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POLITICAL ENCOUNTERS:

FEMINISMS AND LACANIAN PSYCHOANALYSIS

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Feminism is Having a Moment

It may be the explosion of social media, or it could be the straightened circumstances young women find themselves in thanks to the past five years of economic downturn, but feminism is, to put it mildly, having a moment.

Halpin, 2014: 15

From the 'feminism campaigns' of *Elle* and *Marie Claire* to Beyoncé sampling 'We Should All be Feminists', it seems that feminism has now become fashionable. This trend reflects a wider resurgence of feminist politics for a new generation engaged in on-line campaigns, street protests, grassroots meetings, and university groups (Cochrane 2013). The 'fourth wave of feminism' attends to the current pleasures and miseries of masculinities and femininities, and the issue of 'women and equality in society today' (Halpin, 2014: 15; Candy, 2014: 57). In this moment, gender has once again become a political problem. This re-emergence of 'gender trouble' opens the possibility of a new encounter between feminism and psychoanalysis.

This chapter examines the political encounters between feminism movements and Lacanian psychoanalysis. It argues that fourth wave feminisms might usefully re-engage with Lacan's work in the current political conjuncture. It begins this analysis by examining the first encounter of the feminist movement and Lacanian psychoanalysis in the 1970s. This encounter takes place in the context of second wave

feminist analyses of the politics of gender. This encounter was both highly contentious, and also highly productive. The second wave developed an important strategy of productive appropriations of Lacan's work. This strategy identifies the political problematic that frames these readings of Lacan, as well as engaging with the specificity and precision of psychoanalytic concepts. Building on this second wave strategy of reading Lacan, the chapter then identifies sexual difference and the new sexual contract as the problematic confronting fourth wave politics. It argues that this problematic frames the potential political encounter between this feminist generation and Lacanian psychoanalysis. This encounter can be elaborated in a feminist account of fraternal and feminist social links, which draws on the later Lacanian theory of sexuation and the social bond of discourse. This fourth wave appropriation of Lacanian psychoanalysis can offer an important strategy for understanding not only the psychic life of power that makes social change so difficult, but also for identifying transformative possibilities for fourth wave feminist politics.

Should Fourth Wave Feminists Know Better Than To Re-read Lacan?

Encountering Lacan from the Second to the Third Feminist Wave

The first encounter between feminism and Lacan took place in an earlier period of radical social change. This was the emergence of second wave feminisms in the 1970s, which insisted that women's liberation was integral to social revolution, and that the sexual was also necessarily the political. In this context of the feminist politicization of female sexuality and the rejection of Freudian accounts of femininity, Lacan returned to the question of feminine sexuality in his 1971 seminar, *Seminar XX*.

The earlier 'classical' Lacanian account of the formation of the sexed subject had appeared in his influential work, *Écrits* (2002). *Écrits* consisted of papers written from 1936 to 1966 that Lacan selected as representative of his psychoanalytic theory. In the key papers, such as the 'The Signification of the Phallus' (1958) and 'Guiding Remarks for a Congress on Feminine Sexuality' (1960), Lacan outlined his theory of sexed subjectivity.

In this account, the child becomes a subject after the intervention of the paternal interdict of the Law-of-the-Father in the Oedipus complex. Lacan adapted Lévi-Strauss's notion of culture as a symbolic system, which is structured by a foundational prohibition against intrafamilial marriage. For Lacan, this prohibition upon incestuous desire for the mother is Law-of-the-Father, which structures culture as a system of symbolic exchange. The Law-of-the-Father symbolises the father as the bearer of cultural law. This symbolic father functions as the figure of the prohibition upon the infant's desire for the mother (2002: 229-230). This symbolic function represents the separation of child and mother. It should not be confused with the real or imaginary father that acts as an agent of the paternal Law that bars the child's desire for the mother.

In the Oedipus complex, the infant desires its mother and perceives its father as a rival to its mother's love. The child 'resolves' the Oedipus complex through identification with the symbolic father, and thereby enters the Symbolic order. In the Symbolic order, subjects are sexually differentiated according to their relation to the phallus, a symbolic element (2002: 582-583). The phallus represents the lack of the signifier in the Symbolic order. For Lacan, the phallic function is 'the function that institutes lack, that is, the alienating function of language' that all subjects suffer (Fink 1995: 103). The

masculine subject has the phallus while the feminine subject lacks it. In Lacan's account, subjects have a masculine or feminine structure, which provides a signification of anatomical sexual difference. That assignation is contingent; such that men can have feminine psychic structures and women can have a masculine relation to the phallus. However, it also gives meaning to the biological body, such that this process of sexualisation inscribes sexual difference upon the physical body. Lacan's account, therefore, insists that masculinity and femininity do not reflect biological sexual difference. Rather, they are forms of identification that structure our lived experience of our bodies and our selves.

Lacan's return to the problem of sexual difference in his later seminars of the 1970s built upon and moved beyond this theory. Lacan had given year-long seminars from 1953 to 1981, each of which explored different themes such as the ego, the object, the unconscious, and psychoanalytic ethics. Of these later seminars of the 1970s exploring this new theory of feminine sexuality, only *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, Seminar XVII, and *Encore*, Seminar XX, have been fully translated, with sections of other seminars appearing in translation (see Mitchell and Rose 1982). Of these, Seminar XX marks 'a turning point in Lacan's work, both at a conceptual level and in terms of its polemic. It represents Lacan's most direct attempt to take up the question of feminine sexuality' (Rose 1982b: 137).

