



*The Freudian School  
of Melbourne*

School of Lacanian Psychoanalysis

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## *Annual Conference*

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THE FAMILY: COMPLEXES AND COMPLEXITIES, 6TH SEPTEMBER 2014

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### SPEAKERS & ABSTRACTS

#### **“The generation of gaps”**

Rodney Kleiman, Analyst of the School

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#### **“Play”**

Sarah Jones Ferguson, Analyst Member of the School

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#### **“On the Edge of the Abyss: Death, creativity and the mother as *Das Ding*”**

Helen Dell, Member of the School

This paper is an attempt to find a way to talk about death, creativity and the mother ‘as she occupies the place of *Das Ding*’. I write from the point of view of one who sometimes occupies, as mother, the place of *das Ding* and also, as a writer, the place of creator. In this attempt it is interesting to trace the evolution of Lacan’s theories on maternity and creativity. In ‘The Family Complexes’, published in 1938, Lacan put in a claim for the modern patriarchal family, in the form which he calls ‘the conjugal family’, as the most productive structure for the harnessing of creativity through sublimation:

Because it realises in the most human way the conflict of man with his most archaic anxieties [...] because it puts the most complete triumph over his original slavery within reach of his individual existence, the complex of the conjugal family succeeds in creating superior forms of character, happiness and creativity (FC 54).

In ‘Family Complexes’ the successful negotiation of the Oedipus Complex is crucial to this fortunate outcome for the child. The prohibition against incest is the mechanism by which the child (paradigmatically the son) is freed from his ‘original slavery’. Lacan makes it clear that it is some form of maternal dominance which threatens this freedom, giving as an instance the ‘matriarchal tyranny’ of pre-historic times when ‘primitive cultures [...] with the cruelest rigour reproduced phantasies of a primary relationship with the mother (human victims dismembered or entombed alive)’ (51).

(67). In *Ethics*, I will argue, Lacan speaks as an artist as well as an analyst. As one who creates he offers a more ambiguous relation to that maternal thing. Here the artist, risking encompassment (entombment) by *das Ding*, strives instead to encompass the void by describing a circle around it—a zero. As in the potter’s vase or the cave painting, he or she struggles to make a something out of nothing, creating nothing itself.

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## SPEAKERS & ABSTRACTS

### **“The Family as genogram”**

Patrick Johnson, Analyst Member of the School

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### **“When you let things say themselves: Sex, language and the family”**

Alicia Evans, Analyst Member of the School

When you let things say themselves, freed from the confines of the social conventions of conversation, out come the signifiers that govern one’s sexual practice. For sexual practice is within language and, as such, is particular to each one. If we discard language, then we are left with the scraps: stereotypes and categories of the sexual. These categories of the sexual arose in the nineteenth century when sexuality was becoming an object of medical science and introduced a notion of normality and pathology to sexual practice. Perversity, as it was known, defined all those sexual practices that did not have procreation as their aim. Today we have more defined sexual diagnostic categories but they remain both outside of any reference to language and are a-contextual. This diagnostic and pathological way of thinking disregards the cultural context that bears heavily on families and those within them. Instead, as will be argued, the subject’s sexual life (in the broadest sense of the term) does have a cultural context, but one that is particular to a time and place. This culture is brought into the family and the family in turn continues to generate the culture. This, and language, are what produce the sexual for each one, a particular sexual that defies categorization.

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### **“The Family Ties that Bind”**

Tine Nørregaard, Analyst Member of the School

“Hegel proposed that the individual who does not struggle to be recognised outside the family group goes to his death without having achieved a personality” Jacques Lacan

At the beginning of his book *Thou Who Art in Heaven* the Danish journalist Morten Sabroe writes, “I had known all along that I would walk through the image of Hillary Clinton to reach my mother” . Sabroe, who was nearly 60 years of age at the time, and had just survived a blood-clot in the brain, intended the book to be a portrait of Hillary Clinton. What he found instead was the mirror that he had to break in order to come to terms with the image of his own mother. Lacan, in his early paper “The Family Complexes in the Formation of the Individual”, proposes that the ties which bind the subject and shape the family as a social bond, are precipitated by a crisis that is produced through the child being born into language. The family ties are derived from a series of complexes that shape the various forms of the parental imagos. Here we may question whether it might be possible to move beyond these imagos, and if so in what manner. In analysis, the binding ties of the family may precipitate a crisis in the transference. This crisis may on one hand end in an impasse, but on the other hand open up new possibilities.

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## SPEAKERS & ABSTRACTS

### **“Falling into Silence”**

Michael Gerard Plastow, Analyst of the School

Within the family, the voice—as sound, as a-semantic—is first cloaked in a musicality, by virtue of which the child is introduced to language. The noise of the world is given rhyme and rhythm, it becomes cadenced and structured. But the voice of the Other demands that the subject listen, that the subject obey. This voice threatens to engulf the subject in the demand for obedience, an engulfment that Freud associated with oceanic feelings. To this, the subject may respond with what we can consider to be the other side of the voice: a deafening silence.

### **“Let no one enter here who does not believe in Oedipus”**

David Pereira, Analyst of the School

### **“From function to fiction via vertigo”**

Megan Williams, Analyst Member of the School

Freud defined longing for the Father as a being’s demand for a highest power to place laws in the face of the uncertainty of existence. A Totem is called for by the lonely one who, from his place on the line of lineage, looks backwards into the vertigo of an unknown desire. Lacan conceived the Paternal Metaphor as the law of that desire yet noted that it doesn’t plug the dizziness of the subject as question: ‘why am I?’. If the function of the Father “produces neurosis” (Lacan), what could be expected of a father as fiction?