehend its significance.

The first formulation of the process of sublimation by Freud (1905: 177) concerns the way the sexual instincts are not able to be freely expressed because they conflict with certain social expectations or claims upon the individual. Freud's (1933: 846) explanation of his theory of instincts is:

An instinct differs from a stimulus in that it arises from sources of stimulation within the body, operates as a constant force, and is such that the subject cannot escape from it by flight as he can from an external stimulus. An instinct may be described as having a source, an object, and an aim. The source is a state of excitation within the body, and its aim is to remove that excitation; in the

course of its path from its source to the attainment of its aim the instinct becomes operative mentally. We picture it as a certain sum of energy forcing its way in a certain direction.

An obvious example of sublimation is the marked change in children from being comfortable in any situation with their own nudity to quite suddenly showing feelings of embarrassment about exposing parts of their body publicly or even in the family home. This is compounded when the sexual instinct is impeded by aesthetic and moral ideals, for in the above example of the child's embarrassment about her own body, there is not only a growing understanding about the propriety of wearing clothes but also about the type of clothes that are preferred over others. In this sense, sublimation concerns what is wrong and right in terms of morality and questions of value and judgement in aesthetics. The tendency of sublimation in childhood is carried through into adulthood whereby the aims of sexual instincts may, in some individuals, be put into the service of artistic or intellectual creation (Freud, 1905: 238). The point Freud makes here, which is essential to his theory of sublimation, is that sublimation allows the sexual instinct to be expressed and made useful in other, more socially acceptable ways, which is the creation of an art work.¹ This is really all Freud says about the matter of artistic creation in this text, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, and it is not clear whether sublimation concerns just the aim of the sexual instinct or whether it also includes the sexual object, nor does he give a more detailed explanation of that socially acceptable object. With regard to the former part of this problem, Freud clearly states that sublimation is a 'diversion of sexual instinctual forces from sexual aims and their direction to new ones' (1905: 178). By this he means that a sexual instinct, such as the pleasure in being touched or held, is diverted from its aim of satisfaction to another direction, of which an example might be the writer's desire for and pleasure in 'a room of one's own', and from which I might obtain the satisfaction of a feeling of safety and warmth. Yet does Freud also include in his theory of the process of sublimation the question of the sexual object?

In the example of the writer's room the libidinal² instinct has the aim of satisfaction, and the act required for this is either the direct act of a caring touch, or the displaced, sublimatory activity of writing in peaceful seclusion. Included here is an object that is part and parcel of how the instinct obtains its aim. The object does not refer to something that is inanimate but rather to the kind of object that is desired, as in the poetical phrase 'that is the object of my desire.' The object, then, can be a person or that which psychoanalysis calls a part-object as in the eyes or the mouth of an other. Further, the object can be a real or an imaginary object, like the cliché of the knight in shining armour who never arrives but exists in the imagination as an unattainable desire. It is by or through this object that the instinct can obtain its aim and in regards to sublimation the object then is integral to this process. Since sublimation is one origin of artistic activity, it would seem that not only the instinctual aim but also the object of the instinct is important to the theory of sublimation. Obviously, artistic creation combines both the impulse to create and the object of the artistic activity. The question is how does Freud understand the object in the theory of sublimation?

In a summary of psychoanalysis, *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* (1933), Freud briefly states that sublimation involves both the object and the aim of the instinct:

The relations of an instinct to its aim and to its object are also susceptible to alterations; both can be exchanged for others, but the relation to the object is the more easily loosened of the two. There is a particular kind of modification of aim and change of object, with regard to which our social values come into the picture; to this we give the name of sublimation (1933: 847).

Of the instinct's aim and its object, it is the object that is the more malleable of the two, and in art this makes sense since the impulse to create results in an endless variety of art works. To get a more thorough understanding of this object in the process of sublimation, we need to resort to another essay by Freud which deals with this particular issue.