Similarly to the earlier accounts of the sexed subject, the phallus remains the pivot of the later Lacanian account of sexuality and sexual difference. Lacan's 'Graph of Sexuation' represents the sexed subject and sexual relation to the phallic function. A different relation to the phallus structures the masculine and feminine positions (1998a:

79–80). The phallic function inscribes the male subject ‘man as whole’ or ‘as all’ (*l’homme comme tout*) (1998a: 79). This inscription produces ‘a universe of men’, a masculine universal (1994: 235). The masculine subject claims to be a man who is whole and all, a master of himself who ‘[b]y denying the trauma of primary Castration . . . unconsciously perpetuates the suppression of the person’s own division and the belief in her or his autonomy’ (Ragland-Sullivan 1987: 305). This fantasy of masculinity masks the dual function of the phallus. It signifies the *jouissance*, or bodily pleasure, that is sacrificed when entering the Symbolic order. However, it also signifies the absence of *jouissance* that this sacrifice creates within that order. For this reason, the masculine claim to be whole rests on the exception of castration – such that he defines his universality in relation to an other without the phallus.

That other position of the subject is that of ~~The Woman~~ – a fantasy that affirms that the masculine subject has the phallus. In this fantasy, ~~The Woman~~ desires the phallus, confirming that he has it (1998a: 131). For this reason, Lacan argues that ~~The Woman~~ does not exist. She exists only as a fantasy of the masculine subject, formed in his phallic *jouissance* and in his desire. The fantasy Woman does not exist in the real, because no woman could enact the fantasy that he substitutes for her. This is why Lacan writes ~~The Woman~~ with a bar through the words. Lacan points out in his earlier work on feminine masquerade that women may attempt to fulfill that fantasy of ideal femininity (1998b: 193). However, while a woman may attempt to play out the masculine fantasy, in doing so she does not exist as other than in (and through) fantasy.

In Seminar XX, the position of the female subject is not rendered as nothing, but as ‘not all’ of the phallus: ‘I said “of woman”, whereas in fact woman does not exist, woman

is not whole (*pas toute*)' (1998a: 7). Reading the Graph of Sexuation from the side of the masculine subject positions the female subject as an exception to the phallic signifier, and hence as a signification of its limit. The phallus does not define her sexed subjectivity, because she comes to be a sexed subject through normative identifications with a member of the opposite sex. It does not define her body, for the phallus does not symbolize her body (Lacan 1993: 176). It does not represent her sexuality, since her *jouissance* is not phallic (Lacan 1998a: 74). This does not mean that women are excluded from language. Rather, for Lacan, '[i]t's not because she is not wholly in the phallic function that she is not there at all. She is there in full (*à plein*). But there is something more (*en plus*)' (1998a: 74). The paradox of the female subject is that she is within the phallic law of the signifier and yet 'there is something more'. Lacan argues that the position of exception to the phallic signifier is not that of negation or contradiction, but rather of indeterminacy (1998a: 103). The 'not all' of the female subject is a position which the symbolic does not capture.

Lacan's return to feminine sexuality aimed to both address the contemporary feminist critiques of Freudian phallogentrism and to develop his theory of the feminine subject (Roudinesco, 1997: 369). In Seminar XX, Lacan situates his discussion of feminine sexuality in the context of 'that aspect of relationships between men and women that is related to current trends (*la mode*)' (1998a: 74). There are passing references to *Mouvement de libération des femmes* throughout the later seminars. However, he also asserts that 'woman' tell nothing of their sexuality. Despite the fact that 'in all the time that people having been begging them, begging them on their hands and knees – I spoke last time of women psychoanalysts – to try to tell us, not a word!' (1998a: 75). Lacan's work reveals little sustained engagement with the many words of contemporary

psychoanalytic feminists about feminine sexuality and subjectivity.

In contrast, an important current within the French second wave turned to Lacanian psychoanalysis to develop an alternative politics to the prevalent ideas of women as an oppressed class, as a unitary social group, or as a stable category of embodied persons (see Duchen 1986). These feminists believed that Lacanian thought offered a crucial account of the constitution of sexed subjectivity, and hence of the psychic dimensions of sexual oppression and liberation (see Roudinesco 1990 506 ff.). In English feminist scholarship, this approach has now come to be called 'post-Lacanian feminism' (Campbell, 2000: 102). This includes the influential work of Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva, who trained as Lacanian analysts and became members of his psychoanalytic school. Their critical engagement with Lacanian thought and practice is a crucial part of their theories of language, subjectivity, and sexual difference. For example, in *This Sex Which Is Not One*, Irigaray engaged in an extended critique of the phallogocentrism of Lacan's later theory of sexual difference. Kristeva focused on Lacan's theory of language in her alternative account of the materiality of the semiotic and maternal registers of signification in *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1984). Despite their different relation to the feminist movement as well as to Lacanian psychoanalysis, their feminist re-readings of Lacan would become central to an influential reformulation of sexual difference in the Anglo-American movement.

This so-called 'new French feminism' first emerged within the American movement (Marks and de Coutrivron, 1981, Spivak, 1981). While this inaccurate term was highly contested by French feminists of the time, nevertheless it now marks the impact of these ideas on international feminist theory and practice (see Delphy 1995 and Braidotti

2014). Through the work of these feminist thinkers, the Lacanian account of sexual difference and language became an integral part of a new second wave politics. This politics refused liberal ideas of inequality, radical ideas of sexual oppression, and Marxist ideas of class oppression as inadequate accounts of the oppression of women. Instead, this post-Lacanian feminism argues that the phallic structures of language, culture, and intellectual thought (such as philosophy) constitute the feminine only in relation to the masculine, and that a fundamental disruption of this order is necessary to create new forms of sexuality and subjectivity. By the 1980s, these post-Lacanian feminist approaches to language and subjectivity had become part of the international feminist 'canon'.

