

# "Le désir amputé, sexual experience of Lebanese women" \* : Fifteen years later.

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It has been thirteen years and a half years since L'Harmattan published my work "Le désir amputé" on the sexual experience of the Christian woman in a traditional Lebanese society, and fifteen and a half years since it has been submitted as a PhD thesis. Ever since, solicitations concerning the same theme at meetings, in periodicals ... have been at the origin of further publications on sexual education, the male/female relationship, the experience of the body, etc ...

My work caused a scandal then and would definitely cause one today. The reactions after every communication on the subject whether published in a newspaper or broadcast on television are the best witnesses to this fact. The reactions focused on the same idea: morality. Talking about sexuality is an act that goes contrary to morality. I, a woman, living in an Eastern society where things related to sex are neither mentioned nor talked about, could only be malefic and amoral. So many comments and reflections have since altered the collective debates to include the personal individual level, questioning who I am, my way of life, my motherhood, my role as a wife, up to my physical integrity...

This is how my book started: "As a matter of fact, I am a woman...". To be a woman in this part of the world, doing research, talking of sexuality, and above all of women's sexuality, transgresses many taboos and inhibitions.

Because I was a woman, I needed to extricate myself from the general view that women are controlled by their feelings and emotions. There is no doubt that the

source of this work has been a subjective impulse, a passionate drive, which has manifested itself in scientific research. In his "Introduction" to the *Philosophy of History*, Hegel asserts that "nothing great in this world is accomplished without passion."

What was I looking for? What were my findings? What is still left of them today? This is the itinerary I propose to follow after all these years.

## **What was I looking for? Problematic and Hypotheses**

The problematic of my research was enclosed in a double perspective: to understand the way women "live" within their erotic bodies, in the light of received ideas on sexuality, ideas generally transmitted by education, and sexual education particularly, and to discover the cause or causes which make one woman more satisfied sexually than others.

With that double perspective in view, I advanced the following hypothesis: if the basic sexual energy is repressed, this vital impulse would express itself and transgress the forbidden, and nothing could restrain desire. Indeed, desire tries to find a pathway despite the taboos of a forbidding education.

But how was I supposed to study such a subject loaded with so much feeling? After ten preliminary interviews, the questionnaire method ended up being the only one possible. For the sake of concision I will not talk about this now though I would be glad to answer any questions if this matter is of interest.

I had to face the problem of sampling. In a fantasy

wish for generalization, I wanted at first to have a representative sample of the whole Lebanese feminine population. Confrontation with reality limited my first ambition. There too, I explain in detail the complete proceedings I went through to end up, after many successive renouncements, working with a sample constituted by one category of women, which was the only one accessible to this kind of theme: the Christian woman, living in the city, with a middle and upper middle class social and cultural status. To be more precise, a sample of 100 women (450 questionnaires were sent), 46 married and 54 unmarried, divided into three age groups 18/25, 26/33, 34/42 years old.

My sample is to be taken as it is. It represents a specific population at a definite period, and has no global pretence.

#### My Findings: The Emerging Variables

I was able to emit four principal variables characterizing the sexual experience of the women in my sample. These women seemed, during the investigation, a sufficiently representative sample of the impact of traditional education on the sexual experiences of women. This education has transmitted a certain morality, through school, family, religious teachings, social environment in general, and has created a halo of shame, guilt and dread around sexuality, as I have been able to demonstrate. Actually, it is those restraints that make women socially and sexually immature, causing future sexual problems as expounded by Françoise Dolto ( F. Dolto, “ Sexualité féminine”, Scarabée & Co/A.M. Métaillé, 1983). It is therefore with this burden that we must proceed: the impact of traditional education on the sexual experience of women.

What are the four emerging variables? ( The four variables end up rephrasing the reference text with minor differences. Refer to “Le désir amputé”, pp 158 to 160).

#### The Educational Climate

The social conditions of the childhood environment – the attitude of parents and teachers in our traditional society – ignore and distort everything that is sexually related. They do not give any sexually related data (to cite only one example, the preparation to menstruation which is an unavoidable physiological event, was lacking for half of the sampled women, 38% of them did not even know of its mere existence!). Even when “they” gave information, it was either erroneous, or repetitive recommendations and moral orientations. Yet, without considering the

contents, the youngest seemed to be more updated than their elders. For more detailed figures, please refer to the original investigation.

