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Is it Possible to Represent the Sexual Relation in Cinema? [Est-il possible de représenter le rapport sexuel au cinéma?]^{1,2}

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Abstract

This article offers a reflection on the Lacanian theory of the representation of the sexual relation in film. It draws on the Lacanian logic of sexualization and its interpretation by Joan Copjec and Slavoj Žižek, analyzing what the author calls the cinematic non-relation, taking as an example Alfonso Cuarón's film *Y tu mamá también* (2011). The article begins by returning to the work of Laura Mulvey, who was one of the first theorists to use psychoanalysis as a political weapon to challenge the phallogocentric portrayal of women in Hollywood cinema. The author argues that Mulvey was correct in her conclusions, however not with regard to the production of a "male gaze", but rather with regard to the cinematographic construction of male desire, which is a constitutive element of patriarchal society. The author argues that it is not by creating an "alternative" cinema, but rather developing critical theory, itself, as a political weapon that we are able to challenge the dominant ideology. It is the practice of theory that politicizes cinema and the spectator, rather than the reverse.

Introduction

Towards the end of the 1970s, a period in which both psychoanalysis and semiotics were highly regarded in film theory, Jacqueline Rose (1980, pp. 199-200) identified an interesting paradox: in the context of their dialogue with psychoanalysis, feminists leaned more and more on questions of the construction and representation of sexual difference, especially in cinema, while film theorists, for their part, though they largely appealed to psychoanalysis, did so without ever addressing the question of sexual difference. This observation was made all the more paradoxical given that film theorists often employed psychoanalytic concepts which were developed precisely in order to analyze the question of sexual difference.

Film theorists saw in psychoanalysis and semiotics a means of combating the formalist methods which had dominated earlier theoretical analyses of cinema. Some of them turned to the work of Jacques Lacan, best known at the time for his thesis that "the unconscious is structured like a language", because of the way he used language, semiotics and structural linguistics to rethink Freud. Critical theory played an equal role in shifting the interests of film

¹ Translator's note: as is customary when translating Lacan, I have chosen to leave *jouissance* untranslated throughout in order to preserve the ambiguity between sexual climax and enjoyment more generally that the term connotes (AB).

² Original citation: Flisfeder, M. (2015). "Est-il possible de représenter le rapport sexuel au cinéma?" *CiNéMAS*, 26(1), 49-67. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1037001ar>

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theorists toward Lacan; the influence of Louis Althusser, in particular, is present in the Lacanian film theory of the 1970s. In his article on the “Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus”, Jean-Louis Baudry (1970) applied Althusser’s theory of Ideological State Apparatuses to the theory of cinema, arguing that the cinematic apparatus functioned in the same way as Althusser’s ideological apparatuses (1970). Since the notion of ideology inherited from Althusser was itself influenced by Lacanian thought—in particular, by Lacan’s article (1949) on “the mirror stage”—film theorists were inspired by Lacan to develop a theory of ideology in cinema.

Among the important contributions to the development of psychoanalytic film theory in the 1970s is Laura Mulvey’s concept of the “male gaze”.³ In her well-known article “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”, Mulvey (1975) explicitly uses psychoanalysis as a political tool in order to highlight the phallocentrism of classic Hollywood cinema. Mulvey, in this regard, goes much further than her predecessors as well as many of her contemporaries who were influenced by Althusser and Lacan. Mulvey (1975, p. 484) asserts that the cinema is a pleasure-producing medium; as an advanced representational system, the cinema is capable of structuring ways of seeing and the pleasure of watching. According to Mulvey, Hollywood cinema can engender two forms of visual pleasure: voyeurism and narcissism. In the case of voyeurism, the spectator takes pleasure in making the other the object of his enjoyment, while in the case of narcissism, the ego turns towards itself, generating an image charged with visual pleasure. Relying on the theses put forward by Lacan (1949) in his article on the mirror stage, Mulvey (p. 486) asserts that cinematic representation makes possible the momentary loss of the subject’s self-awareness, which is in turn replaced by the image belonging to the male protagonist; in this way, according to Mulvey, the cinema contributes to the reproduction of the “male gaze”.

Mulvey argues that patriarchal society is divided between active/male and passive/female poles. In cinema, the image of the woman is there to be looked at, while the image of the man is there for the spectator (whether male or female) to identify with. According to Mulvey (p. 493), Hollywood cinema produces a series of interdependent looks: that of the spectator, the camera, and the male protagonist. It is for the benefit of this third look (the male protagonist), that the other two are obscured, thus producing the “male gaze”.

If I insist on Mulvey’s theses, it is first of all because she largely contributed to the advancement of the first phase of a Lacanian theory of cinema, dealing mainly with critical questions around ideological interpellation and the formation of the subject in cinema. The concept of “male gaze” has held an important place in the debates concerning theories of ideology and subjectivity which have taken place in cinema and cultural studies. In this framework, a certain number of Lacanian concepts have found a suitable field of application. Another reason I am particularly interested in Mulvey comes from the fact that she was the first to attempt to theorize sexual difference in cinema, drawing inspiration from Lacan. However, I must clarify that Mulvey comes to the right conclusion, but for the wrong reasons; this is to say that popular cinema is indeed in large part phallogentric, but this is not because of the medium itself as much as it is due of the general persistence of phallogentricity throughout culture. Another point to underline about Mulvey’s article, whose thinking is influenced by an allegiance to “screen theory” and to forms of Brechtian distancing, concerns her proposition that the contestation of the phallogentricity of popular cinema requires the production of an alternative, avant-garde cinema capable of challenging the spectators against the dominant

³ We should also add Christian Metz’s concept of the “imaginary signifier” (1977).

ideology (phallogentrism in this case). I maintain on the contrary that the cinema is incapable of inducing new forms of consciousness and subjective positions by itself which would be likely to indict the status quo: the theoretical and analytical interpretation of cinema remains the only viable and practical method to challenge ideological representations and to produce configurations and alternative forms of subjectivity. It is in the labor of theory—especially Lacanian and Marxist theory, that I focus on here—and not in the position of the spectator that one can challenge ideology. Nevertheless, there are some films which help in the practice of a general analysis of ideology, and which can point us in the direction of an emancipatory politics. Finally, the last point that I want to underline about Mulvey’s article is that if her goal is to contest the phallogentric representation of women, as well as phallogentric ways of looking, her approach doesn’t really take into account the Lacanian theory of the sexual relation and his logics of sexuation; on the contrary, like many of her contemporaries, Mulvey ends up operating, in the words of Joan Copjec (1989, p. 31), “a sort of ‘Foucauldianization’ of Lacanian theory”. Much has already been discussed about the misinterpretation of the Lacanian theory of the gaze; just as numerous contemporary Lacanians have noted,⁴ the first Lacanian thinkers of cinema (based on the “mirror stage”) simply developed a variation of Foucault’s theory of “panopticism”. Despite this, it is necessary to return to Mulvey’s critique of phallogentrism in cinema by revisiting the Lacanian formulae of sexuation.

In what follows, I want to develop some of the ideas formulated by neo-Lacanian film theorists—in particular Joan Copjec, Slavoj Žižek and Fabio Vighi—on the question of the sexual relation. Building on the Lacanian thesis according to which “there is no sexual relation”, I will show that film, if it proves incapable of representing the sexual relation, is nevertheless capable of indicating and visually representing the “non-relation” between the masculine and the feminine, as defined by Lacan (1975) in *Encore*. I will conclude my argument with an analysis of the film *Y tu mamá también* (2001) by Alfonso Cuarón, in which two important scenes perfectly illustrate the fact that, although it is impossible to represent “sexual difference”, it is nevertheless possible to represent the “non-relation”. By approaching this non-relation, we can think more generally about the political cracks and the existing gaps in the dominant ideology, which can make the cinema a weapon against domination and exploitation.

***The Formulae of Sexuation: the Sexual Relation and the Limits of Meaning*⁵**

There are two important moments in the trajectory of Lacan’s seminar where he develops his theory of sexual difference. The first is found in his seminar from 1959-1960, on the ethics of psychoanalysis, where Lacan (1986) deals with the portrayal of the Lady in courtly love. In this context, “the woman” represents the aspect of masculine desire that escapes the subject; she represents the idealization specific to masculine desire; one therefore does not seek her for one of her positive aspects, but for what she represents as the lure of desire. The Woman in courtly love illustrates the way in which the (masculine) subject erects obstacles that bar access to the object itself. The subject creates the object (or, at least, he is responsible for its creation) and—without knowing it—discovers ways to avoid getting the object that he desires [*la réalisation de l’objet*]. As Lacan says (1975, p. 65) in *Encore*, his seminar from 1972-1973, courtly love, “is one very sophisticated way to make up for the absence of the sexual relation, by pretending that we are the ones who erect an obstacle”. The subject, in other words, “posits the presuppositions” of his own desire. According to Slavoj Žižek (1994, p. 94):

⁴ See for example Copjec (1989) and McGowan (2007).

⁵ For a political reading of the Lacanian logic of sexuation, see Flisfeder (2012a).

The point...is not simply that we set up additional conventional hindrances in order to heighten the value of the object: external hindrances that thwart our access to the object are there precisely to create the illusion that without them, the object would be directly accessible—what such hindrances thereby conceal is the inherent impossibility of attaining the object.

The “Woman” is created (in this situation) by man, as something that escapes him and which, therefore, simulates the fact that without “external” obstacles, she would be “accessible”. But, according to Lacan, the “sexual relation” doesn’t exist; obstacles preventing the full realization of the object are erected only to prohibit the awareness that, without them, the object would itself cease to exist. Here, the Woman represents the “sublime object”: the object elevated to the dignity of the Thing [*le Chose*].⁶ As Fabio Vighi (2009, p. 18) explains, sublimation functions on the basis of an internalized instance of prohibition which replaces the impossibility of sexual intercourse “as if by magic”.

The second important moment in the development of Lacan’s theory of the “sexual relation” occurs in *Encore*, where, according to Copjec (2002, p. 5) Lacan suggests that he will be rewriting his seminar on the ethics of psychoanalysis. It is in *Encore* that Lacan (1975) gives us his “formulae of sexuation”, where he establishes a distinction between the masculine logic of the “all” and the feminine logic of the non-all. As Copjec explains, Lacan rethinks his ethics from the point of view according to which being is “non-all”, the woman occupying the position of the non-all, given that she is not at the place of phallic *jouissance*. The non-all of being is concealed from man, who perceives being—in its totality—as a *fait accompli*, because of his belief in a complete being who remains yet to come (like the realization of the object). It is the man’s submission to the threat of castration that posits his existence as both limited and as a closed whole. Thus, Copjec (2002, p. 6) argues that, for Lacan, the ethical act is in itself feminine, regardless of fact of whether it is performed by a man or a woman; when it comes to acting ethically, the act, which itself indicates that being is non-all, is feminine.

Distancing herself from post-structuralist conceptions of the social construction of sex, in particular Judith Butler’s thesis, Copjec (1994, pp. 18-19) explains that sex is the stumbling block of sense which is produced by the internal limit, even the failure, of signification:

⁶ Translator’s note: although Lacan employs “das Ding” and “le chose” interchangeably in Seminar VII when referring to the German “die Sache” and “das Ding”, the latter “Ding” is to be differentiated from the former insofar as, for Lacan, “die Sache” refers to a representation of a thing, whereas “das Ding” refers to the unrepresentable Thing in its “dumb reality”, outside or “beyond-of-the-signified” It is important to note that the although the Thing (das Ding) is unrepresentable, this unrepresentability is itself representable in the symbolic. (Lacan, Jacques. *The Seminar. Book VII. The Ethics of Psychoanalysis, 1959-60*. Trans. Dennis Porter. London: Routledge, 1992, pp. 54-55).

Sex is the stumbling-block of sense. This is not to say that sex is prediscursive; we have no intention of denying that human sexuality is a product of signification, but intend, rather, to refine this position by arguing that sex is produced by the internal limit, the failure of signification. It is only there where discursive practices falter—and not at all where they succeed in producing meaning—that sex comes to be [English in original].

The subject positions of “masculine” and “feminine” fill in or compensate for this limit; this is to say that there is no subject who does not occupy either the “masculine” position or “feminine” position, regardless of biological sex. What matters, rather, is that the position occupied by the subject determines their relation to jouissance, mediated by fantasy. The masculine and the feminine are two opposing ways to deal with the limitation of signification. Or, to use Lacanian terminology, the masculine and the feminine are two opposing ways of dealing with the limitation of signification traced by the Real.

Copjec has shown how the opposition between masculine and feminine developed in the Lacanian formulae of sexuation can be compared to the Kantian mathematical and dynamical antinomies. The mathematical antinomy concerns real phenomena, but which are beyond the limits of everyday experience, whereas the dynamical antinomy applies to objects, which are not part of phenomenal reality, but which nonetheless fall within the realm of everyday experience, making phenomenal experience possible. The mathematical antinomy, according to Copjec, relates to the feminine, while the dynamical relates to the masculine. In the case of the mathematical, (for example, the universe is finite/the universe is infinite), the thesis and the antithesis are both false, because it is impossible to perceive an object which is both finite and infinite (the universe in its entirety can never be an object of our experience). In the case of the dynamical, the thesis and antithesis are true, because they are both based on the experience of an object that is part of our daily life, even if it does not exist in reality. Copjec and Žižek suggest that the distribution between the dynamical and mathematical antinomies correspond to Lacan’s logic of sexuation (see Figure 1).

The four formulae can be read in the following manner: on the left, “masculine” side (all x ’s are Φx ; there is at least one x which is not Φx), the universal function implies the existence of an exception ($\exists x -\Phi x$), embodied by the figure of the castrating father; on the right, “feminine” side (not all x ’s are Φx ; there is no x that is not Φx), the negative function of the particular ($-\exists x -\Phi x$) implies that there are no exceptions. The masculine subject, on the one hand, is castrated, and therefore indicates a completed whole restricted by its limit; masculine universality is limited. The feminine subject, on the other hand, is “non-all”, and therefore, feminine universality is infinite and unlimited. The masculine logic concerns the dynamic antinomy (both statements are true), while the feminine logic concerns mathematical antinomy (both statements are false). The problem with sexual difference, argues Copjec, is that—just as the universe in Kant’s mathematical antinomy—it can never be made the object of immediate experience. Sexual difference is consequently “real” in the Lacanian sense. The feminine logic of the non-all is therefore similar to the problem of sexual difference. As a logic that operates on the side of the mathematical antinomy, the feminine subject position is closer than the

masculine position to the object which represents the real of sexual difference— or, at least, the feminine subject is analogous to the awareness of the limit around which the phallic symbolic order is constituted. The two sides—”masculine” and “feminine”—maintain a relationship with castration; but the feminine position, because it is unlimited, identifies more easily with the symbolic order, without limitation. The masculine position, on the contrary, finds pleasure in the pursuit of an object that continues to escape him.⁷ Based on this reading of Copjec, Žižek (1993, p. 59) adds that the antinomic formulas of sexuation of the “masculine” and the “feminine” are representative of the two ways in which Lacan rethinks the Cartesian *cogito ergo sum*. Initially, in his 1963-1964 seminar, Lacan (1973) breaks down the “I think, therefore I am” into its two moments—being and thought—maintaining that the subject is condemned to choose thought to the detriment of being, the price paid, therefore, is the loss of being. But later, in his unpublished seminar on the logic of fantasy (1966- 1967), Lacan affirms to the contrary that the subject is condemned to choose being, relegating thought to the position of the unconscious. Žižek (1993, p. 61-62), however, argues that this is not Lacan’s correction of an error he allegedly made, but rather two ways of conceiving the cogito in relation to the logic of the “masculine” and the “feminine”: the “masculine” logic, according to Žižek, chooses being, while the “feminine logic chooses thought. In the masculine logic, thought is relegated to the unconscious, while in “feminine” logic the choice of thought results in the loss of being. This explains the Lacanian thesis that “woman does not exist”. The ethical position of “woman” risks being by prioritizing thought; this is the reason why, for Lacan, the subject, in its purest form, is a feminine subject. The woman is the (ethical) subject *par excellence*.

