

*The Object of Psychoanalysis -
Subjectivity and Culture*

Illustrating the Freudian and Lacanian Object of Drive with Zola's *Thérèse Raquin*

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The aim of this article is to discuss the differences between the Freudian and Lacanian conceptualisations of the object of drive. Emile Zola's novel *Thérèse Raquin* will operate as the site for this discussion. The reader will be introduced to Freud's understanding of the object of drive as contained in his "Three Essays on the Theory Sexuality." This understanding of the relation of the subject to the object of loss will undergo a radical reconfiguration during Freud's work on narcissism. Next the reader will be introduced to Jacques Lacan's reworking of drive theory and the radical formalisation of the object of drive that is *object a*. Throughout the essay Zola's numerous attempts to construct the fiction of Laurent's orientation towards Thérèse will delimit and provide certain conditions of possibility for the accompanying theoretical discussion.

Introduction

It could not be said that when Laurent first caught sight of Thérèse Raquin, in Zola's novel of the same name, that he was overcome with lust. As he described her: "She really is plain . . . Long nose, big mouth" (60). At this stage the main thing that attracts Laurent to Thérèse is that he thinks she desires him: "'That young woman,' he told himself, 'will be mine whenever I like. She is always there, right on top of me, scrutinizing me, measuring me, weighing me up . . . What she wants is a lover, that's a certain fact; you can see it in her eyes'" (59). At their first meeting as illicit lovers Laurent looks up at Thérèse and finds her transformed: "To his surprise, Laurent found she was beautiful. *He had never really seen this woman . . .* Writhing and sensuous, she was beautiful with a strong beauty born of passionate abandon. It was as though her face had been lit up from within and fire

leaped from her flesh” (63, my emphasis). After weeks of adulterous afternoon sex, an obstacle is put between them - Laurent’s boss will no longer let him have time off in the day. However, it is the pathetic figure of Thérèse’s husband - the insipid and jaundiced Camille - who becomes for the couple the embodiment of the myriad impediments that frustrate their desire to be together. Now that he is deprived of his once plain-looking and long-nosed woman, Laurent cannot control himself. Zola describes him as a famished animal driven to frenzy by a furious lust for his sensuous Thérèse (77).

Zola’s tale of the adulterous relationship between Laurent and Thérèse is the inspiration for this paper. However, the reader will not be subjected to the ill-fated exercise of “the psychoanalytic interpretation of art” whereby the analyst attempts to explain the psychological motivations of an author or her fictional characters. In order to steer clear of this hazard I shall endeavour to follow Slavoj Žižek’s guidance and reverse the positions of *explanas* and *explanadum* (*Enjoy Your Symptom* 119). In other words, I will not be trying to explain the vicissitudes of Laurent’s affections for Thérèse with the use of psychoanalysis. Rather the tale of Laurent’s perceptions of Thérèse will be used to illustrate the psychoanalytic concept of “the object of drive.”

The Freudian Object is the Object of Drive

First a note on the word “object”: as Laplanche and Pontalis note, the term “object” has slightly different usage in psychoanalysis compared to that of everyday conversation (273). The most important difference is that in psychoanalysis the word “object” does not necessarily denote a material “thing.” In psychoanalytic parlance an object might be a tangible object, but it might just as well be an aspect of a tangible object, or a person, an idea, or an image. Another difference is that in the psychoanalytic idiom “object” is used in relation to a second term. For psychoanalysts the concept of “object” involves the idea of something being an object for someone. Laplanche and Pontalis rightly claim that the particular usage of the term “object” pertaining to the psychoanalytic vernacular originates from Freud’s discussion of drive (274). In Freud’s drive theory the term “object” is used in relation to a drive such that one can speak of the object of the sexual drive.

The Erotogenic Significance of the Source of Drive

Freud’s first detailed treatment of object of drive is in “Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality.” In the first essay he attempts to sketch the anatomy

of the sexual drive (its components and their structure, relations and behaviour) by investigating apparent examples of its aberrant operation. He concludes from these investigations that the human sexual drive is a composite formation comprised of partial drives. An example of such a partial drive is the scopical drive, which impels us to see and to be seen. Each of these component drives exists in relation to an object and possesses an aim - i.e., an act towards which the drive tends (45, 76). Such an aim has two modalities: the drive can either be active "to see," or passive "to be seen," or one might say that drive's movement can either be towards the object (active) or back towards the subject (passive) (71-73). At this stage Freud defines drive as "the psychical representative of an endosomatic, continuously flowing source of stimulation" (83). What then does a drive represent? Freud's answer is that the drive represents "the demand made upon the mind for work" (83). Freud is able to differentiate partial drives on the basis of their differential aims and their relations to somatic sources. A source is conceived here as a stimulus occurring within a somatic site. This allows Freud to refine his notion of an aim so that an aim of a drive is the removal of a stimulus (83).

