

## Adolescence and Femininity at the Play *Spring Awakening*\*

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**ABSTRACT** – This paper aims to raise the theoretical discussion about the vicissitudes in the process of teenage girls becoming women, from the psychoanalytical point, which says the puberty is a landmark on sexual development. Adolescence is approached as a sexuation process resulting from Oedipus. For the boys, the identification with the father is enough, while the girls need extra work. We are going to examine the proper impasses and the outputs to the femininity construction incited by Wendla and Ilse, adolescent characters from the play *Spring Wakening* by Frank Wedekind, in the face of the real drive.

**KEYWORDS:** adolescence, femininity, psychoanalysis

## Adolescência e Feminilidade na Peça *O Despertar da Primavera*

**RESUMO** – Neste artigo levantamos as vicissitudes no processo de tornar-se mulher, tomando como pressuposto a aposta psicanalítica de que é na puberdade que haverá a escansão sexual. Abordamos a adolescência como um processo de sexuação decorrente do Édipo. Se, no caso dos meninos, a identificação ao pai é suficiente, as meninas precisam de um trabalho a mais. Partiremos das personagens adolescentes Wendla e Ilse, na peça *O despertar da Primavera* de Frank Wedekind, para examinar os impasses e as saídas próprios à construção da feminilidade, inventados por cada uma diante do real pulsional.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** adolescência, feminilidade, psicanálise

### INTRODUCTION

In this article, we seek to understand the vicissitudes of adolescence for women, because, as we will see, femininity is a construction that requires a work of psychic elaboration. Thus, we propose to demonstrate that besides finding an answer to the enigma that the encounter with the sexual calls in adolescence, girls will also have to answer the enigmas of assuming their own sex. Therefore, we will start with the discussion about sex in adolescence, and then we will discuss the process of becoming a woman.

In *Three essays on the theory of sexuality*, Freud (1905/2006a) affirms the existence of infantile sexuality. With the arrival of puberty, changes occur that lead sexuality to its final configuration. The sexual drive, hitherto autoerotic, now finds a sexual object. A new sexual objective appears, the partial drives combine themselves to reach it, and the erogenous zones are subordinated to the primacy of the genital zone. This new sexual objective brings different

functions to the two sexes, whose sexual development has not been very different so far. “The sexual development of the man is more consistent and easier to understand, while in the woman there even appears a form of regression.” (Freud, 1905/2006a, p. 213). Freud here refers to the convergence of the affective and sensual currents and compares this period to the completion of a tunnel dug through a mountain, from both sides. Lacadée (2012) describes this tunnel as a hole in which one end pierces the authority and consistency of the Other parental, and the other end disturbs and punctures the existence of the infantile being. A tunnel that marks for the subject the disconnection between his being as a child and his future being as a man or woman.

We will use the play *Spring Awakening* (German: *Frühlings Erwachen*) by the German playwright Frank Wedekind, as a methodological resource, to interrogate the tunnel that exists from a child to her being future as a woman.

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The play shows the complexity of entering adolescence. In its preface, Lacan gives us to see the hole in the real that constitutes the awakening of sexuality in adolescence. Each one, in his way, confronted with the sexual issue, invents an answer. We are interested in approaching our question from the singularity of answers found by each of the female characters in the play. It is not a matter of proposing applied psychoanalysis, but of trying to follow Lacan's indication that we can produce theoretical knowledge from what the poet wrote. The characters are nothing beyond language, bearers of discourse and results from the playwright's creation; however, the poet rediscovers the analytical theory revealing a knowledge that remains hidden.

### Adolescence, Puberty and Sexuation.

"I don't remember to have had any longing for this kind of excitement. Why didn't they let me sleep peacefully until all was still again." (Wedekind, 1991, p. 8). Moritz, one of the protagonists of the play *Spring Awakening*, advances the Freudian proposition that puberty is the moment when the pulses reawaken after the latency period. Lacan (2003a) adds to this, the fact that the biological maturation that prepares the adolescent for the accomplishment of the sexual act does not exclude the misunderstanding inherent in the encounter between the sexes.

