

MADELEINE AND MEDEIA: WOMEN BEYOND MATERNITY¹

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ABSTRACT. In the text 'A juventude de Gide', Lacan (1998a) compares Madeleine Gide, in her act of burning the letters of her husband, Andre Gide, to Medea. This act will be defined to the act of a true woman. We are interested to read this brief comment to capture the point from which Lacan defines the woman. Our hypothesis is that its starting point is not the genre, but the present unmeasured act in both. For psychoanalysis, sexuality comes always from an enigma order to the neurotic. Freud refers to the woman as a dark continent and confesses that his oedipal and phallic lens is not enough to meet the feminine mysteries. This interpretation leads him to the conclusion that maternity is the realization of femininity, par excellence. For Lacan, the true woman is in dissociation between the mother and the woman. From Miller writings about Madeleine and Medea, we propose to question what relationship he establishes between the unmeasured act of them, Medea and Madeleine, and the woman. To do so, we will address one by one.

Keywords: Woman; act; maternity.

MADELEINE E MEDEIA: MULHERES ALÉM DA MATERNIDADE

RESUMO. No texto 'A juventude de Gide', Lacan (1998a) compara Madeleine Gide, em seu ato de queimar as cartas de seu marido, André Gide, a Medeia. Este ato será definido como o ato de uma verdadeira mulher. Interessa-nos ler este breve comentário, buscando extrair dele o ponto a partir do qual Lacan define a mulher. Nossa hipótese é que seu ponto de partida não é o gênero mas antes o ato desmedido presente em uma e outra. Para a psicanálise, a sexualidade é sempre da ordem de um enigma para o neurótico. Freud refere-se à mulher como um continente negro e confessa que sua lente edípica e fálica não é suficiente para responder aos mistérios do feminino. Esta chave de leitura o conduz à conclusão de que a maternidade é a realização da feminilidade, por excelência. Para Lacan, a verdadeira mulher se situa na dissociação entre a mãe e a mulher. A partir da leitura de Miller, acerca de Madeleine e Medeia, propomos interrogar qual a relação entre o ato desmedido de uma e de outra mulher. Para tanto, abordaremos uma a uma.

Palavras-chave: Mulher; ato; maternidade.

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MADELEINE Y MEDEIA: MUJERES ADEMÁS DE LA MATERNIDAD

RESUMEN. En 'A juventude de Gide', Lacan (1998a) compara a Madeleine Gide, en su acto de quemar las cartas de su marido, Andre Gide, la Medea. Este acto se definirá como el acto de una verdadera mujer. Nos interesa leer este breve comentario, buscando extraer de él el punto a partir del cual Lacan define a la mujer. Nuestra hipótesis es que su punto de partida no es el género sino el acto desmedido presente en una y otra. Para el psicoanálisis, la sexualidad es siempre del orden de un enigma para el neurótico. Freud se refiere a la mujer como un continente negro y confiesa que su lente edípica y fálica no es suficiente para responder a los misterios del femenino. Esta clave de lectura lo conduce a la conclusión de que la maternidad es la realización de la feminidad, por excelencia. Para Lacan, la verdadera mujer se sitúa en la disociación entre la madre y la mujer. A partir de Madeleine y Medea, proponemos interrogar qué relación Miller establece entre el acto desmedido de una y de otra y la mujer. Para ello, abordaremos una a una.

Palabras clave: Mujeres; acto; maternidad.

Introduction

This article is part of a developing doctoral research at the Post-Graduation Program in Psychology at PUC Minas and integrates the research 'What a mother wants today: a maternity study in the twenty-first century based on psychoanalysis', both sponsored by Fapemig.

Lacan (1998a, p. 773) comments about the writer André Gide's groan wailing over the ripping away of these letters that were a doubling of himself, which is why he calls them his child. It happened at the moment that his wife, Madeleine, has told him about the burning of them. Commenting this passage, Lacan compares Gide to Jason and says: "Poor Jason [...] he does not recognize Medea [...]", referring to a connection between the act of Madeleine and Medea, who kills her own children, as we shall see later. This is the way Lacan refers to Madeleine.

To what extent, she managed to become what Gide made her into 41 remains impenetrable, but the sole act in which she clearly showed that she was separate from it was the act of a woman, a true woman, in her uncompromising nature as woman [entierete de femme]. The act was that of burning Gide's letters, which are what she had that was 'most precious'. The fact that she gives no other reason for it than having 'had to do something' [...] (Lacan, 1998a, p. 761, author's emphasis).

We propose to unfold this passage that is present in the *Écrits* (Lacan's French work), trying to extract from it the point Lacan defines the woman. His starting point is not the genre but rather the unmeasured act presents in Madeleine and Medea. Both Freud and Lacan teach that sexuality comes always from an enigma order for each one. The relationship between the sexual body and its subjectivity is never simple and obvious and the neurotic always has an inadequate relation to his sex.

