

Male Fetishism: the Anticipation of Castration

D. Hendrickx¹, A. Geldhof², V. Debaere³,

Ghent University, Henry Dunantlaan 2, 9000 Gent, Belgium

¹ hendrick.david@gmail.com - ² abe.geldhof@ugent.be - ³ virginie.debaere@ugent.be

Abstract

While current studies of perversion focus on spectacular symptoms and neglect subjectivity, Freud and Lacan study perversion as a possible organization of subjectivity. Male fetishism illustrates the function of symbolic castration in subject-formation: when it is integrated, the subject structure will be normal; when it is kept at a distance by continuous anticipation, the result is the constitution of a fetish. The fetish inherits the value of the phallus, and functions like a metonymic object, like a veil that protects the subject from anxiety. Fetishists, who lack the paternal metaphor, are characterized by a splitting of the ego. Consequently, treatment should focus on structural understanding of the fetishistic subject, not at superficial behavior change.

Keywords: Fetishism – Perversion - Freud – Lacan – Castration

1 Introduction

In the psychiatric context, fetishism is diagnosed through questionnaires and structured interviews which detect symptoms and personality traits that are matched against the DSM. The most important diagnostic criteria are the following: 'recurrent, intense sexually arousing fantasies, sexual urges, or behaviors involving the use of nonliving objects [which] cause clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning' (American Psychiatric Association [*DSM-IV-TR*], 2000, p. 569). The aim of treatment is the removal of these fantasies, urges and behaviors, the means are pharmaceuticals, self-help groups and/or different kinds of psychotherapy.

Nowadays, as simple key-word searches in scientific article databases show, fetishism is rarely studied, probably because the condition is rarely diagnosed. The reason for this is double. Firstly, unlike for instance pedophiles, fetishist are seldom referred to a psychiatrist or therapist as a consequence of law infringement. Secondly, fetishists rarely enter therapy or look for help because of their fetishism (cfr. <http://www.minddisorders.com/Del-Fi/Fetishism.html>).

It is my thesis that this unpopularity of fetishism results in a misunderstanding of the fetishistic subject.

2 The Early Sexologists

At the end of the nineteenth century, the pioneers of sexology take to perversion in general and specifically to fetishism as one of their main objects of study. Among others, Krafft-Ebing, Moll and Havelock Ellis study perversions as the 'limit cases' that

must throw light on 'normal' human sexuality. Among the sexual deviations, as Michel Foucault puts it in his *History of Sexuality* (1978, p. 154), fetishism is 'the 'model perversion' which, 'as early as 1877, served as the guiding thread for analyzing all the other deviations'. Two facts explain this fascination. Firstly, in contrast to 'normal' sexuality, fetishism – as in the stereotypical shoe fetishism – does not necessarily involve an animate sexual object. Secondly, there is no such thing as human sexuality without a certain fixation on inanimate objects or non-genital body parts. As Krafft-Ebing writes, 'a certain amount of fetishism is essential to any kind of love' (1965, p.16). Despite their fascination, the research of the pioneer sexologists doesn't result in more than an abundant collection of case descriptions and the idea that fetishism, like other perversions, is the result of degeneracy. In their collections of cases, however, Freud finds a wealth of material on which to build his theory.

3 Freud on Fetishism

3.1 First Period: Unsuitable Substitutes for the Sexual Object

Freud develops his theory on fetishism in three periods. He firstly deals with fetishism in 1905, in his *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (Freud, 1905). The material with which his neurotic patients confront him, their repressed sexual phantasies, make Freud see the reality of infantile sexuality. He describes this as essentially perverse, simply because the infantile sexual aim is not genital intercourse, but the stimulation of other erotogenic zones. It is only during adolescence that the partial drives become subordinated to genital sexuality. For Freud, perverse infantile sexuality is the root and essence out of which all adult sexuality develops: 'The sexual aim of the infantile instinct consists in obtaining satisfaction by means of an appropriate stimulation of the erotogenic zone which has been selected in one way or another' (Freud, 1905d, p. 184). This allows Freud to claim clearly that '[...] the sexual instinct of children proves in fact to be polymorphously perverse' (Freud, 1905d, p. 234).