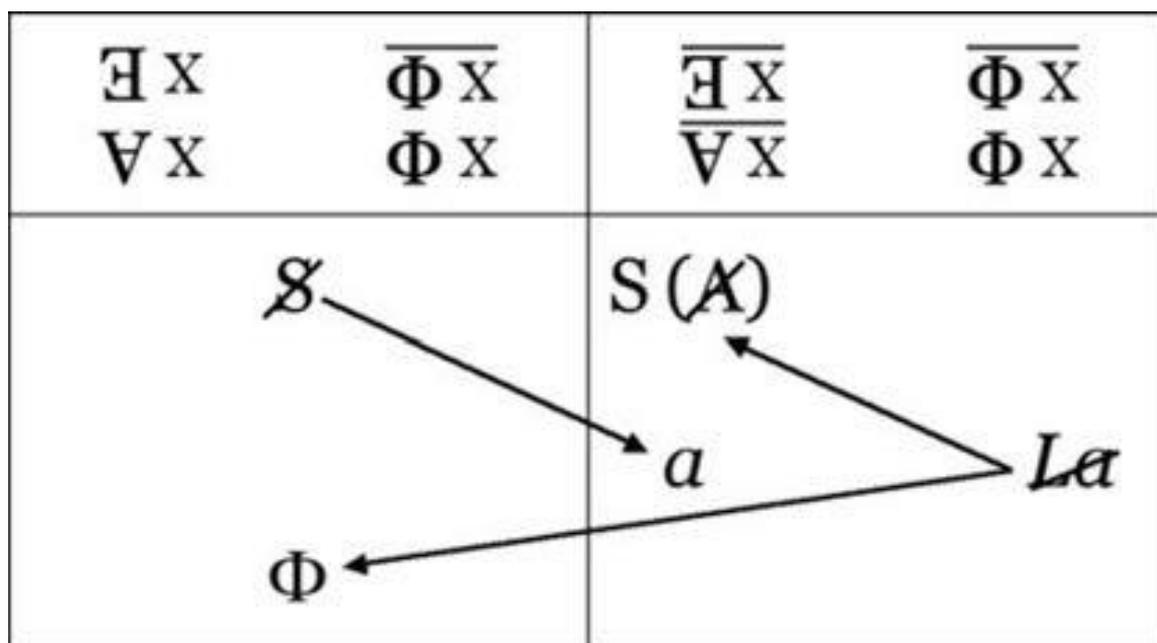


Figure 1. The formulae of sexuation.

⁷ According to Todd McGowan (2011, p. 119), “Female subjectivity is ‘female’ because it does not orient itself in relation to [the] phallic signifier but in relation to the absence of this signifier. As a result, the structure of female subjectivity is inherently political because it is attuned to the incomplete nature of the signifying structure”.

“Masculine” Cinema: the Cinema of Desire⁸

To my knowledge, in recent years, it is Fabio Vighi who has contributed the most to the advancement of Lacanian analysis of sexual difference in cinema, and much of what follows is based on his book *Sexual Difference in European Cinema: The Curse of Enjoyment* (2009). I will examine here the aesthetic effect of the formulae of sexual difference—or, more precisely, the effect of the interpretation of the formulae of sexual difference on the aesthetic representation of the sexual relation—and I show how the non-relation of sexual difference can be read in *Y tu mamá también*, as well as in other films.

“Masculine” cinema, as I understand it here, can be defined as a “cinema of desire”, in the sense that, as we have seen above, the masculine logic follows the path of an ethics of desire in courtly love; the masculine logic sublimates “woman”, functioning by means of an internalized obstacle, which replaces the impossibility of the (sexual) object. According to Vighi (2009, p. 20), the three female characters in *La dolce vita* (Federico Fellini, 1959) represent three different sublimations of the woman from the Lacanian concept of courtly love: Maddalena represents the woman in the guise of a prostitute, Emma, the faithful and maternal woman (the opposite of the clichés of Maddalena’s character), while Sylvia corresponds to a modern version of the Lady of courtly love. All three are elusive figures. It is here that we find the central characteristic of male *jouissance*: the paradox of pleasure increased tenfold by the absence of the object.

Two supplementary examples cited by Vighi deserve our attention as well: *Jules et Jim* (1962), by François Truffaut, and *Brief Encounter* (1945), by David Lean. These two films illustrate other important aspects of masculine *jouissance* regarding the absence of the object. *Jules et Jim* is generally considered to be a film that tells a nonconformist love story; but, for Vighi, the film tackles the theme of the couple’s inability to achieve full autonomy. The traumatic implication results from the fact that $1 + 1 = 3$. We have, of course, the two lovers ($1 + 1$), but the excess of *objet a* comes in between: $1 + 1 + a$. The relationship is achieved with the additional support of the fantasy. The film, then, is not simply about a bad romantic relationship, but rather about the fact that in every couple there is always a missing third—a third object that potentially assumes the posture of the imaginary “gaze”. *Jules et Jim* tells the story of two friends who “share” a woman, but who nevertheless remain friends because the woman plays the role of the missing third: she represents the fantasy realized. It is this third which is essential for the proper functioning of the couple (Vighi 2009, p. 31). Woody Allen’s film, *Vicky Cristina Barcelona* (2008), also deals with missing third in every couple. The love between Cristina (Scarlett Johansson), Juan Antonio (Javier Bardem) and Maria Elena (Penelope Cruz) can only work as a threesome. The relationship between Juan Antonio and Maria Elena was violent and catastrophic; their love required the materialization of the missing third, Cristina, to be able to function smoothly. *Brief Encounter* presents the reverse side of *Jules and Jim* and *Vicky Cristina Barcelona*. Here we have an ideal couple, but who disavows their own presupposition. The condition of possibility for the relationship between Alec and Laura rests on the obstacle that prevents their illicit love affair (Vighi 2009, p. 145). Rather, it is the fantasy of their affair that allows them to avoid the real of *jouissance*. Their love affair does not take place in reality, according to Vighi, not in order to preserve the institution of marriage, but rather to preserve the pleasure accumulated by the fantasy that unites the two protagonists. The love affair between Alec and Laura is linked to the impossibility of the sexual relation, which is exteriorized as the object of the fantasy—*objet a*. Vighi’s examples,

⁸ The following is based on arguments presented in Flisfeder 2012b.

therefore, represent the “masculine” side of the formulas of sexualization, and the “masculine” logic of desire, as one of ceaseless desire.

Another example is without a doubt necessary here. The film *Chloe* (2009) by Atom Egoyan presents the ideological function of masculine *jouissance* in the same way, although it stages a sexual relationship between two women. In the film, Catherine (Julianne Moore) suspects that her husband, David (Liam Neeson), a university professor, is having an affair with a student. In order to verify if her suspicions are justified, Catherine hires an escort, Chloe (Amanda Seyfried), to seduce David. Chloe reports to Catherine that David did indeed have a relationship with her. She tells the details to Catherine who, in the following days, continues to fantasize about the affair between her husband and Chloe. Ultimately, it is Catherine who finds herself turned on by the fantasy and begins a romantic affair with Chloe. We later find out that Chloe and David’s relationship never happened; but the mere assumption of this relationship still arouses Catherine’s desire. Catherine’s fantasy thus follows the masculine logic of sublimation in courtly love, where an internalized obstacle (the presumed connection of David with Chloe) replaces the impossibility of the sexual object (the love relation which is impossible between Catherine and David).

The Cinematographic Non-Rapport: Y tu mamá también

In *Less Than Nothing*, Žižek (2012, p. 796) discusses the change in the reading of sexual difference that Lacan makes by going from “there is no sexual relation” to “there is a (sexual) non-relation”, and specifies that this new positive formulation of the absence of relation means that the masculine and the feminine should not be conceived only as desynchronized entities, but that the sexual difference precedes the two sexes, so that the masculine and feminine subjects appear (logically) after the fact, in reaction to the impasse of the difference they try to resolve or symbolize, this impasse materializing in the pseudo-object called *objet a*. There is, therefore, a non-relation between the masculine and feminine positions, mediated by the relation of each subject to *objet a*—that is, the actual excess of the sexual relation. This model will serve as a starting point for thinking about the politics of the film *Y tu mamá también*.

The strength of *Y tu mamá también* resides in its illustration of the contrasting representations of the masculine and feminine logics, an illustration that cinematically portrays the sexual non-relation. The film features the object of masculine desire, embodied by Luisa, who on the one hand represents the elusive figure of woman in courtly love—insofar as she is seen by Julio and Tenoch as the object of their impossible desire—, but who is also, and on the other hand, the figure of their common fantasy—which is presented at the end of the film in a particularly important scene where the protagonists engage in a threesome; once again, we are confronted by the formula “ $1 + 1 = 3$ ”, which manifests itself as Luisa moves down, out of the frame, presumably to perform fellatio on the two boys, who then begin to kiss (see Figure 2).

The value of this scene lies in the concretization—as Luisa leaves the frame—of the structuring role of the fantasy in the relationship between Julio and Tenoch. The two boys’ common fantasy about a woman suggests that there is no homosexual drive behind their carnal relationship, which is still “heterosexual” at the level of the fantasy, like that of Catherine with Chloe in Egoyan’s film; they are not attracted to each other, but they are both turned on by their fantasy of Luisa; their “platonic” friendship is thus structured around the fantasy of an absent third party. This scene is also provocative because of the way it subverts straight male camaraderie, such as the machismo and chauvinism that characterizes the boys at the start of the film. By exposing their shared fantasy, Luisa disrupts the friendship between Julio and

Tenoch; by bringing to the surface their fantasy, as well as the homosexual core of their friendship, she returns the excess of the real to its place in the symbolic.



Figure 2. The threesome at the end of *Y tu mamá también* (Alfonso Cuarón, 2001).

Earlier in the film, the narrator makes a remark on Julio and Tenoch's class differences. Julio comes from a lower-class, left wing family; his sister is an activist, although he himself is not very interested in politics. Tenoch comes from a bourgeois family; his father is a politician, and, throughout the film, Tenoch seems receptive to progressive political ideas. However, after a dispute over whether Tenoch was the first to have sex with Luisa, class positions—which were previously unimportant within their friendship—are revealed. It is only when it is possible to “share” (at least the fantasy of) Luisa that the impossibility of class relation is disavowed and made to appear possible and reconciled. Following the logic of the “feminine” without limitation, Luisa seems to identify without exception with the entirety of the symbolic order; it

is she who has the power to make the impossible come true. This aspect of feminine *jouissance* is introduced in an earlier scene.

Towards the middle of the film, Luisa talks on the phone with her husband, Jano. (Before leaving on the trip with Julio and Tenoch, Luisa has learned not only that Jano had had extra-marital affairs, but also that she has cancer). While talking with Jano in a phone booth, Luisa moans and cries so softly that neither Jano nor the two boys can hear the sadness in her voice. As the door leading to the phone booth is left open, we can see the reflection of Julio and Tenoch playing foosball a little further away: this generates an image of “Totality”, an image without exception or excess (figure 3). This image should be read as an objectification of Luisa’s relation to the completeness of the symbolic order, outside of the confines of castration. By later returning the Real to its place in the symbolic—through her own fantasy of the non-castrated Symbolic order embodied in the embrace between Julio and Tenoch—Luisa effectively disrupts the symbolic order, which makes her the most ethical character in the film. It is by directly realizing the repressed fantasy—even one that is still structurally heterosexual—of the homosexual core of their friendship that Luisa manages to disrupt the connection between Julio and Tenoch. It is their shared fantasy that is arguably too traumatic to confront directly. It is also the fantasy of the Woman which stands in for the impossibility of their class relation.



Figure 3. Luisa in the phone booth in the middle of *Y tu mamá también* (Alfonso Cuarón, 2001).

We must also keep in mind that this film is set against the background of political protests in Mexico City against the World Trade Organization (WTO) and globalization. The film is political, but only insofar as its political dimension remains strictly in the background. This dimension of the film only manifests itself through an “anamorphosis”, like the one Lacan speaks of in connection with Hans Holbein’s *The Ambassadors* (1533). In the foreground of the painting, near the bottom, is an elongated skull that is only visible from a certain angle; in order to see the image of the skull, one has to, as Žižek would say, “look away”. Žižek uses the notion of “anamorphosis” in his analysis of the film *Children of Men*⁹ (2006), also by Cuarón.

⁹ In a six-minute, supplemental video from the DVD edition of the film.

In this case too, politics occupies precisely the backstory. In the foreground of these two films is a depiction of the impossibility of the sexual relation—the relation between Julio et Tenoch from *Y tu mamá también*, and sexual reproduction in *Children of Men*¹⁰ —, this impossibility being put in parallel in the background with the impossibility of the class relation.

In Cuarón's films, the central antagonism of the sexual relationship is coupled with a socio-political antagonism; two gaps overlap, which show both where the symbolic order is constituted and where it can be overturned. These films, it seems to me, are in this sense exemplary of the radical sublime linked to the Lacanian dimension of feminine *jouissance*. It is a *jouissance* which is not phallic—in other words, a *jouissance* which is subject to the signifier, but which is not sustained by *objet a* or fantasy.

Toward a Politics of Cinema and the Sexual Relation

On more than one occasion Žižek (2006, p. 82; 2012, pp. 746- 747) has looked at the overlap between the Lacanian logic of sexuation and the Marxist hypothesis of the historicity of class struggle. For Lacan, the sexual relation does not exist [il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel]; for Marx, there is no such thing as a class relation [il n'y a pas de rapport de classes]. But the analogy goes beyond a simple illustration of Lacanian logic. Just as the real of sexual difference cannot be reduced to the post-structuralist conception of the social construction of identity, so too class struggle cannot be thought of as the product of the simple or mere construction of a class identity. According to Žižek, each “class identity”—that is to say, the actualization of a given class identity—shifts the core of class antagonism. Class struggle is “Real”, in the Lacanian sense, because it cannot be conceived of in terms of one identity or another, but instead should be understood as a state of material relations of exploitation.

Likewise, sexual difference cannot simply be reduced to a social construction of identity. In other words, identity is that which attempts—but fails—to take the form of subjectivity as well as that which is constituted by the relation of the excess of the subjective or social form: *objet a*. The real of class struggle and the real of sexual difference can, and probably should, be considered as the two faces of the Möbius band. If we start by following the path of sexual difference, we end up returning to the political terrain of class struggle.

It is here, I believe, that *Y tu mamá también* succeeds. The film plays with the spectator's desire, luring the spectator through the desire found in sexual fantasy, but it then evenly distributes sexual tension along the lines of the political class struggle; it makes the feminine logic of the non-all, of the unlimited, coincide with the subjective position of a subject exploited by capital.

Thus, we can conceive of a model that actually relates to the Lacanian theory of the sexual relation in order to think through and question the phallogocentric logic of the masculine. While going beyond the concept of “male gaze”, this model remains faithful to Mulvey's objective of using psychoanalysis as a political weapon in questioning phallogocentrism. However, more than the creation of an alternative, avant-garde cinema to challenge the interpellative processes of Hollywood cinema, theory itself is the best tool for deconstructing and reading the ideological components of cinema. Film can serve as an ally in this operation, at least stylistically, particularly a kind of cinema that attracts its audience not by producing a Brechtian rupture, but by provoking and manipulating the spectator's desire. It is in this way that Cuarón's film,

¹⁰ I have to emphasize that this impossibility is not of the same order in the two films: in the case of *Children of Men*, the impossibility is radically real, while in the case of *Y tu mamá también*, it is contingent and metaphorical.

allied with newer and more recent readings of Lacanian theory, shows that the politics of cinema must be integrated into the project of the theory rather than the reverse.

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An Exploration of Multilinguals' Voice-Hearing Experiences

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Abstract

Research on multilinguals' voice-hearing, sometimes termed auditory-verbal hallucinations, is dominated by psychiatrists' reports, skewing toward etic over emic approaches. Most also pre-dates developments in both voice-hearing and multilingualism research which highlight the complexity and dynamic nature of both phenomena and shows little cross-fertilisation between the two fields. This paper sits within this gap, presenting results from an in-depth interview study with ten UK-resident multilingual voice-hearers analysed via constructionist reflexive thematic analysis. A high proportion of participants described hearing voices they did not (fully) understand, challenging the dominance of the hypothesis that voice-hearing originates from misattributed inner speech. This set of experiences is presented along a spectrum with a complex array of associated emotions and subtle experiential distinctions. The relationship between language experiences, voices' languages, and associated emotions was similarly complex and individual: participants described voices both reflecting and distorting or shifting the contexts, domains, interlocutors and feelings associated with their various languages. This has implications for therapeutic and peer support for those who are distressed by their voices, as well as opening up new avenues in voice-hearing phenomenology and aetiology.

Introduction

Between 5 and 15% of adults may hear voices others do not hear, called auditory-verbal hallucinations (AVHs) in clinical contexts (Understanding Voices, 2020). Globally, multilingualism is increasing yet awareness about multilingualism is still rather limited in psychotherapy (Costa, 2020). Also, recent research on multilinguals' voice-hearing is sparse, with earlier work being methodologically flawed, racist and using an etic¹ approach exclusively (Lukianowicz, 1962), in contrast with work adopting an emic² approach and highlighting voice-hearers' own narratives (e.g., Romme et al., 2009). The early papers often take the form of clinicians' reports on their patients and neglecting the experiences of voice-hearers who never encounter psychiatric services (non-clinical voice-hearers), who may make up to 1% of the population (Understanding Voices, 2020).

Perceptions of voice-hearers and ways to investigate voice-hearing have been changing thanks to the Hearing Voices Movement (HVM), an international movement comprising local, national, and international networks of voice-hearers and allies (Hearing Voices Networks) which has highlighted voice-hearers' accounts of their own experiences. HVM asserts that voice-hearing is a meaningful experience emotionally and psychologically (Hearing Voices

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¹ Etic analyses use of carefully defined and relatively stable concepts from the analytic language of the social sciences (Pike, 1954). It allows comparative research across languages and cultures.