Freud refers to femininity as a dark continent, territory in which his phallic and oedipal lens does not allow him to unravel all the mysteries. It is undeniable that he has found a difficulty to represent the sexual position of feminine side. He published his first major clinic case, the Dora case, that brought into the picture the subject upon what a woman is. For Freud, a point has always been inassimilable in the feminine

In Lacan (2008), this inassimilable appears in the form of the aphorism 'The woman does not exist' that points out the impossibility of thinking the feminine from the universal and the need to consider it from the singular of each one. Lacan takes up the Freudian principle of the primacy of the phallus as the representative of the difference between the sexes in the unconscious by postulating the absence of a significant of 'The woman'. The Other sex is what resists to the identification, you can not identify it. One can speak of man as universal, identifying him to the phallus, on the other side, there is an absence, an alterity that is not identifiable to any significant: 'The woman does not exist'. There are no 'two' that enters a relationship with a 'one'.

In the 70s, Lacan (2008) formalizes his formulae of sexuation, using the phallic function. On the left, called male side, there is the universal proposition 'For every x, x is phallic' and in the place of the particular proposition we have 'There is an x that is not phallic' which founds the place of exception as the father's place, evoking the myth of 'Totem and Taboo'. All are phallic, there is a whole, a universal, and there is an exception that proves the rule. This universal is based on an exception point. There is a universal in the man side of the formulae, but this universal ensures no existence. A set can be empty and can function as universal. The fact that a universal phallic exists does not guarantee the existence of a man. The place of existence is the father's place.

On the right side of the table, the female side, there is not the *One* who is the exception. The formula of not-whole (or non-all) is read as: 'it is not every x I can say that is subject to the phallic function'. Not every woman can be said that it is subject to the phallic function, or whether she is subject to the phallic function, she is not whole, there is a part in the phallic function, but not whole. In place of the universal negative, we find: 'There is not an x to say no to the phallic function'. The father exists, but the woman does not. The not-whole implies a double indeterminacy: Firstly, it states a woman's relationship to the phallus that is undetermined, she is not-whole in the phallic function, and secondly, we can not know where she is in this role. In classical logic, the formula 'There is not an x that say no' would lead to the universal statement 'Everyone says yes'. However, that is not what Lacan writes with the formulae, but that there is no universal. The not-whole does not imply that there would be an existence who would say no to the phallic function and leads to 'one to one', each one is subject to the phallic function contingently and does not constitute a set. Let us know who Madeleine was.

Madeleine Gide

André Paul Guillaume Gide (1869-1951) was a French writer, winner of the Nobel literature prize in 1947, he wrote more than fifty works, as well as several notes and intimate writings that were addressed to Jean Delay, his psychobiographer. Jean Delay, psychiatrist, neurologist and writer, has produced two volumes of a work dedicated to the youth Gide, and it is from them that Lacan will have access to the life of the French writer.

The work of Delay contains personal notes of Gide, unpublished excerpts, reading books and correspondence between Gide and his mother, but missed out on an essential element: "In this mass we must include the hole left by the correspondence with his cousin, Madeleine Rondeaux, who became his wife" (Lacan, 1998, p. 753). In addition to the two volumes of Jean Delay book, Lacan uses as a support the biography by Jean Schlumberger, the couple Gide and Madeleine's friend. This work also brings letters from Madeleine that were never sent.

Gide was gay, but Lacan (1998), when addressing his love life, focuses on his heterosexual choice for his cousin Madeleine. What interests us with this article, relating to André's life, is to highlight only what refers to his relationship with Madeleine.

The family of Gide comes from generations of Protestant alliance, marked by "[...] moralizing maternal care" (Lacan, 1998p. 756), to which Juliette, writer's mother, was a good example. The father of Gide, Paul Gide, brings another feature, the intelligentsia, being a strong influence for the child, and though distant, had a strong presence in André's life until his death when his son was eleven years old.

Juliette Rondeaux was an "[...] austere, mannish and virtuous woman. She worshiped to morality and sacrificed herself in the name of duty" (Martinho, 2007, p. 28). Her marriage with Paul Gide was taken as a duty due to the insistence of her family. Martinho wonders that probably the voluntary act of having the only child with her husband was faced as a task. Lacan (1998, p. 760) poses a question: "Who was his mother for this child, and this voice by which love was identified with the commandments of duty?". André's relationship with his mother is important for us in order to understand his relationship with Madeleine, since his mother is responsible for the separation between love and desire in the writer's life.

Hellebois (2011) will nominate Juliette's relationship with her son as mothering moral and will highlight, based on the reading of Lacan, the mark of death in this relationship, related to the negative impact of the mother's desire in the child, and the salvation of Gide due to the seduction by aunt Mathilde Rondeaux, Madeleine's mother.

Martinho (2007, p. 29) points out that aunt Mathilde intervened decisively in André's life, being a "[...] saving and kinky [...]" presence. In *A porta estreita*, Gide, mixing reality and fiction, tells the seduction scene in which an aunt seduces her nephew of 13, passing his hand over his chest, with the excuse of arranging his clothes. It is in this scene with her aunt that Andre has awakened his desire, but also to become the desired child, in the imaginary plane. Gide, in this awakening of desire, does not recognize himself as the object of the female desire, but he identified himself with the seductress role (Lacan, 1998a). Lacan indicates that it thus seems here that the subject finds himself transformed into a woman as desiring.

But this transformation comes only as a residue of a symbolic subtraction which occurred in the place where the child, faced with his mother, could only reproduce the self-abnegation of her jouissance and the envelopment of her love. Desire left nothing here but its negative impact, giving form to the ideal of an angel that impure contact cannot touch (Lacan, 1998a, p. 756).