How then are the component drives harmonized into normal adult sexuality? Freud's answer is 'repression'. The perverse sexuality is repressed by what Freud calls 'the mental dams against sexual excesses: shame, disgust and morality' (Freud, 1905d, p. 191). If the repression works well, the subject's sexuality will be normal. If the sexuality is not enough repressed, the subject turns out perverse as an adult. If the repression is too strong, the subject turns out neurotic. It is in the context of the study of the sexual instinct of neurotics that he coins the phrase: 'neuroses are, so to say, the negative of the perversions.' (Freud, 1905, p. 165).

But how does fetishism fit in with Freud's early view on perversion? In his classification of sexual aberrations, the perversions fall apart in 'sexual activities which either (a) extend, in an anatomical sense, beyond the regions of the body that are designed for sexual union, or (b) linger over the intermediate relations to the sexual object which should normally be traversed rapidly on the path towards the final sexual aim.' (Freud, 1905d, p. 150). In this latter part on 'intermediate relations', the focus lies mainly on sadism, masochism, voyeurism and exhibitionism. It is in the former part on

'anatomical extensions' that Freud discusses fetishism under the header 'Unsuitable substitutes for the sexual objects – fetishism', the other headers being 'sexual use of the mucous membrane of the lips and mouth', 'sexual use of the anal orifice' and 'significance of other regions of the body' (Freud, 1905d).

Fetishism is defined as the case where 'the normal sexual object is replaced by another which bears some relation to it, but is entirely unsuited to serve the normal sexual aim' (Freud, 1905, p. 153). But while Freud deals with fetishism under the 'Deviations of the sexual objects', he stipulates that the paragraph on fetishism should have been dealt with earlier in the text, under the heading of 'Deviations of sexual objects'. The reason he gives is that he didn't want to study fetishism until he had enlightened the reader about the 'overvaluation of the sexual object'. This overvaluation consists in the psychical valuation with which the sexual object is investigated. This valuation is not restricted to the genitals, but extends to the whole body of the sexual object and to every sensation derived from it. It is this overvaluation which explains the fact that sexuality is always already deflected from the 'normal' sexual aim, just like all sexuality is always primarily perverse: '[In fetishism....] the point of contact with the normal is provided by the psychologically essential overvaluation of the sexual object, which inevitably extends to everything that is associated with it. A certain degree of fetishism is thus habitually present in normal love.' (Freud, 1905, p. 154). But where this deflection is partial in normal sexuality, it is entire in fetishism, and the fact that the deflection is only partial in normal sexuality, is due to repression. In the same way, in 'normal' adults, the perverse instincts are partially repressed, while in pervert adults, they are not.

But while Freud sees perversion as insufficiently repressed infantile sexuality, this explanation does not suffice to answer for the specificity of the fetishistic object-relation, which consists in the characteristic fixation to 'unsuitable substitutes for the sexual objects'. Freud stresses this specificity: he considers fetishism as 'quite specially remarkable' and adds: 'No other variation of the sexual instinct that borders on the pathological can lay so much claim to our interest as this one, such is the peculiarity of the phenomena to which it gives rise.' (Freud, 1905, p. 153). Notwithstanding this special interest, Freud only devotes five paragraphs to fetishism. To explain the phenomena, he deems it sufficient to quote Binet, who coined the term: 'Binet (1888) was the first to maintain (what has since been confirmed by a quantity of evidence) that the choice of a fetish is an after-effect of some sexual impression received as a rule in early childhood.' (Freud, 1905, p. 154) In the main text of the 1905 edition, Freud doesn't elaborate on what kind of sexual impression might have such after-effects. He adds, also without elaborating, the idea of an unconscious 'symbolic connection': '[...] the replacement of the object by a fetish [can be] determined by a symbolic connection of thought, of which the person concerned is usually not conscious.' (Freud, 1905, p. 155).