Freud (1905/2006a) uses the term puberty to designate the moment in life when there is the genitality emergence so that the adolescent can achieve the sexual act. In the Freudian perspective, there is no evident separation between puberty and adolescence. Lacanian authors, on the other hand, separate puberty from adolescence, considering that adolescence is a subjective response to changes arising from puberty and it can be thought as a symptom of puberty so that in the face of the real that emerges at puberty, each adolescent will find a symptomatic response to that encounter. That answer can be the establishment of a loving partnership, the use of drugs, the paths to the act or other possibilities.

In *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, a text first published in 1905, Freud (1905/2006a) announces the existence of infantile sexuality. He describes the transformations of sexual life and its psychic implications. He separates sexuality into two logical periods: infantile sexuality and puberty, interspersed with the latency period.

Puberty is the moment when the changes take place that lead sexuality to its final configuration. It is when the sexual drive, which was predominantly autoerotic and partial during infancy, is combined into a single sexual object, subordinated now to the primacy of the genital zone. Until that moment, female and male sexual development did not differ much, as both were under the phallic primacy, and the autoerotic activity of the genital zones was identical. It is only after puberty that sexual development diverges with intensity.

At puberty, according to Freud (1905/2006a), the drive puts itself at the service of reproduction, once it has acquired

the biological maturation for this, making it possible to achieve the sexual act. With this, "the object-finding, for which also preparations have been made since early childhood, becomes consummated on the psychic side." (p.209). Freud clarifies that since the earliest childhood the male and female dispositions are already well recognized, but the autoerotic activity of children's erogenous zones is identical in both sexes, "and it is this agreement that removes the possibility of a sex differentiation in childhood as it appears after puberty.." (p.207). In the infantile period, female sexuality has an entirely male character, since the sexual organ stimulated in girls, the clitoris, is homologous to the male and in the "transformation of the girl into a woman" (p.208), that occurs at puberty, there is a new wave of repression, making the male sexuality succumb in the girl. A new organ needs to be driven to take the place of the clitoris. However, for this to happen, a time when the girl is insensitive is necessary. It is only when the woman can transmit her excitability from the clitoris to the vagina, the female organ par excellence, that she changes her dominant erogenous zone, unlike the man, who has preserved him since infancy. Thus, we have the first fundamental difference in female and male puberty: while in girls, there is a new wave of sexuality repression (male); in men, puberty brings a great advance in libido.

The second difference is concerning the choice of object, considering that at the end of the Oedipus complex, the boy keeps his object of love: the mother, while the girl needs to exchange the object from the mother to the father. In an attempt to understand this exchange of objects, Freud adds the existence of the pre-oedipal phase in girls.

The pre-oedipal period is characterized by the girl's loving attachment to the mother since the mother is the first object of love for all children. Freud (1933/2006b) wonders, then, why the girl would distance herself from her mother and elaborates that the central and strongest reason for this distance is related to the castration complex. The reason is "the censure, as the mother did not give her an appropriate penis, that is, to have brought her into the world as a woman." (p. 241-2). This estrangement is a decisive step in the course of a girl's development.

Therefore, the castration complex introduces the female Oedipus. Having seen the universality of female deprivation in relation to the penis, and being the mother removed as an object of love, the girl sets out in search of her father so that he can give her what she lacks, in a symbolic replacement of the child-penis. This substitution operation, however, does not erase the core of the feminine position in Freud, which is the centrality of the penis envy – *penisneid* - in his psychic life.

Freud (1931/2006c) points out three outputs for the girl about *penisneid*: the first is the inhibition of sexuality, the second, the masculinity complex, and the third, the output to normal femininity. Regarding the first output, Freud recalls that the first pleasure is the one generated by the phallic

organ, with clitoral excitation. However, upon finding herself castrated, the girl repudiates her small organ and denies any pleasure arising from it, as it is far behind the boy's organ. The woman, then, becomes insensitive.

Regarding what Freud (1931/2006c) calls the masculinity complex, the girl refuses to recognize herself as castrated and "exaggerates her previous masculinity, clings to her clitoral activity and takes refuge in an identification with either her phallic mother or father." (p.129). The output related to normal femininity, in turn, occurs when, with the mother's hatred, the girl turns to her father expecting to obtain from him the penis as a phallic object. "However, the female situation is only established if the desire to have the penis is replaced by the desire for a baby, that is, if a baby takes the place of a penis, according to a primitive symbolic equivalence." (p.128). There, the female desire is identified as being, par excellence, and the phallus desire. Freud would, therefore, be trying to bring women together, which Lacan teaches that it is not possible. It is exactly at this point that Freud stagnates, maintaining the feminine solution enigmatic.