² In emic analyses, researchers incorporate the participants' perspectives and interpretations of behaviour, events, and situations using the participants' language (Pike, 1954).

Network England, 2021). Voice-hearers offer peer support, sharing experiences in an ethos of solidarity (Corstens et al., 2014; Schaefer et al., 2021). The HVM has pushed individual meaning-making and the dynamic relationship between hearer and voice to the fore of (some) clinical practice and research (e.g., Steel et al., 2019; 2020). An emphasis on living well in the presence or absence of voices contrasts with clinical approaches equating voice cessation with recovery (Escher & Romme, 2012; Higgs, 2020; Longden et al., 2018).

Very few authors of voice-hearing studies that involved multilingual participants have made a link with modern concepts in multilingualism research like multicompetence (Cook, 2016) or the Complementarity Principle (Grosjean, 2012). We argue that using these lenses would allow fresh perspectives on multilingual voice-hearing.

We define multilinguals as first language(s) users (any language(s) acquired before age 3) (L1 users) or foreign language users (LX users) who know two or more languages at various levels of proficiency including only receptive knowledge of a language and/or heavily attired (forgotten) L1s or LXs (Dewaele, 2018).

Approaches to Voice Hearing

Voice-hearing has been approached from multiple clinical and non-clinical perspectives. Historically it has been associated with schizophrenia or schizophrenia-spectrum diagnoses, which were often inclusion criteria for voice-hearing studies (McCarthy-Jones et al., 2014). Voice-hearing research therefore bears schizophrenia's imprint; even non-medical understandings of voice-hearing may be partially defined by opposition to it (Woods, 2013). With time it has taken on racialised dimensions, becoming a vehicle for and symbol of institutionalised racism (Fernando, 2017a, b; Metzl, 2009). Schizophrenia is disproportionately diagnosed with among Black Caribbean and Black African groups in the UK (Fearon et al., 2006), who are more likely to experience forced treatment (Degnan et al., 2018).

Voice-hearing has been approached from multiple perspectives beyond the diagnostic. However, no single psychological or psychiatric model has yet explained the range of voice-hearing experiences described in phenomenological literature (Upthegrove et al., 2016). This range is enormous: voices may sound like they come from outside or inside the head; sing, speak, or simply feel present; sound like acquaintances, friends, enemies, or strangers, chorus or individual; and vary wildly in content, utterance structure, and tone (McCarthy-Jones et al., 2014).

Consequently McCarthy-Jones et al (2014) propose different subtypes of voice-hearing, sharing partial causes but with distinct associated mechanisms as well. However, they also note this risks emphasising differences between types at the expense of seeing similarities. Such similarities are emphasised in dimensional approaches to voice-hearing which also see voice-hearing as part of the wider continuum of human experience, the boundaries between clinical and non-clinical voice-hearing being unclear (Upthegrove et al, 2016). Waters and Fernyhough's (2017) review found that many voice-hearing features were found across neurological and psychiatric diagnoses. More than half of features were shared between non-clinical and clinical groups.

One dominant cognitive model of voice-hearing has been that voices are misattributed inner speech (McCarthy-Jones et al., 2013), i.e., that voices are thoughts mistakenly believed to originate externally (Frith, 1988, cited in Upthegrove et al., 2016). McCarthy-Jones et al (2014) suggest misattributed inner speech may be one voice-hearing subtype, itself comprising a range

of experiences. Inner speech in turn may be conceptualised as part of the working memory mechanism and/or as related to sociocultural theorist Vygotsky's work (Alderson-Day & Fernyhough, 2015). Fernyhough (2004) proposed condensed and expanded forms, the latter possessing more external-speech-like phonological and pragmatic features. A broad definition is adopted here: any thoughts with some verbal quality, i.e., condensed or expanded; consistent with Vygotskian and/or working memory models.

Upthegrove et al (2016) describe two further cognitive models of voice-hearing: memory-based approaches and sensory processing error approaches. These also view voice-hearing as misinterpretation: of intrusive (frequently traumatic) memories recalled out of context, or of external stimuli respectively.

To some extent, the HVM referenced above sits outside aetiological models, although trauma-based understandings of voice-hearing are sometimes considered an HVM core principle (Styron et al., 2017). Overall, the HVM is pluralistic, stating, "Hearing Voices is a relatively common diverse human experience that has many different causes" (Hearing Voices Network England, 2021). Waddingham (2020), chair of HVNE, adopts this pluralistic approach in work focused on understanding and supporting voice-hearers, highlighting the relationship between hearer and voice; this was influential in formulating the research question below, which aimed to explore the range of voice-hearing experiences listed above in a multilingual context.

Voice-Hearing and Multilingualism

A systematic search for existing work on multilingual voice-hearers was carried out and yielded a single recent reference. Hadden et al. (2020)'s study of 37 Welsh-English bilingual voice-hearers is the only relevant peer-reviewed study published in the last 15 years. The authors collected quantitative data to test the voices-as-inner-speech hypothesis: if voices are misattributed inner speech, multilinguals' voices should share language-history-related correlates with multilingual inner speech. This was defined as correlations of inner speech and voices' languages with: early acquisition, higher proficiency, greater frequency of day-to-day use. The results were broadly consistent with the voices-as-inner-speech hypothesis.

However, multilinguals' inner speech language use is more complex than hypothesised. Inner speech language use can be affected by: acquisition and use context, and multilinguals' network size (Dewaele, 2015; Guerrero, 2018); degree of L1-LX difference (Resnik, 2021); topic or function (Hammer, 2017; 2019); and emotionality, with emotional LX inner speech taking longer to develop (Dewaele, 2015; Guerrero, 2018). Leung and Dewaele (2021) found that Grosjean's (2012) Complementarity Principle, according to which multilinguals' language preferences differ according to situations, interlocutors, and purposes, applies also to inner speech. Some studies, like Hadden et al. (2020) controlled the language profiles of participants. Others used information on acquisition context, language-specific multilingual social networks, and frequency of LX use. Such broad measures inevitably imply low levels of granularity, though some studies complemented the quantitative data with more in-depth qualitative data gathered through interviews (Dewaele, 2013).

One of the striking findings in Hadden et al (2020) was just how dynamic hearer-voice relationships and voices' language use were. Interviews revealed that voices can change their languages in ways perceived as strategic.

Okulate and Jones' (2003) interviewed 99 Nigerian in-patient voice-hearers. Participants spoke English alongside Hausa, Ibo, Yoruba, Efik, and other unnamed local languages. Fifteen

participants' voices spoke only English; 56 only a local language. Forty-one participants' voices spoke English and a local language. The authors likened the experience to dreaming in terms of greater likelihood of L1 prominence, arguing voice-hearing, like dreams, reflects people's internal worlds. However, they present no data on language occurrences in multilinguals' dreams.

Dreams have long been considered analogous to voice-hearing, sharing phenomenological and neural features (Waters et al., 2016). They can show auditory features present in voice-hearing but not inner speech, such as speech the dreamer does not understand (Fosse & Larøi, 2020). Age of onset of acquisition can affect dream language selection in interaction with proficiency (Schrauf, 2009) and dominance (Ardila et al., 2019). However, proficiency is not a prerequisite for LX appearance (Sicard & de Bot, 2013). Dream language is typically appropriate to within-dream context (Foulkes et al., 1993). Grosjean (2012) argued that the Complementarity Principle applies to dream-language: multilinguals' language use reflects different languages' acquisition in different domains with different people, serving different functions. Multilinguals dream in different languages depending on dream content and interlocutors (Grosjean, 2012). However, dream research is notoriously challenging due to recall difficulties (Sicard & de Bot, 2013), making detailed comparison with voice-hearing almost impossible.

Multilingual Voice Hearers

Six mid-to-late twentieth century papers presented primary research on multilinguals' voice-hearing, although one reported on a single patient's specific adverse drug reaction (Laski & Taleporos, 1977). Two are referenced in other papers but unavailable online: Schaechter (1964, cited in Herbert, 1984) describing Australian immigrant voice-hearers; Dores et al (1972, cited in Herbert, 1984) mentioning bilingual French-Wolof voice-hearing. An abstract from conference proceedings of the International Neuropsychological Society (Schindler et al., 1987) details a study of 19 English-Spanish bilingual voice-hearers showing a correlation with between voices' language and self-reported inner speech language, but no further details were available online. One study fell just outside the period: Zulueta et al (2001) who focused on psychosis assessment, but mentioned several multilingual voice-hearers in her sample. One participant heard voices in Portuguese, English and an unnamed "African language"; and two only in their L1s.

Ethical and Methodological Issues in Earlier Research on Multilingual Voice-Hearing

Early publications in this area are often ethically and methodologically problematic. Lukianowicz (1962) reported on 14 patients he treated in Austria and the UK over 22 years. He subdivided them into European and non-European groups, postulating distinct causes of psychosis entailing racist assumptions about non-Europeans. These pervade his analysis: "the main causative factor in [a sub-group of non-European patients] was the sudden impact of an unfamiliar culture and a strange, restless, highly mechanized civilization upon subjects belonging to a more primitive civilization" (Lukianowicz, 1962, p. 275). He interpreted multilingual voice-hearers as primitive non-Europeans, distressed by a sophisticated society, unconsciously enacting this conflict. Lukianowicz did not describe selection criteria. These cases may have been cherry-picked from a large pool to fit existing assumptions: later research suggests his parallels between (his perception of) his patients' life experiences and the languages of their voices are oversimplified as well as underpinned by racism.

Lucianowicz argued that multilingual voice-hearing reflected hearers' language experiences: protective L1 voices; threatening Lx voices; the reverse where the home country has associated trauma, e.g., for political refugees.

Hemphill's (1971, p.1391) racism is even more apparent than Lucianowicz's, referring to his Black patients as "uneducated" and their language as "incomprehensible". He concluded that patients with schizophrenia only hear L1 voices, not citing Lukianowicz. He distinguishes between "polyglots" (balanced or highly proficient multilinguals) and "linguists" (later and/or less proficient multilinguals). His conclusions apply only to the former, but have nevertheless been disproved (Wang et al., 1998).

Herbert (1984) interviewed 12 American voice-hearers, mostly early bilinguals. He confirmed Lukianowicz's pattern of hearing "good" voices in languages associated with support and "bad" voices in languages associated with rejection or persecution. Several interviewees' experiences complicate Lukianowicz's patterns, but were broadly integrated into a similar overall narrative. Herbert, like the clinical case reports, presented no interviewees' quotations or own interpretations of their experiences.

Malo Ocejo et al. (1991) presented four L1 Basque patients hearing Spanish voices despite being Basque-language-dominant. One reported thinking in Basque but hearing Spanish voices, i.e. voices' language did not match inner speech language. Two heard Spanish voices despite limited Spanish proficiency. All learned Spanish at school.

Finally, Wang et al (1998) reported on 6 immigrant patients diagnosed with schizophrenia in the USA. Two patients reported voices in two languages, two largely in L1 but with occasional L2 (English) voices, one only in English (L3), and one only in Cantonese (L1). The authors argued that the voices reflected their patients' thought-language, and were appropriate to the content: when a hearer's voice reflected an American figure, the voice spoke English; when they represented ghosts from Hong Kong, they spoke Cantonese. This is greater detail on the content-language relationship than earlier papers but they do not probe the experience's emotionality.

Apart from Herbert (1984), Zulueta et al (2001) and Hadden et al (2020), all primary research above was conducted on clinical voice-hearers by treating clinicians. Patients may respond differently in such contexts due to the power dynamics involved (Rose et al., 2003). Clinical notes, like research interview transcriptions and interpretations, are representations entailing information-recording decisions. These encode clinicians' ideologies as much as patients' experiences and may be error-prone (Galasiński & Ziółkowska, 2013).

A literature base reliant on clinical reports where most authors report on rather than quoting their participants, without acknowledging their own subjectivity or relational power dynamics, is problematic. It may explain the skew towards etic approaches (outsider perspective of a phenomenon aimed at objective documentation, using the language of social sciences) over emic ones (focused on understanding a phenomenon from the participants' point of view, using their own words) (Mostowlansky & Rota, 2020). While etic research is relatively homogeneous in its ontological and epistemological assumptions, emic research is much more heterogeneous (Markee, 2013). Indeed, etic and quantitative research is more unified in terms of its goals and statistical procedures than emic and qualitative research where the participant's perspective can be interpreted in many more different ways.

Lack of interest in voice-hearers' own understandings of the experience is a key HVM critique of psychiatric voice-hearing approaches (Styron et al., 2017). It could also reflect a historic testimonial injustice, the injustice of disbelief based on speaker identity (Fricker, 2007). Here, psychiatric patients are considered less reliable witnesses than their psychiatrists, whose objectivity is rarely questioned. For example, Paradis (2008), summarising literature on multilingualism and voice-hearing, wrote: "The validity of self-reports of the language of hallucinations by patients may be questionable, but probably no more so than the report of hallucinations in the first place" (Paradis, 2008, p. 203).

Not-Understood Voices

There is no single term for voice-hearing the hearer does not (fully) understand. Jones and Luhrmann (2016, p. 199) called it "nonverbal garbled voices"; "nonverbal voices" may also mean a voice not heard but felt (Open Minded Online, 2019), similar to experiences termed "felt presence" elsewhere (Alderson-Day et al, 2022, p.1). Okulate and Jones (2003) referenced foreign-language voices without clarifying whether they are foreign to voice-hearer or researcher. This terminology variation made a systematic literature review impossible, but the phenomenon may be fairly common: Jones and Luhrmann reported 17.5% of participants heard garbled voices. Three participants in Sadh et al.'s (2020) HN group reported voices in languages they did not know. Herbert (1984) described one participant hearing German voices which she did not understand. Schaechter (1964, cited in Herbert, 1984) described 16 of 32 non-English-speaking migrants to Australia hearing English voices. This is another under-researched area, entering the literature around the edges of multilingual voice-hearing research. "Not-understood voices" is coined for this range of experiences.

Multilingualism and Emotion

Voices may express emotion-laden content (c.f., discussion of "good" versus "bad" voices above). It is thus important to focus also on the research of multilinguals' language preferences for expressing emotions. It is common for multilinguals to prefer their L1 for expressing their emotions (Dewaele, 2013). Emotions may feel different in different languages because languages acquired earlier, and in naturalistic rather than classroom contexts, become more embodied: they are integrated with emotional and sensory experiences linked with autobiographical memories (Dewaele, 2022). LXs, on the other hand, typically feel more disembodied, more detached, "colder". As a result, multilinguals may switch between their languages for emotion regulation, particularly in therapeutic contexts, where an LX may create enough distance from traumatic memories to verbalise them (Cook & Dewaele, 2021; Rolland, 2019; Rolland et al., 2020a). The idea that all languages of the multilingual need to be considered is linked to Cook's (2012) concept of multicompetence, defined as "the knowledge of more than one language in the same mind or the same community" (p. 1). Cook (2012) points out that "Multi-competence (...) involves the whole mind of the speaker, not simply their first language (L1) or their second" (p. 1). Dewaele (2016) argues that the acquisition of new languages affects individuals' emotional geography as much as their linguistic systems. The acquisition of new emotion concepts as a result of acculturation can affect existing pragmatic norms and emotion concepts, which can lead to a blending of categories in the first and foreign language, and which can accompany a change in emotional fit from one language and culture to another (Zhou et al., 2021).

What this literature review has shown is that, on the one hand, most voice-hearing researchers have treated multilingualism as largely irrelevant and/or a much simpler phenomenon than recent research suggests, with some of the older studies suffering from methodological flaws and racist views from the clinician-researchers. These studies focus on clinical voice-hearers

and typically adopt etic perspectives. In other words, the researchers were largely uninterested in hearing participants' voices about their emotional experiences, let alone about the fact that these voices were multilingual. Moreover, the authors show very little awareness of research outside psychiatry. Even work within or inspired by the HVM has tended to gloss over the complexity of voice-hearers' multilingualism (e.g., Romme et al, 2009). On the other hand, multilingualism researchers had dealt with language preferences for the communication of emotions, including dreaming and inner speech, and language preferences in the therapeutic context but nobody has investigated the experiences of multilingual voice-hearers. The present study proposes to do just that.

Research Questions

The following research question was formulated: How do UK-resident multilingual voice-hearers describe voices' language(s) affecting the hearers' relationships with and feelings about their voices?

Methodology

We adopted what Braun and Clarke (2021, p. 39) term a "big Q" Qualitative approach. Such research is guided not by reproducibility and generalisability, but by: trustworthiness (methodological transparency, laying out theoretical assumptions and demonstrating their application); and transferability (specifying study context, participants, and circumstances so that readers can decide which aspects might transfer to others). Research and participant subjectivity are viewed as both unavoidable and an analytic resource (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

Semi-structured interviews were carried out via telephone or Microsoft Teams, due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Semi-structured interviews facilitated a deeper dive into multilinguals' voice-hearing experiences than most existing research, with enough consistency to facilitate Thematic Analysis' pattern-based cross-case analysis. Interviews consisted of demographic questions; the Language Experiences and Proficiency Questionnaire (LEAP-Q) (Kaushanskaya et al., 2019; Marian et al., 2007); and an adapted version of the Maastricht Interview (Corstens et al., 2008).