Despite the summary treatment of fetishism in the main text, we find the root of Freud's future, novel theory on fetishism hidden in an aside to a footnote: 'Another factor that helps towards explaining the fetishistic preference for the foot is to be found among the sexual theories of children: the foot represents a woman's penis, the absence

of which is deeply felt.' (Freud, 1905, p. 155). This idea of the fetish representing the woman's missing penis, combined with the symbolic connection between the object and the fetish, are taken up, reworked and combined with new ideas in subsequent works, and crystallize in Freud's mature theory of fetishism.

3.2 Second Period: the Uncanny Absence

Between 1905 and 1910, Freud studies the phenomenon of the little boy's refusal to recognize the fact that woman have no penis, but initially without linking it to fetishism. We find examples of the study of this phenomenon in 'On the sexual theories of children' (Freud, 1908c), in 'Analysis of a phobia in a five-year-old boy' (Freud, 1909b) and in 'On a childhood memory of Leonardo Da Vinci' (Freud, 1910c).

This refusal finds its source partly in the first infantile sexual theory, which consists in a belief in the absence of sexual differentiation by attributing a penis to everybody: '[...] the boy's estimate [of the value of the penis] is logically reflected in his inability to imagine a person like himself who is without this essential constituent. When a small boy sees his little sister's genitals, what he says shows that his prejudice is already strong enough to falsify his perception. He does not comment on the absence of a penis, but invariably says, as though by way of consolation and to put things right: 'Her ---'s still quite small. But when she gets bigger it'll grow all right.' (Freud, 1908c, p. 216).

We find the same example in the case history of Little Hans (Freud, 1909b, p. 8), which probably served as one of the three sources Freud used in 'On the sexual theories of children' (Freud, 1908c). In both instances, the phenomenon is described in terms of a simple rejection of perceptual evidence, without connecting it to fetishism. It is only in 'A childhood memory of Leonardo Da Vinci' (Freud, 1910c), that Freud makes the link. He interprets the artist's childhood phantasy of a vulture which comes to his cradle and opens his mouth with its tail as the unconscious wish to see woman as provided with a phallus: 'We can now provide the following translation of the emphasis given to the vulture's tail in Leonardo's phantasy: 'That was a time when my fond curiosity was directed to my mother, and when I still believed she had a genital organ like my own.' (Freud, 1910c, p. 98). He links the idea to the reverence for the foot by foot fetishists, and to the behavior of 'coupeurs de nattes', who 'play the part of people who carry out an act of castration on the female genital organ.' (Freud, 1910c, p. 96). This foreshadows Freud's later expansion of the idea that the fetish is a substitute for woman's missing phallus from foot fetishism to fetishism in general.

Two other ideas of prime importance to Freud's later theory on fetishism – infantile masturbation and the castration complex – are also to be found in the first edition of the Three Essays, but are expressed with more clarity and concision in 'On the sexual theories of children': 'The child, having been mainly dominated by excitations in the penis, will usually have obtained pleasure by stimulating it with his hand; he will have been detected in this by his parents or nurse and terrorized by the threat of having his penis cut off. The effect of this 'threat of castration' is proportionate to the value set upon that organ and is quite extraordinarily deep and persistent.' (Freud, 1908c, p. 217).

In two letters to Karl Abraham of 1909 and 1910, Freud ventures an new, original idea of the origin of fetishism: 'The fetish [...] results from a particular kind of repression, that we could qualify as partial: a part of the complex is repressed, another part is idealized.' (Falzeder, 2002, p. 83; pp. 105-106). This 'partial repression' and 'partial idealization' can be seen as the kernel of what Freud later will call a 'splitting of the ego' (Freud, 1940d).

