



‘AINSI BAS LA VIDA!’ LACAN’S THEORY EXTIMATE SEXUALITY AS BASED ON *OBJECTS OF FALL*, OUTLINED BY MEANS OF A SHORT STORY OF PERFUMES. AN ESSAY

„Ainsi Bas La Vida!”
Teoria seksualności ekstymacyjnej
Lacana oparta na obiektach upadku
(*Objects of Fall*), przedstawiona
na przykładzie krótkiej
opowieści o perfumach

Abstrakt:

Niniejszy artykuł stanowi próbę wykazania analogii między funkcją, jaką pełnią „małe przedmioty” w zmiennościach pożądania, a pewnymi ważnymi odkryciami w świecie przemysłu perfumeryjnego. Wykorzystuję lacanowską koncepcję imitacji, w szczególności rozróżniam między imitacją strukturalną a imitacją narcystyczną. Ta ostatnia jest rodzajem „powierzchnowego” procesu opartego na wyobraźni, przededypalnym funkcjonowaniu podmiotu, natomiast ta pierwsza jest zjawiskiem znacznie „głębszym”, polegającym na imitacji, która uwzględnia zasadniczą strukturę determinującą dany mechanizm. Przedstawiam krótki opis branży tworzenia zapachów. W historii produkcji zapachów nastąpił pewien przełom, który pozwala nam zrozumieć libidinalne trajektorie popędu. Początkiem było wydobycie „cząsteczek

Abstract

This paper is a trial of showing analogy between the function that ‘little objects’ perform in the vicissitudes of desire and certain important discoveries in the world of perfume industry. I make use of the Lacanian concept of imitation, in particular I discern between the structural imitation and narcissistic imitation. The latter is a sort of ‘superficial’ process based on the Imaginary, pre-Oedipal functioning of the subject, the former is a much more ‘deeper’ phenomenon that consists in such a kind of imitation that considers the essential structure determining the mechanism in question. I make a short description of the industry of composing fragrances. In the story of the business of producing scents there has been a certain breakthrough, allowing us to understand the libidinal trajectories of drive. The beginning has been the

ekscentrycznych” przez producentów perfum. Szczególnie interesująca jest tak zwana „ISO E Super”, której odkrycie jest osiągnięciem Gezy Schoena. Na tej podstawie twierdzę, że zapach może funkcjonować jako jeden z „obiektów a”, zgodnie z teorią Lacana. To założenie wynika z obserwacji, że ta tajemnicza cząsteczka „zachowuje się” strukturalnie w podobny sposób, jak istotna cecha wyjaśniająca fakt, że „małe obiekty”, zwłaszcza dwa dodatkowe, konceptualizowane przez Lacana, a mianowicie głos i spojrzenie, odgrywają tak kluczową rolę w psychoanalizie lacanowskiej. Chociaż każde „małe a” wydaje się być w pewnym sensie „ukryte” w libidinalnej ekonomii podmiotu, jego wpływ jest ogromny, ponieważ pomaga konkretnej istocie ludzkiej „wzniesić się do godności Rzeczy”. „Obiekty” uruchamiają całą energię popędu, który krąży wokół tych wyjątkowych „punktów” dynamicznego mechanizmu pożądania. Specyficzna „rzecz”, która charakteryzuje konkretny osobisty zapach, hipotetycznie zawiera rodzaj „księgowego” ISO E Super, enigmatycznego czynnika, który toruje drogę do rozpoznania (a nie wiedzy, jak twierdzi Lacan) nieskończenie nieznanego Innego w naszym bliźnim.

Słowa kluczowe: obiekt a, Rzecz, Inny, imitacja strukturalna, imitacja narcystyczna, zapach, perfumy.

extraction of ‘escentric molecules’ by producers of perfumes. Especially, the one most worth of being interested in is the so called ‘ISO E Super’, the discovery of which has been an accomplishment achieved by Geza Schoen. On this base I make a statement that smell could function as one of ‘objects a’, as they were described in Lacan’s theory. This supposition is made due to the observation that this mysterious molecule ‘behaves’ structurally in a similar way as the essential feature accounting for the fact that ‘little objects’, especially the two ones additional conceptualized by Lacan, namely voice and gaze, play such a crucial described in the Lacanian psychoanalysis. Although any ‘little a’ seems to be sort of ‘hidden’ in the libidinal economy of the subject, its impact is enormous, as it helps a particular human being become ‘risen to the dignity of the Thing’. The ‘objects’ set in motion the whole energy of the drive that circles around these unique ‘points’ of the dynamic mechanism of desire. The specific ‘something’ that characterizes a particular personal smell hypothetically contains a kind of an ‘accountant’ of the ISO E Super, the enigmatic factor that paves the way to the recognition (not knowledge, as Lacan maintains) of the infinitely unknown Other in our neighbor.

Key-words: object a, Thing, Other, structural imitation, narcissistic imitation, smell, scent, perfume.

1. Life that falls

As is known, the ex-centric and extimate structure of human subjectivity is organized around certain objects, and Lacan differentiates between two of the objects that play a role in the flow of drive. The common object of desire is an individual, a whole person – that man, that woman – we meet and tend to get as much close as possible to them. However, much more important in the Lacanian approach seems to be the discovery of such an object which is a cause of desire and sets libidinal energy in motion. In the beginning (objectless¹ world of a newborn infant) the movement is quite chaotic but as far as it loses its instinctual characteristics and takes on the form of drives as canalized into a particular desire, becomes much more orientated in particular directions depending on the circumstances.

There's no need to negate that there is a strong association between 'affect' and 'affection' (particular affect is an effect of some affection – in its a bit old-fashioned sense joining 'evoking an affect' with 'exerting influence'). The movement of drive joining signifiers has its topological stakes: there is always something 'fallen' in singular 'little objects'. Life tends to somehow 'fall' when any of them comes into play. Perhaps it means their repression since one doesn't usually 'see' them or their metonymic groupings, and so they resemble something like 'remnants' one gets away with. But there seems to be something more to the essentially 'fallen' nature of objects *a*, something that has much to do with their extimate, ambiguous nature. While enumerating them: oral (breast), anal (excrements), genital (phallus), auditory (voice) and scopic (gaze), we can't tell whether they're really something external or internal to the body. For example, suddenly someone's gaze is noticed by somebody else. Is this gaze the possession of that first person, or does the other have its part with it (we assume that the two gazes meet). And what if their gazes come across the gaze of a third person. We can't say my gaze borders with yours and from that point your gaze starts, and his starts there. Every gaze is however singular and unique. The third who noticed the particular exchange of the two gazes revokes in their memory perhaps some long-forgotten gaze, way of looking at things that was proper to somebody else remembered or not, from the long forgotten past, and when he sees that seeing, he is overwhelmed by the highly intensified mixture of affective experiences. How many gazes have met? Who is the true owner of this or that gaze, and, most important, is it something internal or external? Sometimes such expressions are used: 'They interchanged gazes', 'He drowned his gaze in hers.' As if both intimate and separated, situated in the outside as far as in the inside? And what does it mean that an object *a* has fallen, and from what it has fallen? The particular objects *a*, especially

¹ Even if objectless, it is neither nothing, nor a certain defined something, its 'substance' isn't as yet discreet, although, as it seems, some unclear 'dynamics', 'happening', 'movement' (of course the child doesn't have as yet these concepts at his/her disposal) takes place. It seems that only when a certain amount of time has flown, gradually first processes of 'coming into existence' start to emerge within the vague clamour of being, which undergoes processes of 'spatialising' and 'temporalising' as phenomena preceding notions of time and space, and maybe at least to some extent not differentiated as yet from each other. The newborn at first doesn't perceive the difference between oneself and one's what one's surroundings (as is, e. g., evident in cases of hallucinatory satisfaction of needs, etc.). It's only later that he/she recognizes, e. g., some part of his/her body as belonging to him/her. Perhaps some amount of this undisturbed coexistence is necessary for the formation of his/her subjectivity and breaking it too quickly may have serious consequences.

gaze and voice, seem to play an especially important role in the moments of infatuation, *Verliebtheit*, fascination, etc.

As an example of such a situation of the earliest beginnings of enamourment, I have chosen the song *Ainsi Bas La Vida* by Indila. The title may be translated as 'That's how life falls', or 'That's how life lows', and, of course, also in a more common way: 'That's how life goes down here (on earth²)', however, it sometimes seems useful to look at a certain ambiguity or play on words as something more than a pure coincidence. In general, it tells the history of something like falling in love³ of a young girl with a newly acquainted boy. The ambiguous meanings contained in the text are displaying various dilemmas, worn in all-too-common formulations, heard often from others, wanting to protect young girls from dangers associated with similar situations. The 'inner dialogue' of the undefined subject of the song is modeled on what Lacan calls 'common discourse' (its universality is underlined by the fact of being spoken in the automatically-repetitious refrain, like a broken record). In this way the song hides a story of ambivalent affects and thoughts regarding the lack of certainty concerning the feelings of the man. The voice (especially its sometimes quite desperate tone) expresses desire, longing for closeness with that particular boy. She still remembers his gaze, as he looked at her, his smile, his voice, his heartbeat, which made her heart beat faster, she surely smells the exceptional scent of his skin... she sings as if she couldn't catch a breath, as if she couldn't make it in time... In other words, she is seduced by the unique 'objects of fall'. (What did they fall from refers us to the seminar *Encore* – later in the text it will be explained). The refrain constitutes the repeated, unquiet questions, doubts as contrasted with her wishes, dreams, desires. The girl is in a state of 'fallenness' (compare the concept of a 'fallen angel' with remarks written in *Encore*). You can feel with the girl her anxiety⁴,

² Incidentally, it seems that this title may be interpreted as referring to the biblical and mythological stories of the Lost Paradise and their connection with the human sexuality. Interestingly, in his last but one seminar in the 1978, Lacan (just when he remains particularly absorbed in the reflections on the question of the third sex) repeats his famous formula that 'The sexual relationship doesn't exist', adding that this is compensated by the fact that people make love (*les gens font l'amour*), the earlier-postulated explanation of which is the possibility defined as that which stops being written, the possibility of the third sex. Then he asserts that the reason or cause of there being only the two sexes is, by the way, weakly explained. And – returning to the question of topology and sexuality – he affirms that it is just that which is evoked in the figure of Lilith, being a sort of female substitute of Eve, a sort of her *doublure* (09.01.1979). This reminds that there are two anthropogenetic traditions represented in two myths of the creation of the world: according to one version, man and woman were created simultaneously and in the same way (from earth/dust). In the other variant man was created from earth and woman – from his ribbon. Then a quarrel exploded between them as Adam wanted to be in a higher position during the sexual act and Lilith – arguing that they were equal, since there was no difference between the acts of their creation – didn't agree to be lower while making love, and as no agreement was reached, she ran away. That would be the reason why every woman had later to follow Eve in her sexual functioning. This remark would suggest at least that the figure of Lilith – the *doublure* – seems to still exist and function in topological conceptualizations of the sexual life of men and women, explaining the origins of the present state of things, described by the statement: *Ainsi bas la vida*. Also, the question appears whether the problematics of the third sex and its association with Lilith has anything to do with the famous formulas of sexualization and especially the two kinds of *jouissance*. Is the appearance of the substitute (a sort of 'cross-over') of Eve in the person of Lilith in her fallenness somehow associated with the Other *jouissance* as a-sexual, with the ability to experience the both kinds of *jouissance* or only one of them and, based on this fact, the division on the two sexes and the possibility of the third sex?