The Maastricht Interview has been publicised by national HVNs (HVN Aotearoa New Zealand, 2011) and was developed in collaboration with voice-hearers. As such it seemed likely to be acceptable to participants and provide meaningful initial questions. Adaptations were theoretically, ethically, and pragmatically motivated. The interview sees voices as a "code" (Corstens et al., 2008, p. 325) which, when broken, reveals hearers' trauma. Recent voice-hearing aetiology work (Luhmann et al., 2019) shows that while trauma is a significant risk factor for voice-hearing, a universal cause-effect assumption oversimplifies matters. Moreover, the idea of breaking through voices' apparent reality to some truer meaning beneath entails assumptions about the nature of meaning incompatible with this project's constructionist analytic approach (see below).

Questions on specific childhood traumas were replaced with questions about voices' languages and code-switching; contextual influences on these; and multilingualism-specific coping strategies. Further changes followed two pilot interviews and ethical feedback regarding interview length and risk of overwhelming participants. Seven initial draft questions were removed or merged and one question on inner speech languages was added. See Appendix 1 for the final interview schedule.

Ethics and Recruitment

This project obtained ethical approval at the authors' research institution. Ethical decisions were driven by awareness of participants' possible histories with institutional power (Rolland et al., 2020b): for current or former psychiatric patients, being written about may be a loaded experience (O'Hagan, 2009). Research interview and psychiatric assessment both involve surrendering control of life experiences to researcher or clinician for interpretation. In a clinical context this may risk Mental Health Act detention and/or child removal (Diaz-Caneja & Johnson, 2004; Jeffery et al., 2013; Seeman, 2011). The first author's record of lived-experience mental health advocacy (e.g., Rowan Olive, 2019; 2020a, b) likely encouraged participants wary of clinician-researchers, but also resulted in a sample high in clinical voice-hearers.

The project aimed to maximise participants' data control, recognising loss of control within the psychiatric system causes iatrogenic trauma: an awareness driven by the first author's own experience and embeddedness in communities of survivors of such interactions. All participants could review interview transcripts; comment and/or withdraw data; and/or read the final report, following Mann (2016). Five opted to read transcripts. None requested edits or withdrawals. All opted to read the report; high interest in results may reflect a lack of existing opportunities to discuss related experiences.

Inclusion criteria aimed to capture a range of language and voice-hearing experiences. These were:

- 1) UK-resident, comfortable participating in an English-language interview.
- 2) Hearing voices that others do not hear more than once, ideally within the last year (some flexibility was applied depending on how well participants felt they recalled the experience).
- 3) One or more of:
 - a. Migrant to the UK from a non-English-speaking country.
 - b. Hearing voices in more than one language.
 - c. Hearing voices in an LX.

Interviews were conducted by the first author. Consent was taken in writing or orally (where orally, audio was recorded). Where consent was given in advance, it was checked verbally at interview outset, when the researcher assessed capacity for informed consent according to relevant legislation (Mental Capacity Act 2005 or Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000).

Due to COVID-19, advertising was principally digital, limiting the participant pool. A poster and participant information sheet was distributed via social media; via email to research and personal networks; and via four voice-hearing, therapy, and/or lived-experience-led mental health voluntary sector organisations.

Convenience sampling was supplemented by snowball sampling, with participants encouraged to circulate details (Robinson, 2014). Participants were all who volunteered and met inclusion criteria. Purposive sampling aimed specifically at going beyond those Braun and Clarke (2013: 58) term "the usual suspects" for research – educated, white, middle class, straight people – was limited by financial and practical constraints as a small unfunded project. We aimed for the accountability to participants necessary (if not sufficient) to render research non-extractive (Kouritzin and Nakagawa, 2018), within the bounds of a a master's dissertation schedule (c.f. data control and results dissemination above).

One participant opted out of all demographic questions. Among the nine who responded, the sample was fairly diverse in age (23-59 years), gender (5 women; 2 non-binary people; 2 men), sexual orientation (4 heterosexual, 1 bisexual, 1 lesbian, 4 either opted out or described themselves as “unsure” or “curious”), and education (ranging from no post-16 education to PhD). Participants reported psychiatric diagnoses including schizophrenia, borderline personality disorder, schizoaffective disorder, PTSD; neurodivergent diagnoses such as ADHD and autism; and epilepsy. Most disclosed multiple diagnoses. However, only two participants felt their current psychiatric diagnosis fit their experiences well, and two opted not to disclose theirs. Six participants were white, one described themselves as mixed white and Indian; one as British Pakistani and one as Arab.

Participants’ Languages and their Voices’ Languages

Table 1 shows participants’ languages and the languages in which they reported hearing voices. This provides necessary context for the interpretive themes described below.

Table 1. Participants’ languages and their voices’ languages.

P	L1(s)	LX(s) in order of acquisition (Age at onset of acquisition/ AoA in years if available)	Dominant language(s)	Language(s) spoken by voice(s) in approx. order of frequency
1	Greek Cypriot	English (5)	English	English, Greek Cypriot, Glossolalia
2	Scots, English	Scottish Gaelic (22)	English, Scots	Scots, Scottish Gaelic, English
3	Croatian	English (7), German, Spanish	English, Croatian	English
4	English	French (secondary school; receptive knowledge only)	English	English, Unknown (two distinct unknown languages)
5	Gujarati, English	Hindi (20), French (reading & writing), Arabic (reading & writing)	Gujarati	English, Gujarati, Hindi
6	English, Levantine Arabic	French (10), Spanish (secondary school)	English	English, French, Levantine Arabic
7	Greek	English (11), Romanian (15), German (18), Russian (18)	English, Greek	English, Greek
8	Punjabi	English (5), Urdu	English, Punjabi	Punjabi, English
9	Tunisian Arabic, French	English (11), German, Italian, Russian (secondary school)	English	Tunisian Arabic, French, English, Glossolalia
10	Danish	German (7), English (7), Swedish, Norwegian (receptive knowledge only)	English	English, Danish, formerly German, Nonverbal voices

Not all participants gave precise AoAs or voice language frequencies; the most precise information given is reported. Glossolalia is listed separately to voices in unknown languages: P1 and P9 described it as akin to Pentecostal religious experience, an aspect not reported by others. “Nonverbal voices” refer to felt-presence-type voices (Open Minded Online, 2019)

rather than not-understood voices. This table demonstrates that early AoA and dominance are not prerequisites for a language featuring in a hearer's voices.

Data Analysis

Interviews were analysed using a constructionist form of reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Constructionism regards meaning and reality as constructed through language and social practice, including interview talk (Braun & Clarke, 2021). As such, where space permits: participant quotations from interviews are provided alongside the prompting question, to allow consideration of how the question may have shaped the answer; and data ambiguities are analysed rather than shied away from (Mann, 2011; 2016; Talmy, 2011). Data were too sensitive to include full transcripts (Mann, 2016). Analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2013) six-stage theme development process. Initial transcription and note-making constituted stages one and two, familiarisation and initial code generation. Codes and comments which could be grouped around a central idea were then exported into individual tables. For the themes described below, everything relating to not-understood voices was initially grouped in one table, and everything referencing relationships between language experiences and voices' languages in another. Stage four, reviewing themes, involved going through these tables and developing further links and patterns. Stage five, defining and naming themes, involved arranging these patterns into the metaphors of the spectrum, reflection (the throwing back by a body or surface of light), and refraction (a change in direction of the wave). The analysis was an iterative process with some movement back and forth between stages as themes were refined, until stage six (writing the final report) was completed.

Results

Participants' descriptions of their relationships with their voices were interpreted via three overarching themes within the interpretive frame of metaphors of light (a spectrum of understanding; reflection and refraction of language experiences).

Reflection is light bouncing off a surface: with smooth, flat surfaces, a clear image appears. Refraction is light bending passing between media, e.g., air into water. This can distort – water appearing shallower than it really is – or cast rainbows from a white beam. Here, reflection describes experiences where participants' voices directly mirrored language experience(s), for example where voices in a specific language spoke about topics and domains in which the participants typically used that language. Refraction describes experiences where there was a relationship between language experience and voice-hearing experience, but it was less direct: something key had changed from the participant's memory of the original experience, often introducing a sense of the uncanny. This could relate to one or several aspects of the experience: a mismatch between the recognised identity of the voice and their language, accent, volume, or tone; or unexpected elements of the original experience coming to the fore. These were not always entirely separate, with the same voice(s) sometimes reflecting parts of one language experience and refracting another. Nor are they perfect metaphors, particularly if their physics-specific meanings are examined too closely. However, as a metaphorical frame and a starting point for understanding they highlight the complexity of the relationship between multilingual experiences and voice-hearing experiences, which as discussed above is under-researched.

Understanding Voices is a Spectrum

The interview schedule contained no questions about participants' (in)ability to understand their voices. However, seven participants described not understanding one or more to some

degree. These experiences can be organised along a spectrum (see Figure 1 below). “No understanding” does not signal no meaning or emotionality.

Three participants (P5, P8, P9) reported difficulty writing their L1, but high speaking proficiency. Two (P5, P8) reported no difficulties understanding any voices. Writing proficiency appears unnecessary to hear and understand voices in a language.

P6’s experiences demonstrate the variations in both emotionality and nature of not-understanding. She described two partially-understood voices: a woman’s voice, English with occasional French muttering; and a set of voices she described as like multiple YouTube channels open simultaneously. Some of these spoke Levantine Arabic, P6’s heavily-attrited L1. P6 did not consider herself proficient in Arabic or French. Partially understanding French caused anxiety:

Interviewer: *And how does that feel, um, sort of getting part of what she’s saying?*

P6: *Um, I, I feel like it’s designed to confuse me.*

Interviewer: *Ok.*

P6: *I, [...] it doesn’t feel like she’s got good intentions towards me when she does that.*

This voice had agency and power, “designing” her speech for impact, seemingly using two languages maliciously. By contrast, P6 called the partially-understood Arabic voices “comforting” four times, relating to feelings of loss:

Interviewer: *So what does it mean to you to hear kind of snatches of Arabic and to understand it? Or to get a [sense of meaning?]*

P6: *[I find it very] comforting. It’s, it’s really quite comforting. It gives me a link with... My mum died and I miss her terribly. [...] and it gives me a link with her [...] I find it comforting because it’s a link to listening to family that I never met [...] It’s, I feel like it fills in a part of me that’s missing as well, you know, maybe a part I won’t discover fully in this lifetime but you know [...] It’s, it’s comforting actually is the word I’d use. (Emphasis added.)*

P6 described understanding occasional French words. She recognised similarly few Arabic words, but sensed meaning beyond them, a difficult experience to articulate:

Interviewer: *So do you understand the actual Arabic words or do you just have a sense of like, knowing what it is that they’re saying?*

P6: *I think it can only be a sense of meaning, I don’t think, some of the words I I I recognise, some of the words I recognise because I recognise them from the grocers round the corner from me, and they’re Jordanian. [...] So.. I think it’s more the meaning, they’ll say some words which will trigger something so that I can understand the meaning, so it’s almost like they’re saying words I will recognise, I don’t know why I recognise them, I understand the words, um, um.. Oh it’s hard to explain, um.*

Partial understanding could therefore differ in nature alongside degree, a dimension difficult to demonstrate in figure 1. The metaphor of the spectrum should be considered a starting point for representing this range of experiences, while acknowledging that a linear representation inevitably collapses some qualitative experiential distinctions. Not (fully) understanding voices marked exclusion or inclusion, empowerment or disempowerment, depending on the hearer-voice relationship.

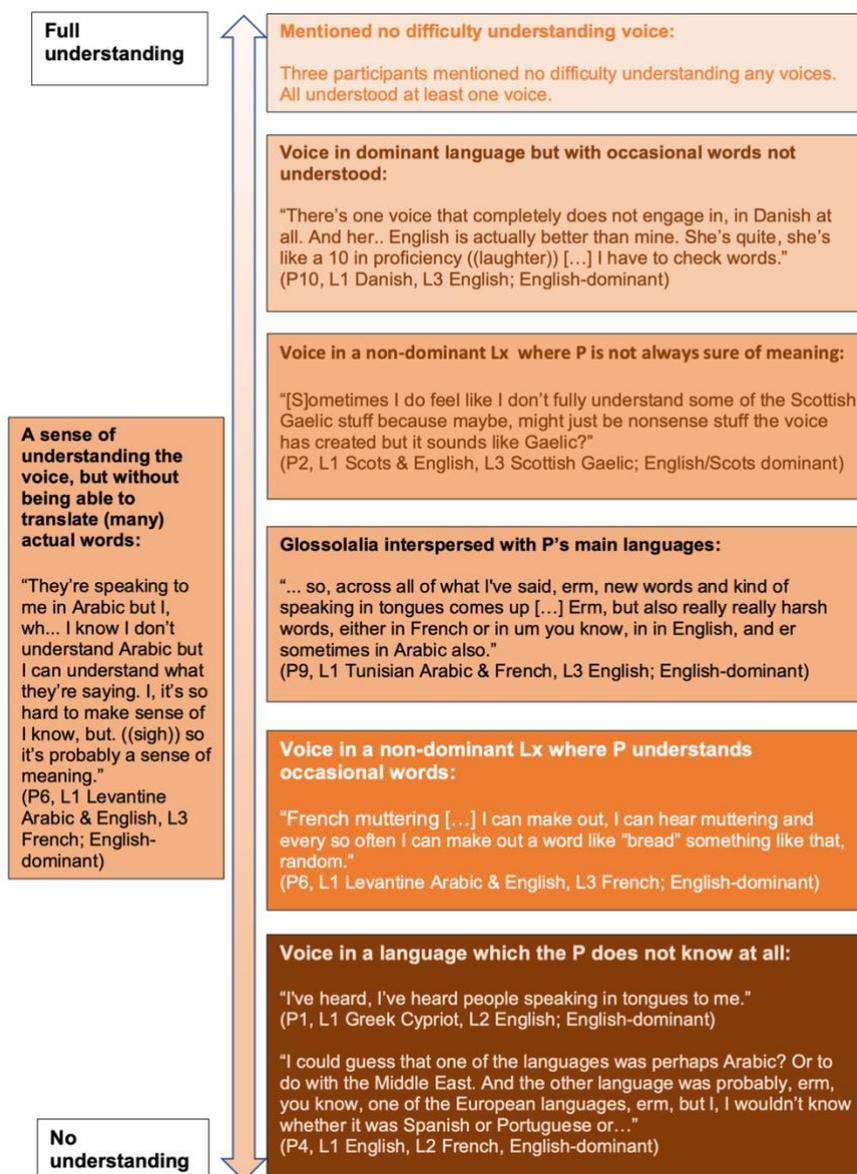


Figure 1. Spectrum understanding voices.

Thought, Voice, Memory, Language

The blurred boundaries between distinct experiences implied by the metaphor of the spectrum also feature to some extent in boundaries between thought, voice, memory, and language. However, here multilingualism could blur or clarify such distinctions.

Some participants described voices developing from thoughts or memories. This process could involve a transition across languages, or different language combinations. P3 described voice-hearing developing from a belief that she could read others' thoughts, in the language of the person concerned, typically Croatian (L1) or English:

Croatian would really come into my, into my mind only when, when somebody from the Croatian context would message me? Or speak to me. Erm, and then you know obviously I thought I could read their thoughts in Croatian. (P3)

However, the voice developing from this belief spoke only English. P3 described both “reading” and “hearing” people’s thoughts, highlighting blurred boundaries between a thought with some auditory qualities and voice-hearing, despite the difference in languages involved.

P8 described a flow from memory to both voice and thought. He reported thinking “90% in English”, but hearing one voice: “sometimes it speaks two languages”. He described it as “predominantly within the Punjabi, and then sometimes it is in English”. The voice and P8’s own thoughts seemed to have opposite weightings in L1 versus L2 frequency. However, elsewhere P8 referred to hearing his father’s and uncle’s plural “voices”. Against this ambiguity, P8 was clear about the memories’, voices’, and thoughts’ negative content, calling them “negative” or “negativity” 25 times total. He described his trauma causing negativity both in voice(s) and thoughts:

P8: *Do you know what I mean so, I think so if you’re consistently getting criticism that gets internalised, becomes around negativity.*

Interviewer: *Yep.*

P8: *And so therefore if I don’t hear the voices it’s like I’m thinking the negativity because all being, the foundation was set a long time ago and the condition is there.*

The similar emotions evoked by both voice and thought, and their shared trauma-based origins, could make them indistinguishable despite apparently different L1 versus L2 use: “the thought may be the voice, the voice may be the thought [...] It may be they’re saying one thing” (P8). However, sometimes multilingualism clarified the thought/voice boundary, due to differences in conscious control:

P7: *Here because I’m exposed daily to English, when I come home I tend to think my day more in Greek or Romanian.*

Interviewer: *And do you change that consciously?*

P7: *Yes.*

I: *And can you... consciously change the language of the voice at all?*

P7: *No.*

Voices’ Languages Reflect, but also Refract, Participants’ Language Histories

Reflection is light bouncing off a surface: with smooth, flat surfaces, a clear image appears. Refraction is light bending passing between media, e.g., air into water. This can distort – water appearing shallower – or cast rainbows from a white beam. These are helpful metaphors for the relationship(s) between participants’ language histories and voices.