This figure of the angel is embodied by Madeleine. She was the eldest daughter of Juliette's brother with his wife, Mathilde, the seductress aunt. Mathilde was an unfaithful woman and with her acts considered immoral she exposed her family socially. In 1880, Madeleine's father died and the young took over the family responsibilities, since the behavior of her mother shamed the family and her daughters rejected her. It is in his uncles' that Gide has his breath taking meeting with her cousin, when he finds her, "[...] on her knees, in tears and it is for him 'an inebriation, excitement, helplessness and emotion climax'. From that moment, Gide is dedicated to protecting Madeleine. He elects her as his sole object of love" (Martinho, 2007, p. 32, author's emphasis).

That devotion promise is what marked the love of André for Madeleine, a love without carnal connection, a pure love. Before they were married, they started an intense exchange of letters, marked by a fraternal tone. Madeleine often signed the letter as *soeurainée* and

called him as *petit frère*. However, for fear of a scandal due to the eccentric behavior of her cousin, Madeleine breaks up with him and destroys some memories that she had from him (Fayad, 2015). Later, she, divided between morality and love for his cousin, accepts his marriage proposal, believing she could influence him morally.

Hellebois (2011) points out that Juliette was against the marriage of cousins, but shortly before her death she had changed her mind, for a reason that has to do with her moralizing attitude. In 1893, Gide makes a trip to Africa where he had sex with prostitutes and with young boys, the first reported his mother through letters and the second inferred by her. As she was afraid with her son scandalous way, she preferred to support his marriage with Madeleine. For the author, marriage is sealed in a funeral atmosphere, as Juliette died less than a month before the couple's engagement. After marriage, Madeleine and Gide left for the honeymoon, in which they had no sexual relationship, a fact that remained during the twenty years of marriage.

Gide loved Madeleine and wished young boys, showing his pederast preference. The couple's love was marked by the reading and music, a soul love only. Gide declares that he would abstain from caring for not to disturb the purity of Madeleine, "It is better I do not desire you. His body bothers me, and carnal possessions left me terrified" (Hellebois, 2011, p. 51, our translation)⁴. Gide's desire is relegated to marginal, to clandestine.

About Madeleine position, Lacan (1998, p. 767) points out that she "[...] wanted an unconsummated marriage. But she wanted it for unconscious reasons that happened to be the most appropriate for leaving Andre's impasse intact". These unconscious grounds are related to the love of the young woman set on her father. Lacan draws this conclusion from a letter from her to her aunt: "Perhaps I really only know two feelings in life: anxiety regarding the future and sadness over missing Daddy [...]" (Delay quoted by Lacan, 1998a, p. 767). Madeleine fixed on his dead father also excludes desire. Lacan asks "[...] What would have happened if Madeleine had turned toward André the face of Mathilde (her mother, whom she resembled) that a womanly flush [la couleur du sexe] had revived?" (p. 767). Would there be among them the establishment of this loving partnership? We understand that in it, Madeleine took the place of loved object, which fitted her very well, not needing to deal with the issues of his desire. She consented to Gide's preference for young boys since this would guarantee her that her position of being the object of love.

After a time of marriage, Madeleine moved to Cuverville, a small French town while Gide stayed in Paris, where his libido could find a way out. Distant, Gide had the pretext of writing to Madeleine, which made her, since adolescence, her reader. The letters had an immense value for the writer, since through them, he could achieve immortality.

Lacan (1998, p. 771) points out that Madeleine was a cultured and highly secretive woman, and "[...] knew how not to see what she did not want to know". This situation issustained until 1918, when Madeleine burned the letters Gide sent her for his lifelong. Gide fell in love with Marc Alégrett and planned with him a trip to Cambridge. On the eve of the trip, after dinner, Madeleine asked her husband: "You do not leave alone, do you?" (Gide quoted by Hellebois, p. 64, our translation)⁵. André babbled no, and when she asked him if he would go with Marc, he said yes. Gide tried to argue, but Madeleine replied, "Do not tell me anything. Never tell me anything anymore. I would rather your silence to your

⁴ "Aussi bien je ne te désire pas. Ton corps me gêne et les possessions charnelles m'épouvantent".

⁵ "Tu ne pars seul, n'est-ce pas?".

dissimulation” (p. 64, our translation)⁶. At this time, the words of love had no more value to her.

Lacan (1998a) states that Madeleine saw in Gide's face the first love he had away from her, and therefore she asks him. Although disturbed by the question of Madeleine, André travels with Marc. And after his departure, Madeleine burning all the letters he had sent during the time they were separated. It is from this act that Lacan brings the fundamental passage for us, let us take up again:

To what extent she managed to become what Gide made her into remains impenetrable, but the sole act in which she clearly showed that she was separate from it was the act of a woman, a true woman, in her uncompromising nature as woman [entierete de femme]. The act was that of burning Gide's letters, which are what she had that was ‘most precious.’ The fact that she gives no other reason for it than having ‘had to do something’ adds the sign of an unleashing provoked by the only intolerable betrayal (Lacan, 1998a, p. 772, author’s emphasis).