In this way, we realize that Freud erects his thesis on female sexuality, having as a reference the phallus and the centrality of penis envy in the woman's life, approaching, as if in equivalence, the motherhood femininity. With that, an authentic feminine positioning would depend on the woman having a partner, and with that, the feminine solution would pass through a man. Lacan, in turn, complements, in his reading of the Freudian Oedipus that creating an alibi is up to the girl.

Lacan (1999) indicates that the Oedipus function is normatizing not only in the moral field or in the subjects' relations with the reality field (a matter of structure), but also to the assumption of sex. It tells us that the Oedipus complex is not the same as genitalization, because,

there is in Oedipus the assumption of own sex by the subject, that is, to give names to things, what makes man assumes the virile type and the woman assumes a certain feminine type, as well as she recognizes herself as a woman, identifies herself with her role as a woman. Virility and feminization are the two terms that translate what is essentially the Oedipus function. (p.171)

Lacan (1999) divides the Oedipus complex didactically into three periods. The first period is marked by the position in which the child seeks to satisfy the maternal desire, identified to the imaginary phallus. In the second Oedipal period, the father intervenes as the mother's depriver, referring her to a law that is not only hers but to whoever possessed her object of desire. It is the prohibitive father, who intervenes in the maternal discourse announcing two prohibitions: to the son - you will not lie with your mother - and to the mother - you will not reintegrate your product. In this way, the child is removed from the place of an imaginary phallus.

In the third Oedipal period, the father intervenes as the one who holds the phallus, inverting his position, from the one who deprives the mother from the phallus to the one who can give it to her. The mother, in turn, can access the phallus via the man who owns it. The father appears, at this moment, as permissive and donor at the maternal level, appearing, for the first time, in his own speech. Thus,

through the gift or permission granted to the mother, he [the subject], after all, achieves this: that she be allowed to have a penis later. Here is what is effectively accomplished by the Oedipus' decline phase - he really carries, as we said last time, the title of possession in the pocket. (Lacan, 1999, p.212).

Lacan (1999) indicates that having the title of possession "does not mean that the boy will take possession of all his sexual powers and exercise them" (p.201). We know that after the Oedipus decline, there is the latency period in which sexual functions fall asleep, but to the boy his potency is left, which can be awakened at puberty. The Oedipal process, in this way, forbids a part of *jouissance* while allowing another part through phallic signification. Phallic *jouissance* encrypted by castration is allowed, and it is at puberty that the subject can use this enjoyment, positioning himself in the field of sexuation. Therefore, what Lacan calls the title of possession is an authorization that gives adolescents the right to use phallic meaning when called upon to do so. In the boy, we have Oedipus leaving with his identification with the father as the ideal of the self. In the case of girls, the outcome is different:

She does not have to make this identification or keep this title of right to virility possession. She, the woman, knows where it is. She knows where to go to get it, which is on her father's side and goes towards the one who has it. This also indicates why femininity, true femininity, always has a touch of an alibi dimension. In very women, there is always something deviant. (Lacan, 1999, p.202)

What Lacan (1999) indicates is that girls do not need to have the title of virility, because they can access the phallus by addressing those who have it. The psychic work required from girls is to establish the alibi position that marks their oedipal output. In this way, Lacan also demonstrates the extra work that it is up to the girls that is to establish this position, differently from the boys who make their oedipal output by virility, identified with their father. Thus, in the 50s, Lacan already indicates a loss of the feminine position, which will be better formalized in the 70s with the notion of the not-all, in which the woman unfolds between both phallic and supplementary enjoyment, that is, a deviant concerning the phallus.

Therefore, in both Freud and Lacan, we have that the psychic work needed in adolescence includes sexuation, taking the standpoint on sharing the sexes. Miller (2015) indicates that even though the sexual dispositions of girls

and boys are already recognized at an early age, “puberty, in any case, for both Freud and Lacan, represents a sexual landmark, a landmark in development, in the history of sexuality.” (p. 2).

### The Femininity Beyond Phallic Logic.

Jacques Lacan goes a long way in his theory on femininity. In the beginning, in the 60s, he maintains the phallic centrality, subverting the logic between having and not having the phallus for the logic of having or being the phallus. At that moment, he points out that the woman is located in the loving partnership as the masquerade, as the one who masks herself as the phallus, locating herself as an object that causes man’s desire.