P1 described the clearest reflection of language experiences in her voices’ languages, quantifying both current language exposure and voices as 80-90% English, 10-20% Greek Cypriot. Greek Cypriot voices principally concerned family and her parents’ belief systems, reflecting language-use context. Voices, present only during crises, reflected triggers in both language and content:

[W]hen, umm, there was a lot of kind of Greek family involvement and hostility and involvement- over involvement and just a lot of Greek shit going on [...] and it was too much, too much stress, too much gossip, too much, erm, hostility between everybody, yeah, that kind of kicked off a lot of Greek voices. (P1)

Sometimes languages began featuring in a participant’s voices sometime after the relevant language experience: P10 described one voice acquiring English several years after moving to the UK. For P7, a shift in the voice’s language followed actively trying to change her thoughts

from Greek to English to learn English faster, causing the addition of English to her voice's repertoire.

This time-lagged reflection also occurred with not-understood voices. P4 said that her not-understood voices did not reflect anything "in [her] reality" at the time. However, elsewhere she described spending her professional life surrounded by languages she did not speak:

Interviewer: *I wondered how you reached that conclusion about what language it might be?*

P4: *Um, I suppose because I have um, I've been lucky to work with people from different nationalities, particularly when I was doing work at [job location] [...] before I retired as [job role] I would also hear people erm speaking in different languages then as well. [...] I couldn't tell you the logical process of why I thought that it might be Arabic and why I thought it might be European, it's just, I suppose based on, on the... the people that I have met through the years and the languages that they speak.*

LX exposure can therefore be relevant even when the language is not actually acquired.

Refraction took place when, in transition from external linguistic input to voice-hearing, hearers' linguistic knowledge and memories distorted, or unexpected elements emerged. This produced mismatches between a voice's perceived identity and their language, tone, or accent, creating a sense of confusion or the uncanny.

P2 described a "demonic gran voice" mimicking her late paternal grandmother. This voice spoke Scots and Gaelic; P2's grandmother never spoke Gaelic. The voice retained P2's grandmother's working-class Scots accent when speaking Gaelic. P2 expressed her confusion as "Fuck knows what's going on there".

P7 described the voice she heard as an androgynous distortion of her own voice:

It would be a bit more, a bit more of a, a lower toned voice, so it it would sound to some people more masculine, but I can understand that it's still...it's still, um, very similar to my voice. But it's a more low-toned voice, so a more angry toned voice. (P7)

Some participants' voices accompanied visions. P5 saw people from a workplace he was bullied out of. His colleagues had spoken English, but in P5's visions they spoke Gujarati (L1) and Hindi (L3). He called this "disturbing"; the uncanniness was reinforced when the figures appeared outside his home, visible through the window, but audible as though inside.

However, accompanying this refraction were elements of reflection: P5 recognised influence from Hindi reality TV in one voice's vocabulary and manner:

So, on [Hindi reality TV] they have lots of arguments and they have lots of kind of, the way that they speak, and I think some of that has kind of almost influenced the kind of vision that I get of, of the person speaking in Hindi, because when I'm telling them to shut up or I'm trying to respond, they're telling me to shut up and it's, it's a constant kind of barrage. (P5)

These examples of refraction involved a language featuring with a different interlocutor, in a different context and / or domain of language use to that in which the language was acquired and regularly used. For P2, Gaelic was transposed from a classroom context to a family one; for P5, Hindi and Gujarati shifted from family interlocutors and television viewing to appear in the mouths of workplace interlocutors.

All participants described some relationship between language experiences and voice-hearing ones, but these did not necessarily mirror each other. Participants' language experiences could, as they became represented in their voice-hearing, be reflected, refracted, or both.

Discussion

The research question asked how 10 UK-resident multilingual voice-hearers' multilingualism affected voice-hearing experiences. A number of themes were drawn from the analysis of the interview data.

The Study Sample and Recruitment

As described above, the sample was relatively diverse in age, gender, education, and sexuality. This likely reflected the first author's networks within the "lived experience" space in mental health, as most participants had some knowledge of the HVM and/or other lived experience movements in similar spaces. Most participants found the study via social media, where the first author is "out" as a queer woman, or knew her from shared lived experience advocacy roles in local mental health services.

Nor was the research exclusively with white participants. However, no Black African or Caribbean participants were interviewed, which is a limitation. Many voice-hearing studies include relatively few Black participants (cf. Woods et al., 2015). This gap therefore reinforces a problematic status quo, particularly given the disproportionate rates of schizophrenia diagnoses in Black communities mentioned above.

We chose not to systematically approach community groups or organisations specifically for marginalised voice-hearers: being unfunded and as such unable to offer compensation to either participants or organisations, approaching groups and asking for effectively free labour felt problematic during the first year of Covid-19, when many were busy adapting to survive (National Survivor User Network, 2020). However, this lack of outreach was itself not an ethically neutral choice, particularly since working with Black community organisations could have helped involve Black participants whose voices are not heard here. It would be important for future research to proactively address this gap.

A Spectrum of Understanding

Voice-hearers described a spectrum of understanding their voices and a complex array of associated emotions. Boundaries between memories, voices, and inner speech could be blurred or clarified by multilingualism's role in the experiences. This has implications for subtyping and psychologically modelling voice-hearing.

While the lack of consistent terminology for not-understood voices made systematically reviewing previous research impossible, no papers were found discussing the emotionality or range of not-understood voices. Studying multilingual voice-hearing with participants whose proficiencies varied opened up a wide range of experiences: each language could potentially be understood to any degree along the spectrum.

Whatever mechanisms underlie these experiences, an original finding is the variety of emotions potentially associated with not-understood voices. Individual histories and the specific nature and degree of not-understanding could affect these.

This spectrum of understanding challenges the voices-as-inner-speech hypothesis' dominance: inner speech is not experienced as an unknown language. More real-time methods such as experience sampling employed in some inner speech (Guerrero, 2017) and dream (Foulkes et al., 1993) research may help explore this further. The fact that some participants reported understanding voices in languages they could not write, but spoke proficiently, suggests researchers testing relationships between voices' language use and hearers' proficiency should consider analysing written and spoken proficiency separately.

Some participants' experiences of voices sometimes being indistinguishable from inner speech (e.g., P8) potentially support the voices-as-inner-speech hypothesis. However, some participants' voices used different languages to their inner speech. This challenges Hadden et al.'s (2020) argument that if voices represent misattributed inner speech, then voices should be predicted by the same language history factors. If individuals can experience inner speech mostly in one language, and voices mostly in another (P8), or their voice can speak one language despite developing from thoughts experienced in two (P3), then the voices-to-inner-speech relationship may be more complex than this hypothesis allows.

Possibly only some voice-hearing subtypes fit the voices-as-inner-speech hypothesis, as McCarthy-Jones et al (2014) suggest, which could resolve these apparent contradictions. The range of not-understood voice-hearing experiences suggests they might integrate into multiple subtypes. McCarthy-Jones et al.'s (2014) subtypes were based on reviewing literature which under-represents not-understood voices; further study of these, and of the relationship between multilingual voice-hearers' voices and own inner speech, may develop subtyping models.

The range of experiences above strengthens parallels between voice-hearing and dreaming, where not-understood speech can occur (Fosse & Larøi, 2020), but this may not progress aetiological study: dreaming and voice-hearing differ in their relationship to regular perception of the outside world, with which voice-hearing co-occurs and dreaming does not. This, plus methodological difficulties with dream research (c.f., Sicard & de Bot, 2013), limits dreaming's usefulness as a model (Waters et al., 2016).

Reflection and Refraction

Participants' relationships with their voices and associated emotions showed a range of interactions between language history and voice-hearing experiences. Some participants' voices reflected their language experiences, sometimes with a time delay. However, more complex effects occurred, akin to refraction, where voices' languages altered language experiences in unexpected ways.

Hadden et al (2020) found a relationship between Age of onset of acquisition, language proficiency, and likelihood of a language featuring in a hearer's voices. While this study does not disprove this at a group level, it demonstrates neither Age of onset of acquisition nor proficiency is a prerequisite for a language to feature, mirroring Sicard and de Bot's (2013) dream-related findings.

Literature reviewed above frequently sought patterns whereby language histories and associated emotions were reflected in voice-hearing experiences, exceptions being Wang et al. (1998) and Hadden et al. (2020). This study builds on Hadden et al.'s qualitative findings, investigating voice-hearers' own perspectives on their experience in greater detail. Refractions of language experiences, uncanny voice-hearing experiences or mismatches between context and voices' languages are rare in the literature: Wang et al. (1998) argued that voice-hearers'

experience match the experience's internal logic. This fits some but not all participants here. Some (P2, P5) heard voices of known individuals, speaking languages the "real-life" analogue could not. This complicates Grosjean's (2012) Complementarity Principle and further highlights distinctions between voice-hearing and inner speech. While multilingual voice-hearers, like other multilinguals, typically acquire their languages in different domains and contexts, this is not necessarily reflected in their voices. P2's Scottish Gaelic was acquired in a classroom context but heard coming from a voice reminiscent of a family member; P5's home and family languages were spoken by voices associated with a workplace context. This differs from inner speech patterns: for example, students speaking English as an LX adopt academic inner speech more than general inner speech, reflecting the domain and context of acquisition (Leung & Dewaele, 2021).

The relationship between multilinguals' language experiences and their voice-hearing can be associated with more multi-faceted emotions than previous research suggests. Aside from Hadden et al. (2020) and Malo Ocejó (1991), where earlier research reported emotions, it categorised voices as simply positive or negative (e.g., Lukianowicz, 1962; Herbert, 1984). Some participants described overwhelming negativity in their voices. However, a range of other emotions featured: confusion, disturbance, anger, fear, comfort. Multilingualism played into all of these. As such where voice-hearers seek support for voice-hearing-related distress, whether psychological, medical, or from HVN peer support groups, it may be worth exploring how voices' languages affect the experience.

Conclusion

This small-scale interview study contributes two new findings to the voice-hearing literature. First, not-understood voices are a considerably more complex phenomenon than previous literature suggests. Second, the relationship between language experience and voices' language(s) is not one of simple reflection, but appears highly individual: neither early Age of onset of acquisition nor dominance was a prerequisite for voice-hearing in a given language, and the transition from language experience to voice-hearing experience could distort, refract, or shift the domains and interlocutors which made up the language acquisition context. These findings challenge the dominance of misattributed inner speech in voice-hearing aetiology and open up new ground for future research into prevalence and experiences of both not-understood voices and multilingual voice-hearing more broadly. The wide variety of experiences and emotions disclosed by participants suggests this is the tip of a considerable iceberg with potential implications not just for voice-hearing phenomenology and aetiology but for therapeutic and peer support for voice-hearers.

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Appendix

Bilingual and multilingual voice-hearers' relationships with their voices

(Let the participant know that we can pause or stop the interview at any time, there are no right or wrong answers and we can skip any questions they'd rather not answer without them having to give a reason.)

Demographic questions

What is your gender?

How old are you?

Are you trans?

What is your sexual orientation?

What is your ethnicity?

What region of the UK do you live in?

Do you have a mental health diagnosis? (If so, do you think it fits your experiences?)

Are you taking medication for your mental health at the moment?

Are you working, studying or volunteering at the moment?

Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

Do you have a religion or faith?

Language questions: LEAP-Q

<http://bilingualism.soc.northwestern.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/LEAPQ2007.doc>

Voice-hearing questions

This part of the interview is intended to find out more about the voices you hear and how you relate to them.

How many voices do you hear? What languages do they speak?

(Which do you hear most / which language do you hear voices in most often? Has the number of voices and the language(s) they speak changed over time?)

Why do you think you hear voices?

E.g. do you understand them as symptoms of an illness, as a message from someone or something else (who?), as the result of trauma, as part of yourself, as coming from a good or bad spirit, as ghosts or angels?

I'm going to ask a set of questions about the voices in each language and your relationship to them. For each question, try to start with the language with the voices you hear or have heard most frequently and most recently, and work through to the voice or voices you hear least and longest ago.

Characteristics of the voices

Tell me about the voices in each language - do they have a name? Age? Gender? Accent?

How often / how much of the time do you hear these voices?

Where do the voices come from / where are they located? Has this changed over time?

(Do they sound as though they are in your head / coming through your ears / located somewhere else within your body / coming from somewhere outside your body? Do you think they come from you or from someone else? Does this differ according to language)

What kinds of things do they say and how do they say them / what is their tone?

Do any of the voices ever switch languages?

When does each voice do that - for example, is it when it is expressing a particular emotion, or when you are in a particular place or doing something in particular? Does it change in the middle of a sentence, utterance or situation, or does it speak one language in particular contexts? Do you have a sense of why it changes?

Do you ever have a dialogue with these voices or communicate with them at all?

If yes, can you give an example? What language do you speak back in – is it always the same? If no, why do you think that is?

Do you speak out loud or in your mind if you talk to them? How do they react? Have they always reacted in this way?

Content & relationship to the voices

Do you hear mostly positive / friendly or negative / unfriendly voices in each language?

What do they say or do? Is this the same as when you first heard them?

How would you describe your relationship with your voices?

(Prompts: Powerless / Compliant / Conflict-heavy or antagonistic / Balanced / Distant / Warm / Playful / Understanding / Fearful / Protective)

Have you always felt this way about these voices? Do you know why?

Do these voices talk about specific subjects or people?

Can you describe them? What do they say? Do these things interest you as well? Do different languages cover different topics?

Would you miss the voices if you didn't hear them anymore?

Do any of the voices also have relationships to each other?

E.g. are they friends? Related to each other? Co-existing or in separate universes? Do they speak to each other - if so in what language?

Think about how you felt about [Lx] when you first heard these voices and how you feel about [Lx] now. Is it different? Do these voices change how you feel about [Lx]?

(Prompts: if someone speaks Lx to you, how do you feel about them? Has that changed since you started hearing voices in Lx? Do you want to speak Lx more or less than you used to? If you have a language you speak but don't hear voices in, how do you feel when someone speaks that language to you?)

Do you experience yourself as thinking in a language?

If so, what proportion of the time do you experience this in each language? Does it feel qualitatively different to voice-hearing? How?

Triggers

Have you noticed whether these voices tend to be present when you take part in particular activities or in certain kinds of circumstances, or when you feel certain emotions? Can you describe what those are?

(If so, what is the language context? Do you relate those to experiences you have had in a specific language? Follow up if yes: **Can you describe how the voices react to your emotions?** Is it helpful or unhelpful? Does it change your emotions?)

Are you hearing any of these voices now?

If so, are they commenting on this interview? What are they saying?

How old were you when you first heard voices? What was happening in your life at the time and what was your dominant language then?

(Prompt: if it's helpful, I have a list of the kinds of circumstances that other voice hearers say they experienced around the time or just before they first heard voices)

Coping strategies

Are there specific things that help you cope with hearing voices if / when it is difficult? I have a list of examples of things other voice hearers have said they sometimes use if that would be helpful to prompt you.

(Prompt list: Send the voices away / Ignore the voices / Concentrate on listening / Listen selectively / Think about something else / Make a deal with the voices / Try to limit contact with the voices / Try to escape the voices / Telephone someone / Visit someone / Distract yourself / Keep a diary about the voices / Carry out certain rituals/behaviours / Relaxation exercises like yoga / Medication / Alcohol and drugs / Food)

If so, do you use different coping strategies for different languages, e.g. if you listen to music, does it make a difference whether the lyrics are in the same or a different language to the voices?

Support & social network

Could you tell me about any formal support you have or have tried to get with voice-hearing? E.g. GP, NHS mental health services, hearing voices groups, charities or peer support organisations? What do they do to support you?

What language do you get this support in?

Has anyone in any of these services ever asked you about the languages your voices speak?

If yes, was that helpful? Did they use that information in the way they went on to support you? If no, would you have liked them to? How do you think it would have made a difference?

Can you tell me about any informal support you get from family, friends etc with your voice-hearing - do you have people who know about it, who you talk to about it? If so in what language?

Is there anything else I haven't asked about that you think is important to know about your experience of voice-hearing?

Closing

Check in about how the participant is feeling, and whether they would like a follow-up by email or phone in a day or two, and/or the list of support and resources on voice hearing.