³ There's the question of 'agent' who falls in love (of course, I realize the peculiarity of the formulation, bordering nearly on oxymoron). It sometimes happens that one falls in love with someone clearly against one's free will, for example, when – in some extreme cases – that person is disgusting for the subject, or boring, or at least the subject for some reason just has never liked that person (this is also testified by the case when someone is loved but not liked (and, of course, the other way round)).

⁴ Some parts of the song's text can be misleading, for example the fragment: *Et soudain j'ai pris peur*. ('And suddenly I was scared') seems to be more about fear than anxiety. However, the context would suggest that the state of mind of the woman in question has more to do with being anxious than feared/scared (of course, fear and scare are not synonymous but let's leave aside the difference as it would deviate too far from the topic). She's evidently overwhelmed by anxiety and not without reason: as precisely this affect is the only one that doesn't delude and has its specific object The girl is unsure of the true meaning

her anxious answering the doubts resounding in her head, and perhaps a sort of acceptance or affirmation of her worried state (or even a trace of *jouissance*⁵), when she decides to submit to that 'fallenness' after all. The specifically structured dynamics of singing, with its 'timing' and 'spacing', its rhythm and rime, reflects the sequence of the alternating inflows of doubt and belief, hesitation and certainty, as if approaching – and withdrawing from – the desired object⁶. The quickly changing dialectics of excitement/anxiety, sureness/resignation, etc., accentuates the dynamic character of affectivity, the more dynamic the more immediately the relevant affects touch their essence which is desire. Perhaps the song also tends to evoke the phenomenon of transitivity, not necessarily in the strictly Lacanian sense, to designate the subject/object non-differentiation present in the mutual interchange between partners: the more intimate it (although happening in the 'external' world) gets, the more it involves the characteristics of a specific object *a*, especially if we broaden the number of the 'candidates' for playing this part beyond the scope of only five of them. Specific examples of this peculiar transitivity between two individuals who have fallen in love with each other would be the fact that it's not quite clear, whose heartbeat or breath is felt, who's touching and who's touched⁷, which scent of the shared mixture of smells is your own and which is your lover's, and the desire present in the gaze is yours, or the partner's, is it immediate or just reflected, or both? The trembling voice expresses one's desire or questions the partner's desire, or asks to be desired? It's a bit like dancing (circling around each other, going away and coming again) in a mutual embrace, with the reservation that it's not clear which of the partners is leading and which is led, who's embracing, who's embraced, who's kissing and who's kissed... who's the subject, who's the object...

Returning to the song in question the problem of the topology of affect, the 'dancing' girl, having nothing to lose (she's already lost her 'place' in the discursive space), anticipating a possible loss of the love for her or the interest in her of that man being now her whole world, chooses the 'impossible' road, on which there's no escape from anxiety. She yields to the anxiety-awakening experience as if in some way it would let her regain the dispersed particles of the lost 'reality' (as if she recognized the 'place' where everything started). Not

of all the signifiers present in the boy's eyes, smile, voice, sighing, heartbeat, etc. She's uncertain of the promises inserted in all of these forms of expression and she's right: the Other is always deceiving (that is, unconsciously, even if his/her verbal or nonverbal signs aren't problematic and don't incite any doubts in the interlocutor) just for that simple (all too simple) reason that he/she can't render the meaning accessible, he/she can't make accessible the Thing). The language is the most perfect means of deluding, even if one has the best of intentions to express the truth. However, for practical reasons, taking a decision is urgent and any delay may squander time and waste our hopes and dreams, and another chance may never come. This is audible in the rhythm of desperate hastiness in the consideration of the pros and cons, and in quickness of the act of taking the final decision. (It's worthy of noticing that the mixture of affects implicated in her anxious attitude is rendered perfectly by the fast rhythm and tempo of, so to say, more and more hasty 'overtaking of herself' in surpassing her own argumentation.) As her whole life truly seems to 'sink', she 'decides' she has nothing to lose. And what's very significant, she's herself surprised at her own readiness (as if this ability were more – than hers – the attribute of a certain Other in her she's never known so far) to love what's completely unknown to her, to lose herself in abandonment to being carried by the current of the flowing fascination and excitement.

5 That's an example of the ambiguous nature of *jouissance* as enjoyment/pleasure but not without a tint of pain, suffering, discomfort, etc.

6 This recalls these smallest additions and losses of libidinal energy, the achieved extent of which decides the relevant increase or decrease in terms of the incessant flow of drive.

7 When I touch my partner's body, is it at the same time my own body that is being touched, is for example the touching hand being touched, or the touched hand (or any other bodily part) can be said (and sensed) as touching?

hesitating in the face of what seems to lead to the Real – this dark nexus, ‘black hole’ that makes everything gravitate around, itself unspoken, ineffable but overpowering the vicissitudes of our earthly wanderings. One may notice this in Indila’s another song entitled *Dernière danse*, where the girl is ultimately thrown by her despair to her knees in confrontation with the approaching all-devouring darkness⁸. Finally, the only thing she has to say is: *Je suis une enfant du monde!* (in English ‘I am a child of the world’) meaning an heiress of desire, moved by the drive as submitted to the Other, and so, destined to fall and fall again in a sort of *dance macabre*. It’s her ultimate dance accompanied by her *douce souffrance*, a kind of ‘sweet torment’, which expresses the more demonic, ambivalent, but strangely compelling character of *jouissance*, in the context of a love story where ‘the *unheimlich* function of the eyes’ (*Anxiety*, 315) is perfectly underlined.

What does the girl see? And what can we see in her gaze? Disorientation, anxiety, even despair. But also a sort of determination – to do what? Perhaps to do nothing. Perhaps to assume her suffering, to embrace this strange ‘sweet torment’, this sufferance not devoid of a tint of pleasure. We do not know what the content of the photo that flies away is. We must also first of all remember that as we see, we are unavoidably (as is expressed by the formula of desire) being seen. Every time we look into somebody’s eyes, our gaze is gazed at.

2. Introduction to Lacan’s Theory of Sexuality as Based on Objects a

For a short period of my life, I must admit it, I used to be a declared (and perhaps irremediably so), perfumoholic (however, non-practicing now). Even worse: I didn’t desire to be cured from just this ‘affection’ – I was sort of addicted to being addicted as far as it didn’t disturb me and my Others. Incidentally, the use of the quotation marks in the previous sentence has its purpose: the ambiguous word ‘affection’ is supposed here to be read in all its shades of meaning, as not only revoking some disturbance, but also more originaire ‘pathological’ sense (read in the spirit of the Old Greek *πάθος*, and nowadays relating to emotion, feeling, mood, affect. However, I still have a strong liking for the world of scents, and I think my interest in the Lacanian psychoanalysis makes them a still more special object of affection. Now, more generally, speaking of any ‘object’ that our affection is (intentionally or not) directed at, must over and above all *signify* something (and, paradoxically, this doesn’t exclude the fact of this ‘something’ being senseless or meaningless from the more conscious or aware point of view). In general, it could be said that if anything is affected, it is influenced somehow, in a certain sense, it ‘gets lower’ or ‘gets fallen’, generally, ‘gets down’ or ‘sinks’ in some way while the influencing thing gets the upper hand. However, what’s affecting, is also affected by just the same fact that it exerts influence. According to Lacan, subjects seem to have no privilege over objects (both can be conditions of possibility for each other), may be equally active as passive. The earlier mentioned ambiguity, it must be repeated, resides in

⁸ The song is s accessible here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K5KA5CoCuk>

this 'I', at least in one of its senses, which seems to be somehow coextensive with the life as such (in its particularity – its, let's say, 'general singularity', so to speak), in which it could be 'something' that 'falls', 'weakens', etc.. Life has its falls, happens to be down, but – at the same time – still 'goes', meaning 'follows' as such, as a matter of fact, that is, according to its most usual mode, its most actual course of proceeding, which is just falling. In other words, what comes into play, is the process of living (abstracting from its subject or object) as such. Living that is meant here revokes the descriptions that Lévinas delivers in his early book *De l'existence à l'existent*, and existence he means here must be understood in the spirit of his later philosophy as *essance* (the neologism having roots in the German *Wesen*, meaning 'realizing' itself historically, actualising its essence). The author seems to try to introduce us to a situation before any existents have appeared, and, through different phenomena to show us how the first existent emerges itself from the noise of being. This enterprising finds its linguistic equivalent when Lacan introduces the neologism *signifierness* (as rendering the French *signifiance*).

In summary, if living as 'I' (that is, existing as a subject of language) means desiring, the object-cause of desire seems to point at that which accounts for this common 'affection', being the source of this repeated 'falling' (and 'arising'⁹) and our human *conatus* (attempt at continuing our 'fallen' being. That's how things usually happen as they happen, compulsively-repeatedly: that's just how life goes.

So much for the explanation of the ambiguous character of the title of the song in question. Now let's return to the main point. First of all, the 'object' in psychoanalysis has of course its own habitual, technical meaning – depending on the 'school' and the kinds of 'objects' we take into consideration in its framework – the signification of which needn't at all converge with the way in which the word is usually used, on its everyday basis. For instance, in the object-relation theory its employment differs from its popular usage, and some special objects, crucial for this or that theory, don't exist in our common, everyday dictionary. This is the case of Winnicott's 'transitional objects', as this gentleman defines them, and also the same state of affairs obtains, as far as Lacanian 'objects little *a*' are concerned. And so, in Lacan's conception we can differentiate at least two additional kinds of 'analytical' objects, that is, defined differently than objects inhabiting our day-to-day 'reality' ('reality' as different from the 'Real', being one of the three registers that this author distinguishes in his theory): gaze and voice. Lacan devotes much of his attention to investigate different sorts of relationships that human beings can maintain with particular objects (or relationships which just happen to them, whether they want and/or know it or not). To some extent this author takes over the earlier psychoanalytical understanding of the word 'object'. He says that he just develops the Freudian theory, that is, explains what the 'father of psychoanalysis' *really* meant by this or that concept. But Lacan, as we know (or just pretend to know) him, wouldn't have been the true 'Lacanian Lacan' himself if he had resisted to yield to the temptation of putting something of his own into the 'standard' reading

⁹ At last, life doesn't kill us at one's, it takes its time.

of Freud's works. Even in one of the first volumes of his seminars, *La relation d'objet*, he has already introduced some modifications, adding or subtracting something, and, in the final account, everything we have to do is to take the theory of object relations as – even if perhaps in some respects similar – a modified conception, differing much from its 'original'. In other words, he introduces a kind of a simulacrum of the assumed old post-Freudian understanding of object relations.