#### Virgins and Sexual Desire

Virginity constitutes by itself a whole field in the sexual experience of women, because of the taboos and the prohibition it carries. Half of the bachelors included in the sample are no longer virgins and those who still are have had no form of flirting (7.4%), light flirting (20.3%), sexual relations without penetration (16.6%) or with anal penetration (3.7%).

For virgins and those who remained virgin until marriage, I found a desire for a complete sexual relation, but it is the fear of going against social morality which makes virginity a value for marriage – that stops them from going further.

Thus, the taboo of virginity is in operation. Note that even those who are no longer virgin have lost their virginity with the partner they ended up marrying, as shown by the sample of married women who lost their virginity before marriage. Marriage still remains the only institution where sexual relationships are sanctioned.

#### The Autoerotic Practice

Masturbation plays an important role in sexual life since it arouses the body’s erotic sensibility. Those who have practiced it are those who have had the greatest sexual relations before marriage, who more than others enjoy the stimulation of their erogenous areas and are the most sexually satisfied. The exploration of the physical self would lead a woman to acknowledge her aptitude to sensuality, to have a better investment of the erogenous body and to search for a sexual partner. This reveals the important role of masturbation and premarital sex for future sexual satisfaction.

#### Marriage, an Inhibition Factor?

Marriage and sexual satisfaction seem incompatible. It is this variable, severe in its institutional bearing, that imposed itself upon me, against any expectation. The married woman was revealed to be less sexually satisfied

than the unmarried who has sexual relations and who, of the same age, seems to live her sexuality in a more blooming manner even though, in the global evaluation of their experiences, they are both unsatisfied.

Actually, there is an inversely proportional relationship between sexual satisfaction and age, for bachelors and married women, in most observations:

*When I lost my  
virginity, after  
a sexual intercourse  
with my friend,  
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mother’s footsteps  
in the corridor*

- With age, the bachelor woman who has a profession (100%), seems to get progressively over the prohibited, since virginity has no importance whatsoever (respectively in the age pools 35.2%, 42.8%, 66.6%). She is no longer virgin (83%), and does not refuse sexual relations when she has the opportunity (66.6%). Since she is frustrated by the irregularity of partners and available places where she could have sex with a partner, she looks for frequent relations (66.6%). When she is with a partner, she initiates him to her erotic desires (83.3%). She likes foreplays, breast stimulation, mouth stimulation of her clitoris (even if she does not dare ask for it), vaginal penetration (100%) and most often ends up having an orgasm.

- While the married woman, as she ages, does not work anymore (68.7%) or has never worked before and seems more attached to general preconceived ideas concerning sexuality: she considers virginity as very important (68.7%), having herself had very little sexual contacts before marriage, having been a virgin on the first night of marriage (respectively according to age pools 57.2%, 69%, 75%). It is her partner who takes the initiative for the sexual relation, and we find that she has the highest percentage of rejection by her partner (68.7%). Her partner is progressively less preoccupied with her own pleasure (7.1%, 12.5%, 37.5%), and she does not dare ask for sexual stimulations (72.7%). As time goes by sexual intercourse becomes less frequent and leaves her dissatisfied. She thinks of herself as being frigid (50% of the age pool 25/32!) though she likes foreplays, and breast stimulation, but as she gets older, she does not like more daring contacts (14.2%, 43.75%, 62.5% don't like the mouth stimulation of their clitoris), has no pleasure in vaginal penetration (18.75%) and rarely has orgasm.

These bachelor and married women, who are nevertheless of the same generation, have had little sexual information: half of over 25 years old (bachelor and married) have had late or no sexual information; add to this the archaic use of contraceptives, since it is only the youngest that use the most efficient means.

Certain forms of behavior seem to be linked to the marital status:

- Fixation on the negative reactions to the first intercourse (weeping, pain), is occasionally encountered (13%), but does not exist for unmarried women who have lost their virginity.

- We find few women who do not like vaginal penetration, but while no bachelor says she doesn't like it, all those that do not, are married and their number increases with age (7.14%, 12.5%, 18.75%).

- Also, all the bachelors say they "like very much" or "moderately" the mouth stimulation of their clitoris, and it is the married woman who likes "a little" or "not at all" this kind of stimulation, their number growing with age (14.2%, 43.75%, 62.5%).

- The extramarital partner thinks more often about his mate, while it is only in marriage that we find men who do not worry about their wives' excitement, their number growing with age (7.1%, 12.5%, 37.5%).