The intolerable betrayal was from Gide who has found a love far from her, since with Marc appears the point of love. Gide had sex with young boys throughout his marriage to Madeleine, but that was not a point of conflict for her, since he preserved her in the beloved place (Hellebois, 2011; Fayad, 2015; Lacan, 1998a), and when she only realizes something related to love field in the relationship to Marc, then Madeleine feel betrayed. As much as Gide has repeatedly said that Madeleine was his only love, what matters is, what highlights Lacan (1998a), that she saw on his face a new love beyond her. Interesting that Madeleine's response when asked about his act was ‘had to do something’, adding to the act the sign of fury. In *Et nunc manet in te* a Gide’s work written after Madeleine’s death, he shows her reason for her act:

After you left, so I found myself alone in the big house that you were forsaking, no one on whom to lean me, without knowing what to do, and what to become myself [...] I initially believed I had no other alternative than just to die. Yea, truly, I believed that my heart stop beating. I suffered so much. I burned your letters to do something. Before destroying them I re-read one by one. [...] they were my most precious possession in the world (Gide quoted by Hellebois, 2011, p. 69-70, our translation)

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It looks like something from the devastation affects Madeleine. Without Gide, she does not know neither what to do nor what to be. Madeleine only reports Gide about the burned the letters when he asks them to his biography. Gide's testimony about the incident is overwhelming and shows how Madeleine’s act reaches the being level:

I thought I would die. But it was necessary that you knew what these letters were. [...] these letters were the treasure of my life, the best of me, definitely the best of my work. [...] the purest of my existence, the purest of my heart was there [...] and I often told me, 'you can die' [...] ah, I can imagine what can feel the father who comes

⁶ “Ne me dis rien. Ne me dis plus jamais rien. Je prefere ton silence à ta dissimulation”.

⁷ “Après ton départ, lorsque je me suis retrouvée toute seule dans la grande mansion que tu abandonnais, sans personne sur qui m’appuyer, sans plus savoir quoi faire, que devenir [...] j’ai cru d’abord qu’il ne me restait qu’à mourir. Oui, vraiment, j’ai cru que mon cœur cessait de battre, que je mourais. J’ai tant souffert. J’ai brûlé tes lettres pour faire quelque chose. Avant de les détruire, je les ai toutes relues, une à une [...] C’était ce que j’avais de plus précieux au monde”.

home, and his wife will say, 'our son is gone, I killed him (Gide quoted by Hellebois, 2011, p. 65-66)⁸.

Gide raises the loss of the letters to the loss of a child. This action opens an emptiness in his being. The letters had for him the function of life continuity even after his death. Madeleine reaches Gide in the affiliation. She breaks with a logic of her husband's descent, hitting him around the being level.

This act is interesting because under the need to do something Madeleine also opens up from what she had more important because the letters were her most precious possession, having a phallic value, since the letters made her the receiving of what Gide had best written. (Hellebois, 2011). At this time, Madeleine gives up of having to achieve Gide in the being area. The act of Madeleine holds this dimension of putting holes in Gide's being.

Hellebois (2011) points out that Gide described himself as someone who cried all day in front of the wife after the burning of the letters, she, in turn, remained indifferent and insensitive to the partner's crying. Gide says that after burning his letters Madeleine aged rapidly, fell ill and died. However, Schlumberger indicated the opposite, that after burning the letters of her husband, Madeleine began to devote herself more to her preferences, to her readings and not to be only the addressee of Gide's work (Fayad, 2015).

From the act of Madeleine, Lacan (1998a, p. 773) refers to Medea, at glance:

André Gide, turning over and over in his heart the redemptive intention he attributes to Madeleine's gaze, which he depicts as ignoring his poignant sighs, to this passerby who goes through her demise without meeting him, Andre Gide is mistaken. Poor Jason who has gone off to conquer the Golden Fleece of happiness—he does not recognize Medea.

Lacan (1998a) does not directly address the act of Medea as the act of a true woman, doing this through a derivation, when portrays the innocence of Gide in not recognizing Medea in his Madeleine. Here we have the equivalence André Gide and Jason and, therefore, Madeleine and Medea. Miller (2012, p. 12) says that Gide did not recognize in his angelical wife Medea, a woman capable of killing her own children to reach the man. What stands out in Euripides's play is “[...] an emergency of the absolute”. Both have in common the act as a response to partner's betrayal. Both commit the act after losing the object of love and yet they have destroyed what was the most important things for husbands, but mostly, what was the most important to them – for Medea, the children and for Madeleine, the love letters.

Although we know that there would be a real woman, as Lacan (2008) teaches that because there is not The woman, we can only take the women one by one. We believe that the passage quoted opens us a research path. Time to Medea.

Medea of Euripides

The play *Medea* was written in 431 BC and alludes to the mythological expedition of the Argonauts. In Iolcus land the throne is usurped from Esão by his brother Pelias. When Jason, son of Esão, comes to the age of legal majority he demands the throne as his

⁸ “J’ai cru mourir. Mais il faut que vous sachiez ce qu’étaient ces lettres [...] Ces lettres étaient le trésor de ma vie, le meilleur de moi: à coup sûr, le meilleur de mon œuvre [...] Le plus pur de mon existence, le pur de mon cœur était là. [...] et solvable je me disais: ‘Tu peux mourir: [...] Ah, j’imagine ce que peut éprouver le père qui rentre chez lui, et à qui sa femme vient dire: ‘Notre enfant n’est plus, je l’ai tué’”.

inheritance rights, but Pelias requires as a condition, for returning the throne to his nephew, to conquer the golden fleece, located in a forest of Colchis. Jason part to the mission accompanied by fifty warriors in Argos ship. When he arrives in Colchis, King Eetes places to Jason four impossible missions as a condition to deliver the golden fleece. Willing to return to Iolcus, given the impossibility of winning the missions alone, Jason was helped by the “[...] powers of love” (Dutra, 1991, p. 2). Medea, barbaric witch, daughter of Eetes, helps Jason to win the missions using magic. After capturing the golden fleece, she flees with him and takes his younger brother Apsirto as a hostage, she kills and dismembers him throwing the pieces of his body into the sea, to delay her father's pursuit to her vessel.