In 'On Narcissism: An Introduction' (1914) Freud discusses in detail the libidinal instincts, making a distinction between the ego-libido and the object-libido. Simply put, Freud is demonstrating how the human subject moves from self-love, where the subject's own ego retains

all the libidinal instincts (ego-libido), to an object existing outside of the subject whereby the libido becomes an object-libido. What is important to this discussion is that sublimation in this essay is characterised as 'a process that concerns object-libido and consists in the instinct's directing itself toward an aim other than ... sexual satisfaction' (1914: 94). The distinction between object-libido and object lies in the issue of movement and direction, that is, the sexual instincts are characterised as an object-libido in terms of the movement towards an external object. The point Freud seems to be making in the essay 'On Narcissism: An Introduction', is that sublimation concerns the deflection of the object-libido from a sexual object to an object that is not considered sexual. In sublimation there is a change from one object to another, whereas with idealisation the object is not changed.³

To make these concepts more tangible we can look at a synonymous situation in Proust (1927: 173-175) where the narrator contemplates his conflict between pursuing the life of an artist and his relationship with Albertine who consumes his passions and time. The scene begins with the narrator waiting at home for the return of Albertine and while he waits, in order to soothe his agitation, he begins to play the famous sonata by Vinteuil. For a brief moment his anxiety is eased: 'I could dispose of my thoughts, detach them for a moment from Albertine, apply them to the sonata.' The effect the music has upon him recalls one of the major problems for the narrator, his desire to be an artist and the lack of fulfilment of this desire due to his present life with Albertine. Thus, he asks himself:

In abandoning that ambition *de facto*, had I forfeited something real? Could life console me for the loss of art? Was there in art a more profound reality, in which our true personality finds an expression that is not afforded it by the activities of life?

The answer he finds to these questions contains elements of narcissism and sublimation:

Music, very different in this respect from Albertine's society, helped me to descend into myself, to discover new things: the variety that I had sought in vain in life, in travel, but a longing for which was none the less renewed in me by this sonorous tide whose sunlit waves now came to expire at my feet. A twofold diversity. As the spectrum makes visible to us the composition of light, so the harmony of a Wagner, the colour of an Elstir, enable us to know that essential quality of another person's sensations into which love for another person does not allow us to penetrate.

For the narrator, music is a way of narcissistically withdrawing from all the distractions of jealousy and longing that he experiences with Albertine, while also providing him with the possibility of directing or sublimating his desire towards a 'more profound reality' over which he has more control than the anxiety he suffers because of Albertine's suspected lesbian affairs. There is here a clear idealisation of art, in that the object of the sonata is endowed with extraordinary qualities, yet it is the narrator's artistic sensibility to deflect and sublimate his object-libido away from Albertine, the object of his love and jealousy, towards art which allows him to 'discover new things.' Music and painting give the narrator a connection with artists' perceptions; a connection to an other that is unfulfilled in his relations with Albertine.

To a certain extent this discussion has provided some coherency to the ambiguity in Freud's theory of the process of sublimation concerning the problem of the object and the object-libido, but this does not go far enough for an understanding of the relationship of sublimation, art and society. As Laplanche and Pontalis (1988: 433) emphasise in their definition of sublimation, 'the lack of a coherent theory of sublimation remains one of the lacunae in psychoanalytic thought.' Some thirty years on from Freud, it took Lacan to fill in those gaps of the sublimation theory.

The true secret of sublimation

Lacan's (1960: 94) initial approach to sublimation is to refine the elements in the theory that Freud began with and to reject the too easy resolution of its complexity. Sublimation has two components. Firstly its satisfaction is substitutive, and secondly, the objects that provide the satisfaction are valued socially. It would be too easy to understand this as an opposition between the individual agent and the social structure and then to unite the opposition in the view that the individual attains

satisfaction only through social acceptance. In this simplistic view, the artist would satisfy her libidinal desires by creating an art work which is equally desired by the social group. Yet this perspective utterly reduces the critical and disturbing aspects of art in terms of its social milieu and in no way accounts for the artist who in his lifetime is rejected or undervalued by society.