In the 70s, Lacan (2008) will discuss the division between the sexes from two *jouissance* modes: phallic *jouissance* and non-all phallic *jouissance*, or Other *jouissance*, having as a basis its table formulation as sexuation, built from the math resources with Aristotelian propositional logic, as we can see in the figure 1.

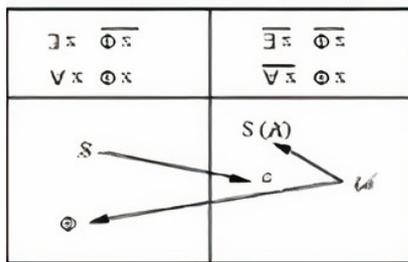


Figure 1. Table of sexuation  
 Note: Lacan (2008, p.84).

At the top of the table, we have the quantifiers. On the male (left) side, we have the universal statement that all men are enrolled in the phallic function precisely because there is the one of the exception who founded the rule: the primeval father, by *Totem and Taboo*. The tyrant father from the primeval horde owned all women but denied to his children accessing to women. It is from their place of exception to the law that the rule is founded in the group of men. At the bottom, we have how the man is in a loving partnership. He is in the position of a desiring subject and will have access to his partner in the form of object *a*, mediated by fantasy.

On the other hand, there is no universal affirmative to the woman. However, there are two negations: there is no woman who escapes from the phallic function, and not-all woman is subjected to phallic function. Therefore, no woman makes an exception to the rule and, as a result, a group of women is not founded so that *A* woman does not exist. At the bottom of the board, we have the duplicity from which the woman will relate in the loving partnership: if, on

the one hand, she addresses herself to the phallus ( $La \rightarrow \Phi$ ), on the other hand, she addresses herself to the  $S(A)$ , seeking on the barred Other a signifier to tell her what a woman is. However, there is no Other of the Other; there is no signifier of this lack of  $A$  and, thus, the woman’s demand becomes infinite, not being regulated by the phallic register. Lacan (2008) calls this *jouissance* of Other *jouissance*, having mystic *jouissance* as a paradigm. In this way, one can think of the non-all as being not in the order of absence, of one less, but as of the order of the most, the supplementary, the infinite. Then, a woman has more freedom than man, being able to invent herself, thus creating her alibi.

It is not that Lacan (2008) exempts women from submission to the phallic record. However, he indicates that the phallic record does not say everything about both female *jouissance* and the woman. “It is not because she is not-all in the phallic function that she ceases to be all in it. She is all there. However, there is something more.” (p. 101). Therefore, not being all circumscribed by the phallus, there is no *A* woman, but a woman, who will, in her own way, deal with the absence of a signifier that tells her what a woman is. By not being able to identify with *A* woman, there is an appeal to sexual identification, as Soler (1998) advises. The author proposes that by not being able to specify herself as one for her enjoyment, the woman can “at least be a man’s wife” (p. 249), demanding an exclusive love.

Love, therefore, structurally has a privileged place for women. It has as its principle the  $A$ , the not-all, the limitless, and devastation is its other name. While on the male side, we have a rubric on the way to enjoy the symptom, on the female side, we have devastation. Taking as a metaphor to devastate a region, the devastation means unlimited depredation.

This call for love, when not answered, can lead to devastation. Devastation starts from the mother-daughter relationship and makes its appearance in loving life. Devastation is linked to female enjoyment, which “is directed to the Other, to the love of the Other, on the form of the  $S(A)$ . It is in this aspect that the demand for love arises with all its insistence” (Lacan, 2008, p.87) and can be devastating. In devastation, there is a subjection to the desire and demand of the other. Soler (1995) proposes that devastation indicates a subject at the mercy of the Other’s will, desire and demand. While the mask is used to sign up for the partnership, “there is devastation when we leave the masquerade when the masquerade that was over a scene overflows and takes place as real subjection, performed subjection” (p.127). It seems to us, then, that devastation is a structural trend in the case of women, because of her loving erotomania way.