However, another second wave encounter of feminism and Lacanian psychoanalysis took place in context of Marxist feminism of the 1970s. Marxist feminists undertook a 'powerful critique of materialist perspectives which prioritise class', and sought to develop an account of patriarchal capitalism (Brah, 1996: 104). Althusserian Marxism was particularly influential in British socialist feminism, which led to the question of how to 'locate sexuality and gender identity in the specificity of historical ideological processes [and] culminated in the . . . feminist appropriation of psychoanalysis' (Barrett, 1984: 53). The most influential of these feminist appropriations was Juliet Mitchell's text, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* (2000). This argued for the importance of Lacanian psychoanalysis in understanding the operation of ideological mode of patriarchy in general, and the reproduction of the (Oedipal) subject in the family in particular (Mitchell, 2000: xxx). Mitchell's later work with Jacqueline Rose developed this reading of Lacanian psychoanalysis, returning to the Lacan's later work on feminine sexuality, and providing key translations of Seminar XX and the later seminars

(Mitchell and Rose, 1982). In this influential reading of Lacan, Mitchell and Rose argued that his work offered feminist thought 'an account of how the status of the phallus in sexuality enjoins on woman a definition in which she is simultaneously a symptom and a myth' of the phallic organization of sexual identity (Mitchell, 1982: 57).

These readings of Lacan informed a wide range of feminist cultural analyses, particularly those influenced by British cultural studies. The political context for these readings was two key challenges for the British left in the 1980s. The first was an increasing focus upon identity, which was thought to reflect the rise of the 'new social movements' such as second wave feminism. The second was an increasing interest in ideology, which was thought to explain the failure of social revolution in the 1970s and resurgent conservatism in the 1980s (see Hall 2012 and Brah 2012). These concerns gave rise to 'post-Althusserian Lacanian' feminism, which argued that sexed subjects are produced by ideological interpellation (the process by which individuals recognize themselves as subjects) (Clough, 2007: 343). This approach focused upon the production of the 'feminine' in the field of culture, and the development of alternative cultural politics. The influence of this approach was particularly notable in feminist film, art, and literary theory (Penley 1988: 4). By the 1980s, this approach became central to feminist post-structuralist theory, and so moved into international feminist thought (Weedon 1997). With this theoretical shift came a re-orientation of political struggle from the state and the economic to the subject and the cultural.

The feminist second wave predominantly read Lacanian theory as (and for) an account of the constitution of 'femininity', subjectivity, and sexuality. This sympathetic

interpretation of Lacanian theory argued that it provided a compelling description of the difficulty of the phallic organization of 'femininity'. However, the pivotal role of the phallus in Lacanian theory has also given rise to highly contentious feminist debates concerning the appropriation of his work. The first objection is that Lacan ties his concept of the phallus to the biological organ of the penis, and that by doing so Lacan privileges masculinity and the male body as his model of sexual difference. The second objection concerns the 'monolithic, all-pervasive, and all determining symbolic order', which appears to prevent any possibility of changing the phallic ordering of sexuality (Fraser, 2013: 10). These debates have continually returned to the unresolved problem of sexual difference that constructs femininity as either phallic or as Other to the phallus, thereby defining femininity in relation to the phallus. It is unsurprising, then, that '[a]s we turn to the twenty-first century, amidst the ebb and flow of waves of feminism, a few spectral questions return: does feminism finally come to the end of its 'analysis terminable interminable' with sexual differences? Is feminism done with the phallus? with psychoanalysis?' (Hsieh 2012: 102).

The third wave that emerged at the end of twentieth century did not engage with Lacanian psychoanalysis, even as its ideas continued to have spectral existence in this movement (Lueptniz, 2003). In the feminist politics of the 1990s, it seemed that the third wave had come to the end of its encounter with psychoanalysis (Rose and Mitchell 2010). This reflected the wider disengagement from psychoanalysis in the British and American societies from which this feminist wave emerged. However, it was also due to the political sensibilities of the third wave. Lacanian psychoanalysis, with its emphasis upon theoretical analysis, sexual difference, the emptiness of identity, and the costs of sexuality and consumption did not sit well with the third wave emphasis upon

personal politics, flexible sexualities, multiple identities, and the pleasures of sexuality and consumption.

Re-reading Lacanian Psychoanalysis in the Field of Fourth Wave Feminisms

The fourth wave of feminisms is now typically described as the building of a critical and transnational movement of young feminists from 2008 onwards, most visibly in the US and the UK. It is characterized by the deployment of social media, an immersion in late commodity capitalism, the acceptance of sexual diversity, and a politics of gender equality (Baumgardner, 2011; Halberstam, 2012). In this, the fourth wave has similar political sensibilities to the third wave of the 1990s. Unlike the third wave, the fourth wave does not reject second wave critiques of sexual inequality, capitalist exploitation, and patriarchal sexism. Instead, for the fourth wave desire and sexuality have become an evident element of new globalizing neoliberal circuits of exchange (see, for example, Penny 2014). In this context, the fourth wave has returned to the second wave problems of gender equality and the costliness of femininities (Banyard, 2010). However, this return is rearticulated through the neoliberal market, which is seen restructuring as gender and femininity in new ways. Against oedipal and generational understandings of feminist waves, the fourth feminist wave can be understood as an ongoing problematic within feminist movements (see Snyder 2008). In this approach, feminist waves do not reflect chronological generations as such. Rather, they mark the emergence of new articulations of 'gender' as a political problem and as a renewed category of political analysis.