One of Lacan's key approaches is to go back to Freud in order to unsettle this superficial interpretation. With regard to the instincts, Lacan (1960: 91) reminds us that Freud emphasised their inclination for 'plasticity' and 'fluidity' with the consequence that an instinct cannot be entirely appeased by the mere acceptance and approval of a society. An instinct is not a discrete entity, and its satisfaction is not attained in a singular goal. For members of a society to enjoy art there must be some factor involved other than social approbation, one that accounts for both the production and reception of art. Lacan (1960: 97-8) returns to Freud's essay 'On Narcissism: An Introduction' which does not just deal with self-love but with the question of how the subject first sets up the relationship with the object-other. The myth of Narcissus is a story about the power of an imaginary relationship. Narcissus is stuck in an illusion where what he sees in the pool is his own self that he mistakenly idealises as a loved other. It is through this illusion of otherness, though, that he does at the end of the story acknowledge the division between self and other necessary in a love relationship. In other words, although Narcissus is really only in love with himself, his desire is for an other, and this is why he dies from the realisation that this other is an illusion. Lacan shows us that the myth of Narcissus is a Freudian story whereby the first relationship with the object-other is an imaginary one.

At this level the object introduces itself only insofar as it is perpetually interchangeable with the love that the subject has for its own image This ideal makes room for itself alone; within the subject it gives form to something which is preferred and to which it will henceforth submit. The problem of identification is linked to this psychological splitting, which places the subject in a state of dependence relative to an idealised, forced image of itself.

By this Lacan points to the way love for another is grounded in fantasy. The representations that artists create, and which are deemed significant in society, are so because they function according to this imaginary scheme (Lacan, 1960: 99). The example par excellence for this imaginary function of art lies in the historical time of courtly love, which provoked not only a change in sexual relations but also a sublimation of woman.

The art of love and suffering

It will be remembered that the myth of Narcissus is a tragic one, for the story concerns Narcissus' loss of the imaginary other with the realisation that he cannot love a true other, and so he dies. For Narcissus, the illusory love relationship does not coincide with his fantasy of a real other as beautiful as himself, while alongside this there is the crisis in the relationship with the real object-other, the nymph Echo, whose love Narcissus would not accept. On the matter of crisis in regards to the loved object, Lacan (1960: 99) notes that Freud did make indications of this but only inconclusively. The object of desire is not just a correlative of the good; in the process of sublimation the object to which desire is directed is not the pure incarnation of goodness and satisfaction. Rather there is something that eludes the fulfilment of satisfaction and this something is implied in the emphasis Freud and Lacan place on the malleability or plasticity of the instinct. In the process of sublimation the displacement of desire, which occurs along the trajectory of instinctual aims, does not contain a complete transferral from the sexual object to the supplementary object. Just as the fantasy object never quite equates to the real situation, there is in desire a movement which continually circles around a loss that initiates sublimation and endows art with its ever elusive appeal (Lacan, 1960: 95 & 99).

What does this theory have to tell us about courtly love? Courtly love occurred in the 11th and 12th centuries through to the 15th century in certain European countries and in England. Its

significance lies in the fact that it was based on the arts of music, poetry and visual art (carving, painting, illustration, tapestry), and that these arts were the impetus for an entire social, albeit aristocratic, structure. Courtly love provided codes for the relationship between the sexes: how to act and converse with the beloved was ruled by an of etiquette of an extreme refinement. The men and women in the heyday of courtly love created and fostered art works of intense emotion and profound influence. Gottfried von Strassburg (fl. 1210) was one of the greatest medieval German poets, notable for his classic version of the courtly epic *Tristan und Isolde*. Heinrich von Morungen (d. 1222) was a German *Minnesänger* who wrote poems and painted the miniatures for what is now called the Heidelberg manuscript. In France, the troubadour Arnaud Daniel (fl. 1180-1200) composed poetry and music in a refined and intricate style. Women took an active part in the artistic innovations of courtly love, for example the famous Eleanor of Aquitaine (c. 1122-1204) who patronised the arts and instigated many of the courtly love doctrines. Her daughter, Marie Countess of Champagne was another leading figure in courtly love. These two women ruled over their own courts where the courtly love conventions held sway, and which are depicted in carved ivory ornaments and illustrations, such as those in the English Petersborough Psalter (c. 1300). The courtly love conventions most well-known to English speakers is depicted in the Arthurian legends, first written by Geoffrey of Monmouth (d. 1155) and which the Countess of Champagne had Chretien de Troyes (fl. 1165) re-write for her own court.