The traditional understanding of the term 'object relations' – which meant a certain kind of attachment to somebody/something, or any sort of affective attitudes, emotions, feelings, passions (like love, hatred, and ignorance – the third one being the strongest of the triad, according to Lacan). Traditionally, first of all, the object was meant to be a parent or any substitute of a parent – him or her who takes care of a newborn or young child. In other words, an object of drive, of sexual attraction, the one later replaced by any other, still precocious or infantile objects, until the 'mature' (in Freud's terms: 'genital') relationship is established between a man and a woman. We all know Lacan's objections, or better: *object-ions* to some details of this theory: first of all, such a (sexual) relationship doesn't exist (it 'never stops not being written' even if, in each and every place in the world, there is much ado about this 'no-thing'). Secondly, one of this relationship's terms, that is, 'the other sex' – *the* woman – doesn't exist. Thirdly, the allegedly mature relationship doesn't need to obtain between a man and a woman, it may equally join two men, or two women, and not only individuals of the two opposite sexes, or of any sex at all for that matter. And what's very important, 'sex' as we commonly understand this word, hasn't much to do with the specifically Lacanian definitions of a male and a female, which is explained by means of his famous formulas of sexualisation. It depends on which kind of *jouissance* a given person is able to experience: either only phallic *jouissance* (the left side of the diagram) – then we have to do with a masculine subject, and if an individual can experience both the phallic *jouissance* and 'Other' *jouissance*, then it is a feminine subject. The one who is a subject, is also an object for the other, and vice versa – this fact is much more underlined by Lacan than by the preceding analysts: if mother is an object of love for her child, then also the child is a special object of affect for the mother.

After this short repetition of the history of object relations, getting more and more modified in the course of the Lacanian thought, it's time to introduce the second 'object' of these investigations – the 'object little a', 'little object' or just 'object a' – the letter *a* denoting *autre* as different from *Autre*). If the object of object-relations theory is more like the purpose of our desire – we want to conquer him or her, to win his or her love, and through the unification attain a state of satisfaction and happiness. On the other hand, the 'little object' is an unconscious cause of this beginning of desiring another person, and we usually can't tell what the cause really is. And we don't know either that what drives us to this person isn't actually the anticipation of gratification, happiness, well-being, or any peaceful state of satisfaction. We do not know that what truly attracts us is *jouissance* – in all the ambiguity of this 'experience' as not only pleasant but also evoking anxiety-closely associated with this or that 'little object' of which we have little or no awareness.

3. Desire conjured in scent

3.1. Art of imitation

The story of the perfumery industry seems to play on all the possible, different sorts of philosophical (and more specifically: psychoanalytical¹⁰) associations, and to proceed step by step, keeping abreast of any discovery made in these domains of human thoughts. This market could be described as imitating as strictly as possible everything that happens in the Freudian 'new science'. But first of all it's of the highest importance here to at least outline the difference between what could be called the 'imaginary imitation' and 'symbolic imitation' – the first being simply imitating by means of mimicry or mirroring or by any other sort of effectuating the imagined reflection of a certain content; the second way of imitating refers to the symbolic level and consists in the special mode of reflecting dynamical structural relations, that is, something more like a certain form than content. Lacan compares these two forms of imitating by telling a story of children playing the 'even or odd' game', where the winner's advantage depends on his ability to imitate the dynamic *structure* of the rival's way of reasoning, that is, the differential dynamics of the formal, signifying connections between 'elements' of the other's thinking (the cause of certain actions), and not just simulating its imaginary static content (the final result in the form of a fixed, established signification, effectuated by the constant, active metonymic movement, transforming the binary 'atoms' in order that they become – by constant 'punctuation' and metaphorization – into complexes of meaning. This imitation game is also illustrated by the story of three prisoners, who are supposed to guess the color of the circle that each of them is wearing on his back – in order to do that, they must recreate the formal attributes of the dynamic constellation characterizing the supposed sequences of symbols, constituted in the mind of this or that 'counterpart', that is, the structural order of the relationships between 'parts' of meaning (with the restriction that the whole meaning is not a simple sum of its parts). The condition of leaving the prison is more basic, more original and fundamental than simply imagining what the others think. The right conclusion can only be reached through the reproduction in one's mind's dynamic structure – the proper sequence – of the process of concluding that takes place in the minds of the remaining companions. If everyone proceeds from the axioms to the appropriate decision, it will let all of them go out of the prison together at the same time. Of course, there is a temporal aspect that must be taken into account by the 'player', the one that fulfills an important, even crucial function in making the victory more certain: the speed or tempo, or even rhythm of this mental imitation. The participant of that game must be in a hurry, must hurry up, while following the pace, according to which the production of sequential sets – a kind of application of the differential calculus¹¹, conducted on the basis of the transformation (increasing or decreasing) of the

¹⁰ Here, psychoanalysis is regarded as a philosophical theory, in the intentional contrast to the way Lacan conceived his psychoanalytical theory and practice, that is, neither as philosophy, nor as science.

¹¹ The differential in question might be here an affect (positive or negative), as the result of rising energy or its weakening, which

psychical energy into meanings. If the simulation of the partner's reasoning proceeds according to this isomorphism^{12, 13} this sequential order sometimes enforces you to accelerate when needed, so as to overtake your neighbor's course of thinking, or at least catch up with it. The hastiness or, in general, the rate of imitating symbolically another mind's structured sequences, is what counts most, and so the quantitative aspect of the isomorphic 'temporalisation' as well as 'spatialisation', if it's effective, it translates itself into the qualitative change: generating the expected, proper meaningful units.

3.2. Markers of absent otherness

As is well known, Lacan's theory of 'little objects' comprises only 5 of them, however this exclusiveness may be disputed. There are some other 'candidates' to play this part, as far as their (post)structural qualities are concerned (and, predominantly, their unique feature – the characteristic of which is truly nonpareil – of being unsuitable to be captured and closed into the frames of any structure). One of these exceptional entities (those that can't undergo any intentional embracing by human consciousness or awareness), which we could be justified to assume as sharing the 'little object' mode of being, characterized as ambiguity between its 'objectality' and 'subjectality' (not to be mistaken with objectivity and subjectivity), is smell. If smell, in its clearly ambiguous, undefined way of manifesting itself, might be a good pretender to fulfill the function of the sixth object *a*, then we would be inclined to suppose that what we have to do with nowadays is a certain revolution in the realm of the perfumery art and the production of perfumes. This revolutionary movement seems to be marking the point when the passage from the purely imaginary imitation of the way the sense of smell 'works' (of its specular content) to the simulation of the dynamic structures in question, that is, the one more defined by the ordered and energetic relationships between their particular terms. Let's take it for granted that the 'ingredients' of smell might be regarded as being kind of 'atoms', the constellations of which constitute fragrant, aromatic 'molecules' of a given scent.

Any object *a*, as a sort of marker of the Real always presentifies itself in its 'absence' as always already having been lost, through its own dialectic of disappearing in its appearance, that could be described as constantly 'falling' anew, as always already having been 'fallen'.

changes the sign ('+' into '-', or vice versa).

¹² The idea of isomorphism, frequently interweaving with other threads of these investigations, draws upon the conception of Douglas R. Hofstadter, included and developed in his book, where he draws a sort of parallelism between, firstly, Bach's music (especially his fugues and canons) as based on the counterpoint principle and the concept of infinite 'strange loops', secondly, Escher's art, and, thirdly, Gödel's achievements. (Compare: Gödel, Escher, Bach, *An Eternal Golden Braid. A Metaphorical Fugue on Minds and Machines In the Spirit of Lewis Carroll*). Especially, the idea of 'strange loops' can be applied to the art of creation perfumes.

¹³ Also, honestly, I can't omit the influence of Wittgenstein on my understanding of the concept of isomorphism, however, not without certain modifications. Also, I adhere to the belief that this idea is still present in his later teaching and writings, although changed (first of all, much more dynamized) and not so explicitly present as it was in his first philosophy. However, since it becomes very rich and nuanced in the later remarks, it's still worthy of further studies, following and developing the line of thought, initiated by this philosopher.

Their uncanny 'eccentricity' consists in being always de-centered in its centeredness, alluding to a certain lost, 'anarchic' center – the point where setting heavenly bodies into the rotation takes place, around which they incessantly orbit like Aristotle's celestial spheres moving in circles.

3.3. The language of perfumes.

Many people know about the achievements and life events of Gabrielle Chanel, however, few remember that the probably most famous perfumed water¹⁴ in the world 'Chanel No. 5' was created from pure lack, absence, emptiness, and loneliness she experienced after the death of her lover in a tragic accident. The 'elixir of love', the composing of which was planned long before the tragedy, was meant to recreate their feelings and happiness of being together and remained (as it turned out) the last common project. As such, it was just that factor she needed to live on (just in order to realize it).

As is known, perfumes can be considered as modeling themselves on the musical rules. We situate the fragrance's note on a sort of non-musical stave (five horizontal lines) and proceed with any scent developing itself as if it were a piece of music. Fundamentally, there are three stages describing how perfumes change in time: firstly, what we smell immediately, are the notes of the head, then, in the middle phase – the notes of the heart, and finely – the notes of the base. Every stage may last for a longer or shorter period of time, and there are refrains, and returns to the previous themes that sometimes become more complicated or somehow change otherwise in many possible ways. And that's why perfumes can't be estimated on the basis of one case of smelling them, they need time to deploy their whole potential, and sometimes more than one trial. They preserve memories, situations, feelings, atmospheres, etc., but may loose or change their 'content' due to new associations. Sometimes the very fragrance we once hated as disgusting, etc., after a time suddenly starts to fascinate us and we can't just indifferently leave it or forget. Perhaps this phenomenon might have something to do with the way objects *a* influences us.