These are the contemporary conditions of the possible encounter between fourth wave

feminism and Lacanian psychoanalysis. However, it is necessary to displace the ideas of the union or rejection of feminism/psychoanalysis that dominated the second and third wave. Instead, the fourth wave should look to another form of this encounter that also emerged in earlier feminist movements, exemplified by a range of thinkers from the cultural theorist Parveen Adams (1996) to the postcolonial theorist Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks (2000). This approach acknowledges both the particularity of the feminist problematic that framed this encounter, as well as the specificity of Lacanian theory and practice. This important strategy for feminist readings of Lacan can be described as 'productive appropriation' (Campbell, 2004: 26).

This strategy of productive appropriation has two elements. First, it identifies the specific feminist problematics that frame this engagement with Lacanian psychoanalysis. It asks what Lacanian theory and practice can do, or fail to do, for specific theoretical and practical problems in the feminist field. However, it also recognizes the psychoanalytic specificity of Lacanian theory and practice. This acknowledges the 'peculiarity of the psychoanalytic object with which feminism engages' (Rose, 1986: 84). That 'peculiarity' derives from the clinical dimensions of Lacanian work, and its concomitant commitment to the unconscious. This acknowledgement marks the limits of 'applied' psychoanalysis, insofar as it is necessary to acknowledge the distinction between clinical and feminist problems of theory and practice, together with the difficulty of shifting these from one field to another. It also acknowledges that such a re-reading reconfigures Lacanian psychoanalysis in the feminist field. This reconfiguration takes place because feminist practice differs from psychoanalytic practice; and feminist politics implies a commitment to social, rather than individual, change. However, it also marks the

productivity of feminist engagement with Lacanian work, and how it unsettles the underlying terms of feminist politics, and to open up other ways of understanding the political.

Fourth Wave Gender Troubles

The feminist problematics of the fourth wave emerge in a new conjunction of desire, sexuality and 'femininity' in the differentiated forms of late capitalist consumption and neo-liberal politics currently evolving from London to Beijing (Gill and Scharff 2010; Hsing, Y. and Kwan Lee 2010). In this neoliberal phase of late capitalism, this 'new sexual contract appears to displace traditional modes of patriarchal authority and attribute to young women all manner of social, political, and economic freedoms' (Adkins, 2008, 191). Under the terms of this contract, women agree to use their freedoms to enjoy this new world of globalizing capitalism (Oksala 2011). However, the physical and psychic pain of normative sexuality is the cost of entering the new sexual contract for young women (McRobbie 2009: 54). The emergence of a self-named fourth wave feminist generation in Britain and America is symptomatic of these contemporary forms of gender trouble emerging in the post-industrial Europe and in the industrialising Asian and Latin American economies (see Mohanty 2003 and Fraser 2009).

The 2014 *Marie Claire* list of 'key drivers to gaining true equality' typifies the rearticulation of these gender troubles as a feminist politics. Three related sets of problems circulate in this field of fourth wave feminisms. The first are problems of femininities, which concern issues of sexuality, embodiment, and power, such as the

sexualisation of young women or the experience of sexual violence. The second set of problems concerns economic and political empowerment. These arise from the new sexual contract, and include issues such as unequal pay for men and women or the inequitable division of domestic labour. The third concerns how to achieve 'true equality', which is seen as 'the most basic definition of feminism' (Halpin 2014: 15). However, there is little collective agreement as to what equality is, or how best to achieve it.

How can fourth wave feminists re-read Lacan to engage with this problematic? And which Lacan? Instead of following the second and third wave in focusing upon whether it is possible for psychoanalytic feminism to have 'sex without the phallus', the fourth wave should instead develop another strategy for re-reading Lacanian psychoanalysis. This productive appropriation of Lacan focuses upon his later work, and develops the Lacanian accounts of sexuation and the social bond. To undertake a productive appropriation of this later Lacanian theory involves re-reading it as a feminist account of the sexuation of the subject in the new forms of post-patriarchal social ties. Recognising the differences between feminist and analytic practice requires reinscribing the social and the sexual into this reading of Lacan. This is because Lacan's concern is to develop a psychoanalytic theory, and not a theory of the social and the political. However, to develop a Lacanian account of contemporary forms of subjectivity and sexuality does not involve reading Lacan against himself. Rather, it involves a feminist re-reading Lacan's theory of discourse together with his contemporaneous account of sexuation and his idea of the emergence of the modern socio-symbolic form.

The Social Bond of Discourse

In *L'envers* (Seminar XVII) and *Encore* (Seminar XX), Lacan presents his formulae of the discourses of the master, the hysteric, the university and the psychoanalyst. Each formula represents four different positions of the subject - the master, the hysteric, the academic and the psychoanalyst - and four different forms of the discursive social link - mastering, hysterical, academic, and psychoanalytic (see (Chapters I and II, Seminar XVII). These social bonds produce different relations to the subject and the unconscious, such that the lack in the symbolic order and the veil of fantasy that covers it have different functions in these discursive structures. These formulae represent possible subject positions and social bonds within the psychoanalytic field.