Freud's conceptualisation of a somatic source of a drive is an elaboration of his idea of erotogenic zones. In "Three Essays" he defines an erotogenic zone as "a part of the skin or mucous membrane in which stimuli . . . evoke a feeling of pleasure" (99). It is the ability to be a site of pleasure rather than any specific biological structure that is the prerequisite for an erotogenic zone. Although Freud speaks of pre-destined erotogenic zones, he is quick to note that any part of the body can operate as an erotogenic zone. The key to this is to be found in his assertion that the sources of drive have intensified erotogenic *significance* (98, 103).

In his discussion of the perversions Freud is fascinated by the fact that different regions of the body appear capable of being used as if they were genitalia. As he notes, "Certain regions of the body, such as the mucous membrane of the mouth and anus, which are constantly appearing in these practices, seem, as it were, to be claiming that they should themselves be regarded and treated as genitals" (65). The idea that various bodily parts seem to be making claims that they should be regarded as genitals is rather curious to say the least; however, Jonathan Lear proposes two interpretations. The first reading is that many areas of the body can displace the genitalia as the focus of sexuality. Initially there is genital sexuality but some process occurs through which another organ replaces the genitalia as the site of sexual feelings. The problem with this reading is that sexuality is already giv-

en on the model of genital sexuality. Lear therefore proposes a second interpretation where the idea that another organ claims to be regarded as the genitals means that an organ becomes exemplary of what sexuality *means*. For example, sexuality could become “tinged with orality” (77-78).

Perhaps Lear’s argument can be articulated with greater theoretical precision. Few will be surprised if I suggest substituting Lear’s word “tinged” with the Freudian term “overdetermined.” To say that orality has become exemplary of what sexuality means or to say that sexuality has become “tinged with orality” is to say that sexuality has become overdetermined by orality.¹ In other words, an associative/metaphorical connection has been established between the aim and the object of the sexual drive and a particular region of the body - in this case the mouth. Such a connection can only make sense if aim, object and zone are all treated as signifiers, regardless of whatever status or other qualities they also possess. This enables us to understand how Freud can remain consistent with his general assumptions concerning human psychology while also asserting that different erotogenic zones are capable of determining different types of aim (“Three Essays” 101; Laplanche and Pontalis 155).

Stumbling into the Solipsistic and Repetitive Universe of the Drive

A child sucking its thumb as a substitute for feeding at its mother’s breast is the paradigmatic example of the constitution of the Freudian drive. Analysis is the process of constituting a drive wherein the drives derive their object and source from vital functions. In this sense the Freudian drive is an excess in relation to bodily need: “to begin with, sexual activity attaches itself to one of the functions serving the process of self preservation and does not become independent of them until later” (“Three Essays” 98). According to Freud, one of the first experiences of enjoyment for a human being is feeding at its mother’s breast. In this scenario the infant’s satisfaction derived from feeding is connected to and dependent upon an object - the mother’s breast - that is located outside of the child’s own body. Since satisfaction is derived from an action dependent upon an external object, loss will inescapably overshadow the infant’s first relation to an object of enjoyment (144).

This precious object is thus constituted as an object of loss. The re-

1. Freud’s analysis of his “dream of the botanical monograph” contains the clearest exposition of overdetermination (*Interpretation of Dreams* 386-90).

sponse of a subject craving for satisfaction dependent upon such an object is to turn in upon itself in an acephalous and masturbatory autoeroticism. The infant searching for gratification once obtained by sucking at the breast attempts to find this enjoyment from sucking at its own body: "the most striking feature of this sexual activity [thumb sucking] is that the drive is not directed towards other people, but obtains satisfaction from the subject's own body" (97). Moreover, indulging in such a practice intensifies the "erotogenic significance of the labial region" (98). It is with such a move from feeding at the breast, where the aim is nourishment, to thumb-sucking, where the aim is the repetition of a satisfaction, that we shift from the register of somatic need and into the domain of drive.