As was mentioned, the title 'Ainsi bas la vida!' may be read as ambiguous and that's why the song is especially suitable to enlighten the role played by any 'little object' and its captivating, irresistible influence "That's how life falls/goes!" may mean that dominated by the fascination, infatuation, enamorment, our previous existence disappears for a moment or at least becomes empty, insignificant, flat or boring and loses its hitherto meaning, undergoing a total – so to say – transfiguration of the field of experience¹⁵, quasi-alchemic transmutation into pure gold¹⁶. It could be even compared to having a mystical revelation

¹⁴ In the next part of this essay I will use, for reasons of shortness, the universal, international abbreviations: EDT for toilet water (Eau de Toilette) and EDP for perfumed water (Eau de Parfum). The general term perfumes' will be employed when the difference between the two is nonessential.

¹⁵ Like a change of figure (Gestalt) with regard to its background – topological curving of the psychical 'space'.

¹⁶ It will be said more on the ramification of this idea later on.

or at least a radical change of consciousness¹⁷. 'Life sinks¹⁸ like this' or 'Life goes like that¹⁹' is the way of asserting the effects of a certain cause, being the 'forgotten' object-cause of desire that propels us and gives momentum to the vicissitudes of human fate. This having always already been lost 'cause' not only escapes any efforts of being re-presented by intentional activity of our consciousness, it works in its passivity', in its 'passive activity', as paradoxically as it seems, as the most fundamental condition of the conscious life and its ontological, epistemological, as well as esthetic and ethical sources of any possible certainty. The alluring characteristics of the 'lost', 'fallen', dispersed and eccentric 'particles', exemplified by gaze and voice, are imitated by all sorts of techniques. These techniques are meant to expose or magnify their capturing nature, so capable of exciting the human imagination, arouse fascination, so convincing in attracting appreciation or depreciation, admiration or disgust, and – in their most fundamental mode – anxiety of potential recipients. And the same could be said about smell, the object we perceive thanks to the activity of our olfactory sense – the organ functioning as a source of meaning – serving to orientate us in the great universe of fragrances by which every aspect of our everyday life of speaking beings is marked. The scent could be as telling as words, and as ineffable as words sometimes are,

¹⁷ Like a kind of a certain mental 'take-off', 'floating away' or 'being on a high', only without any drugs. If Lacan closely associates anxiety with an orgasm, the comparison is as much possible as it can in this place. The experience of many psychologists/therapists/sexologists points to the fact that making sex and experiencing orgasm mitigates anxiety disorder's symptoms, conducts to the effect of a deep relief, exerts soothing and comforting (even pain-relieving) influence. All of these empirical data seem to confirm the Lacanian thesis that anxiety is the only affect that doesn't deceive, however its sexual ramifications are still not quite explored. At least, it can be perhaps said that anxiety could be regarded as the raw and non-canalized form of drive, of the free-floating sexual energy, which accounts for many instances when the anxious person can't describe the object of their anxiety (except when the 'object' of anxiety becomes anxiety itself – but then, we can always say that this secondary anxiety is purely and simply fear). However, Lacan's statement that anxiety as an affect is 'not without an object' is supported by these cases of analysis when an analysand, having become conscious of these 'non-objects', after perhaps the temporary increase of anxiety, becomes totally free from it or at least able to tolerate it just because when the defined meaning is assigned to it, it becomes more like fear (it may be said that the energy of drive has been canalized and in the best of possible cases has found its socially acceptable issue). There have even been made some famous experiments, enhancing probability of the hypothesis that anxiety experienced in the companionship of a person perceived as highly attractive, tends to be interpreted as pointing into the transformation of the anxious affect into (sexual) excitement (the non-cathexed energy becomes invested in this or that particular object).

¹⁸ Probably all of us remember those ecstatic moments when we (our 'I'- our whole life) sinks – plunged into the depth of the loved person's gaze, or when we forget ourselves completely while absorbed into the Other voice, its unique sound and tone, listening to him or her nearly breathless, in order not to lose any word at this moment of meaningful silence, suspension or sigh. Similarly, the smell of the lover, singular and unlike any other – even if mixed indiscernibly with ours – stays with us forever, unmistakably recognizable in any time and place of the world, revoking both the most intimate and blissful, as well as nostalgic and painful memories.

¹⁹ That is, the ordinary life, usually prosaically uniform, as some experienced people define it, with no unexpectedness or unpredictability, proceeding on well-beaten tracks. Here, down and low on the earth, far from any heavens. Its monotony is only broken from time to time by these rare 'a-objectal' encounters, often described by the people especially tried-out by life's challenges, having on their account nearly always unfortunate, unlucky, sad experiences, confirmed by centuries-old stories of fall and decay, humiliation and fallenness (the fame of being of the 'fallen moral condition'). Remember for example this dark, gothic romance – the novel written by Nathaniel Hawthorne entitled *The Scarlet Letter* whose somber, gloomy atmosphere stands in sharp contrast with its surprising, although very subtly marked, harbinger of at least hopeful resolution. (Incidentally, and perhaps not quite accidentally, the letter 'A', standing out in bold relief on the sew-on scarlet badge, besides its conventional, puritanical meaning (the symbol of adultery), refers to the great A, designating Autre). Perhaps all of us wear this invisible stigma imprinted by those who impressed their stamp on us, burnt on our soul an indelible mark of conatus, the essence of our existence, which is the incessant movement of desire being always desire of the Other, desire of desire, of desiring and being desired by the desired one, for which a human being is able to make any possibly greatest sacrifices. The example is the heroine of the mentioned novel, Hester Prynne, as condemned, excluded, totally estranged in her acute and piercing solitude, alienation, and the long-lasting loneliness and isolation, having as the only companionship her daughter, whose name, Pearl, is forcefully meaningful – as the treasure retrieved from the oyster of the impossible relationship, the fruit of the forbidden passion. (What comes immediately into mind is the association with Lacan's remark on Socrates, whose unimpressive external appearance was hiding the priceless germ, this ineffable remainder of the Real that is represented by this or that object a).

sharing the relationships between them as the isomorphic demands of any possibilities of effective translation.

4. Beginnings of perfumery art and Freudian conceptualizations of libido.

The history of the production of scents reaches the most archaic times. Be as it may, these more and more sophisticatedly composed mixtures were supposed to reflect the most important, lively, but sometimes also very difficult, problematic aspects of human existence. Traditionally, what remains in perfect agreement with many schools of psychoanalytic theory, the most explored and deeply penetrated domains in the world of fragrances were the spheres of human sexuality (in the wider and narrower senses of the word), like sexual attraction/fascination, love, desire, demand, lust, and so many other aspects of human eroticism that it would take too much time and space to enumerate all of them. And of course, as sexual reproduction remains in a close relationship with mortality, the creation of composite mixtures, having as its aim the exertion of the possibly strongest influence on potential recipients, was getting more and more effective in joining these two omnipresent themes of the human existence – Eros and Thanatos – in the most secret, highly detailed set of rules of the perfumery alchemy.

4.1. The pleasure principle and its beyond.

The Freudian two main instincts²⁰: the first one striving to join and form more and more complex and greater wholes, and the second one aiming at destruction and disintegration of any wholes into smaller pieces, tending to return to the state of inorganic matter, underwent of course a reformulation in Lacan's theory. These two erotic and thanatic manifestations of one and the same flow of libido are not as different and separate as it would seem on the superficial review of their characteristics. Rather, they seem to be part and parcel of one and the same, highly differentiated and functionally specialized in its generality and universality, stream of the libidinal energy of drive. Drive is regarded as the result of the transformation of the purely animal, vaguely dispersed instincts into the flow of libido, taking its differentiated, focused, and concentrated forms. It can be said that instinct becomes drive when at least preconscious, presentimental, anticipated realization of the presence of the Other as a desiring being, as well as the desire to be desired by just this Other appear. The two principles, erotic and thanatic, of creation and of destruction, of love and of aggression, are in the last analysis reducible to one and the same death drive, that is, that which has its true source 'beyond the pleasure principle', although some of its more defensive manifestations tend to preserve the constant state of pleasure (lack of suffering, of pain, in general: of any excitation that disturbs this peaceful pleasurable condition of the human organism).

²⁰ I have used the term 'instinct' in order to preserve Strachey's traditional way of translating Trieb into English. Of course, what is meant here is drive.

4.2. Geza Schoen and deconstruction of perfumery alchemy

As it's not very difficult to guess, all of this has much to do with the kingdom of fragrances, organized by the sense of smell. The breakthrough in the perfumery industry happened as recently as at the beginning of the 21st Century, when the German perfumer, Berliner Geza Schoen, decided to introduce into the world of scents something totally nonstandard and exceptional. In fact, as he seemed to have been able to conceive quite original ideas, and he had always been a bit provocatively-minded person, it was certain that he would try to make something radically unusual and going beyond all the possible expectations of the contemporary, ordinary consumers of mainstream perfumery trends. The person himself is worthy of attention and deserves a few more remarks due to his genuinely visionary, outstanding ability of exceeding the spirit of his times and surpass the limits traditionally imposed on the common imaginations on how the composition of fragrances should be conceptualized and realized in practice. He attempted at deconstructing the idea that the art of creating perfumes is a sort of 'alchemy', a hermetic and mysterious knowledge and practice of the chosen magicians, totally inaccessible to the uninitiated laymen. Perfumers have sometimes been regarded as the successors of the mythical Midas, endowed with the king's 'golden touch', the only difference lying in the nature of their 'gift', consisting in transforming water into various miraculous elixirs, capable of exerting forceful if unexplained influence on whoever happens to be their recipient. It's not accidental that many names of perfumes contain all possible derivatives of the word 'gold' – commonly regarded as the most precious of metals, the falsification of which (like of perfumes) is considered as so unacceptable and scandalous that often becomes a source of serious controversies, medial affairs, legal proceedings²¹, actual judicial procedures, and even criminal offenses. In search of the ideal fragrance – the essence of all possible aromatic compositions of extracts – some people happen to be capable of doing unbelievable acts of cruelty and violence, even barbarism²².

5. The myth of thalassa and dreams of return to earlier phases of development

What does all of this have to do with Lacan's theory of sexuality? Of course, the perfumery business is eager to avail itself of all sorts of paradigmatic psychoanalytical themes and motifs, proceeding hand in hand (if sometimes only in the sense of 'collective unconscious') with Freudian and post-Freudian discoveries and their most contemporary transmutations. Due to the reasons of brevity, only a few of the most universal 'threads', 'tangles', 'weaves', or 'knots' can be mentioned here. For example, much of the fragrant compositions play on

²¹ In France, for example, trading or just possessing 'falsified' perfumes is penalized, so beware of just having one in your baggage at the airport.