This theory of the four discourses identifies different and foundational types of social bonds of speaking subjects. For Lacan, '[d]iscourse is a fundamental apparatus which is prior to and which determines the whole relation of subjects to subjects and subjects to objects' (Adams (1996: 72). In these later seminars, Lacan develops this conception of discourse as the minimal social bond, in which the subject always comes into being in relation to other subjects (for further discussion, see Dolar 2006). The social bond of subjects is discursive because language anchors the relation between them (Lacan 1998a: 54). For Lacan, language produces a 'speaking being' and the relation between such subjects (1998a: 54). For this reason, 'the notion of discourse should be taken as a social link (*lien social*), founded on language' (Lacan, 1998a: 17). Discourse thus produces the social link between subjects, because discursive chains of signifiers structure stable relations of subjects. The Lacanian concept of discourse links the structure of signification and the relationship between subjects because it describes

signifying chains that produce those subjects in relation to each other.

For Lacan, the fundamental social tie is the Discourse of the Master. This discourse produces all speaking subjects, such that '[i]n the final analysis, the "person" always has to do with the master's discourse' (Lacan 1998a: 69). As such, it is a position that all persons - both men and women - take up in becoming subjects. The fantasy that this person is a man or woman, with their imagined idealized masculine or feminine qualities, veils the fundamental lack that all subjects suffer in entering the socio-symbolic order.

The Modern Discourse of the Master and the Fraternal Bond

The four discourses do not stand outside history, but instead are inscribed 'in the historicity of modern European development' (Žižek, 2006: 109). For Lacan, the social tie of the Discourse of the Master is the horizon of the Modern. The advent of the social order of modern capitalism stabilizes the Discourse of the Master (2007: 177). It is the discourse of capitalism and its other face, imperialism (2007: 92). For Lacan, this is a contemporary social discourse of mastery, control, and domination. In *L'envers*, Lacan argues that the Discourse of the Master has expanded in the society in which we now live, which is dominated by fakery, advertising, and commodification (2007: 126). He describes the allure and deception of this society, and thereby emphasizes its participation in the imaginary order. As a register of signification, the imaginary fills the signifier with egoistic content, fixing its meaning in phantasmic constructions, and thereby making it appear real to the subject (for further discussion of real, imaginary, and symbolic, see Campbell, 2004). This is the society of the spectacle, a world of

‘fascinated looking and desiring’, which McRobbie describes as central to contemporary consumer culture (2009: 98). What, then, is the gender order that emerges in this modern Discourse of the Master? And how does it produce the gender troubles of the fourth wave of femininity, inequality, and the new sexual contract?

The Social Bonds of ‘Neoliberal Neopatriarchy’

(Campbell 2014)

The new gender order of the Discourse of the Master produces the gender troubles identified by the fourth wave. This gender order is the masculine social bond of the new sexual contract. This social tie takes the form of a fraternal relationship, in which a relationship between brothers founds the social order. Lacan argues that an analysis of the Oedipal myth reveals the phantasy of the brothers of the primal horde that supports the fraternal relation. He suggests that this symbolic murder of the father is the symbolic foundation of the modern fraternal form (2007: 114-115). For Lacan, the Oedipus complex is contingent on the murder of the father, because it establishes the interdict against the *jouissance* of the mother. In this Oedipal myth, the brothers are the murderous sons who, after killing their father, enter into the contract between them that will constitute the new social order. Lacan suggests that the fraternal relation is a social tie between brothers. This tie forms the modern social bond with its founding discourse of equality, liberty, and brotherhood (2007: 114-115). The sons of the primal father inaugurate a new political form - that of fraternity. They are no longer the sons of the father, but brothers. This pact is not the neutral agreement of social existence presented in the myth of the social contract. Rather, it represents a particular ordering of the polity - a fraternal form. This gender order is founded in a phallic representational economy that differentiates ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ subjects. The

symbolic father - the symbolic function that represents the murdered father - is the pivot of this order. Despite the murder of the father, the fraternal form does not indicate the end of patriarchy, because it is not a post-patriarchal order. Rather, it represents a different form of phallic social bonds.

This new sexual contract produces the hegemonic masculine subject, and establishes the social bonds of hegemonic masculinity. In this gender order, the hegemonic masculine subject functions as the universal subject. This masculine subject claims presence and universality, such that it posits its identity as a whole and complete self who is the universal representative of all being. However, the universality of the masculine subject defines itself in relationship to a non-universal, the 'feminine' position of a being without the phallus. The masculine subject displaces his lack-in-being to a castrated other, which enables the construction of his fantasy of being a unified, omnipotent and universal subject, which masters itself and its' others.

The fraternal order is not a relation between siblings. It is not a relation between brothers and sisters or between sisters, but only a relation between brothers as the male children of the father. Accordingly, the Discourse of the Master is a social contract between masculine subjects. It is a social link between those who recognize themselves (and each other) as masculine subjects. The fraternal subject is a masculine subject, constituted by the paternal identification that founds his relation to other subjects. In Juliet Flower MacCannell's important elaboration of the Lacanian theme of the fraternal tie, she argues that '[w]hat we have in the place of patriarchy is the Regime of the Brother' (1991: 3). For Flower MacCannell, a relationship to fraternal members of the social group forms the subject. These "fraternal objects" are eroticized' in a

sublimating identification between brothers (1991: 52). It is not a contract between men and women, since women function in its symbolic economy as objects of exchange rather than as political subjects who enter the social contract as equal citizens of a polity.