The (Re)Finding of an External Object

According to Freud, the object that first supplies the subject with sensual gratification becomes the prototype for later object choice. Indeed Freud even goes so far as to claim that "the finding of an object is in fact a re-finding of it" (145). Freud later declares that the subject's first object choice is almost identical with the object of the oral drive constituted by the process of anaclysis: "though it is not actually the mother's breast, at least it is the mother. We call the mother the first *love-object*" (*Introductory Lectures* 372). All subsequent objects of the sexual drive are but substitutions of that first object choice (377). As Freud was to note in 1912, when an original libidinal object has been lost, it is often "represented by an endless series of substitutive objects none of which, however, brings full satisfaction" ("On the Universal Tendency" 258). It can be said that for the Freudian subject each object choice is, to borrow from Derrida, an iteration *qua* differential repetition of the subject's first object choice (213-14).²

From the point of view of Freud's theory of the object of drive as presented in "The Three Essays," the sexual object for Laurent in Zola's *Thérèse Raquin* is clearly Thérèse herself. Thérèse, then, would have been one in a line of substitutions for Laurent's first object - the breast of his mother or wet nurse. In Zola's novel the reader encounters brief allusions to Laurent's past loves. During his time as a law student Laurent had liked to frequent the studio of an artist friend. The principal appeal of the studio for

2. As Lacan reminds his audience, "the object is encountered and is structured along the path of a repetition - to find the object again, to repeat the object. Except, it never is the same object which the subject encounters. In other words, he never ceases generating substitutive objects" (*Seminar II* 100).

Laurent was the perpetual movement of different naked female models, “whose favours were within the reach of his purse” (55). Such was Laurent’s desire to dedicate himself to a life full of naked women that he attempted to become an artist himself. When recalling his life as a nascent artist Laurent noted: “It’s great fun, this art racket, only it doesn’t bring in a sou. I had a lovely red-head as a model - firm white flesh, gorgeous bust, hips as wide as . . . ” (56). At this point Zola has Laurent pause and look intently at Thérèse for the very first time. Might this not already suggest a desire on the part of Laurent to inscribe Thérèse within his chain of sexual conquests? Might not Laurent’s serial seductions of women, including Thérèse, be used to illustrate the metonymical movement of the sexual object? Such an attempt might seek validation from noting that during Laurent and Thérèse’s period of self-imposed separation, Laurent, when visiting his painter friend, did not hesitate to initiate a year-long affair with one of the painter’s models. While he was engaging in this affair, Laurent’s passion for Thérèse cooled somewhat. Indeed it was only the thought of the threat posed by a jealous and vengeful Thérèse that made him think about reuniting with her. One day Laurent discovered that the model had left him and now that there was no longer a woman beside him in bed he became aware of a “gap” in his life. The following week his hunger for Thérèse returned (123-25).

Narcissism and the Object of Love

A very different reading of Thérèse’s position in relation to Laurent’s desire may be formulated, however, if one takes on board Freud’s revisions to the theory of drive that were developed in the essay “On Narcissism.” Rather than turn directly to Freud’s text I will proceed by addressing Joan Copjec’s discussion of Freud’s “On Narcissism” essay, as presented in her path-breaking book *Imagine There’s No Woman*. What is crucial for Copjec in Freud’s theory of narcissism is the relation between ego-libido and object-libido. Copjec’s point of departure is a quotation from the narcissism essay: “during the state of narcissism, [ego-libido and object-libido] exist together and our analysis is too coarse to distinguish between them: not until there is object-cathexis is it possible to discriminate a sexual energy - the libido - from an energy of the ego-drives” (“On Narcissism” 68, translation modified; *Imagine* 61). In other words, libido and hence narcissism can only be inferred in light of the subject’s attachment to an object. Narcissistic libidinal investment is simply never directly discernible either to the analyst or to the narcissistic subject itself.