These four ideas – infantile masturbation, the castration complex, the rejection of the absence of a penis in woman the splitting of the ego – are the cornerstones of Freud's late theory on fetishism.

3.3 Third Period: from the Object to the Subject

These later thoughts on fetishism are to be found in the later editions of the Three Essays, in the seminal text 'Fetishism' (Freud, 1927e) and in the short paper 'The Splitting of the Ego' (1940d). These thoughts do not only refine the explanation of the origin of the fetish as a sexual object, but also provide insights into the structure of the fetishistic subject. They can be summarized as follows: two insisting events from childhood (the threat of punishing masturbation with castration and the uncanny perception of the absence of the penis in women) influence the development of the subject after the facts ('nachträglich') and are instrumental for the formation of the subject. If the uncanny perception is subject to disavowal ('Verleugnung'), the outcome will be fetishism, characterized by the formation of a screen memory and the splitting of the ego.

The refinement of the explanation of the origin of fetishism consists in the elaboration of the castration complex and the uncanny absence, and in the analysis of their mutual influence. This mutual influence is only understandable by making use of Freud's concept of 'Nachträglichkeit' (translated as 'deferred action' or, more precisely, as 'afterwardsness').

In a note from 1923 to the case study of Little Hans (1909b), Freud stresses the universality of the castration complex: 'Any one who, in analyzing adults, has become convinced of the invariable presence of the castration complex, will of course find difficulty in ascribing its origin to a chance threat - of a kind which is not, after all, of such universal occurrence; he will be driven to assume that children construct this danger for themselves out of the slightest hints, which will never be wanting.' (Freud, 1909b, p. 8). But the complex initially stays without effect: 'A threat of castration by itself need not produce a great impression. A child will refuse to believe in it, for he cannot easily imagine the possibility of losing such a highly prized part of his body' (Freud, 1940d, p. 276). The little boy will continue masturbation as before, and the threat in isolation won't have any effect. Once more, we find another example of this idea in Little Hans: 'When he was three and a half his mother found him with his hand on his penis. She threatened him in these words : 'If you do that, I shall send for Dr. A. to cut off your widdler. And then what'll you widdle with?' Hans: 'With my bottom.'

He made this reply without having any sense of guilt as yet. But this was the occasion of his acquiring the 'castration complex'.' (Freud, 1909b, p. 8).

In isolation, the sight of the absence of the phallus in a woman doesn't need to be traumatic either. The child just thinks: 'Her --- is still quite small. But when she gets bigger it'll grow all right.' (Freud, 1908c, p. 216).

But what happens? The two events influence each other afterwardly, and confront the child with two problems. Firstly, the child has to deal with the perception that not all human beings have a phallus. Secondly, he has to take position on the issue of castration.

As said, the way the child deals with both issues can lead to structurally different outcomes, one of which is fetishism. But the reason why a subject 'chooses' one outcome or another other, remains unclear.

Till 1927, when Freud writes 'Fetishism', he does not only not answer the question why one of the possible outcomes is selected, but also does not investigate the way in which the fetishistic outcome is not only phenomenologically different, but also results in a different subjectivity. It is only in his paper on fetishism and in one of his last texts, 'The splitting of the ego', that Freud provides us with the elements which enable us to understand something of the character of the fetishist. These elements are the screen memory and the splitting of the ego.

Freud, picking up the idea of a 'symbolic connection' from the Three Essays, describes the fetish as a screen memory onto which the sexual value of the expected phallus is displaced: '[...] mostly, when the fetish is instituted some process occurs which reminds one of the stopping of memory in traumatic amnesia. The subject's interest comes to a halt half-way, as it were; it is as though the last impression before the uncanny and traumatic one is retained as a fetish.' (Freud, 1927e, p. 155).