This Lacanian description of the masculine side of the new sexual contract draws out the reconstitution of patriarchal culture in modern fraternal form. In her analysis of social contract theory, Carole Pateman rightly argues that 'in the modern world women are subordinated to men as men, or to men as a fraternity. The original contract takes place after the political defeat of the father and creates modern fraternal patriarchy' (1988: 3). This description of a shift from the feudal patriarchal to modern sexist gender order traces the continuing operation of the paternal function and its signifier, the phallus, in the production of the new sexual contract. While there is a 'shift from a genuinely patriarchal feudal society to a sexist capitalist one', modern social forms are born of, and precipitated in, patriarchy (Brennan 1993: 167). The Lacanian account reveals the crisis of traditional patriarchy and the reconstitution of a phallic order in the modern form of the fraternal social bond and the political order of citizen subjects that is based upon it. This delegitimation of traditional patriarchy centers on the 'loss of the paternal fiction, the West's heritage and guarantee' (Jardine 1985: 67). The figure of the traditional patriarch no longer functions as the guarantee of the social order, with his guarantees of violence, coercion, and repression (Pateman 1988: 88). However, the modern paternal figure of social power and prestige serves in his place. The fourth wave has identified the continuation of social, economic, and political inequalities between men and women into the contemporary gender order. The social order remains a masculine order in its forms of domination and power. Through this account of the fraternal form, it is possible to perceive how the differential and disadvantageous terms

of older patriarchal orders re-emerge in the new sexual contract.

These neoliberal and neopatriarchal social bonds form the 'guyland' of a new form of hegemonic masculinity characterized by fraternal bonding, sexual aggressivity, and social dominance (Kimmel, 2008). This fraternal masculinity has been extensively described by the fourth wave: 'As for young men, they were told they lived in a brave new world of economic and sexual opportunity, and if they felt angry or afraid, if they felt constrained or bewildered by contradictory expectations, by the pressure to act masculine, make money, demonstrate dominance and fuck a lot of pretty women while remaining a decent human being, then their distress was the fault of women and minorities' (Penny 2014: 7). These fraternal forms of masculinity range from aggressive on-line 'everyday sexism', to male bonding through the exchange of sexual images of women, to the assertion of social dominance when challenged (see, for example, Bates 2014). While the fourth wave has described these fraternal masculinities they encounter in detail, they remain underexplored in this literature. This feminist Lacanian account shows how this new form of hegemonic masculinity produces a subject that imagines itself as omnipotent and masterful. It relies on the fantasy of the (castrated) feminine to refuse its own lack, and aggressively fears any challenge to this subjective and social position.

The feminist Lacanian account of fraternal masculinity also reveals how the sexual exchange of women is crucial to the social bonds of the neoliberal neopatriarchy. This fraternal bond includes women as objects of sexual and economic exchange, but excludes feminine subjects as such from this post-patriarchal sexual contract. In *This Sex Which Is Not One*, Irigaray describes a 'hom(m)o-sexual' order, in which the

masculine subject only recognizes other masculine subjects (1977: 172). She argues that this order is founded upon systems of material and symbolic exchange between men, and specifically upon the material and symbolic exchange of 'wives, daughters, and sisters' (1977: 172).¹ Irigaray's work fundamentally concerns 'a single problem, in its multiple aspects: the absence of and exclusion of woman/women from the symbolic/social order' (Whitford 1991: 170). Her description of 'the between-men culture' provides a feminist description of the fraternal social bond of the new sexual contract. That agreement forms a fraternal social bond, which produces feminine subjects as objects of exchange, rather than as equal subjects of a new political order. They exist in this social bond only in terms of their absence and exclusion.

So how, then, do women enter this new sexual contract? This post-Lacanian feminist account of the modern discourse of the master as a fraternal social bond explains the formation of the masculine side of the new sexual contract. However, it does not explain the feminine position of the other sexed subject, and the production of modern hegemonic femininities in this neoliberal and neopatriarchal social bond.

The New Sexual Contract and Post-Patriarchal Femininities

There is a new sexual contract issued to young women which encourages activity concentrated in education and employment so as to ensure participation in the production of successful femininity, sexuality and eventually maternity.

(McRobbie, 2009: 64)

The first position of women in the new sexual contract is that of an equal party. As the

¹ It should be noted that Irigaray takes this neologism from Lacan's discussion of 'male-sexual' (and not homosexual) desire in Seminar XX. My thanks to the editors for this clarification.

fourth wave identifies, this position depends upon the promise of economic and political empowerment, particularly in the public spheres of education and employment. This promise rests upon the discourse of equality which the modern fraternal tie between masculine subjects produces. The sexual and racial others excluded from this modern political settlement fought long and hard to achieve this promise of equality between persons. So, for example, in the twentieth-century, first- and second-wave feminist movements fought for (and largely won) formal rights marking equality of citizenship in the polity, such as the right to vote or to education. These civil and political rights claim the right to equal participation in political and economic spheres without discrimination.

While ideas of 'true equality' are fundamental to fourth politics, nevertheless the fourth wave also recognizes the 'equality illusion' that underwrites this promise (Baynard 2010). This promise of equality is illusory because it offers no more than the right to be the same as masculine subjects. This formulation of equality does not disrupt modern fraternal discourses because it requires women to enter the social contract as either masculine subjects, or as their other. In this new sexual contract, women cannot be sexually different (or will face the difficulties of sexually 'neutral' treatment, such as those of working mothers), or alternatively they can only be sexually different (and so will face the difficulties of being sexed, such as work place discrimination and sexual harassment). In reality, women continue to suffer substantive inequality across all sectors of society, despite increasing participation rates in education and employment (see, for example, Fawcett Society 2013). The problems of economic and political empowerment identified by the fourth wave, such as the lower pay and political under-representation of women, reflect this discrimination. The terms of the fraternal sexual

contract between masculine subjects remain intact.