Copjec's next step is to insist that infantile auto-eroticism is transformed into narcissism through the operation of sublimation (52-55). The possibility for this interpretation is opened up by Freud's assertion that "a unity comparable to the ego cannot exist in the individual from the start; the ego has to be developed. The auto-erotic drives, however, are there from the very first; so there must be something added to auto-eroticism - a new psychological action - in order to bring about narcissism" ("On Narcissism" 69, translation modified). This new psychic action, Copjec proposes, is sublimation. Now in order to avoid getting into a discussion at this juncture of the different interpretations of sublimation, I will adhere to the definition to which Copjec subscribes: "[sublimation is] the satisfaction of the drive through the inhibition of its aim" (*Imagine* 30).³

The significance of proposing that narcissism is constituted through the process of sublimation is, as Copjec notes, that it takes narcissism out of the register of the ego and mnemonic images and locates it firmly within the domain of the drives. This effects a radical change in how one must regard primary narcissism, since "the drive's movement out toward the object and back towards the subject is not one of reflection or identification, but of the attainment of satisfaction" (63). If one combines this insight with the recollection that narcissism can only be manifested via object cathexis, then it becomes apparent that firstly, object choice and narcissism are two modalities of the aim of drive (active and passive), and secondly, that narcissism is dependent upon taking an other as an object (63-66). Narcissism is dependent upon loving another precisely because one cannot love oneself as an object since the subject does not exist as an unmediated object of experience. Copjec clearly elucidates this point when she says, "The 'I' of the subject is a hole in being. How then can one love oneself; whence comes the experience of 'oneself' on which narcissism depends?" (66). Here it is worth noting that on the very issue of the relation between object cathexis and narcissism Freud quoted from Goethe's *Westöstlicher Diwan*:

Does she expend her being on me,
Myself grows to myself of cost;
Turns she away, then instantly
I to my very self am lost. (*Introductory Lectures* 468)

In other words, that elusive trait that we find in the object of our love, that

3. This definition is Lacan's but it clearly makes reference to the general trend of some of Freud's comments regarding sublimation (Lacan, *Seminar XI* 165; Freud, "Ego and the Id" 369).

very thing which is something more than the mere descriptive characteristics of that object, is ourselves.

According to Freud's theory of narcissism, love involves a splitting of the object of drive into itself and the subject's cathexis of that object - a cathexis that is the mark of "I" *qua* subject. This account of the relation of subject to object therefore involves a modification to our psychoanalytic description of the relationship between Laurent and Thérèse. Whereas according to Freud's early theory of sexuality Thérèse was the object of the sexual drive for Laurent, now in light of Freud's theory of narcissism, the situation is a little more complicated. Laurent's affection for Thérèse has split her into two and it is this divided object that I introduced at the beginning of this paper - Thérèse is a plain shop assistant with a long nose who is in one instant "transformed by love" into a lithe and voracious lover whose desire for Laurent is clearly discernible (Zola 63).

The Lacanian Object

In "Instincts and their Vicissitudes," Freud had modified his theory of the drive by adding the aspect of thrust (*drang*) to the series object (*objekt*), aim (*ziel*) and source (*quelle*), where thrust marked the motor factor *qua* "measure of the demand for work which [the drive] represents" (118). In his turn, Lacan adds to this series by splitting *ziel* into two different moments - aim and goal (*Seminar XI* 178-79). The goal of drive is the activity with its particular end upon which the drive leans, whereas the aim of the drive is the itinerary the drive takes (for example, self-directed or other-directed). This differentiation between aim and goal helps Lacan to place greater emphasis upon the aim *qua* circuit of drive as illustrated by the vicissitudes of the verb - active, passive and reflexive. In every instance the aim of a drive is to return to its point of departure (165-70). This circuit was seen in Freud's reflections on the perversions, as discussed above, where he noted that the scopoc drive shifts from seeing (voyeurism) to being seen (exhibitionism) ("Instincts" 124-27). In each circuit the drive aims outwards beyond the subject towards the other, only to return and aim at the subject itself (*Seminar XI* 177-78). Each circuit of drive is thus a repetition. If the phenomenon of repetition indexes the operation of drive, then it is conversely due to drive that repetition is the signature of human existence.