And what is this last impression? Freud answers: ' [...] the foot or shoe owes its preference as a fetish - or a part of it - to the circumstance that the inquisitive boy peered at the woman's genitals from below, from her legs up; fur and velvet - as has long been suspected - are a fixation of the sight of the pubic hair, which should have been followed by the longed-for sight of the female member; pieces of underclothing, which are so often chosen as a fetish, crystallize the moment of undressing, the last moment in which the woman could still be regarded as phallic.' (Freud, 1927e, p. 155). The film breaks during the projection, and the spectator leaves the cinema, branded by the last image before the unraveling he will forget having witnessed.

But what is the function of this overexposed snapshot? By sticking to the image of woman as phallic, the subject protects himself from the fear of castration: 'We can now see what the fetish achieves and what it is that maintains it. It remains a token of triumph over the threat of castration and a protection against it. [...] The horror of castration has set up a memorial to itself in the creation of this substitute.' (Freud, 1927e, p. 154). So the fetish does not only establish the continuation of the triumph, but also of the horror.

The price to pay for the relative benefits of the fetishistic solution is high: a splitting of the ego of the fetishistic subject, 'a rift in the ego which never heals but which increases as time goes on'. (Freud, 1940d, p. 273). This rift is the consequence of a double action: disavowal of the reality that women are castrated, and repression of the affect accompanying this uncanny perception. The disavowal can be compared to the

breaking of the film, while the repression can be seen as the overexposing of snapshot. In the process, the subject saves his own penis from castration, and can proceed undisturbed with masturbation.

In 'The splitting of the ego' (Freud, 1940d), Freud discusses the question of the different outcomes in the simple terms of a choice between giving in to an instinctual demand and obeying to a prohibition of it by reality. He describes fetishistic outcome as the simultaneous choice of both alternatives: 'On the one hand, with the help of certain mechanisms he rejects reality and refuses to accept any prohibition; on the other hand, in the same breath he recognizes the danger of reality, takes over the fear of that danger as a pathological symptom and tries subsequently to divest himself of the fear.' (Freud, 1940d, p. 275). This simultaneous choice leads Freud to an important theoretical nuance. Next to neurosis, where the ego suppresses a piece of the id in service of reality, and psychosis, where it is the other way around, fetishism becomes an in-between solution, where an attitude that fits in with reality exists side by side with an attitude that fits in with the id. No wonder that Freud describes this coexistence as 'a very ingenious solution of the difficulty', and speaks of a '[...] way of dealing with reality, which almost deserves to be described as artful [...]' (Freud, 1940d, p. 277).

But Freud never comes up with an explanation of *why* some children disavow the uncanny perception, and others are able to integrate it. It is Lacan who will fill this gap left by Freud's theory.

4 Lacan on Fetishism

Lacan deals with fetishism mainly in his fourth and fifth seminars (Lacan, 1994; 1996). Three ideas are central: fetishism is the result of the lack of a specific kind of object-relation, the fetish is like a metonymy, like a veil that protects the fetishistic subject from castration anxiety, and the fetishist lacks the paternal metaphor.

4.1 Lack of Castration

In his fourth Seminar (Lacan, 1994; 1998), Lacan studies the object-relations. Lacan radicalizes Freud's concept of the object. For Freud, there is no object as such: it is always and only the object of a subject's drive. For Lacan, there is not only no object as such, but also no subject as such (Lacan, 1994, p. 17). There is only the subject that looks for an object that is always already lost (Lacan, 1994, p. 15). That is the reason why Lacan speaks about *object-relations*. The object-relations are characterized by the way the object lacks. Lacan conceptualizes three forms of object lack to illustrate the development of the subject: privation, frustration and castration (Lacan, 1994, pp. 36-39; 55-71).

In the beginning of its life, the infant still forms an undifferentiated whole, defined as the Real. Privation starts when there appears a lack or a hole in the Real, such as when the need for food appears. Once the child understands it is his mother's absence or presence that will bring him that what will calm his need, the mother is perceived as an entity separate from the Real: she becomes Symbolic. The object she brings or

withholds (the breast) on the other hand, will continue to be identified with the Real. The result is that a direct relationship with the mother becomes possible: it is the bed of the dual, Imaginary relationship Lacan describes in his theory on the mirror stage.