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Thus, marriage seems to constitute an inhibition factor in the erotic function of women: the married woman appears to be less satisfied with her sexual life than the bachelor of the same age who has sexual relations, even though in the global evaluation of their experience, they are all unsatisfied.

Indeed, the maternal function of women, especially in the East, seems to absorb all their energies and could lead them to renounce their genital sexuality. On the other hand, it is not the nature of sexual impulses that denies women satisfaction, it is rather the socialization of the human being (man and woman) which plays a major role in the suppression of the impulses (as developed by S. Freud, mainly in "Malaise dans la civilisation" and "Introduction à la psychanalyse"), which, in the case of women, is more exaggerated because they live in a world whose laws are regulated by men. (Refer to chapter 13 and the conclusion of "Le désir amputé" op. cit.).

### **What Remains Today: Updating of the Emerging Variables**

At the time, my research was done in the context of a PhD thesis, I had to evaluate, measure, quantify, and compare, in order to emerge with scientific variables. Today, I cannot help thinking that I could have, maybe, done things differently. In this context, talking about sexuality implies the reduction of the sexual to descriptive behavior, without its psychic dimension. While sexuality is first of all psycho-sexual, "it has a biological aspect in its physical manifestations, psychological in its emotional expression; affective and relation related; erotic in its articulation of body and desire; historic and social in its function of creating the structure of family relations and the couple for the mere existence of humankind through history; and finally, an aspect related to morality which governs

sexuality by a set of rules which act as laws and which are related to every culture as reported by the ethnologists ( M.T. Khair Badawi “Pédagogie morale et éthique de la sexualité” in “La génération de la relève; la pédagogie éthique” tome 3. Publication of the pedagogic bureau of the Saints-Coeurs, Beirut, 1993). A permanent concern of research in this field must correlate constantly the observed with the psychological and the social. This is nevertheless what I have tried to do, and what I am attempting to do today by updating the emerged variables. The question is to find out whether these variables are still verifiable, based on my clinical experience.

### The Educational Climate (the immeasurable cleavage)

The educational system has not overlooked sex education which remains part of the curriculum. Accordingly, an introduction to sexuality has been progressively included into the textbooks according to class level. Indeed, rather than ignoring sexuality, the books explain it, dissect it, dismantle it, as if it were a kidney or a brain , in the frame of chapters mainly focused on reproduction, included in the biology courses of the 3rd and 4th grades. The Lebanese curriculum overlooks the fact that sexuality is above all psychosexuality and that in addition to a biological and physical aspect, it has a psychological, affective structuring dimension for the socialized human being. It is this aspect linked to affectivity which scares educators and leads them to overlook it, targeting only the informational aspect in what they call sexual education. The data they give is definitely important, yet it can only be given as part of the psychic, the affective and the social. I have debated this subject at length in two articles in 1989 and 1993 (“ Les jeunes filles et leur famille face à la sexualité”, in “La génération de la relève; une pédagogie nouvelle pour la jeunesse libanaise de notre temps”, tome 1. Publications of the pedagogic bureau of the Saints-Coeurs, Beirut, 1989, and “Pédagogie morale et éthique de la sexualité”, 1993).

At every meeting with young people, I never fail to notice that most of the questions are related to the emotional aspect: at what age can we kiss a boy (a girl)? What is flirting? Why do I have to keep my virginity? Does masturbation drive you mad? A 22 year old girl asks: “Is it true that losing her virginity before marriage can be detected on a girl’s face?”. A 20year old student came to see me after a lecture and told me that last night her boyfriend kissed her on the mouth and that she couldn’t sleep all night. What was he going to think about her?

At the same time, we can come across as many conservative girls as daring ones. I would mention the example of a 20year old girl who told me, with panic,

that she was pregnant. She had already had an abortion at the age of 18! This shows us that there is no homogeneity within the group of young ones. Everything is possible as established 15 years ago including ignorance! In this context, I would like to mention the case of a 13year old girl, from a bourgeois and educated family, who was brought to me by her parents, suffering from insomnias and anorexia owing to her first period. After a few interviews, I realized that the girl didn’t even know about the existence of a menstrual period before having it and the sight of blood gave her a real shock.

In the classroom, the questions asked by young people are those related to their emotional lives. The answers given by teachers are scientific and biological, without any hint to the emotional factor. The essence has not changed, only the appearance, and this has created a cleavage and a misunderstanding.