The Narrative Structure of Transcripts and the Psychoanalytic Self

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Abstract

Psychoanalytic publications often contain the patient's discourse in the form of transcripts in the context of a clinical vignette. These transcripts are productions that result from a set of operations and technologies put at play by the psychoanalytic author, in the process of transmission and dissemination of the psychoanalytic discipline. The focus of our study was to investigate these transcripts and to determine first, if their narrative structure was affected by four factors (diagnosis, psychoanalytic school, gender and source of the transcript), and second, to articulate what type of self was promoted by such narratives. For this purpose, 93 clinical vignettes with transcripts, published in a recognized psychoanalytic journal, were analyzed and the effects of those factors upon the narrative structure of these transcripts, studied. Anova's results showed that the produced transcripts were affected in their narrative structure by the studied factors. At the same time, the studied factors tended to promote certain forms of selfhood over others through the transcripts.

Introduction

Psychoanalytic publications consist, among other things, of topics such as the development of new concepts, meta-psychological issues, new clinical paradigms, problems around diagnosis, development and technical innovations as well as current debates around new proposals. If we don't just focus on the topics that make up these clinical publications, but also attend to their particular elements, we'll find what is known as clinical vignettes. The most important component of a clinical vignette is the transcription of a patient's discourse. In psychoanalytic publications, the author offers the reader access to the patient's discourse, either to illustrate an ongoing treatment, to exemplify a problem, to show a clinical element in the middle of an abstract development or because it is a document that presents a clinical case with certain characteristics that would allow the development of a new paradigm. With regards to clinical cases, it was Freud (1905/1962; Breuer & Freud, 1895/1957) himself who, very early on, became aware that clinical cases have the structure of short fictional stories, short narratives, and thereof his concern of not being taken seriously by the scientific community. Increasingly, clinical data in the psychoanalytic discipline consists of small vignettes rather than of full-length accounts of a case (Michels, 2000). In both cases, however, vignettes and full-length clinical cases, the speech of a patient in the form of transcripts and the construction of a story constitute the primary elements (Ferrari, 2012; Lewis, 2001; Nasio, 2013; Michels, 2000; Wyman & Rittenberg, 1992). Even though transcripts in discourse analysis are referred to the practice of recorded speech, psychoanalytic transcripts encompass different sources: notes, memory of the analyst, and digital recordings. The common practice is to build transcripts from memory and notes and not so much from recording devices. Nevertheless, we have chosen to use a broad definition of transcripts to include these sources for the transcripts in psychoanalysis.

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There are two characteristics of these psychoanalytic productions that have to be emphasized. First, as just said, they are a production, in the sense that they constitute a part of a diffusion apparatus. Journal publications are part of all disciplines and are at the service of the promotion and diffusion of any discipline (Danziger, 1985, 1997). As stated above, among these productions, we are concerned with one specific element that is sometimes present in these publications: the transcripts. Secondly, in the making of these productions, there are technologies involved (Daston & Galison, 2007). In this case, by technologies we mean a series of operations done and employed by the psychoanalytic authors over the psychoanalytic experience itself, and at a more precise level, the analysand's discourse. The technologies include the registration of that discourse, via recordings, notes taking, memory recall, which also gives place to the operations of editing, of selecting and eliminating parts of that discourse, as well as the working towards coherence and meaning (Michels, 2000; Spence, 1982). In these operations, the author works over the patients' discourse according to his or her goal in one particular paper, the scientific dilemmas at the moment, the social/institutional demands, etc. In that sense, despite being presented as a verbatim discourse, transcripts are never neutral nor objective (Bucholtz, 2000). In other words, many factors are involved in these operations and are working in an unconscious way.

In this work, we are interested in one of the characteristics of these productions: the narrative structure of the transcripts that compose the vignettes, which are the product of an indefinite number of operations made upon a patient's discourse. At the same time, we are interested in attending to what type of self is promoted by these transcripts and to articulate them. Narrative approaches of the *self* have established these connections. Language, and narrative structure, went from having only a referential role, to having a more constitutive role (Gergen, 1991; Muller, 2016; Shotter, 1993; Taylor, 1991), that can promote certain forms of selfhood over others. We don't intend to define a specific type of self, such as the romantic self or the modern self (Gergen, 1991), the empty self (Cushman, 1990), the punctual self (Locke, see Taylor, 1989), the monological self or the dialogical self (Hermans, 2001; Muller, 2016; Taylor, 1991) or so many other forms of proposed selves. We intend to articulate and point out what forms of selfhood are promoted through these transcripts when we analyze their narrative structure. So, these transcripts, being the production of a group of psychoanalytic authors, contain ways of talking that are structured around some narrative characteristics which tend to be more predominant than others, and that are affected by different factors. At the same time, these predominant narrative characteristics tend to promote a certain implicit conception of self or selfhood, which we intend to articulate and point out.

Whether the psychoanalytic publication is one where we find a small clinical vignette or a full-length clinical case, the psychoanalytic author offers the reader the discourse or narrative of a patient, which must be defined as captured and therefore objectified, but that is, as said above, mainly produced. These transcripts of the patient's narrative offer researchers an opportunity to perform narrative or discourse analysis, as we are able to examine its elements and structure, as well as the different aspects of its content, and carry out studies considering the impact that the factors of interest may have on those transcripts.

The starting point of psychoanalysis is the patient's discourse and the work done over that discourse. First, it did so in a way where its cathartic function prevailed, and then, later, the focus was on the repressed unconscious expressed through discourse itself (Breuer & Freud, 1895/1957). From catharsis to free association, Freud sophisticated a technique that operated on the discourse of his patients, whether through their slips of the tongue, unintended mistakes and other failed acts (Freud, 1901/1960), the decomposition of dreams into different elements

in order to analyze them (Freud, 1912/1959a), or the discourse of the analysand that was formed from his associations (Freud, 1913/1959b).

From that starting point established by Freud, language began to have another place in psychoanalysis since the inclusion of structural linguistics and anthropology, as was the case of Jacques Lacan's work around 1950, or the more recent hermeneutical proposals developed by authors such as Donald Spence (1982) or Roy Schafer (1983) since the beginning of 1980. It is from these proposals that redefine and restate psychoanalysis in narrative terms that narratives gradually, and with increasing frequency, started to be an object of study and a way of doing studies in psychology. Initially, in the cognitive psychology field (Bruner, 1990), in its social realm (see Gergen, 1991), in developmental psychology (Fivush, 1994; Stern, 2000), and even in psychotherapeutic proposals geared towards narrative intervention (Madigan, 2019; White, 2007).

One of the ways in which research in the field of psychoanalysis has evolved is precisely by making use of patients' narratives. The analysis of their discourse in narrative form is a fertile ground for producing research both in psychoanalysis and psychotherapy now (for a review of the latter, see Avdi & Georgaca, 2007). Along these lines, Gergen and Kaye (1992) turn to the creation of meanings through dialogical acts in the therapeutic couple. On the other hand, Schneider's (2013) research explores the psychoanalytic process in pragmatic terms, and at the level of speech acts and role negotiation. But the narrative approach itself has also benefited from the use of psychoanalysis and the integration of psychoanalytic postulates to studies with qualitative methodologies (for example, see Pardo & Buscaglia, 2017; Thomas, 2007; for an introduction, see Midgley, 2006). Research on discursive analysis has also employed psychoanalytic concepts to deepen the reflective turn in social psychology (Parker, 1994).

Narrative analysis makes it possible to measure and produce values by attributing numbers to different aspects of a narrative. Measurements in narratives allow researchers to quantify their qualitative aspects (Habermas & Döll-Hentschker, 2017) and, from there, carry out content or structure analysis. If psychopathology is a factor of interest, Habermas and Döll Hentschker argue that there are five aspects of narratives that are the most commonly affected by it. The first four aspects - narrativity, agency, direct evaluations and reflective causal evaluations, correspond to morphological-syntactic aspects of narratives; the fifth is a semantic-pragmatic aspect, the listener orientation. Our study is oriented to evaluate several of these narrative aspects considering, at the same time, psychoanalytic psychopathology and other factors.

The narrative approach to psychopathology has developed in different ways. In some cases, the relationships between narratives and psychopathological diagnosis have been studied, focusing on the characteristics that make up the narratives of patients in the context of a certain treatment. In other cases, emphasis has been placed on the structure of the narrative developed between psychotherapist and patient or on the relationship between different forms of pathologies and narratives (see Gonçalves et al., 2002), taking into account, in some of these cases, narrative coherence as a measure (Vanaken et al., 2020), or the effectiveness or dysfunctionality of the narrative (Dimaggio & Semerari, 2001). Other studies have addressed specific clinical structures and their relationship with narratives, when considering schizophrenia (Lysaker et al., 2003) or when addressing Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) (Mulhall et al., 2019). These works address the assumption that the discourse of the different diagnosis would be reflected in differences in the narrative structure of each one of them, and in most of these works it is intended to establish some forms of relationship between the narrative and the type of treatment needed.

Our interest differs from these last works. Even though we are interested in diagnosis, we don't intend to make a contribution on what the narrative characteristics of each diagnostic category in psychoanalysis are, which would imply a different approach. Our approach simply allows to answer the following questions: what is the effect of the factor diagnosis over the operation done by the psychoanalytic author as reflected in the analysand transcripts? And also, what is the type of self (more affective, more rational, more action oriented, etc.) promoted to the interior of its community by psychoanalyst authors when they publish a vignette that contains the analysand's discourse that is associated with a diagnostic category?

In a previous study (Muller & Bermejo, 2020) we have investigated the narrative structure of dreams included in psychoanalytic publications, studying the impact of four factors over it: the patient's diagnosis, the author's psychoanalytic school of reference, the gender of both the patient and the psychoanalyst, and the age of the patient. The study was carried out to determine how all of these factors affected the narrative structure of the reported dreams. We addressed, as we do in this study, the effect of these factors on narrative units (narrative tellings, contextualizing statements, affective-evaluative remarks and comments addressed to the analyst) and non-narrative units (such as meta-memory statements). Regarding the factor diagnosis, the results showed that the dreams of patients diagnosed as narcissistic contained more evaluative remarks, while the dreams of those diagnosed as borderline reflected a higher proportion of comments directed to the analyst. The psychoanalytic school of the author was an important factor as well, since there were more narrative tellings of non-personal facts of thought when the analyst was identified as Freudian and more affective components when he / she was identified as Lacanian. Finally, the gender of the analyst seems to be another important factor that affects the narrative structure of dreams, since we found a higher proportion of narrative tellings of personal facts, but of an affective nature, when the analyst was male.

The present work focuses not in dreams, but in discourse transcripts of analysands in psychoanalytic publications, and emphasizes the production done by the use of technologies and the operations of the psychoanalytic authors, more than the psychic production itself, as we did in the dream study. We propose to study the narrative structure of the transcripts, considering intentional states, types of facts, evaluative remarks, affective remarks, among other narrative and non-narrative elements. Specifically, when studying the transcriptions, we attend to four factors: diagnosis, psychoanalytic school, gender and source. We understand that each of one of these factors has an effect on the produced operations done by the psychoanalytic author over the analysand discourse, and as a consequence, promote certain types of selves.

On the one hand, we study how the narrative structure of this discourse is affected by the *diagnosis*. The study on the narrative of dreams (Muller & Bermejo, 2020) showed that diagnosis is a factor that has an effect on the narrative structure of dreams. As in that work, we consider the categories most commonly used by psychoanalysts today in Argentina: neurosis, borderline, narcissism, and psychosis. We understand that there are some discrepancies with diagnosis in the psychoanalytic community (Fink, 1997). Different authors could be using different variables over the same analysand for diagnostic purposes and although this is relevant for our considerations, our goal at this point is not to solve this issue, only to point out that among a certain group of psychoanalysts, those using certain diagnostic labels may tend to produce object-transcripts with certain narrative aspects that convey a certain type of self or selfhood.

As previously mentioned, we are also interested in studying whether the author's psychoanalytic school has an impact on the narrative structure of the transcripts. The dream
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study showed that the narrative structure of transcribed dreams was affected by this factor (Muller & Bermejo, 2020). Taking into account the psychoanalytic schools that have the most presence at the local level, we consider four main schools: a) classical or Freudian; b) the English school, which includes authors such as Melanie Klein but also more contemporary authors such as Donald Winnicott and Wilfred Bion; c) the Lacanian school, whose reference is the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan; and d) the Contemporary French School, whose referents are authors such as Andre Green and Didier Anzieu (regarding the latter category, see Lanza Castelli, 2018). In this regard, it was precisely the psychoanalyst André Green (2000) who pointed out the usefulness of attending to the references in a publication when wondering about the way of thinking of its author. We are interested in studying whether, for example, a greater number of affective or evaluative components are observed in the narrative structure of the transcripts produced by authors from one school or another. It will be interesting to observe this in the Lacanian school, for example, to which it is generally attributed not to consider the affects in its clinic (see Green, 2005 and Soler, 2016).

The third factor that we consider important to study is the gender, both of the patient and the analyst, and the impact that this may have on the production of the narrative material found in the transcripts. In the study on dreams (Muller & Bermejo, 2020) we saw the incidence that the gender of the analyst / author had on the proportion of narrative units. In the present work, we are also interested in studying whether the produced narrative in the form of transcripts can vary according to the gender of the analyst and, at the same time, whether there are more dominant narrative elements for patients of different genders. Does the produced narrative of female patients convey, as it is more generally assumed in stereotypical thinking, more affective statements than those of male patients? If the author is a male analyst, do the produced transcripts tend to show a narrative where the agent is the patient, or where the agent is someone else?

A potential problem for our study was the source of the transcripts. Since Freud's (1912/1958) classic *Recommendations to Physicians Practising Psycho-Analysis*, analysts should not take notes during the sessions, with the exception of some dates and names. The reason is that the note-taking process operates as an obstacle to listening. However, the source of the transcripts does appear in a variety of ways, some being products of recorded sessions, others, of notes taken during the session, and others, of a construction based on the memory of the analyst. The source then can be an important factor, if there turn out to be important differences between transcripts which source is a transcription of a recorded session and those which source is the memory of the analyst/author.

For the study of these four factors, we focus on their influence on the differences of proportions of the different narrative and non-narrative units (dependent variables) that make up each transcript. We consider narrative units such as narrative tellings -which include facts, but also predominant intentional states-, contextualizing statements, affective-evaluative remarks and comments addressed to the analyst, as well as non-narratives units, such as meta-memory and meta-narrative statements. Thus, the objective is to study in what way the narrative structure of the produced transcripts present in clinical vignettes varies according to diagnosis, reference school of the analyst who transcribes the discourse of the patient, the gender of the analyst and the patient, and the source of the transcripts.

Method

Materials

The material used in this study is composed of 93 clinical cases. These were all collected from articles published in the *Revista de Psicoanálisis* (Journal of Psychoanalysis) of the Asociación Psicoanalítica Argentina (Argentine Psychoanalytic Association) over a period of more than two decades (from 1995 to 2018). The published articles from which we obtained the transcripts of the patient's discourse had to meet two requirements: A) contain a transcript of the patient's speech of at least ten narrative and / or non-narrative units; B.1) mention diagnosis, contain bibliographic references (to identify the school), specify the gender of the patient and the source used in the composition of the transcript; or B.2) in the event that the data -for any of the items required in B.1- were not available in the publication, have the possibility of contacting the authors of the articles to consult them. In these cases, we used a brief survey with four questions, related to the factors already mentioned, and which is explained in the next section. In some cases, transcripts that did not present specific information about some factor, and where it was not possible to specify it in the interview with the author, were preserved anyway because they presented information on other factors of the study.

As already mentioned, the sample consisted of 93 cases. On the one hand, for the 'Diagnosis' variable, the distribution was as follows: Neurosis [26, which decomposes into Hysteria (11), Obsessive Neurosis (10), Phobia (5)], Narcissism (22), Borderline (24), Psychosis (6). There was a total of fifteen cases that did not present a diagnosis and where diagnosis was not obtained from the interview with the author. The six cases of Psychosis were discarded from the final analysis due to their low frequency. For a cross tabulation between Diagnosis and School, see Table 1.

For the School variable, the frequencies were the following: Freudian School (11), Lacanian School (13), English School (33), Contemporary French School (30), Others (for example, Kohut) (4) (see Table 1). In two cases the school was not identified.

Table 1. Cross tabulation of frequencies between Diagnosis and School

School	Diagnosis				Total
	Neurosis	Narcissism	Borderline	Psychosis	
Freudian	3	4	0	1	8
Lacanian	10	0	2	1	13
English	7	6	11	3	27
Contemporary French	5	9	11	1	26
Others	1	3	0	0	4
Total	26	22	24	6	78

When taking the gender of the analyst into consideration, the sample consisted of a total of 48 female analysts and 45 male analysts. On the gender side of the patient, the sample consisted of 43 females and 50 males (for cross tabulation of gender, see Table 2).

