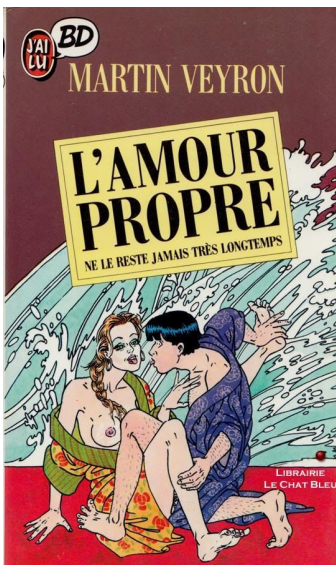


Prelude
Adored body
Marc Strauss



Chance circumstances meant that Agnès Metton’s friendly request for the contribution of this prelude coincided with my reading of page 66 of the French edition of the seminar *The Sinthome*, which corresponds to the fourth session, of 20th January 1976.¹ More apodictic than ever, Lacan proposes then that it is a characteristic of the species that the *parlêtre* adores his body.

The formulation could not be simpler, and yet it is disturbing. Is it so obvious? If we consult a famous search engine, we are weighed down by entries in Websites that present five, ten, or even fifteen pieces of advice to love one’s body, to come to terms with it, to reconcile with it, while others propose slimming diets. We are not

¹ Lacan, J. (2016). *The Seminar, Book XXIII, The Sinthome*. Cambridge, UK and Malden, MA, USA, Polity Press, p. 52.

talking about the worldwide success of cosmetic and corrective surgery; we simply refer to the shame and fears that our bodies unleash. So...?

It is true that adoring is not loving, and that not loving one's body does not mean not worshipping it: it is perhaps the opposite.

This adoration is for Lacan the fact of the falsehood produced by mentality, which is forced to imagine "false facts" in order to preserve the self-love that it presupposes.

Don't we have castration as a major example of a "false fact"? Freud very much insisted on the importance that the delusion that provides the sense of a separated jouissance to an absence has for the constitution and development of the little man.

Martin Veyron has given us an illustration of the fact that self-love never lasted too long for him, and the same can be said, alas, of Lacan's simplicity. In what follows, which becomes extremely dense and calls for a number of comments, Lacan places self-love at the origin of imagination, thus reformulating Freud's family romance of the neurotic, according to which it is from a wound in self-love that imagination takes off, ready to do anything to save the father in his function of assuring the certainty of his place in the Other. It is the body considered from the point of view of this Other that enables the subject to mentally represent himself as a unity, from which all *history* acquires sense.

Lacan adds that if the *parlêtre* adores his body it is because his mentality makes him believe that he has it – mentally and against all concrete evidence. He underlines that the body does not evaporate, and this is why it remains disagreeable to mentality.

The concrete remainder of the body is consequently transferred onto another body that is supposedly truly one, free from its painful mentality.

Rather than Narcissus, a prisoner of his image, about whom the ancients debated in order to establish whether he had recognized himself or not, we can consider Pygmalion, whose love gave life – not without the contribution of Aphrodite – to the stone body of Galatea. The various interpretations of this myth would take us far away, and we would not dare to see in the 1819 picture by Girodet, with its bunch of flowers in the right place, the epic form of a certain schema taken up by Bouasse. We shall simply mention that this Cypriot had fabricated the woman of his dreams after flying from his island, horrified as he was by the impudence of its inhabitants, the Propoetides, who had the dirty reputation of being prostitutes and witches, even the two in one – that is to say, of having a mentality...

If we follow Lacan in the page of *The Sinthome* mentioned earlier, we are all Pygmalions: through our adoration, we see ourselves giving life to the object by recognizing it in another body. Here we have a singular parallel between the object *a* that a woman is for a man and that the children are for her: it is always a question of giving life, even if it is by means of very different types of logic.

If it indeed appears that mothers adore the bodies of their children, sometimes for the misfortune of these children, this form of adoration is different from that which Lacan identifies in women, in his guiding remarks for a convention on female sexuality. In that text Lacan describes feminine infidelity in which, behind the man whose attributes the woman cherishes, there remains veiled “a castrated lover or a dead man (or the two in one) [...] in order to call her adoration to it”. An ideal incubus perhaps, but one that applies all his weight on the body of the sleeping beauty and produces an effect of certainty that inspired the sublime nightmare of Füssli.

It is clear that if psychoanalysis has verified that the body units are ordained on the basis of the discourses, it has always dealt with the body on the basis of another body, making of the body an attached body, a symptom of another body.

This could be a wrong way or even a deceptive way, but it remains the only feasible one for a *parlêtre* whose mentality does not reduce him to the complete abstraction of its imaginary consistency.

Hence a series of questions:

- What happens with the adoration of his own body for someone for whom the body of the other does not harbour any *agalma* because he has his object in his pocket, the psychotic?

- If the *parlêtre* adores his or her own body, is it always by adopting the part of a man, even in the case of women?

- What becomes of this adoration in an analysis, with the reduction of the sexual sense whose support was the fantasy? Is it possible to find an alternative through the analysis?

- In our era, called “of the cult of the body”, from Pygmalion to virtual pornography in *free access* [English in the original. T.], is the bond with the body of the other, and through it with one’s own body, affected; and if so, how is it affected?

Translated by Leonardo Rodríguez