

# The Rudder and the Feminine <sup>1</sup>

*Gil Caroz*

I propose considering that a subject can situate herself in holding the rudder based on her rapport to the master discourse, that is to say, to the unconscious. This leads us to consider two logics, the masculine and the feminine. From the man who loves to hold the rudder—he is a particular species—one expects that he will do it based on his clinging to the  $S_1$  and to the phallus. He believes in it, he believes he is it, and he applies to his practice of holding onto the rudder the measure of the phallic rule: one single law for everyone, without exception.

In a world where the father has become timid, to govern based on a unique or singular masculine logic is the equivalent of condemning himself to embarrassment. The contemporary master does not enjoy the respect that one accorded him in the past, respect accorded to the one who was ready to put his life on the line. The  $S_1$  which gave a weight to his word has lost its force. Besides, the task of the contemporary master converges, rather, with that of the slave. He must submit himself to the will(s) of the people and to their judgments. Now, phallic jouissance does not encourage this kind of dialectic. The phallus, says Lacan, is consciousness's objection to giving service to the other.<sup>2</sup> It is autoerotic, that is to say that it implies the demand that things happen “in my way, and no other way than in my way” in order to be able to conclude as fast as possible, because it is necessary that that circulate.

Insofar as it has a link to the phallus and the signifying network, the relation of a woman to the unconscious is not foreign to man. He recognizes himself there since that position rules him. “It is from there where one sees man, nothing more than that, “Lacan says,” that the dear woman can have an unconscious.”<sup>3</sup> It does not prohibit that even insofar as she has a relationship to the phallus—phallus—she has nothing to lose and, then, is less inclined to hesitation. From that, examples multiply themselves for decades. “One said of Golda Meïr, there is no one more a man than she.” However, some other things took place for her through this masculine position. A

certain suppleness of her relation to the phallic semblant and a facility to separate herself from it to the profit of an act in which there was something of the most authentic.

This appears equally in the relation of the feminine to law insofar as it is universal. Jacques-Alain Miller has already emphasized the feminine tendency to humanize the law.<sup>4</sup> By confronting what limps, a woman privileges her address to the judge—the subject-supposed-to-know how to interpret the law—to adapt it to the particular case, rather than to the common law and without pity.

If the action of governing is measured, based on the capacity to confront a real without law that Machiavelli called “fortune,” the feminine logic of the treatment of *jouissance* is based on a case by case approach which it serves, doubtlessly, much better than the principle of a law for everyone. No pre-established law can be applicable to all the events of the real.

But the relation of a woman to the signifier of the lack in the Other brings us to another terrain. In this zone which is inaccessible to the signifier, a woman has no relation to the unconscious insofar as it is structured, as such, like a language, but to the hole in the symbolic of which the navel of the dream is a speaking example.

Here, it is no longer simply a humanization of the law or of a more airy relationship to the semblant. Feminine logic, from this side, is motivated by a point without law, or, even, to say it differently, by the law of caprice. Myths come to our help to speak of the horrors that this point can imply. Here I will evoke the example of Queen Esther, Jewish wife of King Assuérus in the epoch of the exile of Babylon. The King yields on the  $S_1$  since he entrusts his royal ring to Esther and her uncle Mardochée in order that they write up a decree in their guise in the name of the King, and that they sign with his seal. In consequence, Aman, his ten children, and thousands of other enemies of the Jews in the kingdom, are killed. This vengeance having taken place, for Esther, the account has still not been settled. When the King addresses a: “What do you still want?”; she replies: “Very well, let us put that off until tomorrow.” Assuérus, fascinated by Esther, opposes nothing to this demand. He yields on the phallic limit, which opens the way to a ven-

geance without limit. In any case, this is the interpretation of the Israeli filmmaker Amos Gitaï, in a film consecrated to Esther. Scholars of the *Talmud* do not conclude on the question of knowing whether Assuérus was imbecilic or astute.<sup>5</sup> Whatever the answer may be, the Biblical account of his link with Vashti, his first wife, shows very well his trouble with women.

However, if in our days, the silence of the father has become a generalized phenomenon, it is not for yielding the world to the feminine principle. Rather, it is for ceding to the science and scientism which accompanies it. For some years, we have been worried about seeing the reabsorption of politics into the administrative world, its management coming from substituting itself to governance. This mutation of the Other accompanied by a contemplation of the numeral [*chiffre*], rejects the difference, even, between men and women. The absence of the signifier in the unconscious which would say “woman,” having been denied, each one counts for One. Consequently, if the two logics of the relationship to the rudder regulate themselves on a relation of the man and the woman to the unconscious, management according to numeral [*chiffre*] takes its guarantee from the foreclosure of the unconscious.