Portrayed in the art of courtly love are the conventions of highly stylised sexual relationships where the woman is the master and the male lover her obedient and suffering slave. The woman or Lady is often called *Domnei* or even the masculine *Mi Dom* (my lord) as a sign of her dominant position in sexual relations (Lacan, 1960: 148-9). In poetry and visual arts, the Lady is capricious and cruel in her demands upon the male lover. Portrayed in the visual art are scenes of the Lady binding her lover's hands, demanding that he pluck out his heart as a pledge of his love; he will fight to his death in tournaments bearing a shield on which is written 'You or Death', and he will lie on a perilous bed where swords rain down - all for the sake of winning her favour. The Lady's power is extreme to the point of absurdity (Lacan, 1960: 112) and yet there is an ambiguity here in terms of the position of women in general, who in feudal society were treated as goods for social exchange (Lacan, 1960: 146-8). Thus we have in courtly love the Lady, as depicted in art and in the actual lives of women like Eleanor of Aquitaine, as she who attains great sexual and social power, while for the majority of women of that time life was extremely harsh. In the middle ages, the married woman was legally obliged to give her land to her husband, and overall 'there was a general acceptance of the notion that formal authority was inconsistent with femininity' (Bowie, 1990: 5-7). Married women were required to be submissive, and wife-beating was morally acceptable. To understand this contradiction in the courtly love period we need to go back to the theory of sublimation and its elusive movement of desire.

The answer is the thing

In the very first examples of sublimation (the child and clothes, the writer's room, Proust and the story of Albertine) there is in each an element of denial or prohibition: the child's sense of shame serves as a restriction; the writer finds comfort through displacement; and Proust's narrator attains in music a solace denied to him in his relations with Albertine. Lacan (1960: 87) lays particular stress upon this point in his interpretation of Freud's theory of sublimation by showing us that sublimation cannot be separated from the field of ethics. The relevant text by Freud is his early *Project for a Scientific Psychology* (1895) which Lacan (1960: 32-83) employs as the basis for his discussion on ethics and sublimation. There is, Lacan tells us,

no more vibrant commentary on the gap that is inherent in human experience, on the distance that is manifested in man between the articulation of a wish and what occurs when his desire sets out on the path of realisation (1960: 41).

The gap which Lacan refers to is outlined by Freud in terms of the child's recognition of the primordial object-other. Freud (1895: 331) explains this event as one of an activity of judging a perceptual image:

Let us suppose that the object which furnishes the perception resembles the subject - a *fellow human-being [Nebenmensch]* an object like this was simultaneously the subject's first satisfying object and further his first hostile object, as well as his sole helping power. For this reason it is in relation to a fellow human-being that a human-being learns to cognize. Then the perceptual complexes proceeding from this fellow human-being will in part be new and non-comparable - his *features*, for instance, in the visual sphere; but other visual perceptions - e.g. those of the movements of his hands - will coincide in the subject with memories of quite similar visual impressions of his own, of his own body Thus the complex of the fellow human-being falls apart into two components, of which one makes an impression by its constant structure and stays together as a *thing*, while the other can be *understood* by the activity of memory - that is, can be traced back to information from the subject's own body.

Freud proposes that the subject begins to understand reality in terms of this *Nebenmensch*, a word that Lacan (1960: 51) explains as expressing 'the idea of beside yet alike, separation and identity.' In its relationship to the subject the *Nebenmensch* is an object of division which thus initiates the first split in the experience of reality (Lacan, 1960: 52). This split is outlined by Freud in the above quotation as, on the one hand, the 'constant structure' that 'stays together as a thing', and, on the other hand, a part of the object which 'can be understood.' Lacan translates 'constant structure' as 'unchanging apparatus', the part of the object 'which remains together as a thing, *als Ding*.' While the understood part Lacan defines 'as an attribute' which 'constitutes the earliest *Vorstellungen*' (ideas, presentations, representations).

As Freud shows, this is how the subject first experiences reality by the means of perception and judgement, and the part of the object which enables this are those earliest *Vorstellungen* that enable the constitution of the signifying system. *Das Ding*, though, is 'the beyond-of-the- signified' (Lacan, 1960: 54) because it is that which cannot be understood and yet around it are organised those first judgements and perceptions. What is perceived as pleasurable and unpleasurable always functions with reference to this absent Thing (Lacan, 1960: 52). At this point, it is important to note that neither Freud nor Lacan privilege language (a common criticism levelled at them both). Rather, the unconscious truth of a desire or a trauma must make its way through the material of the body or the signifier, in order to be manifested as symptoms, dreams, slips of the tongue and unintended actions. These signs of truth are the material that is then taken up by language. For Freud and Lacan, the Thing is determined in the symptom or the dream as an incongruity or an absurdity; it is the indication that there is something that cannot be signified. In courtly love, the Thing is the sexual relationship wherein the Lady is cold and capricious and the lover is her willing, active slave. Lacan shows that the Thing concerns ethics, that is, a truth that lies beyond the pleasurable and the good.