²² Just remember the shocking story told by Patrick Süskind in his famous novel – in order to avoid any spoiler, I won't tell anything about the content of the book.

all sorts of 'thalassal'²³ ²⁴ concepts as well as on longing for any substitutes of the 'oceanic' blissful state of oneness and absence of any differentiation, or at least of the surrogates of the return to the intrauterine life of primary narcissism. Some scents are known as appealing to these yearnings²⁵.

Certain kinds of fragrances evoke oral²⁶ or anal²⁷ themes, others – phallic or genital²⁸ associations²⁹. They refer to the 'classical', Freudian, three/four kinds of sexual objects. Another group of perfumes focus on the motives connected with the specific Lacanian 'little objects', like gaze and voice. In their case, the main focus is what they express, and what they express are various manifestations of desire, the forms of which are so many, nearly omnipresent (even if one is not always – in fact, rather infrequently – consciously aware of them), that it would take too much space and time to enumerate even a part of them. In summary, what the perfumers have been actually doing so far, is what we could call just the imaginary, specular imitation of any such and such object *a*'s dynamics in organizing affective life of human beings.

6. The molecular miracles.

The unexpected breakthrough occurred when in 2006 the new, experimental niche brand name *Escentric Molecules* appeared, founded by Geza Schoen as a challenge and sort of provocation. The innovatory character of the project was based on the intention to 'react' to the

²³ Look: Thalassa. Theory of Genitality. Sandor Ferenczi.

²⁴ It often happens that the names of perfumes refer to the fundamental meaning of water as the humanity's ancient basic environment and source of life. Not only of life, but of everything life comprises, including even the most sophisticated advancements, like language and all sorts of symbolic developments. What seems to be worthy of mentioning in this context is the series of Guerlain's perfumes with a common 'family' name Aqua Allegoria, the elaborated, high-quality sequence of fragrances expressing most various themes – as the name suggests – in its own highly sophisticated way. My favorite are – known only from the blotter's trial (for its unaffordable price) – 'Limon Verde', EDT, an ideal scent for the hot summery days, for its cooling, chilling, 'cold' effects it exerts on the user, and, secondly Davidoff's "Cool Water", for its 'green' fruity note of a fig tree. Now I can't help remarking that certain names given to perfumes sometimes seem to be really like pieces of art, demanding much creative power from the persons composing the relevant scents, and some of them truly impress the user as reminding genuine masterpieces.

²⁵ Certain perfumes are recognized for their watery, salty, fishy – even reminding the flavor of caviar – notes, like e. g. Thierry Mugler's 'Womanity' EDP, others present white, milky, warm, carnal, delicately sweet and secure accords (like Calvin Klein's 'Reveal', EDT). The true phenomenon was (and still is) the cult of Lancôme's 'Trésor' EDP, exposing the scent of baby powder, sometimes – curiously – reminding the interior environment of an incubator, creating cozy, snug, comforting and sheltering warmth. In general, the – so to say – 'embracing', carressingly wrapping, enveloping qualities of perfumes are highly estimated, especially in autumn and winter, the example being the fashionable 'Chergui' EDP (chergui – is originally a name for a kind of hot dessert wind of specific sensual aroma, or 'Un Bois Vanille' EDP, both fragrances composed by Serge Lutens.

²⁶ Like, for example, Cartier's 'Baiser Volé' EDP, and in general, all fragrances revoking kissing, sucking, eating and... smoking, e. g. Tom Ford's 'Tobacco Vanilla' EDP. The most interesting and surprising examples in this context are the water called 'Bacôn', designed by John Farginnay (resembling the scent of beacon), 'Flame', the limited series, financed by the network of American fast-foods Burger King (resembling the scent of grilled meat), and 'Stilton' (smelling like the scent of moldy cheese) by Nigel White and others.

²⁷ As far as anal motives are concerned, we could give the example of Boudicca's 'Wode', being the smell of excrements – in general: of dirt, canalization, and... hemlock – *Cicuta virosa* – the most obvious example of affinities between anal drive and aggressiveness as well as stubbornness (like that of the Socrates, having obstinately remained refusing admitting his guilt), and also (as the anal is often associated in dream-work with money). one of the most peculiar scents, Patrick McCarthy's 'Money Perfume' EDP, having the smell of coins and banknotes. Connections between the anal and aggressiveness are evident in the series 'Blood Concept' (perfumes having the smell of human blood).

²⁸ The difference between 'phallic' and genital' (as referring to different stages of the sexual development) is of course very important, although it will be omitted here.

²⁹ For example, 'Vulva' by Vivareos (the scent of vagina), or 'Sécrétions Magnifiques' (the scent of sperm) by Etat Libre d'Orange

traditional way of the production and sale of perfumes by the demystification of the whole process, deemed to deconstruct the metaphysical, mystical reverberations of all its sacred³⁰ underlying alchemy. The intuitively felt post-modern, post-industrial blend of ideas associated with the whole revolutionary flavor of this undertaking certainly doesn't seem to be totally mistaken, even if it's foggy, smoky haziness may reject at first sight (should I rather say: 'smell'?)³¹. The first unusual quality of the mentioned perfumes lies in the fact of their 'being born' always in pairs, as if they were a kind of inseparable twins. There have been three such 'dyads' so far, joined together in a structured, sequential³² way: 'Molecule 01' is completed (and deployed) by 'Escentric 01'; the same state of things obtains with regard to the next 'couple': 'Molecule 02', constituting a sort of unity with 'Escentric 02'; and, at last, the idea of 'Molecule 03' preserves its meaning only if completed and developed by 'Escentric 03'. Only in the companionship of the latter, the conception hidden behind the former can be made clear and its structural, although dynamic, functioning may be then understood. The pairs are constructed in such a way that one of the couple (each of the twins belonging to the series *Escentric*) is a synthesis of different ingredients (and so it is composed in the common sense, taking the form of perfumes as most people understand them). The other twin (of the sequence *Molecule*, in its first, second, and third form) honors the one and unique note that determines the character of the mentioned synthesis. For example, 'Molecule 01' pays homage to one (fundamental and prevailing in many perfumery mixtures) aromatic molecule, called 'ISO E Super'³³. The toilet water 'Molecule 01' consists only of this one ingredient (mixed, of course, with alcohol). It gives to the compositions that contain it the character of depth, velvet-softness, and a delicately woody aroma. It emphasizes the specific, particular character of the mixture that contains it, so to say, 'rises it to heaven', makes it more impressive and exceptional, capable of throwing an apparently unexplained spell on the one who senses it and becomes subjected to its impelling influence. If it is used together with another fragrance, it underlines and amplifies this other scent's impact. If it is used alone, it emphasizes and accentuates the aroma of the user's body itself. On the other hand, 'Escentric 01' contains ISO E Super in great abundance and high concentration, although mixed with other ingredients. As was said, according to the initial assumption, 'Molecule 01' and 'Escentric 01' were to come into being as strictly coexistent, associated together in close affinity as well as contrast, as if following the counterpoint principle. One was meant to focus on the 'eccentric' element ('absently' present in its decentricity in the other) to make it central and dominant for a while, as if to put an

³⁰ 'Sacred' in all of the ambiguity of the word (revoking the ambivalent, sometimes demonic, sometimes angelic character of the Lacanian 'little objects'),

³¹ As these remarks are only an outline of some initial intuitions, conceived rather as a sort of 'taking a pinch of snuff', rather than 'taking a drag/puff', the reader is asked to forgive their fragmentary, temporary character.

³² What comes to mind here is Mitchel's idea of successively arriving siblings as associated with the concept of serial order, of ordered set or progressive series, etc., joined with the Lacanian reinterpretation of the linguistic binarity principle: metonymic, incessant (if 'punctuated') encoding of the 'reality' in terms of dual, 'twinning' oppositions.

³³ 'ISO E Super' is the commercial name for chemical aromatic substance, scientifically and formally known as 1-(1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8-octahydro-2,3,8,8-tetramethyl-2-naphthyl)ethan-1-one, a synthetic ketone fragrance, providing a sandalwood-like and cedarwood-like scent.

emphasis on its usually hidden but decisive, singularizing character. The same structural rules obtained when 'siblings' came into existence: those integrally conjoined 'partners' that were 'dancing' in their dynamic interactions in order to function – with relation to the ordered relationships of ingredients – as oriented in opposite directions: centripetally and centrifugally, to put it in the simplest words. As was said, the usually decentered, now put in the center, 'eccentric particle' in the first dyad was 'ISO E Super', in the second dyad it was ambroxan, a variation of ambergris³⁴, in ordinary language: amber. Ambroxan³⁵ is the *ingredient* around which 'Molecule 02' orbits around exclusively (sister scent 'Escentric 02' blends the note with others). The third substance unveiled in its particularity by 'Molecule 03', the ordered dynamics of which was revealed in 'Escentric 03', was vetiver³⁶ (the synthetic equivalent of which is vetiveryl acetate). The demystifying enterprise can be resumed: there is no magic, no mystery, no sorcery – the enchanting qualities are right before our eyes (or perhaps: noses), although we do not perceive the structured dynamics of this eccentric-molecular topology³⁷, and paradoxically, its 'reality' can't be explained but only shown, enlightened, unveiled. What is needed is simply the change of our viewpoint from the (would-be) central to the (allegedly) decentered aspects, the objects of anamorphosis³⁸ par excellence, constituting the true axis of our existence.

The same thing can be said about Lacan's intentions regarding captivating (however, un-seizable, nowhere to be found) qualities of 'little objects' – inapprehensible, although capable

³⁴ Ambergris is the name for the waxy substance secreted by the sperm of whales and found floating at sea or washed ashore, traditionally used in perfumes. Amber's aroma in its purest form is regarded as one of the most sensual scents, soft, warm, a bit nutty, perceived as exotic, the oriental character of which is highly estimated as the indispensable ingredient of the best oud perfumes (amber and agar – extract from agarwood – are usually combined to render the intoxicating note of incense's smell in the more sophisticated, refined fragrances produced in the niche market).