When they reach Iolcus, Medea, by magic, persuades the daughters of Pelias to butcher and to cook him on the arguments that he would rejuvenate. Discovered the crime, Jason and Medea fled to Corinth and are greeted by King Creon. There they had two children. Dutra (1991) describes the couple lives in peace until the king decided to marry Jason with his daughter Creusa.

The play *Medea* begins at this point. At the beginning of the play, the nurse (Medea's old nanny from her childhood) describes the state of Medea:

She won't eat; she just gives in to her grief, washing away all her hours in tears, ever since she realized her husband had abandoned her. She never looks up or raises her face from the ground. She is like a rock or wave of the sea when those who love her try to give advice; except that sometimes she lifts up her pallid face and mourns for her dear father, her country, and the home she betrayed to come here with this man who now holds her in contempt (Euripides, 2010, p. 25).

The nurse also announces that something is happening in Medea's relationship with their children “And she hates her children, takes no pleasure in seeing them. I'm afraid of her, in case she has some new plan in mind. She is a deep thinker, you know, and she will not put up with this kind of abuse” (Euripides, 2010, p. 25). It seems that the nurse predicts the act that she announces, as Medea is “[...] frightening” (p. 26). The way she reports the scene, the nurse relates that the devastation affects Medea's body, after announced the marriage of Jason and Creusa.

In the first appearance of Medea in the play she announces all his suffering: “I am in agony, I am so brutally misused. You horrible children, of a mother who hates you god damn you with your father, and the whole house go to Hell” (Euripides, 2010, p. 34). More than that, the children already appear to be worthless to her.

Creon orders Medea to leave Corinth with her children, and he says he fears she does any evil to her daughter. The dialogue between Medea and Creon is long and she convinces him to give her another day in Corinth, so she can organize her departure and with the prior consent of Creon she plans her revenge killing her husband, the king and the princess, even knowing that after this crime she will have no city that welcomes her.

Jason enters the play, walks to Medea indicating that she is guilty of her own exile, “You had the chance to stay in this country and keep your home by patiently putting up with what your betters decide, but now you have had your say and for it you are to be deported” (Euripides, 2010, p. 63). He shows his concern for the children and offers to help them. Medea furiously denies this help and tells Jason all she did to save him, thus betraying his father's house, killing his brother and getting Pelias be killed by the hands of his daughters. Medea refuses Jason's help, because she “[...] is already in the area where the having has no value if the man is absent in your life” (Miller, 2012, p. 70). Jason minimizes everything that Medea claims to have given him and says, “Still, I will not put too fine a point on it. However, much you have benefitted me, all well and good. But you certainly got more out

of saving me than you put in, as I will demonstrate. I explain: ‘First you make your home in Greece instead of an alien land and you experience justice and the rule of law, not merely brute force’ (Euripides, 2010, p. 71). Jason shows that it was he who rescued Medea from the barbarian world and imposes a limit to her transgressions.

Jason tries to dissuade her to take the children, offering to raise them in the palace with the princess, but she denies this possibility. Just as the words of Gide have no more value for Madeleine when she sees him falling in love for Marc, the words of Jason not deterred Medea and have no importance to her.

After the dialogue with Jason, Medea finds Aigeus who was passing by Corinth. He had gone to consult with the Oracle of Phoebus Apollo seeking him an answer about his infertility. Aigeus asks Medea the reason for her suffering and agreed to her that Jason's betrayal was terrible. Then, she promises Aegeus the fertility: “You do not know what a lucky find you have found in me. I will put an end to your childlessness and help you become a father. I know how to concoct a potent elixir” (Euripides, 2010, p. 91). After the promise of Medea, Aegeus ensures welcome her in his country, first on behalf of the gods and then the children. She asks him to swear never disown her and always protect her.

Medea calls Jason saying she wants to apologize to him and asks opportunity to also do the same to the king and the princess. Jason believes in Medea and she sends to Creusa a fine dress and a tiara of beaten gold as a symbol of her regret and an apology. Jason, touched by Medea's attitude and believing in her, proposes to help her to ask Creon not to exile them from his territory. Due to this confidence that Jason has in Medea's word, that Lacan (1998a, p. 773) compares Gide to him, “[...] Poor Jason who has gone off to conquer the Golden Fleece of happiness – he does not recognize Medea”. Miller (2012) adds that poor are the men who do not recognize Medea in their partnerships.