Paraphrasing Lacan, I propose that the role of the psychoanalyst would be, today, that of “reintroducing a feminine logic into scientific considerations.” That implies a certain tolerance for caprice. The psychoanalyst is, here, Machavellian in the good sense of the term. A prince whose action does not change in order to adapt himself to the novelties and the surprises that “fortune” reserves for him, is condemned to fail. All considerations taken into account, in order to make oneself face fortune, it is better to be, on occasion, also as unexpected as the real.

That such a governance would appear capricious is based on a masculine logic. A fixed and stable political vision, always the same, is only a masculine fantasy. It is the masculine principle which rises up when the political directors attest to a certain inconsistency. The masculine seeks the good solution, the good orientation which would be valuable once and for all. He believes in it. Opposed to that, the feminine principle is toleration of inconsistency, because, in relation to the signifier, it is inconsistency itself.

From this perspective, the “crises” in the political life of a community are the name given to the moments when a politics adapts itself to the new demands of the real. It is not easy to introduce new orders. “The one who introduces them, says Machiavelli, has as enemies all those who draw advantage from the old orders and for warm defenders all those who would draw advantage from the new orders.”<sup>6</sup> However, the crises, very often sad, are also quite often fruitful [or productive].

To reintroduce feminine logic into the contemporary world means that the master, without abandoning the  $S_1$ , can let himself be called out to by the feminine principle, and especially by what this principle tries to make exist by the word [*parole*]. We can refer ourselves to another myth to enable us to guide ourselves on this point. We remain in Persia, the country of Queen Esther, to remember the stories of “A Thousand and One Nights.”<sup>7</sup> Sultan Schahriar has been cuckolded and decides to take his vengeance by killing every morning the woman he has married the previous evening. Sheherazade succeeds in putting an end to this murderous procedure by telling an unfinished story each evening, a story which opens onto the emptiness of the lacking signifier. This X that she leaves in suspense maintains the desire of the Sultan and shelters her from execution. Schahriar ends up abandoning his project. Paradoxically, his being opened up to the unlimited aspect of the word [*parole*] beyond the phallus which creates a limit to the phallic accumulation of a repetitive and deadly vengeance.

Is this dialectic between the two logics, masculine and feminine, possible? Is there something based on a masculine logic which can be grasped from this beyond the phallus? Anchored in his autistic jouissance, man can only be on the edge of phallic contours, hold out his ear and try to hear what happens from the other side, in the zone of the *pastout* (the not all) which remains hermetic for him. It is not easy for a man to be tolerant of what he is going to hear behind this door. The inconsistency which is heard there can easily be experienced as a weakness of the superego or of the ideal, a bad jouissance, to which the discourse of the master responds often by an insult. Freud’s formula was, without a doubt, much more successful

when he said that the superego of women would never be as “impersonal”<sup>8</sup> as that of men which obeys universal ideals. Lacan says nothing else when he elaborates his logic of the “not all” (*pastout*).

That does not prohibit the man who likes to hold the rudder from doing a psychoanalysis, perhaps, he will one day have a clear perception that what is the most intolerable to him, the most foreign, is also the most intimate for him. He will know, then, that he, himself, has a foot, sometimes both feet, in the Other jouissance. That he also can, occasionally, be in the shoes of a woman. He will be able, then, to let go of the sleeve a bit, not only to approach one of the events of fortune by a step, but also to give a new name to his caprices. Because, fortune, Machiavelli says, is woman.<sup>9</sup>

Translated by Ellie Ragland

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> This text has been presented at the Congress of the *NLS* at Geneva, June the 26<sup>th</sup>, 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Lacan, J., *Le séminaire, livre XX, Encore*, Paris, Seuil, 1975, p. 13.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90.

<sup>4</sup> Miller, J.-A., “Theory of Turin on the Subject of the School” [2000], *La Cause Freudienne*, no. 74, April 2010.

<sup>5</sup> *Talmud de Babylon*, traité Méguila, 12, a.

<sup>6</sup> Machiavel, *Le Prince* (translated by Marie Gaille-Nikodimovchapitre), Livre de poche, chapter Vi, p. 78.

<sup>7</sup> This example has been suggested to me by a conversation with Geert Hoonart.

<sup>8</sup> Freud, “Quelques conséquences psychiques de la différence anatomique entre les sexes” (1925), *La vie sexuelle*, p. 131.

<sup>9</sup> Machiavel, *ibid*, p. 162.

