

The Anxiety of Losing Love

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Loss of Love

In *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety*, Freud asks: “[...] does the affect of anxiety alone seem to enjoy the advantage over all other affects [...]?”¹ Lacan, a Freudian, says he did much work on affects - to which his year-long teaching on anxiety - that he details as the major human affect – testifies.²

Freud specifies anxiety as a danger signal derived from the evolution of castration anxiety to moral and social anxiety. The superego has a role here; it is, above all, the internalisation of the parental voice. The subject fears losing love [*liebersverlust*]. In this text Freud writes about the girl and hysteria.³ He supposes the anxiety of losing love is for the hysteric something like the threat of castration in phobias and the fear of the superego in obsessional neurosis. He links loss of love to hysteria and the feminine and fear of superego to obsessional neurosis and the masculine.

Beyond castration anxiety

For Freud the phallic had an anatomical derivation; this isn't Lacan's reading. In *Seminar X* he goes beyond this. In the chapter entitled *Beyond Castration Anxiety*, he cites Freud's text *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety*⁴ and lists Freud's forms of anxiety that include: “loss of the object's love, loss of the super-ego's love.”⁵ Later⁶ Lacan states that anxiety in man is linked to the risk of impotence. In a man anxiety is related to the possibility of powerlessness.

There's anxiety in women too. A woman feels anxiety when she may lose love but also when she's the object at the centre of a desire: “When it happens that a woman really feels she is the object at the centre of a desire [...] that's when she really takes flight.”⁷

Love isn't desire. When you love, you're often afraid of losing that love. When a woman's really desired, she wants to take flight. She escapes from the position of object of desire. Lacan said: “Woman turns out to be superior in the domain of jouissance on account of her bond with the knot of desire being much looser. [...] the status of the (-φ) at the centre of man's desire, all of that does not form a necessary knot for woman.”⁸ Woman is freer in desire because she's less linked to the phallic signifier but she has more jouissance, as the blind Tiresias, an ancient transgender, said: he had more

¹ Freud S., “Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety” (1926/1936), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XX* London: Hogarth Press, p. 148.

² Lacan J., “Television” in *Autres Ecrits*, Seuil, Paris, 2001, p. 525.

³ Freud, S., *Op.cit.*, p. 143.

⁴ Freud, S., *Op. cit.* p. 82.

⁵ Lacan J., *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book X. Anxiety*, ed. J.-A. Miller, trans. A. R. Price, Cambridge, Polity, 2014, p.53.

⁶ Lacan, J., *Op.cit.*, p. 189.

⁷ *Op.cit.*, p. 192.

⁸ *Op.cit.*, p. 183.

jouissance as a woman. He said that “women’s jouissance is greater than men’s.”⁹ Tiresias lived seven years as a woman and he knew about feminine jouissance. We can say that woman is more on the side of love and of jouissance while man is more on the side of desire. When a woman is very desired, when she’s really the object of a desire, she often takes flight. Her anxiety is being faced with the desire of the Other. We can understand that a man loves a woman when impotence catches him, when he loses his erection.

The sexual encounter, revealing the non-rapport, is something that makes a hole in the real. Looking for love online, as it often happens today on dating apps, isn’t it. A means perhaps, of escaping from a real meeting and from the desire of the Other?

⁹ *Op.cit.*,p 184.