Table 2. Cross tabulation of frequencies between Analyst Gender and Patient Gender

Patient Gender	Analyst Gender		Total
	Female	Male	
Female	26	17	43
Male	22	28	50
Total	48	45	93

Regarding the Source of the transcription: Transcription of recording (8), Notes (12), Reconstruction based on memory (20), Notes plus Reconstruction based on memory (15). In 38 cases, in which the author could not be interviewed, no information on the source was obtained. For the narrative analysis, a grid developed by Hirst and Manier (1996), and that was already applied in previous studies (Muller et al., 2016, 2018), was updated based on our current interest, and do not derive from the transcripts. The categories of this grid are exhaustive, and have similarities with the type of narrative analysis done by other researchers (e.g., Habermas & Döll-Hentschker, 2017). Following Hirst and Manier (1996), two main components were considered: Narrative and Non-Narrative Units. The first are divided into Narrative Tellings (which are divided into Facts -in this case, they can be Action, Thought or Affective-, and Intentional, and at the same time both can be Personal, Non-Personal or Impersonal), Contextualizing Statements, Affective-Evaluative Remarks (which in turn can be Affective or Evaluative, Positive, Neutral or Negative, and at the same time Personal, Non-Personal or Impersonal) and Comments addressed to the analyst. The latter can be Meta-memory or Meta-narrative Statements (See Appendix A).

Procedure

Articles published in the *Revista de Psicoanálisis* were pre-selected, in accordance to the criteria explained in the preceding section. In cases where the author of the publication needed to be interviewed, he / she was contacted to arrange a brief telephone interview about his / her publication, in which four questions were asked: 1) if he / she remembered the patient whose transcription we found in the publication; 2) if so, the diagnosis of this patient (Hysteria, Obsessive Neurosis, Phobia, Borderline, Narcissism and Psychosis); 3) the source of the transcript (Recording, Notes taken during the session, Reconstruction based on the post-session memory, Other source); 4) his / her main reference authors (Freud, Lacan, Klein, Winnicott, Green, Others).

The narrative analysis on the selected clinical vignettes explained in the preceding section was only performed on the transcripts of the patient's discourse. In all cases, the literal production of the patient, as presented in the selected publications, was analyzed. The analysis was carried out by two assistant researchers trained in our narrative scheme analysis described above. They proceeded to carry out the analysis individually. Following the definition of narrative tellings, that requires that a central topic or a main theme has to be identified, the research assistants proceeded first by identifying these main themes or central topics to organize the narrative analysis around them.

In a second moment, agreements and differences in the classification of each unit were assessed together. There was an initial agreement in 90% of the units between the two raters. Differences were discussed in search of a resolution. Finally, there was an agreement in 98.6% of the units.

In cases where there was no agreement, the units in question were eliminated from the final analysis.

Data Analysis

First, after the narrative analysis, the proportion of each dependent variable over the total units was established. Next, the goal of the analysis was to evaluate the differences in proportions of narrative and non-narrative units depending on the factors described. To do this, the assumptions were verified to be able to carry out Analysis of Variance (Anova's). In the Results section, we focused especially on homogeneity of the variances, through the Levene test. In cases of compliance, the Anova results are reported (with the Bonferroni post-hoc test in case of factors with more than two levels). In cases of non-compliance with the assumption of homogeneity of the variances, Welch's Anova's were performed, with the Games-Howell post-hoc test, if necessary. One-way Anova's were carried out, since they avoid the substantial loss of cases. In some cases, significant differences in more general dependent variables that encompass more specific dependent variables are not reported, because the variation of that variable is fully or partially explained by the latter and the differences are between the same groups. For example, the main effect for Narrative Tellings for the factor Diagnosis (more proportion for neurotics than for borderlines) is not reported. Instead, results for Narrative Tellings of Facts are reported. The reason is that there are no significant differences for the variable Intentional Narrative Tellings and differences in Narrative Tellings are explained by differences in Narrative Tellings of Facts.

Results

A quick analysis allows us to discard the factor source, since less than 9% of the sample referred having used some form of recording as their source for the transcripts, while its vast majority was composed of transcripts based on note taking and memory, following Freud's advice. The results section is then organized by the analysis of the three remaining factors, diagnosis, psychoanalytic school and gender, in that same order.

Diagnosis

There were significant differences in four dependent variables for this factor. First, for Narrative Tellings of Facts, $F(2,69)=.82$, $p=.027$, $n_p^2=.100$. Through a post-hoc Bonferroni test for multiple comparisons was shown that those diagnosed with Neurosis ($M=.75$, $SD=.13$) produced a significantly higher proportion of these units than those with a Borderline diagnosis ($M=.64$, $SD=.17$), $p=.023$.

Second, for Narrative Tellings of Personal Action Facts, $F(2,69)=3.14$, $p=.049$, $n_p^2=.083$. The Bonferroni test showed that neurotics ($M=.29$, $SD=.13$) produced a significantly higher proportion of these units than narcissists ($M=.21$, $SD=.09$), $p=.044$.

Third, for Positive Impersonal Evaluative Remarks, Levene's test was significant, $F(2,69)=20.91$, $p<.001$. Therefore, a Welch's Anova was carried out, $F(2,33.39)=5.90$, $p=.006$. The Games-Howell post-hoc test showed that those with a Borderline diagnosis ($M=.02$, $SD=.03$) used a significantly higher proportion of these units than those with a Neurosis diagnosis ($M=.00$, $SD=.00$), $p=.032$.

Finally, for Negative Impersonal Evaluative Remarks, Levene's test was also significant, $F(2,69)=11.24$, $p<.001$. The Welch's Anova showed significant differences, $F(2,34.96)=3.65$, $p=.036$. However, the Games-Howell post-hoc test showed that the difference in the production

of these narrative units between those with a Narcissism diagnosis ($M=.02$, $SD=.03$) and those with a Neurosis diagnosis ($M=.00$, $SD=.01$) did not reach statistical significance, $p=.085$.

Diagnosis - Complementary Analysis

As a complementary analysis to that reported in the previous section, we will report here on an analysis in which only the three groups that made up the category “Neurotics” in the preceding analysis were compared with each other: Phobia, Obsessive Neurosis and Hysteria. A significant difference was found in only one dependent variable.

For Personal Evaluative Remarks, $F(2,23)=3.65$, $p=.042$, $\eta_p^2=.241$. The Bonferroni post hoc test showed that those with a diagnosis of Phobia ($M=.05$, $SD=.03$) produced a significantly higher proportion of these narrative units than those with a diagnosis of Obsessive Neurosis ($M=.02$, $SD=.02$), $p=.039$.

Psychoanalytic School

For this factor, there were significant differences in three dependent variables. First, for Narrative Tellings of Action Facts, $F(4,86)=3.77$, $p=.007$, $\eta_p^2=.149$. The Bonferroni test showed that also when the analyst was from the Lacanian school ($M=.61$, $SD=.16$) the narratives showed a significantly higher proportion of these units than when the analyst was from the Contemporary French school ($M=.43$, $SD=.14$), $p=.011$.

Second, for Narrative Tellings of Personal Action Facts, $F(4,86)=4.57$, $p=.002$, $\eta_p^2=.175$. The Bonferroni test showed that when the analyst was from the Lacanian school ($M=.37$, $SD=.10$) the transcripts showed a significantly higher proportion of these units than when the analyst was from the Contemporary French school ($M=.23$, $SD=.11$), from the English school ($M=.23$, $SD=.15$) or from Other Schools ($M=.12$, $SD=.05$), $p=.014$, $p=.013$ and $p=.006$, respectively.

Finally, for Negative Evaluative Remarks, Levene’s test was significant, $F(4,86)=5.93$, $p<.001$. Therefore, a Welch’s Anova was carried out, $F(4,16.19)=3.26$, $p=.039$. Through the Games-Howell post-hoc test it was evidenced that when the analyst was from the Contemporary French school ($M=.08$, $SD=.08$) the narratives showed a significantly higher proportion of these units than when the analyst was from the Lacanian school ($M=.03$, $SD=.04$) or from the English school ($M=.03$, $SD=.04$), $p=.040$ and $p=.011$, respectively.

Patient Gender

For this factor, there were significant differences in two dependent variables. For Narrative Tellings of Impersonal Action Facts, Levene’s test was significant, $F(1,91)=9.73$, $p=.002$. Therefore, a Welch’s Anova was carried out, $F(1,78.63)=6.63$, $p=.012$. Male patients ($M=.05$, $SD=.05$) used a significantly higher proportion of these units than female patients ($M=.03$, $SD=.03$).

For Personal Affective Remarks, Levene’s test was also significant, $F(1,91)=7.85$, $p=.006$. Therefore, a Welch’s Anova was performed, $F(1,70.26)=4.21$, $p=.044$. In this case, female patients ($M=.03$, $SD=.05$) used a significantly higher proportion of these units than those of male gender ($M=.01$, $SD=.03$).

Analyst Gender

There were significant differences in two dependent variables for this factor. For Narrative Tellings of Non-Personal Facts, $F(1,91)=6.41$, $p=.013$, $\eta_p^2=.066$. When the analysts were

female ($M=.26$, $SD=.14$), the patients produced a significantly higher proportion of these units than when the analysts were male ($M=.19$, $SD=.12$).

For Negative Personal Affective Remarks, Levene's test was significant, $F(1,91)=18.80$, $p<.001$. Therefore, a Welch's Anova was carried out, $F(1,52.36)=4.55$, $p=.038$. When the analysts were male ($M=.02$, $SD=.05$), the patients produced a significantly higher proportion of these units than when they were female ($M=.01$, $SD=.02$).

Discussion

One important finding of the present work is that psychoanalytic transcripts have some specific characteristics. First, psychoanalytic transcripts are, as our results have shown, rarely based on audio or video records as transcripts typically do. They are mostly based on memory and notes and count as transcripts because readers understand that what they are reading was something the patient said literally. So, psychoanalytic transcripts do not adjust to the accepted definition of transcripts but conformed a specific type of transcript that should be considered in itself, just as the psychoanalytic clinical case (Nasio, 2013). In that sense, psychoanalytic transcripts do not follow any international rules for its conformation but some sort of implicit rule within the discipline that should be addressed in future studies. Second, the psychoanalytic transcripts we analyzed did not typically reflect the interaction of two speakers, but mostly the utterances of one of them (the patient), and were presented in such a way that did not allow transcripts analysis such as gaze direction and gestures. This specific conformation of the transcript may be in part due to the way the psychoanalytic experience structures its interaction and its atypical dialogue, which is between two subjects but where the subjectivity of one of them (the analyst) is controlled or left out through a series of self-directed operations (see Freud, 1912/1958). But also, in part due to the predominant schools that tend to present transcripts in such a way. Intersubjective or relational approaches like those predominant in the Anglo-Saxon psychoanalytic world promote transcripts where both subjectivities are present (e.g., Gabbard, 2008).

At a more general level, this work is an attempt to answer the following question: What type of self does psychoanalysis promote or construct through its publishing apparatus, specifically through the produced transcripts in their clinical vignettes? We intended to respond to this question by considering that there are technologies and operations employed by the psychoanalytic authors over the transcripts which we studied. The idea is that if we study these discourses in their structure, in their composition, we can find the clues or signs of the construction of a self or subject that could be articulated from their discourse.

But also, at a more specific level, our research intends to make a contribution in deciphering the discourse of hysteria, of obsessional neurosis or of the other clinical nomenclatures that traverse psychoanalysis today, but by addressing its produced and collective character rather than its individuality, as the general approach does. We intend to show, for example, that social and institutional factors affect this discourse in its production.

Firstly, if we consider the diagnosis, we find two results to highlight: the facts (and in particular the action ones) and the evaluative remarks. The transcripts of neurotic patients are conformed by a higher proportion of *narrative tellings of facts* than are those of patients with a diagnosis of borderline. The accounts of neurotic patients transmitted by the authors tend to be characterized by the enumeration of actions, affections or thoughts that occurred, such as, for

example, “I felt great sadness when I left that place” (fact-affect) or “He believed that I would return soon” (fact-thoughts).

On the other hand, this characteristic has a more specific mark with respect to narcissists. The difference lies in that the *facts* that are most prevalent in neurotics, when contrasted with narcissists, are those of *personal actions*. Therefore, with respect to narcissists, the transcribed narrative of neurotics appears indicating a greater involvement in their actions. For example, the neurotic narrative showed a higher proportion of narrative statements of this type: “That morning I went to the office” or “Every Sunday I worked in that café”. Neurosis as a factor tends to produce transcripts which structure reflects a higher level of personal actions, which indicates a higher level of involvement in their experience. So, this is a self that is more predisposed to actions, and more involved with them, when compared with the transcription produced for narcissistic patients.

Impersonal evaluative remarks were other indicators of differences between diagnostic groups. Specifically, the transcripts of borderline patients showed a higher proportion of *positive evaluative impersonal remarks* when compared to those diagnosed as neurotics. That is, comments such as “Life is wonderful” or “Parties in NY are fun” occupied more space in their narratives. In contrast, although the result was only a trend, with respect to *negative impersonal evaluative remarks*, narcissistic patients’ transcripts showed a higher proportion of judgments such as “Today is a horrible day” than those of neurotic patients. In both cases, the transcripts produced by neurotic patients included a significantly lower proportion of impersonal evaluative remarks than other diagnosis. So, while the narcissistic subject produced by transcripts composed by the psychoanalytic authors is one whose discourse reflects low levels of personal implication, giving birth to a subject with a negative outlook about things, the borderline produced transcripts gives birth to a subject with a more positive look at the world. But both of them tend to use more impersonal evaluations, promoting a more detached and less compromised subject in both cases. Psychoanalytic authors such as Bromberg (1979) tend to point out the detachment characteristics of both borderline and narcissistic patients, but do not stress those emotional tones our discourse analysis found.

The differences in favor of neurotics in relation to narrative tellings of facts and personal action facts seem to be the other side of the coin of the findings discussed in the preceding paragraphs: that is, the neurotic subject produced by the transcripts tends to be less engaged in evaluative aspects or activities and be more involved in events than the narcissistic or borderline subjects.

Now, if we focus specifically on the transcripts of neurotic patients (hysteria, obsessive neurosis and phobia), we find an important result. Psychoanalytic authors produce transcripts of phobic patients which have a greater presence of *personal evaluative remarks* than those of obsessive patients. Comments such as “I’m a good person” or “In general, I’m a bit arrogant” are more characteristic of vignettes of phobic patients than of obsessive patients. A self or subject more prone towards self-evaluation, more super-ego related, is the result of those transcripts, a characteristic much more present in the produced transcripts of phobic than obsessive analysands (for an elaboration of the relationship between phobia and superego, see Gerez Ambertín, 1999).

The author’s school of reference also seems to be another factor of relevance. Here we are interested in highlighting that if the author belongs to, or identifies with, the Lacanian school, his / her transcripts will be made up of a greater number of *personal facts of action* than those of other schools. They will form a transcript where the narrative structure highlights the

patient's actions to a greater extent than the authors of Contemporary French, English or other schools, using, for example, phrases such as "I rode my bicycle every day in the neighborhood" (fact-action) or "At that time I worked from 9 to 18 hours" (fact-action). As the neurotics, the subject produced by Lacanian authors through the transcripts tends to be more action oriented than the subject produced by authors from other psychoanalytic schools.

Perhaps this reflects the criticism that is often made to Lacan of not dealing with affects (Green, 2005), in such a way that the transcripts of Lacanian analysts reflect events to the detriment of affects and other narrative components. That said, it is the analysts of the Contemporary French school who tend to conform transcripts with negative evaluative remarks to a greater extent than the Lacanians or those of the English school, with the use of statements such as "He is a bad person" or "Life is very complicated". In general, the Contemporary French school promotes diagnosis such as narcissism, which would relate this finding to the one discussed above where we addressed the influence of the diagnosis of narcissism. This last affirmation and the findings regarding other narrative unit, the Narrative Tellings of Personal Action Facts, which were more prevalent not only in those diagnosed as Neurotics but also in Lacanian analysts, should lead us to be cautious with this last two interpretations, because some diagnoses were more frequent for some schools (see Table 1). For example, it is not usual the use of the Borderline category among those that consider themselves as Lacanian, and in the current sample most transcripts presented by Lacanian analysts were of neurotic patients. This does not necessarily preclude us to discuss the findings in the terms used, but one alternative interpretation could be directed to the institutional weight of some schools for some diagnoses, so both a certain school and a certain diagnosis could give rise to the discussed findings.

Gender is also a factor that affects the narrative structure of the transcripts. Male patients tend to be represented by transcripts with a greater presence of *narrative tellings of impersonal action facts* than female patients are. For example, in our studies, narrative units such as "It was a sunny day" were more prevalent among their transcripts. On the other hand, female patients were represented as using more *personal affective remarks*, such as "I am very happy at this moment". The production of both the male and female subjects seems to be aligned with the literature. A review by Wester et al. (2002) suggests that sexual differences in emotionality are small, inconsistent or limited, but susceptible to the influence of specific situational demands (context-dependent) or learned gender roles (rather than reflective of innate, basic differences in affective ability). Specifically, the evidence suggests that women are socialized to be emotional, whereas men are not. Wester et al. review shows that girls are encouraged to express emotions, with the exception of anger and contempt, through words and facial expressions. On the other hand, boys would be discouraged to express emotions, with the exceptions of anger and pride [see Chaplin and Aldao (2013) for a meta-analysis with similar results]. According to Eagly (2009), gender role beliefs imply that women are thought to be more communal (i.e., emotionally expressive, concerned with others, etc.) than men. In this sense, the transcripts produced seems to replicate this aspect of the socialization process.