But, even the information speech – whose content has been criticized – has been removed from the program. Actually, a decree from the Ministry of National Education has excluded the chapters on fecundity from the biology courses, because of morality reasons, and under the pressure of some religious and influential authorities. Therefore we are now back again demanding their reinstatement into the school curricula. Concerning this topic, I would like to report the fact that having had a broadcasted discussion with the mentioned religious authorities, I discovered that they are still at the level of denying the mere existence of child sexuality! Moreover, this debate allowed me to find out how much the religious framework is still operative on the social level in Lebanon, and especially in the field of education. Therefore, I cannot avoid citing Freud in this context: “ It is impossible to accomplish a reform without changing the basics of the whole system “ (S. Freud, article: “Les explications sexuelles données aux enfants”, 1907 in “La vie sexuelle”, PUF, 1972, p.13).

Even though psychoanalysis has taught us that the sexual information received by the child does not stop him from creating infantile sexual fantasies which correspond to his own growing stage (article of S. Freud, “ Les théories sexuelles infantiles”, 1908, in “La vie sexuelle”, PUF. 1971), it has also taught us that nothing justifies omitting information that needs to be given to him. Freud maintains: “I don’t think that there is any good reason to refuse explanations to children who are eager to know... If the children do not get those explanations they ask their elders about, they will go on tormenting themselves with this problem secretly and try to find solutions in which the guessed truth mingles in a most remarkable way with the false grotesque ; or they would whisper among



themselves information in which, because of the guilt feeling these young researchers have, sexual life gets the print of the terrible and the disgusting” (S. Freud, “Les explications sexuelles données aux enfants”, pp. 11 and 12).

## Virgins and Sexual Desire (the mothers’ grip)

Even if young girls today seem to be more sexually active, the over investment of the hymen and virginity remains a fact. It constitutes a kind of fetishism, since the hymen membrane corresponds exactly to Freud’s definition of the object of fetishism, according to the explanations provided by Françoise Couchard (F. Couchard, “Emprise et violences maternelles”, Dunod, 1991, p. 108) and as I reported in a previous article (“Pouvoir sur le corps, Pouvoir du corps”, in “Bahithat” No 1, 1995, annual book of “L’association des femmes libanaises pour la recherche”).

Today, as my sample indicates, we still find more virgin than non virgin girls, but all those who remained virgin have had sexual contacts without the tearing of the hymen “for fear of not being able to marry”, even if they had the desire to go further. Moreover, the bachelors who remained virgin while awaiting marriage, “do it” at an age which seems to be around 35 years, after losing all hope of marriage, in a society like ours, where marriage at an early age is recommended and where social pressure still forces girls to marry at an early age.

I will mention that, in clinical practice, we notice that the relationship with the mother is immediately touched upon when we talk about virginity. I would like to quote the words of a 22 year old girl who describes her first sexual relationship with her fiancé

(she will end up marrying him 6 months later): “When I lost my virginity, after a sexual intercourse with my friend, it seemed to me I was hearing my mother’s footsteps in the corridor, even though we were miles away from home and there was no way she could know what I was doing!”. Another 24 year old girl asserts: “I was so scared that my mother might find out that I was no longer a virgin just by looking at me walking around! She has always told me that a virgin had a different gait than a non virgin!”. This reminds us of the example mentioned earlier of this 22 year old girl who thinks that her mother will find out that she had lost her virginity by merely looking at her face. Another 18 year old girl also refers to her mother when she talks about sexuality: “My mother always tells me that she knows by the tone of my voice that I am lying to her about what I am doing with my boyfriend. She always tells me to watch out for the limits, without ever telling me what those limits are.”

This shows us the extent of the mother’s grip on her daughter’s body which contributes to the acquiring of a maternal Super Ego, often intrusive and persecuting (developed in “Pouvoir sur le corps, Pouvoir du corps” op. cit.). Indeed the virgin’s desire for a sexual relationship still holds, but the factor that seems directly linked to it seems to be the mothers’ control of her daughters’ body.

## The Autoerotic Practice (Masturbation)

We have wrongly used masturbation and autoerotic practice as equivalent terms, but we know now that we can label as autoerotic the first two year period, and as masturbation what comes after since it is accompanied by phantasms and constitutes an “intermediary between the autoerotic and love” (Freud, “Les premiers psychanalystes, Minutes de la Société Psychanalytique de Vienne”, 1912-1915, tome IV, Gallimard, 1983, p. 43).