Devastation is depredation that extends to everything, that knows no limits, and it is because of this structure that the Other

can be the partner-devastation. However, he can also be the way in which the rapture happens to the woman because the French word *ravage* (devastation) has the same root as *ravir de ravissement* (rapture) ... To rapture is to lead to a state of supreme happiness, and it has, for that reason, an erotonomic value. Therefore, we have on the erotomania horizon, in the best of cases, the rapture and, in the worst, the devastation. (Alvarenga, 2003, p.46)

Thus, Lacan adds to the phallic logic another side of the feminine position. If it is at puberty that sexuation will take place, it is also at puberty that girls will build their feminine output. This is what Lacan suggests. To the extent that there is no *A* woman, each woman will have to build her femininity uniquely.

### Adolescence and the Spring Awakening.

Spring evokes this moment of helplessness during puberty that it is also the time of discoveries. In the text Preface to *Spring Awakening*, Lacan, (2003a) states that “what Freud demarcated from what he calls sexuality makes a hole in the real, this is what is perceived by the fact that, as no one escapes unscathed, people do not worry about it.” (p. 558). The real from the *jouissance* that breaks out in the characters’ lives, in the play, is the cause of multiple effects and passages to the act. In his own way, each will invent an answer when faced with the sexual issue. Lacan also indicates that because sexuality makes a hole in the real, it is necessary to resort to fantasy so that the adolescent subject can know how to deal with sexuality.

In the play, Moritz’s anguish is evident, which is divided between being approved in the school year, so he is not going to disappoint his rigid parents and curiosity about sex, about which he knows nothing. In search of answers that he does not know, he turns over the encyclopedia, but he only finds “(...) nothing but words and words!” (Wedekind, 1991, p.10), indicating that knowledge about sex escapes from the significant articulation. Faced with the lack of this knowledge, Moritz asks his friend Melchior to write to him about what he knows and put it inside a book.

Melchior, raised more freely than his friend, finds in knowledge a way of trying to articulate ignorance about sex. However, he is faced with the enigma about female enjoyment; he cannot understand the pleasure of his friend Wendla in helping the poor. He knows that boys and girls are different, but he does not know how things are with the opposite sex, seeking, then, the construction of knowledge about the Other sex.

The female characters from the play, Wendla, Martha and Ilse, are the ones that interest us here. Faced with the sexual issue, they teach us something about the feminine and give us to see their unique inventions in the construction of a response when becoming a woman. According to Page and Jodeau-Belle (2015), Wendla seeks to give a sense to the real

that breaks out and invents a fantasy that goes through the man flogging and violence. The explanation that she builds to plug the hole of the real keeps her in an object position that she occupied concerning her mother. Martha, on the other hand, does not appear glued to her mother and maintains a certain distance from the punishments inflicted on her by her parents. Her subjective position is built around a project of rebellion. She will allow her children what has been forbidden to her. Ilse lives without limit. She displays the position of the body that enjoys, determined to enjoy until death, enjoy for fun, without peer and love. Firstly, we are going to analyze Wendla and her inability to access femininity.

The play opens with a dialogue between Wendla and her mother. The mother perceives the transformation of the girl’s body and offers her daughter a long dress, just as a young woman should dress. Wendla, while showing a desire to know about the sexual issue, wants to remain a girl, wearing a short dress. To her desire to know, the mother responds with silence and with disguised reasons for the long dress. Wendla remains irreducible in her position of refusing female faces. Her position, we will see later, will be modified from the meeting with Melchior. However, her desire to know about the sexual does not give up. When her mother announces that her sister has had a baby, Wendla wants to know about the issue of reproduction, to which her mother replies with the story of the stork, which is no longer completely convincing her, because “You cannot really deceive yourself that I, who am fourteen years old, still believe in the stork.” (Wedekind, 1991, p.19). Page and Jodeau-Belle (2015) claim that Wendla asks her mother to recognize her as a subject, as through questions addressed to the Other (to the mother), she seeks to be considered as being of enjoyment, in what she cannot name and that is enigmatic to her. However, as we will see, the education desired by the mother excludes the sexual issue.