Of course this differentiation between aim and goal provides no account of the cause of the drive's circuit of differential repetition. According to La-

can, the cause is the object. But this object is not the phenomenological object. Likewise Lacan's notion of cause is not the commonsense understanding of antecedent cause but is informed by Freud's discovery that a representation that is absent can nonetheless play a determining role in the conscious life of an individual ("The Unconscious" 167-68). For example, Freud's forgetting of the name Signorelli was determined by repressed thoughts concerning the suicide of a patient (*Psychopathology* 38-44, 96-98). The psychoanalytic understanding of cause is thus formulated by Lacan as an absent cause, a hiatus or point of failure within the signifying chain (*Seminar XI* 21-28, 128). It is the encounter with such a position of absence that sets in motion the process of repetition (53-63). As Joan Copjec explains, "repetition . . . [is] the signifier's repeated attempt - and failure - to designate itself. The signifier's difference from itself, its radical inability to signify itself, causes it to turn around the real that is lacking in it" (*Read My Desire* 121). Repetition is thus always the repetition of a certain failure in the register of meaning, or, in other words, a perpetually missed encounter with a lost object *qua* object *a*.

With regard to drive, object *a* is the lacuna around which pulsates the repetitions of the drive's circuit. Since the aim of drive is the movement of returning to the point of departure, then the fulfilment of the aim of drive involves the failure to obtain that upon which the drive closes (*Seminar XI* 178-79). It is this failure that indexes the object of drive. The object of drive (object *a*) is not a positive distinguishable object but the very void produced by the failure to attain the goal of the drive (180, 185). Yet according to Lacan, object *a*, as present in drive, also coincides with the satisfaction or surplus-*jouissance* (Freudian "fore-pleasure") derived from following the aim of the drive.⁴ But how can the object *a* be both a lack of attaining drive's goal and a form of enjoyment? Precisely because *jouissance* is beyond the pleasure principle, it is not a pleasurable satisfaction but rather a state of somatic tension within which pleasure and discomfort cannot be distinguished. Thus in a perpetual short circuit, the surplus *jouissance* which is produced by the aim of the drive missing its goal becomes its own object. Lacan provides an example: when one is eating, the food is not the aim of the drive; the drive gets off on a *jouissance* of the mouth (167-68). Thus drive involves a perpetual self-consumption, whereby the drive aims at a goal only to miss it and turn around and aim at the

4. As early as the "Ethics Seminar" Lacan had stated that *jouissance* is the satisfaction of the drive (*Seminar VII* 209).

subject - indeed the image Lacan draws from Freud is that of a mouth kissing itself (179).

A second way in which Lacan approaches object *a* is via his discussion of *vorstellungrepräsentanz*. This concept (rather clumsily translated in the Standard Edition as “ideational representative”) is introduced in detail in Freud’s essay “Repression,” wherein Freud is attempting to marry his theory of drives with his theory of the unconscious. Freud calls upon *vorstellungrepräsentanz* to accomplish this role. *Vorstellungrepräsentanz* can be thought of as an idea that is the representative, that is to say, it stands in the place, of a particular drive. The relation between idea and drive is established during the process of primal repression whereby an idea associated with a drive is denied access to the conscious. This process results in a fixation so that the idea persists external to consciousness while remaining intimately associated with that particular drive. Secondary repression will occur throughout the subject’s life, when ideas associated with the *vorstellungrepräsentanz* will also be repressed. The result is an unconscious chain of associated ideas, all of which are repressed from the conscious and connected to a nodal point that is associated with a particular drive (“Repression” 147-48; “The Unconscious” 179-89). *Vorstellungrepräsentanz* thus clarifies Freud’s earlier intimations concerning representation and drive, as discussed above in the section on overdetermination, and serves as a bridge between drive theory and the theory of the unconscious.

Lacan suggests that in order to understand *vorstellungrepräsentanz*, we must split the term into its components. The division, which Lacan introduces, is between the signifier and the signified (*Seminar XI* 220). Lacan follows Freud when he declares that *repräsentanz* should be read as representative in the sense of the phrase “the representative of France.”⁵ Lacan notes that when diplomats formally meet, each must not let the positive, descriptive content of the particular individual she is dealing with obscure that individual’s function as representative of a particular country. As Lacan states, “in the very exchange of views, each must not take into account what the other is, *qua* presence, as a man who is likeable to a greater or lesser degree . . . The term *repräsentanz* is to be taken in this sense” (*Seminar XI* 220). *Vorstellung*, on the other hand, should be read in terms of positive descriptive content, since here we are dealing with the register of the imaginary *qua* signified. *Vorstellung* will operate as the scene for the procession of various incarnations or semblances of object *a* in all their full phantasmagoric glory (221).

