

Litura

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During a recent Q & A session held at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne² with the Swedish artist, Natalie Djurberg, Djurberg posed the questions: 'why not just enjoy, why not just be joyful? - why do art?'. She surmised that: 'if it wasn't for fear, I think we would just be joyful'.

Djurberg's question: 'why not just enjoy?' indicates that the question of enjoyment – the question of one's relation to enjoyment – is not the exclusive concern of the psychoanalyst, although it might be said that in the discourse of psychoanalysis, this vexed question is taken up with considerable focus and intensity in a particular way. Djurberg's question could be read as leading on to another: is there something in the artist approach to the question of enjoyment that can in any way inform the theory and practice of psychoanalysis?

In speaking with her audience Djurberg also disclosed that she had made a decision early on in her artistic endeavours to abandon the use of all other mediums apart from film animation; she had felt too constrained by the structure of other forms in pursuing something indefinable, situated at the fringes of structure. In a psychoanalysis, the singular medium of speech is deployed in approaching an object at the fringes of a structure, but differently to the plastic arts, the subject's appeal to something at the unspeakable fringes of language demands an interlocutor: it demands the presence of a psychoanalyst.

In psychoanalysis, a way of speaking that exceeds the formal constraints of grammar, syntax and rational exchange is given licence to speak. The psychoanalytic method of free association, the field of an impossible exchange, evokes the presence of an *Unheimlich* object at the margins of rational sense.³ It is at this frontier, at the limits of what can be conveyed, understood or represented in discourse that a mode of enjoyment associated with the presence of this object may come into question. Lacan proposed that the subject of speech is inhabited by a surplus enjoyment produced by excesses of language, which become inscribed upon the body. This is a parasitic enjoyment; a mutating and disassembling force, which has no regard for the personage of its host. It has no regard for psychoanalytic theory either; it poses a limit to theory.

In speaking to the development of her stop/ start animation works, Djurberg said that she passed from producing works of 'obsession and fantasy' to a different way of working in which it felt like something foreign to herself was taking over. In the film, 'Turn Into Me', something of this transformation is perhaps shown: a female figure collapsed on a forest bed is seen decomposing in accelerated motion. As the corpse is gradually colonised by parasitic maggots, worms and rodents, the scene paradoxically becomes animated; a picture of seething, inchoate life. This might be read as a critique of the ideal, imaginary body, subverted under the sign of death – the body as enjoyed – riddled with holes, possessed and intensified. Notably, in speaking to the technique of her stop/start animations, Djurberg remarked that in order to make the

human figures convincingly move, it was necessary to be affected: '*you have to feel it in your own body*'.

In the papers of the tenth volume of *Écritique*, the affected body in art and in psychoanalysis is given due consideration: the body in the plastic arts vis-à-vis the body in psychoanalysis; the body poeticised, as event; the body-ideal contra the fleshly, discursive, body; the de-animated body of infanticide and the mortal body in symbolic extension insisting as an inheritance from the dead. Jon Kettle writes of the intransitive demand, specific to psychoanalysis, which articulates itself through and with bodies in the gap between demand and desire. Ben McGill speaks of the non-scientific body, in art and psychoanalysis, which is 'dysmorphosized by language': penetrated, disfigured, and eroticised.

In another paper in the present volume, on making an art of becoming mad, Peter Gunn poses the question, 'why write?' Henry Miller, in his novel *Plexus*, posed the same question and reflected as follows:

To ask the purpose of this game, how it is related to life, is idle. As well ask the Creator why volcanos? why hurricanes? since obviously they contribute nothing but disaster. But, since disasters are disastrous only for those who are engulfed in them, whereas they can be illuminating for those who survive and study them, so it is in the creative world. The dreamer who returns from his voyage, if he is not shipwrecked en route, may and usually does convert the collapse of his tenuous fabric into other stuff.⁴

Miller's 'tenuous fabric' of collapsed and converted 'other stuff' refers to a creative 'en route', which we might think of as distinguishing the task ahead for anyone hapless enough to have asked the question, 'why not just be joyful?' The discourse of the psychoanalyst provisions an 'en route' for the analysand in relation to the question of his enjoyment; one that potentially exceeds the stuff of dreams, fantasy, obsession, or even of a dreamer. It begins with the invitation for the symptom to speak beyond the constraints of any already given form: beyond the constraints of the subject's suffering enjoyment.

Christian Fierens, in his recent visit to Melbourne and address to the Freudian School of Melbourne, referred to the subject as, 'remaining at the level of a contradiction, which is irresolvable' – impossible to think, impossible to give meaning and impossible to support. If, in an analysis, the speaking being takes a necessary detour in his approach to the impossible, via the stuff of obsession and fantasy, this is not so as to satisfy a history or stuff the holes of his being with imaginary accoutrements. It is this very articulation at its limits in the transference that widens the gap between a suffering enjoyment and an other jouissance – joying. Fierens proposed that the impossibility of plugging the holes of the discursive body is that which makes the practice of psychoanalysis and the force of its effects eminently 'doable'.⁵ The papers of the tenth volume of *Écritique* constitute part of that morphic, affected body of psychoanalysis.

Notes

¹ Member of the School. The Freudian School of Psychoanalysis: School of Lacanian Psychoanalysis.

² Djurberg, Natalie. *The Secret Garden*. Exhibition. The Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne. Melbourne International Arts Festival, Oct 10 - Nov 22, 2015.

³ The term “impossible exchange” here references the work of Jean Baudrillard: ‘All current strategies boil down to this: passing around the debt, the credit, the unreal, unnameable thing you cannot get rid of’. *Impossible Exchange*. Tr. Chris Turner. London: Verso, 8.

⁴ Miller, Henry. *Henry Miller On Writing*. New York: New Directions, 1964, 35.

⁵ During a series of lectures delivered in Melbourne in September 2015, Christian Fierens referred to the practice of psychoanalysis as ‘doable’ at the level of the saying that is impossible; a method of interpretation that is irreducible to common sense. A rigorous analysis of Lacan’s critique of meaning and interpretation in psychoanalysis, as articulated in *L’Etourdit* (published by Lacan in 1972) is given by Fierens in his recently released book, *Reading L’Etourdit*. See: <http://www.lacanireland.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/CF-CG-Trans-Letter-411.pdf>.