Around six months, the infant starts to notice that his call is not enough to provoke his mother's presence and control her absence. When he calls her, and his call is not answered, the child gets frustrated in his demand. Lacan compares Frustration to a wound and to an Imaginary damnation: it concerns that which is demanded but not obtainable. Frustration changes the position of the mother: she becomes omnipotent, and the infant identifies her with the Real. The objects she gives or withholds change status as well: they become tokens of her love, and as such Symbolic.

When the child, as an effect of the first sexual maturation, grasps that something lacks to the mother in relation to himself, that which lacks starts to play the role of a mediating third term in the relationship between mother and child. It is this third term that Lacan calls the phallus. The relationships between these three terms -child, mother and phallus- constitute an imaginary triangle. The inability to fill the lack of the mother puts the child in an untenable position, a position where there is a discordance in the Imaginary Triangle. The way this discordance is dealt with, will determine the development of the subject.

In the 'normal' case, the way out of the Imaginary Triangle is made possible by the introduction of a fourth element: the father. Castration, the result of this process, is defined as Symbolic lack. Lacan compares castration to a debt which introduces the child in the Symbolic order.

What happens in phobia is an attempt at access to the Symbolic order without the intervention of a father. The phobic object is constructed by the infant in order to justify the absence of the mother's phallus: it is absent because it has been taken away. The phobic object will be like a self-made law that regulates the anguish that was introduced in the relationship between mother and child by the appearance of the phallus as a third term.

In fetishism, it is in a direct fashion that the child tackles the frustrating situation in which his mother finds herself lacking the phallus. The child establishes himself as a link between the phallus and the mother. He does this in an imaginary way, by identifying with the mother or with the phallus.

4.2 Metonymy, Veil and Screen-Memory

When Freud speaks about the dream, he sees two main processes by which the manifest dream is a translation of an unconscious wish: condensation and displacement (1900a). Lacan sees a parallel with two rhetorical figures Roman Jakobson describes as the basis of language: metaphor and metonymy (1963). Lacan gives structural formulas for both (Lacan, 1994, pp. 5-6):

Metaphor: $F(S'/S)S = S(+)\ s$

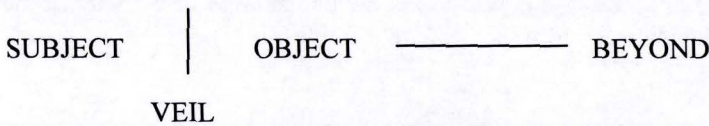
Metonymy: $F(S\dots S')S = S(-)\ s$

These formulas can be read as follows: The metaphoric function (F) of the signifier (S) is the substitution of one signifier (S') for a second signifier (S). It produces (=) an effect of signification, of creation of meaning (the (+) s). The (+) means here the transgression of the bar between the signifier and the signified, so the signifier (S) passes (+) in the signified (s).

The metonymic function (F) of the signifier (S) on the other hand, is the connection of one signifier (S') with a second signifier (S). It permits (=) the elision of the first signifier (of S'). By this elision, the second signifier (S) installs the lack of being in the object-relation. Therefore, it uses the value of the 'sending back' (S sends back to S') to invest it (S) with the desire (the (-) s). The (-) means here the maintenance of the bar (between the signifier and the signified), so the signifier doesn't enter in the signified.

Lacan argues that the fetish is like a metonymy. Filling in the missing phallus of the mother for one signifier and the fetish for the other signifier makes it possible to re-read the formula for the metonymy as a formula for fetishism: The metonymic function (F) of the fetish (S) is the connection of the missing phallus of the mother (S') with a second signifier (S). It permits (=) the disavowal of the mother's lack of the phallus. By this disavowal, the fetish (S) installs the lack of being in the object-relation. Therefore, it uses the value of the 'sending back' (the fetish sends back to the missing phallus) to invest the fetish with the desire (the (-) s). The (-) means here the maintenance of the bar (between the fetish and the signified). The fetish doesn't enter into the signified.