5. See Freud, “Instincts” 118 and “Repression” 147.

Object *a* thus possesses a double aspect: it is both a hiatus within a signifying system and positive imaginary content *qua vorstellung*. This double aspect of object *a* has been most clearly explained by Jason Glynos and Yannis Stavrakakis. As they succinctly formulate it, object *a* designates both the place of lack within a signifying structure and the imaginary positivisation of that lack. That is to say, the imaginary aspect of object *a* is the result of an attempt to cover over the traumatic empty place within the symbolic with an image of fullness, an image in the guise of essential meaning. Hence object *a* is both real and imaginary. Insofar as it is not an object pertaining to the symbolic, it cannot be communicated or exchanged; it has no symbolic objectivity. Yet object *a* can serve as a facade which, by screening the lack pertaining to the register of the signifier, provides the signifying network with a phantasmatic consistency (Glynos and Stavrakakis 206-8).

A further complication arises when we consider that for Lacan object *a* is not just the object of drive; it also designates the object cause of desire. In order to understand this idea, it is necessary to distinguish the object cause of desire from the object of desire. Before this can be achieved, it should be noted that desire is not a relation to an object but rather a relation to lack. That is to say, the condition of existence of desire is that the object of desire is not obtained since desire is desire for an object that the subject lacks. This is clearly demonstrated in Stavrakakis's analysis of the structural role of advertising within the economy of desire constituted by commodity capitalism. As Stavrakakis reminds his readers, in advertising each product is positioned such that "every experience of lack is projected to the lack of the product that is being advertised, that is to say, to a lack that one simple move promises to eliminate" (88). However, once we have bought the object, its relation to our desire has structurally shifted and the satisfaction achieved from the object does not match that which was anticipated (89). Once we have gained access to the object we desire, then our desire for that object fades and desire as such is perpetuated only by metonymically shifting on to another object.

Since desire is only sustained by not obtaining the object of desire, then the object cause of desire may function as an object that prevents us from gaining access to our desperately desired object. As Lacan notes in *Seminar XX*, "[desire's] cause . . . sustains desire through its lack of satisfaction (*insatisfaction*), and even its impossibility" (6, original emphasis). This is vividly illustrated in Henry Krips's example of the chaperone:

Often represented as an aged female relative, she is not paradigmatically an object of desire but instead stands in the way of what the suitor wants: the beloved. Nevertheless, the chaperone is covertly instrumental in producing a certain quotient of pleasure for the suitor. This arises not from the attainment of desire . . . but rather from engaging with the chaperone, in particular from successfully allaying her suspicions and evading her scrutiny. (23)

Hence the chaperone, by the very fact that it is an obstacle to the object, constitutes and maintains the desire for the object. Furthermore, the relationship between the suitor and chaperone - and all the antics, plans and subterfuges that it involves - provides the suitor with a certain surplus enjoyment.

Is not the structure of this relationship between suitor and chaperone illustrated by the relationship between Laurent and Camille in Zola's novel? Camille is not a rival to Laurent since Camille and his wife do not have sex. Rather Camille is an obstacle to Laurent and Thérèse's sexual relationship: "always the obstacle was this man" (Zola 90). Zola's very first intimation that Laurent might desire Thérèse is the following: "Laurent's eyes travelled from Camille to Thérèse, and he repressed a smile" (56). Laurent had to wait for several weeks before he could seduce Thérèse, simply because Camille was always at his wife's side. Laurent makes his move at the very first moment Camille departs from the company of Thérèse (59-62). Laurent and Thérèse continue their sexual liaisons in the very bedroom that Thérèse shared with her husband Camille. These lunchtime clandestine meetings involved considerable planning and caution and yet the lovers delighted in the brazenness of their exploits (63). This period of "alternating excitement and calm" (75) continued until one night Laurent naively suggested to Thérèse: "if only your husband were to die . . . we could get married, having nothing more to be afraid of and enjoy each other to our hearts' content" (80).