However, the sexual issue combines not only with the desire to know about reproduction but also with an unusual interest when Wendla hears her friend Martha tell about the beatings her father inflicts on her, even saying that she would like to stay in her place. Wendla responds to this hole in the real of sex with the construction of a masochistic fantasy that she will entrust to Melchior on her date. She tells him of a dream in which she was a poor girl and that her father sent her to ask for money from rough and cruel men who beat her. She explains that Martha’s father always beats her and that she would like to take her place. Wendla then asks Melchior to hit her so that she knows what it is like, updating her masochistic fantasy of being beaten by her father. Initially, he refuses but ends up giving in. Wendla says that it does not hurt and goes up to her skirts so he can hit her harder, to which Melchior responds by attacking her with violence and fury. After the act, Melchior is overcome with anguish and flees into the woods.

After this scene, Wendla insists, addresses her mother again, and says that she does not sleep until she knows how

babies come into the world and that if her mother does not answer, she will ask her sister or even the chimney sweep. Embarrassed, she says that she will put her head between her mother's skirts so that she can tell her. Finally, the mother offers an answer articulating reproduction with love and marriage. In her explanation, Ms. Bergman hides sexuality and *jouissance*:

In order to have a child – one must love – the man – to whom one is married – love him, I tell you – as one can only love a man! One must love him so much with one's whole heart, so... so that one can't describe it! One must love him, Wendla, as you at your age are still unable to love. Now you know it! (Wedekind, 1991, p.22)

Wendla renounces knowledge and accepts the maternal saying as truth. The two are glued together in an imaginary way so that Wendla readily accepts her mother's explanation. However, her investigation and the search for an answer to her questions, respecting the maternal saying, lead her to a sexual experience. In a second meeting with Melchior, when he tries to kiss her, she says: "People love when they kiss. Don't...don't Melchior!" (Wedekind, 1991, p.24). However, Melchior assures her that there is no love. "Oh, believe me, there's no such thing as love! Everything is selfishness, everything is egotism! I love you as little as you love me." (p. 24). Page and Jodeau-Belle (2015) see there the sadian position of the right to enjoyment. As Lacan (2008) states, the *jouissance* of the Other's body is not a sign of love.

After this sexual experience, Wendla is filled with joy, she cannot control her laughter, and she feels that her feet cannot touch the floor. "Indeed I don't know, I can't find words" (Wedekind, 1991, p.25), says the adolescent. She decides to wear the long dress, accepting the looks of femininity. In the sexual encounter, Wendla knows something of the truth of her enjoyment, which has nothing to do with love. When the mother discovers her pregnancy, she replies that she has loved no one more than her mother.

In the relationship between Wendla and her mother, there is no place for her father, who does not appear at any point in the play. This relationship seems to indicate what Lacan (2003b) calls devastation:

The Freudian elucubration of the Oedipus complex, which makes women a fish in the water, by castration being her starting point (Freud dixit), contrasts painfully with the reality of the devastation that constitutes in the woman and her relationship with her mother, of whom, as a woman, she really seems to expect more substance than her father - which does not suit him being second, in this devastation. (p.465).

What Lacan (2003b) seems to indicate is that in this search for the substance of her feminine being, inconsistent by structure, the girl goes towards her mother. If the daughter is, to the mother, in the place of the phallus, as what could complete her, what she finds is devastation, instead of possible transmission from the point of the feminine. This

is a component of devastation, which places the girl as a fetish object for the mother. Marcos (2011) advises that the devastation is taken by Freud as a catastrophe, when he refers that overcoming the catastrophe of the pre-Oedipal relationship between mother and daughter, the child can address the father as an object, with the devastation linked to the phallus destiny in the girl. As we already said, in the construction of female sexuality, we have a period that precedes Oedipus, in what mother is both the first seductive and the first to forbid the daughter to have her sexuality expression.

Faced with Wendla's pregnancy, Mrs. Bergman interrogates her daughter, "You have a child! Oh, why did you do that to me!" (Wedekind, 1991, p. 34) showing at this moment a non-separation between mother and daughter, as if it were the daughter that made her complete. Wendla cannot understand how the pregnancy came about and says, "God knows, I don't know any more! We lay in the hay. I have loved nobody in the world as I do you, Mother." (p.34). This so decided swear of love to the mother seems to indicate that there is no space between them for the love of a man so that the daughter would take the place of the phallic object for the mother. The adolescent does not decide regarding pregnancy and abortion. It is the mother, taking her daughter as an object, who decides to terminate the pregnancy, which leads Wendla to death.