On the side of the analyst's gender, female analysts reported transcripts with a greater presence of *narrative tellings of non-personal facts* than male analysts did, as in the expression "My friends visited me once a week", in where the others are the agents of the actions. In turn, male analysts' transcripts were presented with a higher proportion of *negative personal affective remarks*, like "I feel rejected", relatively in line with what was found in Muller and Bermejo (2020), where patients were reported to having had produced dreams with more narrative tellings of personal affective facts ("I felt overwhelmed") when the analyst was male (a narrative unit similar, although not the same as affective remarks). The male authors ended up

producing a more “depressed” subject and the female author a subject where the others are the agents of the action.

Our results show that the produced transcripts of neurotic patients in psychoanalytic publications tend to promote an action-oriented self, not overly involved with evaluations of self and other. But also, that the evaluative dimensions are more present when the transcripts correspond to those that are considered phobic by the authors, indicating higher levels of “superego” activities in these constructed discourses, and promoting a more evaluative self. At the same time, a more detached self, prone to evaluative comments, is promoted by the transcripts when a diagnosis of borderline or narcissism is in the authors mind. Once again, a more action-oriented self is also promoted by the transcripts of the authors from the Lacanian School. From the gender point of view, female patients tend to give rise, through their transcripts, to an emotional self, while male patients are represented as being more impersonal. Finally, male authors produce a depressed self, while the transcripts of the female authors give place to an implicated self.

An Action Oriented Self, a Detached Self, an Evaluative Self, an Emotional Self, a Depressed Self and an Implicated Self are our own articulation of the different selves that are promoted in the produced transcripts when we consider the different studied factors. These factors intervene in the operations and technologies employed in the production of that element involved in many psychoanalytic publications, based on the analysed speech: the psychoanalytic transcript.

One way to consider the relevance of the study lies in the fact that it is in their publications that psychoanalysts represent the discourse of their patients. Therefore, it is in these publications with their corresponding transcripts where we will find, for example, the hysterical discourse as it is represented. But this representation process is more the result of a set of operations and productions done over the patient’s discourse than the patient’s discourse objectively captured, or the true discourse of a patient. At this point we contemplate the fact that in these transcripts there are two registers of subjectivity: analyst and patient. But also, we have to add a third one, that of the psychoanalytic author, who ends up producing the discourse of the patient through the operations done over his or her speech, in the process of constituting the material that will illustrate the presentation of a clinical case, or the exemplification of a theoretical or technical development. That is why our study makes a contribution to the structural conformation of the narratives that we find embodied in the form of transcriptions in psychoanalytic publications; on the one hand, the two actors of the analytic experience as source of the material, and on the other hand, the psychoanalytic author, that through a set of operations and techniques produces or creates those transcripts that transcend to the psychoanalytic community.

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Appendix A

Definitions and Examples of Narrative Units and Non-Narrative Units

Narrative Units			
<p>Narrative Tellings Describe states (intentional or not) or events that are linked together (causally, temporally, or spatially) and that relate to a central topic or theme</p>	According to content	Intentional	Description of current intentional mental state <i>“I think they’re going to tell me not to go anymore”</i>
		Fact	Involves the description and narration of facts/events <i>“In just a few weeks I lost ten kilos”</i> According to subtype: Affective: <i>“Before coming to the session, I was always anxious about whether you were going to surprise me with something unforeseen”</i> Thought: <i>“I was seriously thinking about going with my boyfriend”</i> Action: <i>“I got married to leave home”</i>
	According to the agent involved	Personal	Describe states or events whose agent is the narrator (active agent) <i>“The other day I felt very bad, sad”</i>
		Non personal	Describe states or event whose agent is other person or group <i>“The boss one day told me, agreeing with me, ‘they are unrecoverable’”</i>
		Impersonal	Describe states or events where there is no agent <i>“The factory is growing every day”</i>
	<p>Affective-evaluative Remarks Provide editorial judgements or express overall emotional reactions from a current perspective to narrative tellings about past events</p>	According to the predominant feature	Evaluative
Affective			<i>“And that excites me!”</i>
According to the agent involved		Personal	<i>“It distresses me that he is angry that I am not here.”</i>
		Non personal	<i>“He had a protective presence”</i>

		Impersonal	<i>"The world sucks"</i>
	According to valence	Positive	<i>"But I am also happy because I am alive"</i>
		Negative	<i>"It's a bit painful after I've turned my life upside down for her!"</i>
		Neutral	<i>"Maybe, there's nothing wrong with it"</i>
Contextualizing statements		Narrative tellings related to events or states outside the immediate spatio-temporal context of the narrative, adding "context" to the narrative tellings <i>"Our grandfather had come from Italy in 1930"</i>	
Comments addressed to the analyst		<i>"Doctor, how old are you?"</i>	
Non narrative units			
Meta-narrative statements		Comments about discourse itself <i>"I am not sure about what I am saying"</i>	
Meta-memory statements		Comments about memory and the way of remembering <i>"This memories are fuzzy, I find hard to remember those days"</i>	

Book Review

Review of *Esoteric Lacan* by Philipp Valentini and Mahdi Tourage (Eds.). London: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2020. 254 pages. ISBN 978-1786609700.

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When first coming across the Philipp Valentini and Mahdi Tourage's cover of *Esoteric Lacan* on a website listing of forthcoming psychoanalytic books, I was intrigued by the title. My knowledge of Lacan was only slightly beyond the fresh stage. Two factors make studying the work of Lacan difficult. Firstly, Lacan himself deliberately chose not to make his language, concepts, and teaching style overly comprehensible. This is in contradistinction to Freud, whose language is relatively clear and straightforward. Secondly, Lacan's methodology of unfolding his creative ideas and concepts over time is fundamentally different from those methods of science. Science deals with the macro- and microcellular, subatomic and universal forces whose natures are predictable to a degree, and the scientific method, a specific protocol facilitating producing discrete results. Lacan, in contrast, mused, proposed, experimented, and interlocuted with multiple disciplines, such as topology, structural anthropology, and philosophy, in an idiosyncratic way to generate a unique and provocative perspective all his own.

This constitutes the fundamental difference between the sciences and non-sciences such as psychoanalysis and philosophy. Generally, the sciences discuss and interpolate their objects through common languages and procedures, from which novelty is insularly developed and comprehensible from a common starting point. In psychoanalysis and philosophy however, novelty is often specific to the individual's approach. While arguably, it might have been possible to produce another Einstein using scientific logics and materials to generate common results via consensus, producing another Lacan would be next to impossible on the basis that when, why, and how Lacan chose to combine his interests exclusively depends on his singular character, epistemology, logics, and procedures. Add to this Lacan was always shifting his position, the only way to get a Lacanian answer was to wait for Lacan himself to produce it.

The importance of stating this fundamental difference directly relates to what it means to generate a secondary literature hermeneutics from a principally creative process. It is not possible to absolutely root out Lacan's intentions without him explicitly elucidating so. More simply stated, no one can elaborate another person's thought process before, during, or after they state it, much less in a half-stated manner. Precognition of this kind would constitute all sorts of Lacanian violations culminating in a truth that is "half-stated". Viewing Lacan's work initializing from an artistic generative process branching toward scientific deductivity has been important for me in understanding his transdisciplinary capabilities.

What can be performed, however, is to take the connections he derived and implied and make further inferences, connections, and reflections through outside perspectives. The present collection of exquisite essays in *Esoteric Lacan* compiled by Philipp Valentini and Mahdi

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Tourage is hands down one of the most provocative, but also clarifyingly prescient, books I have ever read on Lacan's work.

With Lacan's transdisciplinary and transversal approach to psychoanalysis stressed, it becomes easier to appreciate how this iterative approach is progressively fruitful in the present collection of essays. The directive of the essay set is made explicitly clear on the back cover blurb:

This collection critically examines how Lacan helps us to question how far the European understanding of these texts and traditions is tied to the universal drive of capitalism and to the psychological internalization of the history of colonialism. (back blurb)

Agata Bielik-Robson opens the first chapter with a discussion of the relationship between Lacan and his usage of Judaism. Given what I'm already familiar with, Bielik-Robson immediately struck me saying:

For Lacan, Judaism is the paradigmatic religion of the Other, arranged around the unspeakable extimate centre: the encounter with the Thing itself... (p. 24)

My personal background is with Christianity, not Judaism, but this statement alone was enough of a bridge to allow a scholastic connection to be made. More interestingly, the paragraph before Jesus is related to Lacan's *sinthome* concept whereby "...Jesus, the first *sinthome*, or the first saint man destituted/reduced to his symptom, who successfully expressed his hatred for being with the love for the Real" (p. 24).

The second chapter helmed by Calvin Warren asks a direct question: How might anti-black violence become a sort of religious rituals or a perverse form of worship? (p. 47). Towards the closing of his essay, the author posits:

Hope in miracles, overcoming the American idol, and the reinstatement of the true Other might not have definitive places in Lacanian psychoanalysis, but a continued conversation between black theology and psychoanalysis is fecund with possibility. (p. 56)

I can personally attest as a black subject that there is next to no relation between these two domains in contemporary black United States culture. The church supplements all parallel functions, as the vast majority of black subjects are religious and predominantly Christian. To strike up such a discourse requires a Herculean effort to juxtapose psychoanalysis against the omnipotence of God.

Mahdi Tourage gives an excellent overview of the parallels and differences between Lacanian theory and Sufism. I was pleasantly surprised to see Tourage note "...Lacan's formulation of language as the single paradigm of all structures brings him close to Sufis and makes his work 'esoteric'" (p. 63). Enlightenment continued when he went on to say:

Whereas Muslim theologians employed hair-splitting rational debate as a mode of discourse to speak of God, Sufis paradoxically spoke of 'the language of unsaying' in reference to the awesome God who is irreducible to any language. (p. 63)

There are explicit ties here to apophatic and cataphatic theology, describing God through negative affirmation, and positive affirmation, respectively. Lacanians are already familiar with Lacan's elusive discourse around the Real. Others will find Tourage's further discussions of the phallus, Qur'anic poetry, and Rumi's *Masnavi* intensely engaging.

Many will appreciate Bruce Rosenstock's discussion of Kabbalistic use between Lacan and Wilfred Bion. Taking two of psychoanalysis' most complex thinkers and uniting them through religious themes commands respect. Rosenstock notes the following consequence of his thesis:
...I will suggest that Lacan and Bion seek to free us from the categories of breaking and repairing (part and whole objects) and let desire rejoice in the sheer facticity of being in its rupture... (p. 78)

Rarely do I see conversations with these two figures uttered in the same breath. It was a treat and exciting to learn more about Bion since my knowledge of him is next to nil. Those familiar with Lacan's Four Discourses eventually come to learn about the fifth Capitalist Discourse but may not fully understand it. John Holland provides a thorough and succinct remedy to this. Its chief distinction is motion conducted like an infinity-symbol instead of directly clockwise or counter-clockwise. In addition, Holland takes special care to clarify Lacan's discursive intentions relative to Marx:

To argue, therefore, that Marx makes Lacan's writing of the capitalist discourse possible will require an attentive and meticulous *misreading* of Marx's critique; it will proceed on the assumption that the psyche itself misunderstands Marx.
(p. 114)

Miroslav Griško highlights a very important question common to many struggles: "...How can Rebel oppose Master without becoming a new Master? (p. 119). Even outside of Lacanian theory, the frustration encountered throughout history with factions claiming to be different from their predecessors, only to engage in the same behaviors is an extremely worn sociopolitical trope. Griško examines this relationship utilizing Christian Jambet and Guy Lardreau's *The Angel*, Carl Schmitt's political theology, Lacan's "not-all" formulation, and much more.

In Jared Sexton and Sora Han's own words:

This chapter addresses the modern problematic of racial slavery and universal freedom and the possibility of a theoretical formulation of relations between the two terms. (p. 141)

Sexton and Han introduce an Afropessimist perspective into *Esoteric Lacan's* schema. They use the Lacan's *vel* (Latin: "or") concept to extemporize on the nature of choice, forced choice, and the effects incurred on the black subject contending with historical slavery and freedom in the multiple senses of being and existence.

Janina Maris Hofer tackles two of Lacan's most difficult concepts, that of the Borromean Knot and sinthome. Like Holland's essay *The Capitalist Exception*, Hofer's *Experiences of Transcendence in the Borromean Knot* is a compact beginner's guide to the concept and how it can be integrated with transcendence as discussed by Thomas Luckmann. Hofer directly states:

The ultimate aim of this chapter is to show to what extent Luckmann's concept of experiences of transcendence can be combined with Lacan's Sinthome, providing a way to describe 'religious' experiences. (p. 163)

Davor Džalto treads familiar ground in juxtaposing Lacan's multi-thematic use of the father with Orthodox Christianity's Trinitarian complexes and implementations. His essay *Freedom and Nothingness, Between Theodicy and Anthropodicy: Lacan and (Un)Orthodox Perspectives* (with the '...and Nothingness' alluding to Sartre perhaps?) helps to give Lacanian concepts

like “The Big Other” and the “Name-of-the-Father” more contextual flesh, so to speak. He writes:

Thus the fantasy of god (the universal father) mediates all sorts of unconscious phenomena, including the Oedipus complex, sadomasochistic impulses. In this sense, both of these father figures (the ‘real’ [family] father and the ‘Divine Father’) belong to the *symbolic* order, they are established as part of our immersion into the (symbolic, social) ‘world’. The ‘Big Other’ speaks through both of these paternal figures. (p. 184-5)

My awareness of Benny Lévy is limited to his relationship with Jean-Paul Sartre and the work they produced together. Surprisingly, I was unaware Lévy was also Sartre’s official secretary for that brief time period. Nonetheless, I shouldn’t be surprised with his concentrated Lacanian engagement. Gilles Hanus brings both figures together under the discussion of antiphilosophy, which Hanus puts forward saying:

For Lévy and Lacan, antiphilosophy never involves renouncing rationality, but is rather an attempt to free oneself from the conceptual reduction of the real produced by the discourse that is specifically philosophical: the *logos*. (p. 201)

Ibn ‘Arabī is another philosophical figure I have limited experience with. To that extent Philipp Valentini made me acutely aware of the fact that “...historians of Sufism tend to read Ibn ‘Arabī only through a Neoplatonist framework...” but also that he had “...been introduced in the West first through Renaissance epistemologies and later, in the twentieth century, through late occultist epistemologies...” which involved “...Hermeticism, Christian Kabbalah, and Martinist Free-Masonry...” (p. 215). Valentini goes on to extract a complex argument touching on the concepts of ‘adam, wujūd, ijād, the Name-of-the-Father, the Law, mysticism’s role in the emptiness of being, among numerous others.

I in no way, shape, or form consider my exposure to Lacan parallel with a Lacanian scholar’s. However, even with my limited exposure, I have found this book extremely enlightening and helpful in understanding fundamental Lacanian concepts beyond their usual Eurocentric function. My long introduction about Lacan and Lacanian ideas interlocuting with other domains comes full circle through the publishing of *Esoteric Lacan*. *Esoteric Lacan* is the work demonstrating the true efficacy and pitfalls of the ideas of a monumental figure who carved out a path for himself in a revolutionary, but conservative, space, compared to his peers. Yet, even through Lacan’s journey and exploration of heretical ideas, he does not exist in a world all his own and must eventually content with the annals of world history and peripheral thinkers.

Esoteric Lacan does a fantastic job of balancing Lacanian concepts and religious world views, on top of covering wide territorial engagement. It is comprehensive enough to be listed with other introductory books on Lacan, and exploratory enough to be a first choice for those seeking non-mainstream religious studies work. Anytime a work focused on a large breadth of content, there is the danger of lack of focus. *Esoteric Lacan* does *not* suffer that fate. The careful reader will notice the thoughtful, interlocuting threads that weave the golden, novel ideas within this edited collection. Further appreciation, maybe more so for English-language readers, will ensue when attempting to seek out similar materials, only to find they are far and few in-between. Lacan proved repeatedly the positive generativity in interlocutive methodology. *Esoteric Lacan* is a continuation of that tradition.

I cannot express my personal gratitude enough to Philipp Valentini, Mahdi Tourage, and the assemblage of authors for their incredible work in *Esoteric Lacan*. Interdisciplinary-minded

thinkers, scholars, and interlocutors should consider this work an active meditation on where Lacanian/religious studies scholarship *can* be and go when moving beyond a predominant framework. Too many fall into the idea of what Lacan represents instead of where he can *grow*. Without the capacity for growth, Lacanian studies, and eventually latent representation of the man himself, will grow staler than mouldy bread – and no amount of mana can save that descent from ‘on high’.