**SCARJO: ~~The~~ Woman as Speculative Fiction**

*Culture & Psychoanalysis*

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**LUCY: “Pass it on”**

The synopsis for *Lucy* on the Internet Movie Database reads: “A woman, accidentally caught in a dark deal, turns the tables on her captors and transforms into a merciless warrior *evolved beyond human logic*” [italics added]”.(1)In the chapter“Knowledge and Truth” in Seminar XX, *On Feminine Sexuality, The Limits of Love and Knowledge*, from 1972-1973, Jacques Lacan states, “I am willing to accept the notion that a computer thinks. But that it knows, who would say such a thing? For the foundation of knowledge is that the jouissance of its exercise is the same as that of its acquisition.”(2) Precisely. Lucy is not only acquisitive when it comes to knowledge, her pleasure lies in implementing it.

The movie announces itself as a production of the era of the Other That Doesn’t Exist through inter-titles that chart the percentages of the character’s expanding knowledge, and function as a graphicanalog for the phallic measure. Yet for both the character and the film something remains unquantifiable, beyond the data, off-screen, elsewhere, some portion not accounted for by the phallic calibration. In *Womanly Positions of Being,* Eric Laurent writes “Lacan brings out the duplicity of the womanly position along with its difficulty, to be the locus of a jouissance beyond the phallic measure, outside the pseudo-quantification of the male organ.”(3)

This “outside” may account for a critical narrative lapse: for all of Lucy’s burgeoning knowledge she lacks the know-how of what to do with it. In *Womanliness: Defamation, Fantasy, Semblance*, Geert Hoornaert states, “There is no ‘psychology’ of women. The womanly semblant is to be referred to the hole in structure.”(4) Lucy’s question essentially is not what to do with knowledge, but how to cope with what eludes it. ~~The~~ Woman, with reference to formulas of sexuation, does not exist. What is it to be a woman?

Lucy directs her question about how to handle her metastasizing knowledge, manifested visually by the intense somatic effects it has on her, to a professor of science, whose answer is, plainly, “pass it on, like any simple cell going through time”.

If Lucy’s subjective division could be inferred from her demand, then perhaps her transformation in the film could be construed as her changing relationship to knowledge and the jouissance it causes, from connaissance to savoir faire, symptom to sinthome, suffering to satisfaction.

But this is not the case, for her question of what use to make of her runaway knowledge emanates from the Other, represented by a series of four men: boyfriend, drug lord, professor, and cop. Each of them actualizes some variant of the signifier “pass it on”. As Lacan states in *Guiding Remarks for a Convention on Female Sexuality*, “The difference for the sexes is denatured [...] A man serves here as a relay so that a woman becomes this Other to herself as she is to him.”(5) In addition, as Geert Hoornaert writes, “Whether she makes herself the *Vorstellung* of what the man lacks [being the phallus], embodies the object-cause of his desire, or becomes his symptom, his partner in jouissance, it is clear that in these relative positions her ‘essence’ is missed.”(6)

Lucy’s thirst for knowledge introduces the film, first in voice-over and then when she is seen, as a student in Taipei, questioning her boyfriend about a shady delivery job. In this first instance, the signifier “pass it on” is implied when she’s duped into making the drop for him. The second variation comes from his employer, a Taiwanese drug lord, who uses Lucy as a mule for transporting a synthetic drug, CPH4, by sewing packets of it into her abdomen. While in captivity, she’s beat up, and the bag of CPH4 explodes, releasing quantities of the drug into her system, and in the process feeds her appetite for knowledge and her push to jouir.

The third iteration occurs when the professor, representative of the university discourse, endowed with supposed knowledge, responds to Lucy’s question directly, and inadvertently provides her with the signifier by which she has been marked, “pass it on”. But it’s insufficient, unable to account for what lies beyond the phallic quota. Eric Laurent, “supplementary womanly jouissance cannot be grasped with the phallic measure, it exceeds it.”(7)

The fourth variant occurs decisively when Lucy herself provides an answer. When the cop, having witnessed the extent of her powers, asks what use he can possibly be to her now, she kisses him softly and says “as a reminder”. And here is the remainder. Not a baby, a family or a movie sequel, as her kiss might insinuate. Her reminder to the cop is that woman as reproductive is a nostalgic fantasy. The laws of nature have been broken. There is a disorder in the real.