If the devastation involves a phallic face of claim linked to the mother's desire, it also points out to the difficulty of symbolizing female enjoyment, whose core is revealed when the daughter meets what the mother does not reduce to the desire and the phallus, but it concerns an absence of limit (Brousse, 2002). Wendla is faced with this face of the mother's desire marked by an absence of deadly limit.

La Sagna (2009) recalls that for Lacan, adolescence is par excellence the fact that the subject moves from the infantile position of desired to the position of desiring. As a child, the subject is desired or not, and from adolescence, he is called upon to propose himself as desiring. In the seminar on anguish, Lacan states: "To propose me as desiring, eron, is to propose myself as a lack of 'a'" (Lacan, 2005, p. 198). The separating object is one that produces a desire, from the moment in which I propose myself as desiring, as lack of the object. Wendla's difficulty seems to constitute herself as desiring; she remains like an object of the mother's desire. Her pregnancy, outside of marriage and love, proof of enjoyment, is not acceptable. Her mother will lead Wendla to abortion, and Wendla dies.

Ilse, on her turn, takes a different path from Wendla. The adolescent appears at the beginning of the play by placing flowers in Moritz's coffin. A former colleague of the friends' group, Ilse dropped out of school to become a prostitute. While the issues that the sexual encounter raises embarrass friends, she puts herself at the service of enjoyment, which is not without risks. Just before Moritz's suicide, she finds him and says that she was away from home for four days in

Priapia “With Nohl, with Fehrendorf, with Padinsky, with Lenz, Rank, Spühler—with all of them possible! Kling, kling—things were lively!” (Wedekind, 1991, p. 27). She tells Moritz what happens in her life, the fun and the risks she has taken. She was once found unconscious in the gutter by an acquaintance - Heinrich. He found her and took her to his house. There she had to stage all her fantasies. Ilse puts herself at the service of the *jouissance* of all its customers, at the service of the *jouissance* of all of them (Page & Jodeau-Belle, 2015). This, however, does not exclude her *jouissance*. Lacan (2003c) states that for women, it is more difficult to say about their fantasies. Then,

rather, she lends herself to the perversion that she considers being from The Man. Which leads to the masquerade we know, and that is not the lie that the ungrateful people attribute to her, for adhering to The man. It is more the do-it-what-there of preparing for the fantasy from The man in her finds its moment of truth. This is not an exaggeration since the truth is already a woman since it is not-all – not-all to say, in any case. (p.538)

It looks like this it is the output of Ilse, as she cannot tell her truth as a woman when the pubescent body calls her to it, she lends herself to the fantasies of men, to perhaps find her answers in it. The young prostitute tells Moritz that her painter friends rescued her from a police station, after fleeing from Heinrich:

They transported me in a cab to Adolar’s studio. Since then, I’ve been true to the herd. Fehrendorf is an ape, Nohl is a pig, Bojokewitsch an owl, Loison a hyena, Oikonomopulos a camel—therefore I love one and all of them the same and wouldn’t attach myself to anyone else, even if the world were full of archangels and millionaires! (Wedekind, 1991, p. 29).

Remembering childhood games. Ilse invites Moritz to come to her house, but the young man, embarrassed, denies the sexual encounter made by his friend. Ilse shows no inhibition about sexuality and poses herself as an object of *jouissance* for her partners. This, however, does not dispense terror (Page & Jodeau-Belle, 2015), when the encounter with Heirich occurs. Ilse tells Moritz that when Heirich was keeping her hostage, she had nightmares at night and that he threatened her by putting the revolver barrel in her mouth. Ortiz (2014), in his work on the play, talks about nightmares but focusing on the character, Moritz. He warns us that anguish in dreams is the limit where the ability of dreams fulfill desire fails. Moritz spends the entire play anguished with the issues raised by sexuality, without being able to put into words the questions of the sexual real that breaks out at the time of puberty. Ortiz says that sexual excitement turns into anguish when it has no representation to turn on, which is what happens in Moritz. It seems to us that in Ilse’s encounter with Heirich, this also

occurs. The sexual issues mixed with violence that the young man addresses to her seem not to be linked to representations. If in the sexual field she manages to connect them from the point where she places herself as a fetishist for her partners, this is very different from her relationship with Heirich, as he puts the young woman’s life at risk. In the mixture of sexuality and violence, the young woman does not seem to have the capacity to link them to a representation. Page and Jodeau-Belle (2015) point out that what is at stake in Ilse is the free sexual encounter, regardless of morals and love, and of fixed partnership, she loves all her men. Ilse puts in the scene the demand for a free *jouissance* from all moralistic discourse.