³⁵ Ambroxan as the only ingredient constitutes also the whole experimental composition of 'Not a perfume', which was conceived by the brand-mark 'Juliette has a gun'. The name of the company is inspired by Shakespeare's drama and by the centuries-long war between sexes, and is often thematized by different psychoanalytical writings. The sequence of compositions of successive perfumes constitutes a story of this struggle: the premier versions 'Lady Vengeance' and 'Vengeance Extreme' or 'Mad Madame' had a very rebellious character, the later compositions just underlined or elevated the position of woman: 'Citizen Queen', 'Midnight Oud' or 'Mood Dance', others tried to use the seductive powers of womanhood, like 'Miss Charming', 'Romantina', or 'Gentlewoman'. After that, the time has come to understand that lack of coexistence and cooperation of the two sexes leads nowhere, brings emptiness and stone-like vegetation: 'Into the Void', 'Calamity J.', and at last, the peaceful mutual acceptance of unavoidable differences appeared as well as the wish to complete one sex by the other (and vice versa) and the need of mutual support and respect made itself felt more clearly in the composition of the 'disarmed' versions: 'Anyway', 'Mmm' and 'White Spirit'. One of the latest versions, 'The Oil Fiction', refers to the awareness that the complete reciprocal adjustment is a bit illusory and the running in of the engine that propels the mutual coexistence is difficult and threatened by the forces of friction, due to perhaps – let's use this metaphor – the non-sufficient quantity or quality of oil that could enable more smooth, even and plain working together of all the parts. All of this resumed by Lacanian axioms, founding the (impossible) relationship between sexes (and among people, in general) on essential, crucial misunderstanding, which denounces by saying that the essence of the interpersonal communication is the lack of communication'. The 'oily' functioning is fictitious, the communication is rough and slowly working-out the always difficult and temporary agreement and understanding between two 'aliens'.

³⁶ Vetiver is a perennial bunchgrass, native to India, commonly applied to provide perfumes with the deliciously rich, sensuous, fresh spicy, green, woody and earthy, rooty and airy, dry and damp, warm and cold (at the same time) aroma of its oil (sometimes even taken advantage of as an aphrodisiac), whose soothing and calming qualities are exploited, for example, in aromatherapy. Of course, the natural vetiver oil or absolute are very rare ingredients met in the process of the creation of fragrances (only the most luxurious and the most expensive ones contain it). The chemical synthetic substance used to revoke a vetiver note is vetiveryl acetate.

³⁷ I hope that the structural similarity between 'eccentric molecules' and 'little objects' (as decentered from the subject) hasn't been unnoticed, the latter resembling points called by topologists 'singularities'. Analogically as in Lacan's theory, the condition of the appearance of a signifying chain is the emergence of the first signifiers (becoming the first molecules of a language and subjectivity).

³⁸ It is not excluded (as I'm not sure if the authors have studied Lacan's theory of objects a) that the idea of anamorphosis was the base for creating 'Askew' by Humięcki and Graef.

of inciting the apparently undefined and vague but clearly anxious affect of 'apprehension'. Anxiety as that affect that is 'not without an object' needs a similar demystification. The affective life, the incessant 'music of our soul' has its forbidden notes, illicit accords³⁹, the peculiar points in-between high and low tides, where any oppositions disappear.

A similar example was Givenchy's famous pair of fragrances contained in the giftbox 'Ange ou Démon Le Parfum et Son Accord Illicite'. The prelude is the first part of the set – 'Ange ou Démon. Le Parfum. The second part – *accord illicite* – retrieves the normally veiled, hidden, lost and forgotten note – ex-centric, marginal molecule, the one that accounts for the radical transformation of the – frankly speaking – mediocre perfumes into the center of gravity, capable of unusual force of attraction and becoming a source of *jouissance*, of the forbidden, ambiguous pleasure you can't resist. One dives into the fragrance and reaches the point when recognizing their nature as angelic or diabolic becomes senseless. One's more or less fluid, peaceful – or simply boring – accompaniment of the daily existence is invaded and penetrated by the excluded, although unrelenting accord – accord illicit par excellence, of which one can either become anxious or excited and fascinated by this unexpected 'alien', whom you can exhort or invite. The ambiguous – half joyful, half painful or disgusting but paradoxically pleasurable character of the sinful affection is best resumed by the Lacanian remarks on the irresistible characteristics of what he used to define as 'surplus jouissance' (*plus de jouir*).

7. What is man? What does man desire?

Now, it's a good moment to mention the so often exploited by Lacan 'intersubjective discourse', which may resemble a sort of transgenerational 'collective unconscious'.

I happened quite accidentally to reveal a masculine perfume by Thierry Mugler, with an interesting name 'Kryptomint' (belonging to the series *A*Men*⁴⁰). 'Krypto' may point at the participle 'hidden. My first association was with the word 'cryptonym' – like a code name of, for example, a secret operation, aiming at hiding the true nature of that operation. A question arises as to what operation may come into play. Perhaps something important is happening to the men living in our cultural environment that we don't notice as yet for the lack of a sufficient distance. In general, it seems that some change regarding their cultural archetypes and roles played in today's society aren't excluded. What we can suppose, men are nowadays somehow 'lost' and disorientated. Half-joking, one may say that it is all about Kryptonite – the radioactive substance that can weaken Superman. But seriously, what does 'krypto' linked with 'mint' mean? Perhaps a short description of the scent will throw a little light on it and on what is encrypted here. What part of reality is hidden and not spoken about? The main 'hero' of 'Kryptomint' is – as the name would tell – mint, so the fragrance

³⁹ Illicit because forbidden, that is, repressed.

⁴⁰ Perhaps such a name isn't accidental: it may refer to a new generation of men as true Others, marked by A as Autre. In the light of this interpretation, we would be obliged to say that The man (as such) doesn't exist, so we can talk only about singular representatives of this sex and ask every time anew the question: 'What does he want?', an equally unique answer.

should be cold, refreshing, cooling, chilling, etc. But it's not the whole story – calling this scent a pure 'fresher'⁴¹ would be a great mistake. 'Kryptomint' smells strange, strong and the sensation of mint is not at all similar to that which we encounter in other cold and fresh perfumes. The mint here is sweet, viscous and similar to a condensed syrup but it's not any defect at all. All the openings of this complex and very changeable composition are well chosen and perfectly integrated: the successive scenes unveil from the chocolate-like beginning until the woody, golden finale. There's no trace of anything like 'drag queen' in spite of the fact that its (commonly called) masculine and feminine aspects complete each other very harmoniously. By the way, when applied to the skin, 'Kryptomint' provides us with many surprises because at the starting point the aroma is strongly patchouli-like, 'fluffy' (reminding creamy cakes, candies, and sweets in a patisserie). The smell is both sweet and breezy, joins notes of gourmand⁴² and of oud⁴³, and is not devoid of a certain load of carnality and animality. As someone said, 'Kryptomint' is like the chocolate candies 'After Eight', and he was perfectly right! So what is encrypted in the fragrance? The part 'Krypt' sounds similar to the word 'crypt' – a place where someone's dead body is put after death. My opinion is that the crypt in question is about the public, universal, common although unconscious image of *the*⁴⁴ man, of the truly male, the masculine 'manly' man, who is strong and cold as mint – that is: rational, logical, devoid of any softness and delicacy, never warm, cute or cuddly... The 'mint' in question doesn't resemble what we usually understand by this world. In our culture men seem to be supposed to act under the cryptonim 'mint' or otherwise they have a problem with finding their place in society, and then must be more and more often substituted by women, but the results of the process will never be successful or at least just satisfying. The imaginized symbol of man seems to be split, at least in our culture. 'Kryptomint' delivers us a counter-symbol to this prevailing symbol in order to wake us up from the common dream of anything like a 'Superman. The uniqueness, otherness, particularity of every singular representative of the male population is that which is encrypted, put into a crypt, where it must stay hidden before the world will be ready to accept it. The split part is omitted in the common discourse as it seems shameful (the womanish men, men 'with a vagina'). Our collective imaginarium conceals the otherness of any human being, classifying it under the etiquette of one of the two sexes, making the real singular subject as dead as corpses. That's why, secondly, the crypt in question may symbolize the entombment of the egoic, cultural and individual imaginaria we tend to cultivate. Thirdly, according to the oldest cults and beliefs, a crypt, a tomb is a place from which 'undead' entities may come out (and even nowadays the popularity of various creations of pop-culture, like ghosts,

⁴¹ Fresher – a scent associated with a refreshing, cooling, frigid or cold impression, devoid of any sweet or warm tones. (W żargonie perfumeryjnym: 'świeżak' – przeciwieństwo 'słodziaka').

⁴² Gourmand consists primarily of synthetic edible notes, such as honey, chocolate, vanilla or candy. These top and middle notes may be blended with non-edible base notes such as patchouli or musk. They are also called 'foodie' fragrances and can be both feminine and masculine.

⁴³ Oud-is valued strongly by perfumers for its warm sweetness mixed with woody and balsamic notes. It's an aromatic and complex scent. It is used in the form of oud oil or a resin. When used in a perfume composition, oud is most often a base note.

⁴⁴ We all now the woman doesn't exist but at least in the crypt she may enjoy the company of an equally nonexistent man.

vampires, ghouls, lamias, werewolves, phantoms and zombies, – 'aliens', neither living, nor dead, as cold as mint is – but often also sweet, charming, warm – becomes more and more enormous. But what is as 'undead' and as uncanny in Lacan's theory as 'little objects' are – points marking the true, inevitable lack? The 'undead' object-cause of desire is that which is truly lacking and it is perhaps just this precise lack that enables us 'to feel mint'⁴⁵ for this rather than that person. This first sympathy has the smell of both a crypt and sweet-mint and it is perhaps this mixture that exerts such a strong, if unexplained, influence on us.

8. The third sex?

But still, the question remains, why I have dedicated so much investigation to the issue of encrypting the fundamental lack in a fragrance since the topic of this essay was supposed to be focused on Lacan's studies on 'little objects' as the heart of the human sexuality? I think it is a similar (in some points) but at the same time different and alternative vision of the approach to the sexual theory – a sort of counterpoint – although applied to a totally different problem than the dilemmas of the Wolf-Man. Perhaps this changed focus of interest is completely (non-intentionally) neglecting the intentions of the author, however I dare to think about it as at least giving some ground for reflection, even if transferred into a different domain of philosophical thought. I have also brought up this specific problem as it has much to do with the question, analyzed a few paragraphs below, of narcissism and the issue of the unimpossible 'third sex'⁴⁶. It could be regarded as a sort of a prologue to these investigations, introducing the theme from quite another point of view (or at least in a different language). The common vision of men, popularized and imitated, represents them in extreme cases as totally independent, autonomous, self-sufficient beings, devoid of any sort of desire. But traces of desire are just where the 'objects little *a*' can be found (like nostalgic gaze, the longing voice and ... if smell is to be considered as one of them – the smell of always unsatisfied desire, craving for impossible (but always hoped for) fulfillment. Even anxiety has its specific smell (some people and most animals can recognize it), and if the object of anxiety is the cause of desire, then that unique smell deserves at least a little consideration. The full, complete uniqueness of the Other (although never known in its otherness) in our partner is to be searched for in the topology of the 'little objects', we can not only see, hear, but also smell it, sense it, feel it.