I had found in my sample a relation between masturbation ( always accompanied by phantasms) and the awakening of the erotic body’s sensibility which creates an urge to look for a partner and allows a more satisfying evaluation of sexuality. Yet, we find in the daily clinical practice that masturbation is impregnated with guilt, and generally experienced in frustration and as a primary impulse to the search for a partner, as illustrated in the two following examples. (In women, I have not encountered a repetitive, compulsive masturbation, leading to the confinement of the person, except in cases where it revealed factors of a severe illness. Generally, on the other hand, masturbation for men appears to be more compulsive).

A 20 year old girl asserts after hesitating for a while: “I masturbate in the evening in my bed thinking about



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X... I would like him so much to notice me and go out with me... but in the meantime and after having done so, I wonder if this is normal". Another 36 year old unmarried woman says: "There are moments where the desire for a man in my bed is so great that I cannot help but masturbate thinking about things. After that, I feel disgusted with myself".

The relations we are talking about appear today as ample evidence since the explanation that psychoanalysis gives us about the notion of building up is the genesis of human sexuality. Actually, infantile sexuality, in its first trend, is autoerotic. The sexual impulses are partial since they come from multiple organic sources: the mouth and cheeks region, and the anus and erogenous zones (S. Freud, in "Trois essais sur la théorie de la sexualité" op. cit.). The stimulation of those organs, in the search for self pleasure through touch and masturbation, characterizes infantile sexuality. It is only progressively that these partial sexual impulses end up with adult sexual life and act in sexual relationship with a partner: "At their first appearance, they (sexual impulses) build up on conservation impulses... and follow also at the discovery of the object, the paths that show the impulses of the Ego" (Pulsions et destins des pulsions", 1915, in "Métapsychologie", 1912-1915, Gallimard, 1991, p. 24).

Therefore, from that point on, we can understand the part that masturbation has in the process of development. Masturbation, with the building up function of sexual impulses, helps sensitize the erogenous body and participates in the progressive routing of partial impulses towards the quest for a partner.

#### **Marriage, an Inhibition Factor? (the couple, the family, the society)**

I had therefore found out in my sample that marriage and its duration in time seems to be an inhibitive factor of the erotic function of women, and that the married woman, with time, is less satisfied with her sexual life than the bachelor, of the same age, who has sexual relations. Even though, in the global evaluation, dissatisfaction is a generalized feeling.

I realize that this is the variable I have studied the most in detail, to which I have given the most explanations. It is only today that I understand that it probably had struck me from the start, and sensing all the hostility it was going to generate since it touches various institutions, I had unconsciously tried to build "a defensive stronghold", made out of arguments that I wanted solid, objective, and scientific.

What I had feared proved to be true. This variable seems to be the one that shocked traditional minds and

provoked the wrath of the religious circles: I was touching the institution of marriage. But as I have always mentioned, it is a variable that imposed itself upon me and I had no choice but to develop it, underline its slightest meanings, try to explain it... and over all those years, the clinical experience just confirmed it!

Actually, it is married women who talk of frigidity, lack of desire in their sexual relationships with their husbands, the husband who "takes his pleasure and turns his back." The bachelors, on the other hand, seek pleasure through a partner who cares about their pleasure, etc. ... The words of a 40 year old married woman do not sound outdated: "After he has had his pleasure, he relaxes all his weight on me and I feel a kind of aversion... he doesn't care about me anymore, turns around and goes to sleep..." Similarly, a 35 year old woman (married for 13 years) speaks of a "monthly boring duty". Thinking that she was talking about her menstrual period, I found out later that she meant the monthly intercourse with her husband! Contrary to the experience of married women, a 30 year old bachelor describes sexual intercourse with her partner as "floating after love and being thankful for having a partner".

This last example introduces the notion of the frequency of intercourse. If it is true, as shown in the poll, the frequency of intercourse decreases with the duration of marriage, I would like to underline that during my clinical experience I have encountered many married couples, with children, who after many years have not only decreased the frequency of their sexual encounters, but have stopped them altogether. For some the link seems severed, cut, and the couple live in mutual indifference. For others, on the other hand, the link seems to remain tenacious, and the couple live in shared tenderness inside a structured family: "The mutation of direct sexual tendencies, who have a short life span, into a durable simply tender relationship, is also something very usual and the strengthening of marriage contracted with loving passion, relies mostly on this process" (S. FREUD, "Psychologie des foules et analyses du MOI", 1921, in "Essais de psychanalyse", 1915-1922, Payot, Paris, 1981, p. 212). This is related to the function of the displacement phenomenon, where the energy discharged is invested in socially valued objects, professional life, children... etc.