The terms of the new sexual contract may promise that women can (and should) enjoy the political, social, and economic freedoms of late consumer capitalism. Nevertheless they do so as *sexuated subjects* such that the *sexual terms* of the new sexual contract remain unchanged. The new sexual contract offers two different forms of 'feminine' exchange, both of which are structured through different hegemonic femininities. The first position is that of the young woman enjoying sexual and economic freedom. However, this also requires that the young woman attempt to make herself over into a phantasy ideal of youthful sexuality, beauty, and glamour (see McRobbie 2007 and Harris 2004). This is a composite image, made up of different signifiers of feminine heterosexuality. These signifiers range from the (lower class) hyper-sexualized femininities of 'raunch culture' (Levy, 2006) to the (bourgeois) femininities of the 'fashion-beauty complex' (McRobbie 2007). The complex process of the globalisation of these femininities can be seen in the most recent 'multi-cultural' campaigns of Estee Lauder to the all 'non-white' models of the Givenchy couture collection, which re-articulate these white European norms into global femininities (Wood, 2011). If the young woman can perform this ideal, then she can effectively enter the sexual competition of 'women on the market' (Irigaray) that has intensified in this globalising consumer capitalism (Harris 2012: 214). The fourth wave has identified the costs of undertaking this path. These are the problems of femininities, such as 'the sexualisation of young women' or 'body-image issues' (Halpin 2014: 15).

The second is the conventional position of wife and mother. However, this position is also being remade through the new figure of 'affluent, feminine maternity' (McRobbie

2013; see also Stivens 2007). As McRobbie describes, '[t]his idea of active (i.e. en route to the gym), sexually confident motherhood marks an extension of its pre-maternal equivalent, the ambitious and aspirational young working woman' (McRobbie 2013: 120). This bourgeois ideal requires that the mother – who cannot be too young (lower class) or too old (outside the sexual economy) – attempt to make herself into the phantasy of the 'yummy mummy', a sexually desirable and high-consuming maternal figure, or the 'mumtrepreneur', the woman who has it all - satisfying work and maternal fulfillment (Littler, 2013). The re-articulation of these maternal phantasies in global consumer culture can be seen in the emergence of this figure of the upwardly mobile and professional mother in Asian cultures, exemplified by the highly influential editor of *Vogue* China, and self-described 'working mother', Angelica Cheung (see Stivens 2007 and Donner 2008). However, the fourth wavers look to their imagined maternal futures and already see the costs of this position. These problems concern economic disempowerment, in which their working mothers struggle to find employment, receive lower salaries for the paid labour they obtain, undertake higher hours of unpaid labour in the home, and pay for private childcare (Baynard, 2010).

Following Judith Butler and the psychoanalyst Joan Riviere, McRobbie argues that contemporary forms of femininity emerge as a new cultural dominant because of the current challenges to the older patriarchal forms of the socio-symbolic order. She suggests that 'the Symbolic is faced with the problem of how to retain the dominance of phallogentrism when the logic of global capitalism is to loosen women from their prescribed roles and grant them degrees of economic independence' (2009: 61). From this gender trouble emerges the 'post-feminist masquerade as a mode of feminine inscription, across the whole surface of the body' (McRobbie, 2009: 64). The post-

feminist masquerade conceals that patriarchy is still in place by insisting that women choose to take up these positions to empower themselves in the (sexual and work) marketplace, while at the same time ensuring their regulation according to rigid and punitive cultural norms (2009: 68-69).

However, the feminist Lacanian account shows how fraternal social bonds produce these norms of femininity (and their masculine counterpart), and illuminates the psychic life of these subjective forms in this new gender order (see Campbell, 2004). It traces how the modern fraternal discourses of the new sexual contract emerge from the collapse of the older paternal law of force and authority. Older patriarchal forms are not left in place, but are superseded by the fraternal social tie. As McRobbie suggests, this is still a phallogocentric socio-symbolic order. However, it is no longer a patriarchal order, but a fraternal order in which the social power and dominance of the brother replaces the repression and violence of the patriarch. For this reason, it creates a new gender order, with new hegemonic gender identities and their attached gender troubles.

These neoliberal neopatriarchal discourses produce the imaginary identities of hegemonic masculinities and femininities. These identities collapse phantasies of self and the 'idealizing capital I of identification' (Lacan, 1979: 272). They give flesh to these norms by filling signifiers of masculine and feminine (the ideal) with the imaginary content of the phantasies of self. Central to this Lacanian approach is the proposition that there is no 'true' feminine behind the masquerade, for the masquerade of femininity is itself a phantasy that we identify with. While McRobbie emphasizes masquerade as performance or practice, a Lacanian feminist account explores the deep attachment or 'unconscious wish' that ties us to these performances, and the psychic

costs and pleasures that come with this feminine phantasy. The performative account assumes that the practices of feminine masquerade make us into 'feminine' subjects, whereas Lacanian psychoanalysis assumes that it is our attachment to ideas of 'femininity' that give these practices meaning as markers of sexual difference.