If smell could be regarded as one of 'objects *a*', that is, the residual object, always having already been lost, and if there's for everyone his/her the most singular, unique kind

⁴⁵ Fortunately, there is in Polish this opportune idiom: we say that we 'feel mint' for somebody when we feel sympathy for this person, we start to like him/her in a particular way or even begin to fall in love in him/her (and this is sometimes accompanied by a – not necessarily quite conscious thought – that 'maybe something will be out of this...', 'maybe it will happen to be successful...'). Half-jokingly speaking, it's more or less similar to the situation when a cat senses the scent of catnip and tends to be strongly attracted to its source.

⁴⁶ Perhaps it's the sign of our times (marked by the struggles for sexual equality, for the rights of non-heteronormative persons) that popularity of perfumes destined for both men and women is quickly rising. The described series of Escentric Molecules is orientated on both of the sexes, and it's not very infrequent that a man uses feminine fragrances, or a woman uses masculine ones.

of fragrance that reminds what was lost, 'cut off', its special qualities must be preserved in memory (for the most part, being unconscious), arousing a certain, definite group of associations every time the person experiences it. And so there is a huge amount of perfumes that are to attract the other's desire, love, sympathy, willingness to start a romance, etc., and each of these compositions has so different ingredients, characterized sometimes by totally contrary qualities, that there seems to be nothing that the scents whose purpose is to seduce have in common. This is because what seduces must have nothing but 'Thing-ish' unspeakable d inimitable character and the 'little objects', whatever their actual characteristics are, must remind that *a*-narchic 'Thing' in some way.

9. *Homo sum, humani nihil alienum esse puto.*

In summary, it seems enough to say that the present revolution in the domain of perfumery artistry or (as it happens more and more often) the technology of production of fragrances⁴⁷ shows close affinities with Lacanian theory of objects *a*, and perhaps now more clearly than ever before. It not only unveils the structured dynamics of their manifestations (simulates it, strictly isomorphically, on the symbolic level). Secondly, it also unveils the singularizing properties of their functioning, from at least three points of view. Every fragrance constitutes a singular aroma and is protected by the appropriate authorship rights. Secondly, no perfumes smell in the same way when applied to different people, as their ingredients come into different reactions with the specific bodily characteristics of the person on whom the scent is tested, like the condition of the skin, etc. Thirdly, for everyone who senses the resulting aroma, the perfumes in question have different smell. As any object *a*, the smell seems to have neither subjective, nor objective character, as it were, it belongs nowhere. Fourthly, the perfumed part of the body of one and the same person may smell differently, depending on their mood, emotions, the general state of mind, bodily comfort, etc. Fifthly, the fragrance changes in time and space, it has its own way of deployment: in the very beginning we sense the so called notes of head, then the scent becomes dominated by the notes of heart, and finally, after a certain time has passed, what remains are the notes of base and the time during which they can be felt, is longest, and their remnants are the effect of different interaction between the just mentioned ambiguous, unidentified – subjective and/or objective – adherence and affinities: little *a* is an object not quite separate from the subject and at the same time it only partly belongs to him or her.

Another issue, the important aspect of the described demystification consists also in denouncing the 'non-angelic'⁴⁸ (at least not always such) character of these objects, in negating their sublime (in Immanuel Kant's sense) qualities. As was noticed above, some of the perfumes simulating certain controversial smells, nearly seem to transgress the boundaries

⁴⁷ Revolution whose many ramifications could not be even superficially touched on here – it would demand much longer, comprehensive and detailed exposition of relevant themes, based on better argumentation and empirical evidence.

⁴⁸ The famous example, among many others, is 'L'Ange Noir', composed by Givenchy. The name and the aromatic qualities of the perfume could be interpreted as representative of the contemporary trend trying to overcome egoic dualities, binary oppositions characteristic to the narcissistic mirror stage of sexual development.

of good taste... and flavor⁴⁹, or overtly transcends them. This is not an objection. This is just the logic of desire and its metonymical movement or, in the last analysis, of drive that proceeds on the paths we're not always happy to follow – but it enables us to reach the usually extremely rare moments of *jouissance*, when life moves between its 'peak' as well as its 'fallen' moments. '*C'est vrai, ainsi bas la vida*'. That's simply 'how life goes' here, on earth, far from the heavens. The important, perhaps the most innovative part of the conception of the human sexual (also in its broad sense) life as actuated and energized by our most own and, at the same time, most alien 'little objects', can be resumed by the famous Terence's sentence: *Homo sum; humani nihil a me alienum esse puto*.

Not trying to shock with deemed to be 'perverse' elements, one must assume that 'objects *a*' are somehow resembling these 'excesses of flesh', Shylock's 'pounds of meat', although of course, they aren't specific organs of the body, belonging and non-belonging to what we understand as the human organism. The voice is not an ear, the gaze is not an eye⁵⁰, and the smell is not a nose. As objects-causes of desire are 'u-topian (or You-topian?), orientated towards that which is different from us but referring both to the subject's *and* to the Other's body. As was mentioned above this bi-directionality is expressed explicitly by the formula of the unconscious desire: the diamond that appears between the divided subject and object *a* might perhaps be treated as the sign pointing into the two directions, expressing the mutual relationship (desiring/being desired) between the two terms that it joins and separates at the same time. The desires of the subject and of the object are mixed, one's desire is in some way non-separable from the Other's desire, and my partner's *jouissance* is my *jouissance*, and vice versa. Perhaps it's one and the same desire in which drive manifests itself?

10. Signature scent or sign of sexual plasticity?

Perhaps this hasn't been underlined enough clearly, however, all that can be said about any perfumes must be highlighted and multiplied by 100, when such perfumes as the series 'Escentric Molecules' come into play. As has already been said, the distinctive feature of the product belonging to this collection is that its scent smells differently on every individual using it. There are some people, on whose bodies the fragrance isn't perceptible. There are cases when the user doesn't sense it but the aroma is detectable by the environment, or only by part of it. This family of scents has also another amazing attribute of disappearing in one moment, and suddenly reappearing in another, or even they start to be perceptible only after a certain period of time (like a few hours, for example) has passed. Strangely, people usually

⁴⁹ The probably most incredible controversy in the world of perfumes took place in 2011, when a French artist, Jammie Nicholas, gathered his excrements in little jars for a week's time. Then he resolved them in ethyl alcohol and poured the contents out into 85 small bottles, sticking onto each flacon a label with the scent's name which was 'Surplus'. The cost of each 'product' was 'just' 90 euro. And what was most (or perhaps not so) surprising was the fact that the whole stock immediately and quickly was sold out like hot, fresh cakes. Shocking? Scandalous? Or perhaps just human?

⁵⁰ As it's not necessary that Buddha should rise his eyelids to have a gaze and exerting such enormous influence. Similarly, who would be audacious enough to deny that Al Pacino, playing a blind colonel (in 'Scent of a Woman'), perfectly acts his part (with the incessantly motionless eyes, never closed, never blinking, nor moving in any possible way, continuously fixed as if 'staring' with a sort of a certain 'third eye' right into the infinity) just with his gaze as with his voice, expressing insatiable desire.

become divided between those who love them and those who hate them. Next, for some people, they seem to be rather unimpressive, for some they constitute genuine masterpieces. Certain individuals just use them to 'beef up' the scent of other perfumes, since they – as was mentioned – have this amazing quality of 'vamping up' other fragrances, themselves often of poor quality⁵¹. Lacan's remarks on 'little objects', dispersed in enormous amounts in his lectures and writings, confirm that they share similar characteristics. The three basic 'molecules': Iso E Super, ambroxan and vetiver are nearly never the most salient ingredients in perfumes (except the niche), they are rather marginal, de-centered, hidden or secondary: evidently of minor importance. Rather, they conjoin or cement the main substances used in the combinations that are to become perfumes, giving it its own style and holistic character. As was said above, Schoen's idea was to make them more prominent, to put them in the center. The Lacanian objectal *a*-particles are not of major importance for an accidental 'passer-by'. However, they become suddenly 'protruding' for the captivated, infatuated partner, though they aren't perceived as such on the daily basis, or perceived at all, or perceived in this way after a time, often just described in sentences like: *He/She has this 'something'. I can't explained that. It's just how it is*. As Lacan said in *Encore*, any object *a* is what joins together certain elements into an image⁵², and this idea, although conceived many years later, is undeniably complementary with regard to the theory of the mirror stage, is its perfect completion. The 'philosophy applied' of perfumery art makes that more conspicuous.

The peculiar feature of the demystifying process initiated by the line of 'Escentric Molecules' consists in exposing and highlighting the specific qualities of the regarded marginal 'particles', namely, their decentered centrality, their purely extimate character: as being always both inside and outside, revealing their nature of 'intimate exterior'. The sequence of 'Molecules' (01, 02, 03) has more of a revealing character, while the set of 'Escentrics' (01, 02, 03) reflects the dynamic structure of the concealing attributes of particular combinations of 'molecules'. What does an object *a* reveal? Seemingly, the inscrutable desire of another person, as well as our own desire – which is made explicit by psychoanalysis as the desire of desiring, of being desired, of the desire of another person, of our own desire, etc. But little *a* also tends to screen, shield, cover something that we wouldn't be too eager to know, as well as wouldn't be able to designate it in language. As we can suppose, it concerns a certain truth about ourselves we don't show off with or even try to hide, conceal from ourselves and our close ones. It may concern certain masks, disguises, camouflaging our essential characteristics. We are perhaps ashamed of their ambivalent, double, imperfect features – the pretended better versions⁵³ of ourselves.

⁵¹ Similarly, the gaze, voice, and ... perhaps smell can radically change a rather unattractive person in the breathtaking 'pie' or 'hottie'. Or at least, their uncanny appearance may make an ugly woman or man in an unexplained way beautiful (but obviously it must be remembered that the Lacanian concept of beauty has more to do with that which Kantian 'transcendental esthetics' defined as the sublime...).

⁵² The image can engage, of course, different senses: it can be seen, heard, smelled, etc.