But why "displace" when we live as a couple and sexual impulse is a fact? Besides, don't the couple basically come together to realize the sexual impulses in the only form sanctioned by our traditional society, marriage and the foundation of a family? Yet, even in this form, the sexual impulse seems

damaged in a permanent way as indicated by Freud: "The civilized education tends only to the temporary repression of the impulse until marriage... the repression goes often too far which ends up in this undesired result that the sexual impulse, once liberated, appears damaged on a long term... due to this artificial postponement of the loving function, young women leave to the men disappointments only... they are frigid... the traditional education creates exactly this kind of women... preparation to marriage helps the mere goals of marriage to fail" (S. Freud, "La morale civilisée et la maladie nerveuse des temps modernes", 1908, in "La vie sexuelle", 1907-1927, PUF, 1972, p. 41). Moreover, we notice that the sexual specificity of the couple in marriage is eventually absorbed into the family and seems to be diluted within the family entity. The family whose basic structure must be built around the couple, ends up reducing the dual sexual link to the inevitable process of its own perpetuation. This leads us to add to the earlier factors presented above (marriage and maternity as factors that minimize the genital sexual function of women, and the access to civilization through the family which presumes the renouncement of impulses, and specifically the repression of women), a new factor that highlights the problem of the traditional family.

As a matter of fact, a new field of comprehension is offered to us. It seems moreover to link the four variables together: the family is the first vehicle of the educational climate denying sexuality; it absorbs the couple's sexuality and constitutes the bias through which the mother seeks to have a grip on her daughter's body, repressing all sexual manifestations whether in the form of contacts or primary relations. As a result, we can say that the traditional family constitutes a collective force of suppression and contributes to the formation of a tyrannical guilt feeling, the Super Ego.

So, does one expect the family to disintegrate and die? This death, so often predicted, will never be realized since the family is, was, and will remain the basis for the formation of the individual, his individuality and his necessary belonging to a socialized collective space. But we have to acknowledge that it is time to start questioning it.

Does the family as an entity not sacrifice the particular for the collective, destroying individuality in the interest of the community? Could not the family give a breathing space for the individual, by tolerating the blossoming of sexuality, instead of denying it? Could not the family be built around the couple and still preserve this couple as a living entity, instead of diluting and erasing its identity?

The family has a role in the process of the suppression of impulses as imposed by the socializing phenomenon. But in the same manner, should not the family respect the potentialities of the individual's development and therefore contribute to the yielding of a protecting Super Ego that would liberate, instead, and replace this tyrannical Super Ego evoked earlier?

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Clearly, work on women's sexuality ends up questioning the relation between man and woman in the family and its necessary integration in society as a whole. It is true that I have favored the sexuality/society relation in most of my attempts at understanding, starting with the pressure imposed by the social "tools", the school, the family, and marriage that I had long thought of as misleading. But it is because I have discovered the importance of that link between the global cultural and the experience which apparently seems to touch only individual intimacy, that I have tried to find answers to these questions. Anyway, the sacrifice – in the sense of suppression – of men and women's sexuality imposed by civilization, as developed from the start by Freud, helps us to understand sexuality as playing a major role in the formation of individual psychic development, the social link, and the access to culture.

It is only after this that we can understand that a definite society, at a definite time, uses its institutions (school, marriage, family...), which constitute the collective forces of suppression, to maintain the status quo. We can then understand, in the light of those four variables that we have uncovered, that in our form of society, the intensity of the suppression seems to touch women more than men. Indeed, more sacrifices are expected on the feminine side than on the masculine (refer to the general conclusion of "Le désir amputé" op. cit.).

But why then, is this fate reserved to women in our part of the world? Many psychoanalysts – mostly women – have attempted to find an answer and it is still premature to come to a conclusive decision. Some talk of "feminine denial", others of "fear of annihilation by the primitive mother", and others still talk about "fear of castration". The diversity of these contributions reveals the complexity of the issue.

\* Marie-Thérèse Khair Badawi "Le désir amputé; vécu sexuel de femmes libanaises". L'Harmattan, Paris, November, 1986.

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