The function of the Thing concerns ethics, thus Lacan (1960: 55) makes an important connection between psychoanalysis and the philosophy of Kant,

who better than anyone else, glimpsed the function of *das Ding* ... In the end, it is conceivable that it is a pure signifying system, as a universal maxim, as that which is the most lacking in a relationship to the individual, that the features of *das Ding* must be presented.

That which we can know, through perceptions and judgement, is what Kant calls the realm of phenomena, while underlying all phenomena is the area Kant calls the noumenon which is the fundamental ethical realm. The ethics of the Sovereign Good must be a universal maxim for the purpose of guiding moral actions in the realm of phenomena. The unchanging apparatus of the Freudian Thing, that which pleasure and unpleasure refer to, has the characteristics of Kant's noumenal Thing-in-itself. Yet the ethics of psychoanalysis are not the same as Kantian ethics by virtue of the two extremes that we see in the art of courtly love: sublimation and perversion.

Lacan finds in Kant a philosophy that has much to tell us about the human condition, yet he does not wholeheartedly accept or discard Kant. The gap in Kant's philosophy which Lacan (1960: 108-9) identifies arises because 'our philosopher from Königsberg was a nice person' and he did not account for how in sublimation there is an 'overevaluation of the object.' The example Lacan uses to explain this is in Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788: 26-8) and concerns the problem of free will in relation to the moral law. Kant presents us with two situations. In the first, the individual is given the choice of fulfilling his 'lustful inclination ... when the desired object and the opportunity are present' and, immediately after the pleasurable act, he will be hanged on the gallows. This choice, Kant says, is an easy one as anyone will deny themselves the gratification of their lust rather than face immanent death. The second situation is where the individual is asked by his ruler to either 'give false testimony against an honourable man whom the prince would like to destroy under a plausible pretext' or, if the individual refuses, he will face execution.⁴ In Freudian terms, Kant's example exemplifies the distinction between the pleasure principle and the reality principle: the individual will forego his pleasure when it is detrimental to the reality of life and death. Yet psychoanalysis shows that there is a beyond of the pleasure principle which is that unchanging apparatus of the Thing. In sublimation and perversion, the subject's desire goes beyond the Sovereign Good of moral law and the object is valued over any consideration of actual consequences. Aristotle's ethics of moderation cannot satisfy the subject who will go to any extreme on the path of her desire, as can be witnessed in artists such as Orlan or Stelarc who undergo self-mutilation for their art's sake.⁵

In courtly love, the defining features are a sublimation of the feminine object and a perversity in the sexual relationship. The woman as the feminine object is raised 'to the level of the Thing' in courtly love (Lacan, 1960: 112) for it is obvious that the lovers will seek to gratify their desires even though faced with death for doing so, as in the stories of Launcelot and Guinevere, Tristan and Isolde, and Romeo and Juliet. Love and desire will cause humans to act perversely, to act against their moral codes and to ignore the requirements of reality. The high percentage of violence in New Zealand homes is just one example of how the primordial object-relation with the *Nebenmensch* is the nucleus, is the Thing, in the relations between the sexes. As Lacan (ibid) tells us, 'the Thing ... is at the heart of the libidinal economy.'