When Creusa wears the dress and the tiara, she dies poisoned and Creon, the only one with the courage to touch her, embraces her daughter's body into his arms and also dies. After Medea knows about death in the palace, she announces that she will kill her children, but before the chorus asks her, “Will you dare to kill your own flesh and blood, Medea?” (Euripides, 2010, p. 101), to which she replies, “Yes, this will cause my husband to feel the most pain”. Before killing them there is her monologue:

What will I do? My heart is not in it, women, when I look at the gleaming eyes of my children. I could not do it. Goodbye my plans of before. I shall take my children with me. Why should I abuse them to wound their father, and have twice as many woes myself? I will not do it. Goodbye my plans. But what is the matter with me? Do I want to be a laughing stock, letting my enemies go unpunished? These things must be endured. Damn my cowardice! How could I let soft words into my heart? Who ever is not permitted to partake of my sacrifice stay away. I shall not let my hand grow slack. Go into the house, go on. I am no longer able to look at you. I am overcome by wrongs. I understand what evil I am about to do but my wrath is stronger even than my thoughts, which is the cause of the greatest wrongs of human kind (Eurípedes, 2010, p. 119-120).

In this passage what is at stake is not the absence of love for the children of Medea; she states that to look at the face of them succumbs to his heart, but that does not make her to waver in her decision. Still, the act shows her as imperative, it is intended to achieve Jason even at the expense of children prejudice because “[...] what there is in her of woman, surpasses what there is of mother” (Miller, 2012, p. 72). There appears, then, the possibility of thinking the acts of Medea and Madeleine, as acts of a real woman: acts in which what is

at stake is the being and not the having, acts in which the mother's position does not suppress what there is in the woman.

When Jason questions Medea about the murder of the children, she is accurate: “[...] I have wrenched your heart as I had to do. Do you think this a trivial wrong for a woman?” (Euripides, 2010, p. 147). He highlights the absence of limits in her: “If she is a good woman. But to you nothing is good. You have no limit”. Here, Jason brings an illustration concerning what Lacan points out on his formulation about the not-whole. If to sensible/good women the act committed is an audacity, to Medea it is not, since she is considered as a no limit person. She, in the act that has the structure of what would be the 'act of a real woman', breaks with the logic of having. The fact of having the children loses value if they will not knit her husband with her. Being a woman is more valuable than being a mother, revealing a dissociation between mother and wife (Miller, 2012).

Medea says Jason that she will bury them with her own hand, so that none of her enemies will defile them by tearing up their graves and once again she stated that her act does not say about the lack of love for her children, because she tells Jason that she made this “[...] to wound you” (Euripides, 2010, p. 153). Medea leaves to meet Aegeus in a dragon-drawn chariot that his grandfather, the Sun God, sent her.

The play *Medea* is widely commented in psychoanalytic means, since it emphasizes the separation between women and mothers. Medea commits all his actions (remember that before this central act, she betrays her father, kills and dismembers his brother and persuades Pelias's daughters to kill him) on be half of a man – Jason. For the love of Jason, she is fatherless and homeless and for him, she kills her children.

According to Laia (2015) Medea does not measure the concessions that makes to her man, basing here in Lacan reference (2003a, p. 538) when he says “[...] there is no limit to the concessions that each woman makes to a man: from her body, from her soul, from her goods [...]”, as it points to the not-whole as we shall see later. For Jason she breaks down “[...] the semblance that gave her homeland, decimating the place that was hers” (Laia, 2015, p. 29). At this moment we do not find in Medea nothing to indicate the presence of the devastation, as all concessions were circumscribed by the love of her partner. The devastation comes after the Jason's love be taken away.

Thus, according to what she says to the women in Corinth, experiencing 'being injured in bed', not counting with the pillar which Jason became a semblance, Medea also experiences that there is no other bloodiest mind and there is no more way to control the devastation that Jason, as a man, is spreading on her body (Laia, 2015, p. 29-30, author's emphasis).

So, Medea devastates herself only when Jason announces that he will marry Creusa. At the end of the play, Medea goes to meet Aegeus to whom she promised fertility and at this point no longer she seems to be taken by the devastation. Like Madeleine, she shows a before and an after from the act. It has the function to make a subjective difference. Miller (2012) indicates that the real women can only appear in a *tyche*, as if by chance. It is in that moment of the act and exclusively in it we could find a real woman, even if she does not exist. From the description of the play we will analyze what is in common between the acts of Medea and Madeleine.

Madeleine and Medea: are they real women?

The passage of Lacan about the real woman in her relationship with the act brought us some important questions. We can find both in Madeleine as in Medea the presence of the devastation in their bodies before the commission of the acts. These acts can be taken in the psychoanalytic perspective on the case of the clinic of the act, since among other features, they mark a before and an after, a subjective change. The act appears to the two women as a possible treatment for the devastation. Miller (2012, p. 71) also highlights that the acts of these women reach the partner in the being level and not just in the having:

For Lacan, discreetly, the act of a true woman - I will not say that it is the act of Medea, but that has its structure: the sacrifice of what is the most precious in their lives to open in man the hole that can not be filled [...]. A real woman explores an unknown area, exceeds the limits, and, if Medea gives us an example of what is lost in a real woman, it is because she performs with less rather than more. At the very heart of a situation in which she appears defenseless, there is a deadly sword. She can do from the less her own weapon, which has more power than all the weapons of the warriors. Let us add that she does it for a man, in strict relationship with him.

In other words, what Miller stresses is that the act of Medea, and also Madeleine, shows the relationship with the less, and thus, a distance of having, which could be completed for one by the children and for another by the letters. Both, after their husband's loss, just work with what lacks them. Unlike trying to suture the absence of love with something else, they pierce their partner.