In the final sequence, preparing to download her knowledge, now nearing full capacity, as her body undergoes computer-generated effects and morphs violently at the will of her mind, Lucy explains that the natural order was always a “fixion”, a semblant, and shows that science falters at the non-sexual rapport.She unveils a hole in the fundaments of the scientific discourse when she says “One and one has never equaled two.” This echoes Lacan in Seminar XIX, *... Or Worse*, and chimes with Marie–Helene Brousse in *Beyond Prince Charming and Pink Swords*, “Why do I say that it’s the case in the semblant field? Because man has become an S1, woman has become an S1. So they are one each on his side, or her side – one, one, one, and that doesn’t make two any longer. It’s one satisfaction, next to another satisfaction, next to another. All of them are different, all of them at once. You just cannot compare them with one another. And that’s the second difference.”(8)

Upon reaching the limit of 100-percent brain capacity, Lucy transpires, vaporizes, evanesces. When the cop asks where she is, Lucy answers, appropriately if absurdly, via text message on his smart-phone, “I am everywhere”. But at the same time she is nowhere. She is both. ~~The~~ Woman is Not-All. The signifier “I am everywhere”, or rather its absence until now, may explain the porous nature of the film, which is perforated with found footage and cut-aways to wildlife and nature. Again Geert Hoornaert, “There exists therefore a signifier that says something about femininity, the Phallus, but it does not say everything: there is a leftover of femininity about which the signifier says nothing at all, but were the *Vorstellungen* comes rushing in – a whole series of representations. These semblants, these ‘images and symbols’ that provide a figure for femininity, put something *in-form*, right where the signifier is missing; they are not simply illusory elements, elements of appearance: they have very real effects.”(9)

The crisis of knowledge, and the films answer to it, “pass it on”, is by the end recognizable for how it’s been ciphered throughout, as a derangement in the real, a crisis of the replication of the species, wrought by the collusion of science and capitalism. (According to the films director, Luc Besson, CPH4, the synthetic drug implanted in Lucy’s abdomen, is based on a real molecule produced after six weeks of pregnancy, and has for the baby “the power of an atomic bomb”.) At the start, the character Lucymay exist as a woman we’re familiar with but by the end she’s non-existent, ephemeral.Grappling with the inexistence of ~~The~~ Woman, the film *Lucy* confronts the cycle of reproduction as a fantasy of transmission. Yet by the same operation, ~~The~~ Woman is posed as an answer to the disarrayof procreation, a maneuver that ultimately fails, yet succeeds in giving the film its hypermodern contour.

To end, following the film to its conclusion logically, by a topological twist, the hole in knowledge is Lucy herself.

Notes

1. http://www.imdb.com/title/tt2872732/

2. Lacan, J. (1973). *Encore: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XX*, W.W. Norton Company.

3. Laurent, Eric. (1992-93). “Womanly Positions of Being” in *Hurly Burly, Issue 3.*

*4.* Hoornaert, Geert.(2010).“Womanliness: Defamation, Fantasy, Semblance” in *Hurly Burly, Issue 5*

*5.* Lacan, J.(1958).“Guiding Remarks for a Convention on Female Sexuality” in *Ecrits, The First Complete edition in English*

*6.* Hoornaert, Geert*.* Ibid.

*7.* Laurent, Eric. Ibid*.*

8. Brousse, Marie-Helen. (2014). “Beyond Prince Charming and Pink Swords” in *Lacanian Ink 43/44, Spring 2014*

9. Hoornaert, Geert. Ibid.

10.http://www.craveonline.com/film/interviews/734585-lucy-luc-besson-on-philosophy-action-and-the-real-cph4