We understand that Ilse makes two moves in relation to the construction of her femininity; on the one hand, in satisfying the fetishes of all her partners, she inscribes herself in the phallic logic. However, on the other hand, when she claims to be free from morals, she seems to seek unlimited enjoyment, a not-all phallic enjoyment, something she experiences in her own body. If Melchior seeks in the formal knowledge an attempt to articulate the signifier about the sexual, Ilse puts her body at the service of this; this seems to be her adolescent response to what she insists having no answer. On the other hand, she also builds her femininity by saying that she loves all these men, even if they are apes, pigs or camels. This, because Lacan (2008) teaches that love is a possible way of giving consistency to the feminine being, even if it does not tell her anything about her enjoyment. It seems that as a prostitute, Ilse finds her alibi to seek the phallus aside from her partners.

About Martha, we have few elements to think about her femininity and adolescence construction. She, the object of parental enjoyment, is beaten daily by them. When asked by Wendla about the beatings, Martha says she believes that if she did not exist, her parents’ life would be empty. She still recognizes the *jouissance* found by the parents in the beatings:

I believe they enjoy it—even if they don’t say so. If I ever have children I will let them grow up like the weeds in our flower garden. Nobody worries about them and they grow so high and thick—while the roses in the beds grow poorer and poorer every summer. (Wedekind, 1991, p. 9)

If Martha’s accounts slide into a masochistic fantasy by Wendla, the young woman, in turn, shows she does not find satisfaction in that way. On the other hand, perhaps Martha tries to find in her friends - Wendla and Thea (the latter mentioned without details in the play), something that guides in her constitution of femininity, when she complains about her braided hairstyle and the parents’ prohibition on letting her have her hair like her friends. It seems that trapped as an object of *jouissance* by the parental couple, Martha finds no artifice for the construction of her femininity.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this article, we seek to investigate the vicissitudes of adolescents' outputs to girls seeking to combine the work of building femininity that occurs at the time of puberty. As much as Freud (1905/2006a) even affirms that in early childhood there are already distinctive features between the sexes, it is at puberty that, in the words of Miller (2015), there will be a landmark in the sexual development. We also follow the guidance of Lacan (2005) that it is at puberty that boys will enjoy the title of virility forged in Oedipus. Besides, interpreting the Lacanian position, we understand that it would be, also at puberty, that the girl would find her alibi to build her femininity.

The psychoanalysis, which does not disregard the body in the construction of sexuation, proposes that what is at stake in becoming a man or woman is sexual ethics so that being a woman or being a man is related to the way as desire is articulated in this construction. Adolescence and the construction of femininity have in common an embarrassment point: sexuation, the way of positioning themselves in the sharing of the sexes and creating answers to the issues that the pubic body demands for the real hole of sex with which they are confronted.

In addition, adolescence taken as a symptom of puberty, according to the elaboration of Stevens (2004), requires the subject to make an effort to create his response to the lack of ready answers about the sexual encounter. This sexual

is not only in its biological sense, as psychoanalysis goes far beyond biology. The sexual in question is the encounter with the Other sex. We agree with Lacan (2003a) that this is an unfortunate encounter for everyone.

In this encounter, several answers are possible. We chose to think of these answers from the play for two reasons: first, for the Freudian proposition that poets always arrive before science and for Lacan's (2003a) warning that Wedekind advances Freud, considering that in 1891, the play's original date, Freud had not yet formulated his theory of sexuality.

Wendla and Ilse, the characters chosen by us, teach that in the face of the enigma proposed by sexuality at puberty and the issue of how to become a woman, we have different ways of responding. At the same time, the first is stuck with the maternal response; the second invents a response with her own body. However, the two teach us that the encounter with the man brings its mark: Wendla's encounter with Melchior will make her come across the *jouissance* of her own body that is revealed in a smile that has no end; while Ilse plays *A Woman* role when she lends herself to male fantasy.

To conclude, it is worth remembering that the responses of the characters are possible responses, but they are not universal responses, since, as Lacan proposed in the 1970s, there is no universal that says about *A woman*, so that it is up to each one to invent herself in her femininity construction.

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