About the least, Miller (2012) indicates that he opens a field to speak of a feminine's clinic. He recalls that for Freud the fundamental meaning that women give for not having the phallus is the *penisneid*, that is, by penis envy that the woman subjectives the phallic lack. Remember that having the phallic lens as reading instrument, Freud (1933/2006) points to three outputs for the girl in relation to *penisneid*: the sexuality inhibition, masculinity complex, and finally the output to normal femininity. Now, the output by the normal femininity takes place when the girl turns to her father, hoping to get from him his penis denied by her mother. "However, the feminine 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 the penis, as a primitive symbolic equivalence" (Freud, 2006, p. 128). Thus, in Freud, the female desire is identified, as par excellence, the desire of the penis. And for him, the way that woman subjects the absence is by the maternity way, when a child sutured the brand of less. Lacan (1998b) adds a new step in this discussion.

In 'A significação do falo', Lacan (1998b) states that the relationship between the sexes refers to a unique signifier: the phallus. Hence this relationship revolves around who has the phallus and another that is the phallus. In this sense, Lacan does not reduce the femininity to the field of maternity, since what is at stake in the female is not to cover the lack with the child/phallus. This, because the solution to be the phallus "[...] is not to close up the hole, but metabolizes it, dialectizes it, being the hole itself, that is, to make a being with nothing" (Miller, 2012, p. 68). When being the phallus, the woman escapes from the lack of female identity and attacks the entireties of the Other male. Being the phallus, indicates Miller, reduces the Other to a semblance. In this sense we have a first indication of what would be a real woman, "[...] the real in a woman is measured by her subjective distance from the mother position" (p. 69). What the acts by Medea and Madeleine indicate is exactly the break with the mater position, from one that takes the children, and in the

case of Madeleine, the letters, as a phallus and protects them as something precious. It is only in the act that Madeleine and Medea are constituted as such.

However, it is important to clarify that you can not form a concept on the real woman as the Lacanian proposition in the 70s indicates that The woman does not exist.

The expression 'This is a real woman' can only be said in a cry of surprise, either wonder or horror, and perhaps only when one realizes that, clearly, the mother does not close up the hole in her. Something that is linked to the sacrifice of the goods, to the sacrifice of having, and perhaps, for this reason, the woman has merited this cry when she consented to her own castration method (Miller, 2012, p. 69, author's emphasis).

In the division of sexualization proposed by Lacan in 1972-73, there is a key point, because, in formulating the table of sexualization, he indicates that at the womanside there is no universal affirmative proposition as there is at the manside. This does not allow merging the group of women in such a way as The woman does not exist. What Lacan (2008) indicates that there is not a significant to define the woman. Lacan also indicates, with the use of the table, that the woman is not-whole subject to the phallic function, "There is not The woman, definite article to refer to the universal. There is not The woman because [...] by her essence she is not-whole" (p. 78-79).

Lacan (2008) also points out the duplicity from which the woman engages in loving partnership: on the one hand, she moves to phallus (La → Φ) on the other she directs to the S (A). This means that the woman moves in her jouissance towards the phallus, but also towards the S (A), seeking in the barred Other a significant that tells it what a woman is. However, there is not a significant of the lack of significant - S (A), and with it, the love demand of woman is unlimited, what is not regulated by the phallic record. What this indicates is that there is a part of the woman who is not regulated by the phallic logic but goes beyond that.

It is in this direction that Miller (2012) names that the real woman is the one that goes beyond limits, that is, who is located at the not-whole side of sexualization. Or more precisely, she is located there, but not-whole. Lacan (2008, p. 80) states: "It is not because she is not-whole in the phallic function that she is no longer in it at all. She's there entireness. But there is something more". Interestingly, the feminine jouissance also holds the mark of a transcendence, not giving the woman her significance. Morel (2010) presents an interesting proposition indicating that the woman's jouissance can be found not only in the field of love, "[...] but the Other jouissance is also revealed in certain 'foolish', passionate acts, which witness another logic than the phallic logic of the lack of having as well of being and it may arise with a force capable of canceling the phallic logic" (p. 27, our translation, author's emphasis)⁹. One example that the author brings is the murderous act of Medea.

Morel (2010) indicates that before being abandoned by Jason, Medea found himself obedient to the phallic norm; she was a woman, wife and mother, she was determined to get the goods to her husband and children, her actions so far are in the logic of having – so, phallic. However, after the betrayal of Jason she is willing to sacrifice their children. The author points out that the children were to her in the position of object 'a', but they were also the objects that had more value for Jason. "In her revenge of Jason, Medea, therefore, acts as a betrayed wife and no mother. There, the wife and the mother are disjointed and the

⁹ "Mais l'Autre jouissance se révélerait dans certains actes 'insensés' passionnels, que témoignent d'une logique autre que la logique phallique du manque à avoir et du manque à être, et qui peut surgir avec une force capable d'annuler la logique phallique".

not-whole femininity subverts the maternal phallic logic, resulting in the act, irresistibly” (Morel, 2010, p. 272, our translation)¹⁰. The act is what emerges as a result of the subversion of maternal phallic logic by not-whole logic.