In this account, the psychic attachment to these ideas is not reducible to practices of self-governance, but instead involves the 'forced choice' to become sexed subjects. However, since the unconscious reveals the failure of all identity, sexual identity is also necessarily unstable and incomplete. It is a process that never quite maps onto our bodies or selves (Rose, 1986: 90). While both masculinity and femininity are never fully achieved or stable, 'femininity' and the position of the female subject are particularly problematic. This is because the socio-symbolic order that appears to create sexual difference is in actuality structured around the 'masculine' term. It is not possible to achieve a position of 'successful femininity' precisely because it is an impossible phantasy. The fourth wave has clearly described the costs of these phantasies of ~~The~~ Woman in its different forms. This feminist Lacanian perspective helps to explain the operation of this psychic life of power, and how this phantasmic operation supports the new (fraternal) sexual contract.

This approach opens another way for fourth wave feminisms to consider the relationship between the femininities and commodities of the new sexual contract. In the act of consumption, the subject composes this normative feminine 'self' from and through each purchase. In this scene of commodity seduction, what lures the subject is a material object. This real object glimmers with 'something more', and it is this 'something more' that captures the subject's gaze. It has become a psychic object, an

object that does not fulfill 'real' or material needs but rather psychic desires. The material object becomes a psychic object through the co-ordinates of the subject's desire, that is, through her wish to be her image of herself as feminine. These imaginary objects fill these representations of femininity with phantasmic content (the imaginary *a*). In this way, this object supports the subject's deepest attachments to the signifiers of 'femininity' that circulate in her world of late capitalist consumption. In the psychic life of this material economy, the infant itself becomes an object of exchange in the maternal masquerade. Nina Power (2009: 30) sharply observes of such images of contemporary womanhood that: '[t]o Freud's infamous question '*what do women want?*' it seems, then, that we have all-too-ready an answer. Why! They want shoes and chocolate and handbags and babies and curling tongs washed down with a large glass of white wine'.

However, it is also important to understand that the imaginary self 'stands simultaneously for the imaginary phantasmic lure/screen *and* for that which this lure is obfuscating, for the void behind the lure' (Žižek, 1998: 80). The lure of these hegemonic femininities obfuscates the gender troubles of the feminine in the new gender order. Laurie Penny offers her own fourth wave reply to the question of what women want: '[w]e can have everything we want as long as what we want is a life spent searching for exhausting work that doesn't pay enough, shopping for things we don't need and sticking to a set of social and sexual rules that turn out, once you plough through the layers of trash and adverts, to be as rigid as ever' (2014: 7). This 'void behind the lure' is the gap in the socio-symbolic order. These hegemonic femininities veil the excluded term of fraternal discourse, the gap in (or void of) its symbolic structure. They mark a place of structural impossibility: namely, that point at which

the socio-symbolic order is incomplete and lacking. The recognition of this structural impossibility of the position of women in the new sexual contract offers another kind of feminist politics for the fourth wave, for which Lacan's later idea of the *not all* of the female subject provides a useful direction.

The *not all* of the female subject is a position which the socio-symbolic order does not capture. In Lacan's later model of sexuation, the phallus only guarantees a masculine subject and symbolic order. The subjective and symbolic structures that it supports are therefore incomplete - there is always 'something more', such that the phallic order always produces an excess to itself. The phallus fails to effect closure of what otherwise appears to be a transcendental Symbolic order. For this reason, the *not all* provides a means to reconceive the female subject. Lacan argues that the position of exception to the phallic signifier is not that of negation or contradiction, but of indeterminacy (1998a: 103). As a position which the law of the signifier does not determine, the *not all* is a limit to its claim to represent an infinite set of all. It marks both the limit of the phallic signifier (as its exception) and the failure of that limit (as its infinite excess). The *not all* is an objection to the universal claim of the masculine (1998a: 103). The *not all* of a female subject is a position of a non-universal subject, and so is a position of specificity and particularity. In the position of *not all*, the female subject is a specific and particular subject: women 'do not lend themselves to generalization. Not even, I say this parenthetically, to phallogocentric generalization' (1975e: 18).

The position of the *not all* is a political description of the position of female subjectivity in the new sexual contract, rather than an ontological description of women. The *not all* is a position that is neither 'inside' nor 'outside' the new gender order. Instead, it is

in excess of its phallic fraternal imaginary. It represents the failure of phallic identity, which opens the possibility of moving beyond its limits. This strategy recognizes that ~~The~~ Woman is a masculine fantasy that does not represent women. As such, ~~The~~ Woman does not describe 'women', but is rather a site of feminist contestation. This contestation is contingent upon building new feminist discourses. These new feminist discourses posit women as speaking subjects, who bring into representation the reality – not phantasy – of the pleasures and miseries of femininities.

Fourth wave feminisms are currently doing just this in acts of 'shouting back' (Bates). These acts range from campaigns against misogyny in the online and traditional public sphere, and for the inclusion of women in public life to building new feminist counter-publics in meetings and protests. In each act, fourth wave feminisms resist the lure of the normative phantasies of contemporary femininity. Instead, they insist on revealing the gap or lack in the new sexual contract. This opens the possibility of making the hegemonic fantasies of femininity a site of feminist contestation. With this disruption of the discourse of the master, it then becomes possible for feminist discourse to 'bring about new forms of representation and definition of the female subject' in order to produce new social bonds and political forms (Braidotti 1992: 182).

An important part of this challenge is to build new feminist social bonds, which articulate emancipatory ways to become speaking beings, and to exist in social bonds. These social bonds provide the foundation for inventing new ways to be female subjects. However, this process inevitably involves building collective political practices, which can remake our social ties in less oppressive and more emancipatory forms. In developing these collective practices, the fourth wave can challenge the psychic life of

power that makes social change so difficult, and so to build a transformative fourth wave feminist politics.

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