Lacan also compares the fetish to a screen-memory. To protect the subject from castration anxiety, the uncanny perception of the mother's missing phallus is frozen and desubjectivized in one point. The screen-memory is a stop in the chain of memories, and in that way it is metonymical, because the chain of history itself continues. In the screen-memory, the next part of the chain is missing. The screen-memory veils the full scene, but at the same time inherits its value. This displacement of value onto an image is the cradle of fetishism. But the fetish is more than an image: it is also a sign, which stays the witness of something beyond the veil, something that can be as such re-articulated in the unconscious through analytic dialogue (Lacan, 1994, pp. 157-158).



The schema of the veil shows that for the fetishist, the object is on the other side of the veil (Lacan, 1994, p. 155-158). Because it is veiled, the subject can disavow that the object is marked by a lack, that the mother misses the phallus. The acceptance of this lack is necessary for the access to the symbolic dimension, and as such to desire. Desire is always desire of something else, of something beyond which is lacking in the object. Without this access, the fetishist is confined into the imaginary triangle, in which he oscillates between an identification with the phallus and with the mother. "This ambivalence is sustained and cherished and lived in a fragile equilibrium that is at every

instant dependent on the collapse or the dressing of the veil. That is what the relation of the fetishist and his object is about" (Lacan, 1994, p. 157).

4.3 The Paternal Metaphor

One of Lacan's basic claims is that the Oedipus is crucial in understanding anything about the constitution of the subject. Fetishism is crucial to such an understanding, and illustrative of the case where the Oedipus fails. To come to a better understanding of the Oedipus, Lacan analyzes the function of the father in the Oedipus as metaphorical, as 'a signifier substituted for another signifier: the mother (which was the first signifier introduced into the symbolic)' (1994, p. 13). Based on his above mentioned formula for the metaphor, Lacan gives his formula for the paternal metaphor:

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \underline{\text{Father}} & \cdot & \underline{\text{Mother}} \\ \text{Mother} & & \text{X} \end{array} \rightarrow \text{Father (X)}$$

'In the metaphor, the intermediary signifier (here the mother) falls, and the father gets possession by metaphorical means of the object of desire of the mother, which presents itself in the form of the phallus.' (1994, p. 13)

That is why, as the outcome of the Oedipus, the child will love the father as the one who can let the child, by metaphorical means, 'have' the phallus instead of having, by means of a metonymy, to 'be' the phallus (the x in the formula):

'At a given moment of the Oedipus, a question is posed for the subject of accepting, of registering, of himself symbolizing, of making significant this privation of which the mother appears to be the object. The child accepts or refuses, assumes or not. This is the nodal point of the Oedipus in phobias, perversions and neuroses: everything revolves around in what measure the child doesn't accept the privation of the mother's phallus by the father, in what measure he continues to identify with this phallus.' (Lacan, 1998, p. 145).

To reach this beyond of the mother, a mediation is needed: the position of the father in the symbolic order. The absence of this position is the explanation of the why of the fetishistic choice, the explanation Freud wasn't able to provide.

5 Conclusion

We can conclude that the accent Freud and Lacan put on the subject of the fetishism specifically and on the subject of perversion in general instead of on the pathology, shows that the subject is constitutive for his perversion. This opens up another way of dealing with the perverse subject: psycho-analysis should at least be retained as a possibility for treatment.

The thoughts on perversion in the later work of Lacan leave fetishism as the blueprint of perversion. Instead, masochism will fulfill this function. This results in a quarter-turn of the paradigm with which Lacan thinks the perverse subject, and most

interestingly opens up the possibility of a psycho-analytic elaboration of the perverse subject's relation to the law. This would be worth of further study.

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