Still, it is clear to us that in the act of a true woman she opens the hand of having, since the children respond to a phallic having. To Madeleine, having the love letters does not have more value for her, since she lost the love of Gide, which constituted her being. The having only had value for her as constituted her being as loved. When Lacan (2008) indicates that The woman does not exist, a chance for her to realize her being is being the wife of a man, which does not hold for Madeleine, when she realizes in Gide's face the love for another. At this point, while she lies adrift, it is that the act arises. Marcos and Derzi (2013) indicate that it is the law of desire, founded in the Father's name, which allows the subject does not look so adrift, and being drift pushes the subject to the act. It seems that ‘have to do something’ pronounced by Madeleine pushes her to the act. It also happens to Medea, the words of Jason even the love for her children put her away from the act. None of this has value, if one is not loved.

Another point of linking between Madeleine and Medea is the devastation and how the act gives them a treatment. Lacan (2003b) states in the ‘O aturrito’ that the woman wants to be recognized as unique by her partner, so that, she can be marked as a woman, although she is from only a man. Unlikely the way of masculine loving in which man directed to the partner taking her as object ‘a’, as a cause-object of his desire, mediated by fantasy. Love, therefore, marks a privileged place for the woman and the devastation can be its other name, guides Miller (2016). This privileged place of love for women is highlighted since Freud in *Zur Einführung des Narzißmus* (Introduction to narcissism) and taken up by Lacan. The devastation may arise as the woman directed herself to a partner, she goes in two directions: to the phallus, which is limited, and to the S (\mathcal{A}) unlimiting her demand for love. When the demand for love can not be matched in partnership the devastation imposes its face. Note that Lacan (2008, p. 85) indicates that in the sexual partition “[...] anyone, who is phallic, inscribes oneself of one side or of the other [...]” not making it an anatomical equivalence.

Interestingly, that in addition to the passage in which Lacan (1998a) refers to Jason comparing him to Gide, there is another reference of the tragedy in his text. In the French version of *‘Écrit’* contain the following lines as an epigraph: “If you try to show some clever innovation to the inept you will seem useless and hardly skilled at all; if people in the city suspect you of being superior to those they believe ingenious you will irritate them”. (Euripides quotes by Miller, 2012, p. 73). This passage is a speaking from Medea to Creon. He calls on her saying that she knows how to ruin someone and that is the reason he is so afraid with the fact that she stays in the city. Fayad (2015) indicates that, therefore, what Lacan (1958a / 1998) stresses when using this epigraph is Medea's character, her fury when she is relegated, comparing her to Madeleine here. In addition to this fury reference, Miller (2012) points out that there is here a reference to Medea's knowledge, appearing in her wise position. She knows how to open a hole in the man that will never be filled. Her action, as well as Madeleine's, includes this dimension.

¹⁰ “Dans sa vengeance de Jason, Médée agit donc en femme trahie et non en mère. En elle, la femme et la mère se disjoignent, et la féminité pas-toute subvertit la logique phallique maternelle, entraînant l'acte, irrésistiblement”.

Final considerations

Medea and Madeleine reveal the hidden face of the female not-whole covered by the phallic logic, highlighting the disjunction between wife and mother and the approach of the female with the real. For Miller (2012), a real woman is defined by the subjective distance from the mother's position. It is not a question of building the concept of The real woman, as Miller reminds us (1993), but this is about taking them one by one.

We can not forget that, for Lacan, the significant woman is not reducible to sex and gender. Leguil (2015, p. 61, author's emphasis) states that Lacan says that the relationship of a subject with her femininity something from order of the act. "To the extent that femininity is linked to an act which gives her a mode of existence, the woman represents a 'proof' for the man". Reference is made here to Lacan's Seminar 18 when he (2009) states that for the man, the woman is the moment of truth, and that regarding sexual jouissance, the woman is in a position to punctuate the equivalence between semblance and jouissance. The act in Lacan holds something irreversible. Medea and Madeleine contradict, if we may say, the desire of the mother and seek the castration of the man sacrificing the phallus representation par excellence, the children for the first, and the letters of Gide, for the second. Leguil (2015) proposes that the act should be taken in this case to make the other understand that there is a woman. Thus, the real woman is not defined as a mother, but as one that opens a hole in the being of another (Miller, 2012).

Leguil (2015) resembles a precision made by Miller in this regard. When one says that The woman does not exist it does not mean that a woman's place does not exist, but this place is essentially empty, what is not an obstacle to find something in this place. It is precisely because The woman does not exist that the real women do. That is, there are women who have an extreme relationship with this place of inexistence, a closer relationship than others with this non-place that, however, exists. We can situate the modalities of this relationship with this place of absence under the old *hbris* term. A real woman is concerned in her being by a form of excess that endangers her the same time that leads her to experience her femininity (Leguil, 2015).

Where would place this true, this excess in a woman? From this path we can take Medea and Madeleine as figures of a real woman par excellence. The hysterical symptom can be a question of the subject on what a woman is, as one can see in Dora. Her hysteria and her identification with her father, the maternity and her partnership with her son, to be the phallus of a man in the loving relationships are just ways to coat the feminine and her absence of being. Medea and Madeleine are defined neither by having or by being, but by an act which, according to psychoanalysis, establishes a before and an after. The sacrifice of what is the most precious in her life raises the woman beyond the mother, opening a hole in the Other.

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