Once Camille's decomposing body hits the mortuary slab, Laurent and Thérèse discover that the very obstacle that had prevented them from realising their fantasies of nights of bliss in each other's arms was also the cause of their desire. Indeed with Camille safely out of the way, Laurent and Thérèse can no longer bear being together in the same room. On their wedding night they feel embarrassed and self-conscious in each other's company: "They began desperately searching in themselves for some thing of the passion that had possessed them long ago. Their bodies now seemed to be devoid of muscles or nerves, but their embarrassment and fear increased, and it made them feel self-conscious to be sitting like this tongue tied and dismal opposite each other" (159). From this point on their relationship rap-

idly deteriorates as they indulge in mutual recrimination and eventually violence; as Zola himself observes, “by killing Camille they had killed their own desire” (165).

If Camille is the object cause of Laurent's desire for Thérèse, is this equivalent to saying that Camille is an object of drive for Laurent? My reply would be no. What makes Camille the object cause of Laurent's desire is Camille's relation to an impossible object - the gaze. Now according to Lacan, the gaze is the object of the scopic drive and this suggests that the gaze is on the side of the object rather than the subject (*Seminar XI* 72-73, 76-77, 80-85). During one of his seminars Lacan narrates an anecdote concerning a sardine can as an illustration of his proposal that the gaze is on the side of the object. One day Lacan was out in a boat with a fisherman called Petit-Jean. A small object - a sardine can - caught the sun as it bobbed in the sea. Petit-Jean pointed at the can and said to Lacan, “you see that can? Do you see it? Well it can't see you!” (95). Lacan admits that Petit-Jean's jibe made sense because in a way the can was gazing at Lacan. Indeed as Lacan proclaims, “the gaze I encounter . . . is, not a seen gaze, but a gaze imagined by me in the field of the Other” (84). It is this impossible gaze of the Other, coming from an indeterminate location, that accompanies anxiety for many people. As Antonio Quinet notes, “analysts occasionally have patients who are unable to leave their homes, not because of phobic fears, but because they cannot bear the Other's gaze” (145). That this gaze exists is due to the pre-existence of the given-to-be-seen *vis-à-vis* the seer within the scopic register. It is the index of the passive aspect of the drive within the visual field - the manifestation of the subjective split itself within the terrain of the perceptual. In other words, the split between representation and the gaze is the visual manifestation of the antinomy between the subject of the statement and the enunciating subject as encountered within the domain of speech (Copjec, *Imagine* 76).

If one reads Zola's novel from the perspective of the gaze, then a peculiar sub-theme presents itself: Laurent as subject and object of the gaze. Turning first to Laurent as subject of the gaze, one of the first things we learn about Laurent is that he harbours fantasies about being an artist. Within Laurent's first few sentences he informs Camille's family about the five years he spent in the studio of his artist friend and how he enjoyed taking in the delightful sights of naked female models. He continues by informing the Raquins about his attempt to become an artist. Laurent's strategy for gaining access to Thérèse is to spend several weeks painting Camille's portrait (Zola 54-62). We encounter Laurent as subject of the gaze

during his visits to the mortuary in his desperate attempts to ensure that Camille is officially pronounced dead. Each week he endures the horror, tainted with voyeuristic pleasure, of examining the faces of the newly discovered dead. Laurent lets his gaze linger upon the naked flesh of female cadavers - especially the ones displaying naked breasts (107-9). One particular corpse - that of a young woman who had hung herself - Laurent finds particularly captivating: "he lingered over her for a long time, running his eyes up and down her body, lost in a sort of fearful desire" (109).

When Laurent finally encounters Camille's putrefying remains he is suddenly relocated from the position of subject of the gaze to that of object of the gaze. From this point onwards Laurent is persecuted by an imaginary gaze - the accusing gaze of the murdered Camille. Each night Laurent is tormented by images of Camille's bloated corpse staring down upon his sleeping body. Laurent's own portrait of Camille now takes on a horrifying aspect: "the white eyes floating in indeterminate sockets that reminded him exactly of the putrefying eyes of the drowned man in the morgue" (166). Laurent cannot gather the courage to take the picture down and instead tries to sleep but "all he could see were the white eyes staring hard at him" (166). He tries unsuccessfully to "avoid the drowned man's gaze . . . But the portrait looked at him with such a scornful, evil, and prolonged stare that Laurent, try as he might to outstare it, had to give in and fell back beaten" (167). This movement from Laurent lasciviously gazing upon the naked body of a dead woman to Laurent cringing before a gaze that he imagines to emanate from within his own painting is as vivid an illustration (although rather gothic) as one could hope to find of the circuit of the drive around its impossible object.

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