

Lacan Circle of Melbourne

STUDY DAYS 2010

SATURDAY 17 APRIL

The Australian Institute of International Affairs, 124 Jolimont Road, East Melbourne 3002 (both parking-friendly and public transport-accessible).

The Wolf Man

Semblants, Simulacra and Verisimilitude

9.30am – 5.00pm

We continue with our study of the Wolf Man at our next Study day. Incidentally, you might have seen that there is a long piece by JA Miller on the Wolf man in the latest *Lacanian Ink*, no. 35. It is a crucial text. As we have a full program for the April meeting, we can spend some time studying it at our May study day.

The second part of our study day looks at some of the broader issues around semblants, both inside and outside the Freudian field.

Program

9.30 – 11.30 *The Wolf Man*

A detailed study of Freud's classic text on the Wolf Man, *From the history of an infantile neurosis*, *Standard edition* volume 17. Discussion will be led by Justin Clemens. We pick up the discussion at Part II, 'General survey . . .', p. 13 in the *Standard Edition*.

Semblants, Simulacra and Verisimilitude

'Semblant' invites comparison with classic philosophical concepts: reality and appearance, deception and truth. Embedded in the field of vision, it invites questions about its connections with simulacrum, a concept revived by Baudrillard, and likeness or verisimilitude. Lacan's work here takes us outside of the symbolic into the deceptive, the misleading, the it-is-not-what-it-seems—into a field where even the it-is-what-it-seems can itself be an illusion. Three presentations will explore these issues.

12.00 – 1.00pm *Real reality and virtual reality* – Matthew Sielawa

Semblants, like fetishes, protect us against the traumatic real, and the anxiety associated with it. They have a make-believe nature, they are deceptive, but we like them as they give us protection and satisfaction. The new realities we live in are a postmodern reality or "hyper-reality", described by Baudrillard, or a "virtual reality" created by advances in computer technology. They offer us a new generation of semblants: a "simulacrum", or a perfect copy of a copy (Jameson, Baudrillard) and a "techno-fetish" (Nusselder), which produce a surplus of enjoyment, so we choose increasingly to immerse ourselves in the

virtual environment. Does this process disturb our ability of retaining the right distance from the Real? Will the world around us “implode” so we cannot distinguish between what is real and what is fictional (Baudrillard). Or perhaps simulacra, instead of functioning as mere mirrors can be new windows for us, windows we can use to “express our own image in them” (Nusselder).

2.00 – 3.00 *Assembling the Semblant, or Recreating the lost object in Hitchcock’s Vertigo* – Mairead Phillips

If we read Scottie Ferguson’s recreation of the dead Madeleine as, in fact, the creation of the Lacanian *semblant*, then we have at our disposal a useful tool for identifying the similarities and differences of this concept from the *objet a* and the fetish object. Indeed, Scottie’s reconstitution of his lost love is almost a step-by-step guide, ‘How to Assemble a Semblant’. I will illustrate my presentation with excerpts from Hitchcock’s 1958 classic, *Vertigo*, starring James Stewart and Kim Novak.

3.30 – 4.30 *The semblant is on the side of the fetish object, the phallus is on the side of masquerade* – Sarah Curtis

A discussion of this distinction that draws on Lacan and Caillois and includes a return to Zeuxis

4.30-5.00 *General discussion*

Registration \$60, LCM members \$40, FT students \$30

Contact Russell Grigg rgrigg4@optusnet.com.au if you have any queries.