Why is it that the feminine object, in courtly love, is raised to the level of the Thing? And does this make Lacan's theory an anti-feminist one by giving importance to women only in the abstract and not their full actuality? Lacan (1960: 67) explains that the Thing is originally maternal because it is the mother who 'occupies the place of that thing, of *das Ding*.' The mother is the first object of prohibition because it is through the early relations with her that the child learns about boundaries and limits. Yet it is not the Thing as a substantial object that is known by the child, rather it is in terms of desire and fantasy that the subject comes to be in its relations with the Thing. The fact is, the Thing has no substantial content and there are only actual objects to take up the place of this emptiness, as demonstrated in the process of sublimation (Žižek, 1993: 38). The answer to why it is that the feminine object in courtly love is sublimated to the level of the Thing lies in Lacan's (1973: 7) (in)famous statement 'Woman does not exist.' Courtly love is the template for all relations between the sexes by portraying in art that it is not the actual woman that the lover desires but rather his fantasy of what Woman is.⁶ As Žižek (1993: 284, n. 27) puts so well, "'Woman's secret' is man's fantasy, which is why the only proper feminist gesture is to assert that woman qua real does not possess the mysterious X imputed to her by man - in short, "Woman doesn't exist.'" The X factor is the insubstantial Thing which exists nowhere in reality and only in fantasy. Courtly love - and art in general - is one of the socially acceptable means for articulating the Thing (Žižek, 1993: 37).

If you ask an artist why they make art, the answer is invariably, 'because I have to.' The ethics of psychoanalysis is to act according to your desire, not at the expense of others, but rather to understand your relationship to your own desires. The theory of sublimation is a psychoanalytic procedure for understanding the ethics of desire. A reason that Lacan, in his book *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* (1960), first discusses courtly love and ends the seminar with Sophocles' *Antigone*,

lies in the issue of the subject's desire in relation to moral duty. In courtly love, the rules of the game exemplify an art where the sexual relationship is sublimated and thus revealing that the sexual relationship is impossible, that the courtly love convention provides an ethics for dealing with the antagonism between the sexes. Art functions here to articulate social discordance: courtly love is an impossible sexual relationship yet it pervades our fantasy and artistic worlds still today. Lacan completes his seminar on ethics with Antigone who accepts and follows her own desire over and above the social law. What drives Antigone is something that lies beyond both the reality principle and the pleasure principle, that aims for neither social approval nor sexual satisfaction. Antigone is just one example of how art is able to represent the non-symbolised surplus of the subject in her society. It is because of this that Lacan and Freud continually resorted to art for their psychoanalytic discoveries.

Notes

1. A sensational example of sublimation was recently given by Linda McDougall, author of *Westminster Women* (London: Vintage, 1998), in an interview on Radio New Zealand (19 February 1998). McDougall's assessment of Margaret Cook, the betrayed wife of the Labour MP Robin Cook, is that Cook wrote her book divulging her ex-husband's drunkenness and numerous sexual affairs partly because she had been denied the benefits of being the wife of a Foreign Secretary. In other words, when her husband left her in 1997 just prior to his promotion as Secretary of State, she wrote her autobiography in order to obtain the publicity and admiration that she lost through her broken marriage. See Cook, M. (1999) *A Slight and Delicate Creature*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson.
2. Laplanche and Pontalis (1988: 239) define the libido as 'the dynamic manifestation of the sexual instinct in mental life.' In other words, the libido is the mental representation of the sexual instinct and is most commonly understood as desire.
3. In 'On Narcissism: An Introduction' a distinction is made between sublimation, that concerns the object-libido, and idealisation where the object is not changed in itself but is 'aggrandised and exalted in the subject's mind' (1914: 94).
4. As a humorous aside, when I told a friend about this second situation, his answer was that the person who poses the choice should himself be hanged for proposing such an iniquitous choice. It is partly for this reason that Lacan places Sade alongside Kant because it was Sade who epitomised the Kantian proposition that it is possible to be evil by principle.
5. Since 1990, the French artist Orlan has transformed her body through a series of surgical operations which she directs as a theatre performance while under local anaesthetic. These operations are networked live by satellite to venues around the world. Stelarc is an Australian performance artist. Amongst his many performance works, he has done twenty five body suspensions with insertions into the skin, in different positions and varying situations.
6. It would be wrong to think that Lacan's theory of the sexual relationship is a heterosexist one. Zizek shows that the dynamic of the courtly love relationship occurs in homosexual relationships, as exemplified in Neil Jordan's film *The Crying Game* (1992). See Zizek, S. (1994) *The Metastases of Enjoyment: Six Essays on Woman and Causality*. London: Verso, pp. 102-9.

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Note: A standard abbreviation used in this bibliography is *SE*, which stands for *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, J. Strachey et al. (eds.), 23 vols. (London: Hogarth Press, 1953-66).

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