⁵³ The word 'flanker' comes from the world of commercial perfumery: when a particular fragrance, masculine or feminine, has been a huge success, its producers will often try to capitalize on its success by creating 'spinoff' fragrances. These 'spinoffs', called flankers, might be similar to the original olfactorily but with a different spin or variation put on it. 'Light' versions, 'sport' versions, versions for summer, for winter, etc., are common types of flankers. For example, the classical 'Euforia' EDP

The revealing/concealing dialectics is sometimes purposely exemplified by the specific names given to certain perfumes, like 'Voile d'ambre' created by Olivier Pescheux, which is highly appreciated with regard to its smoky, balsamic, layered, and deep character, warming you as if with a cashmere coat and embracing like sunny rays, leaving a long-lasting *sillage* after you, the one dynamically changing over time... By the way, one of the most precious characteristics of perfumes is being 'sillageous'⁵⁴ – such fragrances are often chosen as signature scents⁵⁵ as if being an emblem, an identifier of a particular subject. The commercial success of a specific product arouses hopes to develop the original fragrance, introducing some modifications and creating its new varieties, which, unfortunately, doesn't generally make good results. Flankers, with few exceptions⁵⁶, are usually worse, or at least devoid of the impressiveness characterizing their elder 'sibs', and being not at all infrequently just 'washouts' of the original (in a certain sense like the elder, firstborn child, on whom the greatest expectations, demands are put, sometimes transforming them into outright 'performers' (the most talented and hard-working as well as the most mentally disordered members of families), while younger siblings, being freed from such a burden of requirements, seem to resemble rather much more flat, insipid, or even simply dull repeated copies.

11. Mystery of object *a*.

But again, what does object *a* conceal? As we know, the object-cause of desire is capable of arousing anxiety. But what are we anxious about? Of course, the object of anxiety is little *a*. But what is behind it? Nothing we could verbalize (we can only try to verbalize substitute meanings, always missing the point) – there is, as far as linguistic possibilities are concerned, a hole in speech, a lack or emptiness, or rather: a pure chaos from which nothing seems to emerge. This vagueness is what makes us at least a bit uneasy. But the apparent emptiness seems to veil something more: perhaps, as Lacan underlined many times, the *voile* (in fact, its many successive layers) obscures, envoys, and at the same time represents (non-intentionally) what he called the Thing, the state of the absolute lack of differentiation into the subjective and the objective. As the Thing is absolutely inaccessible to our conscious mind, this sort of 'reduction' perhaps leads to the Levinasian noise and hum, even roar of being, the incessantly buzzing existence with no differences as yet, without the one who

created by Calvin Klein was (and still is) the bestseller that doesn't leave the highest place taken in the rankings, and has preserved its place of the most often bought fragrances for many years, in spite of its next versions, successively substituting it with the arrival of nearly every season.

⁵⁴ As 'sillageous' (in Polish: *ogoniasty*) are described perfumes which have, so to say, a long 'tail', 'trein', 'trail', that leaves a long-lasting trace even after the exit of their 'bearer'.

⁵⁵ 'Signature scent' ('ss') is the fragrance that a person always or most often wears, which allows others identify him/her and perceive his/her individuality through just this scent – a sort of aromatic 'identity card' (in Polish: *sygnatura zapachowa*), treated by the subject as a unique trait representative of themselves.

⁵⁶ The example would be the traditional 'Shalimar' of the brand-mark Guerlain, which sometimes seems too heavy and musky to a whole new generation of Millennials (women and men), accustomed to fragrances which smell detergent, aquatic and ultra 'clean'. With this in mind, the company's house, 'Guerlain of Paris', has launched a new flanker: a much lighter version of the classic 1925 sexbomb, pruned of its muskier elements, called simply 'Shalimar Light'.

exists. Or maybe, while removing the veils⁵⁷, one after one, while the anxiety increases, our affect gets closer to what Kristeva describes as abjection. But how many layers, voiles are there? And what would it mean transcending all of them and reaching the deepest 'heart of darkness'? Or perhaps there is, happily, an infinite number of veils, securing us from madness, the death of the subject?

12. Between chaos and order.

As every object *a* evade any enumeration (for example of all the wonderful qualities of the loved person) and the Thing is totally beyond language, perhaps it wouldn't be bad to mention some perfumes that it's easy to tell what their fragrance is not, rather than what it is. One of them is certainly 'Miroir des Envies' (belonging to the edition *Miroir Miroir Collection*, under the auspices of Thierry Mugler, and created by Christine Nagel). It is neither niche, nor mainstream line; neither boutique collection nor network brand-mark; it shares both dining-room-like features and disgustingly rejecting ones – you can't also tell if the scent is nice or ugly, you try to catch it but it slips out of your hands (or rather: nose) – seeming to be an apotheosis of contradictions. Of course, it must be remembered that it is exactly object *a* that makes any image consistent⁵⁸, joins its parts, extracting it from what we could just guess or suppose to be something like pure chaos... (compare: *Encore* – forgive me my not-remembering of the number of page(s)!).

Another perfume, similar to the one mentioned above, with respect to its indescribable character, which is comparable to that of any object *a*, is 'Like This', composed by Etat Libre d'Orange. The best answer to the question of what the fragrance smells like is just that: 'Like This'⁵⁹. The inspiration for creating this independent, niche celebrity-scent was provided by Tilda Swinton who wanted to have her own fragrance. Composed in the image of the Scottish actress, the fragrance is totally different, radically other than all that which was created by perfumers for centuries. It's rather 'something' and the answers to all the potential questions this avant-garde phenomenon rises sound always the same: 'like this', as it breaks all the frameworks we try to put it into. It's androgyny, unisex trace, the ingredients that are very rarely or never found in perfumes⁶⁰, the unusual echoes that resound in this elixir have

⁵⁷ In *La topologie et le temps* Lacan says about the function of mask, which consists in 'incarnating the presence of gaze' (d'incarner la présence du regard). He refers to Spitz, the psychologist studying the behavior of a child in the interaction with an adult, who alternately puts on and takes out the mask, in reaction to what the child bursts out laughing. But if it suddenly turns out that behind the mask that has just been taken off, there is another mask, then 'it appears with the child something of the order of anxiety' (8th May 1979)

⁵⁸ The same function can be fulfilled by one's signature scent, as helping one to create a sort of image-portrait of oneself, destined to others, revealing what one wants to reveal about oneself, hiding what should be hidden, expressing the way in which you desire to be perceived by others (and desired by them).

⁵⁹ Kripke's 'rigid designator' for any particular object *a* could be just exactly 'Like This' (Comp. Naming and Necessity, Saul Kripke)

⁶⁰ The main ingredients are pumpkin and ginger. The fragrance is also inspired by the creative activity of Rumi, the poet that lived in XIIIth century. The phenomenon of the scent is the fact that it provides us with certain sounds we could never 'hear' in perfumes, like pleasant and clear resounding of broken coffee beans, crushed in the coffee-grinder or even on the tongue; the sound of the broken-off peppery chips. The smell reminds peppery chips, beautifully browned, which are, however, too big and get broken by the mouth. This 'crack' or 'snap', as you will, is something completely improbable but pleasant beyond any doubt. Improbable because there's neither coffee nor peppery chips among ingredients. What accounts for their sounds is

been projected to render the unique, unrepeatable, inimitable character of the atmosphere that dominated her Scottish house in Sunday afternoons, with its warmth and the sound of crackling tree branches in the fireplace. The ambiguous, unbridled, subversive, transsexual⁶¹ behavior made her an icon of *a*-narchic style of being that would be characterized below.

The true phenomenon in the perfumery kingdom consists simply in that Tilda seems to have identified herself completely with 'little *a*' – in this case, it is smell, individualized to the point⁶² of undescribability and ineffability – in order to express her desire of desire, desire of being the unique object of desire and love of the Other.

13. Necessity of the third sex?

The last issue that could be brought up in the context of these investigations, is the question of the 'third sex' – the problem to which Lacan repeatedly returns. It may be asked, what is the meaning of this concern? Some fragments of his writings point to the solution, according to which the third sex could be connected with the problem of narcissism, that is, narcissistic people often regard themselves as situated beyond and over the sexual difference, existing as a sort of higher beings, neither men nor women. And the successive increase of narcissistic disorders in XXth century seems to account for the fact of more and more frequent reflections and his repeated questioning: 'Why do we have to assume the existence of the third sex?' (e. g. in *Topology and time*). On the other hand, the issue has much to do with the theory of objects *a*. In *Encore* the author often makes use of the adjective '*a*-sexual'. The ambiguity of these remarks can be resumed in the following way: if they refer to sexuality as closely associated with the dynamic functioning of 'little objects', there's no reason in this context to understand them as connected with the empirical phenomenon of asexuality, since they are that which causes desire and which the phallic *jouissance* is directed at. However, that is not the only sense of these remarks: the author

the dried seeds of pumpkin, eaten while sitting by the fireplace. The result is that Tilda Swinton's fragrance isn't similar to anything else, breaks the fossilized frames of the perfumery art and shows just that 'it's possible'. The pumpkin brings warmth, crackling and very comfortable effect of a very old wooden house situated by a lake (Scottish: loch), and the passion of love without any future. The fragrant masterpiece that makes one's flesh creep...Of course, it isn't an easy, simple composition that could be for everyone but because of its specific structure and dynamics will reach certain people according to the rule 'the key- the lock' (again in agreement with the idea of isomorphism). This level of the perfumery spawn is equivalent to the liberated, unlimited, ambiguous piece of art. These remarks were written to give an ideal example of what it means to render the enigmatic, mysterious, absolutely unknown character of 'little objects' and try to render their character as intelligible as possible in words. Perhaps perfumery language does that better than our conventional linguistic means.

⁶¹ In clinical sexology 'transsexualism' refers to the isolated group of disorders, however the new, contemporary, social (especially prevalent in the LGBT circles) connotations have changed the sense of this word. It could mean also a new cultural phenomenon when a given person doesn't want to change his/her sex, he/she identifies him-/herself as a man or woman but has an inclination to mixing the styles of being, behaving, appearance, etc., of different sexes and doesn't regard that (as well as his/her environment doesn't) as pathological. This phenomenon is also named 'transgenderism', associated often with what is called 'queer identity'. Of course, that which was said about Tilda Swinton's style of being refers to the latter, non-heteronormative inter-cultural trend, more and more widespread in certain, liberal, and especially artistic and intellectualist circles.

⁶² But it must be remembered that it's a 'circle that is irreducible to a point' (I'm making this remark, of course, not in an orthodox Lacanian spirit – in the text it refers to the constant obsessive's circling, never leading to an act of yielding, however, the essential, general topological sense seems to be more or less preserved). As Lacan says about the obsessive's moving in circles: 'If the image of the hole impresses itself here and if I've long insisted on this reference, it's because the circle of the obsessional's desire is precisely one of those circles that can never be reduced to their topological place on the torus. It's because, from the oral to the anal, from the anal to the phallic, from the phallic to the scopical, and from the scopical to the vociferated, it never loops upon itself, except by going back via its point of departure' (Anxiety, p. 323).

seems to refer to the more primal, primary meaning of the term 'third sex', which would be that of 'sexlessness', being 'without sex' at all: we might say that in the unconscious we are all quasi-angels, devoid of any differentiation into males and females. 'Sexless' seems to be like an angelic entity, which when applied to humans would be something unthinkable on the ground of the logic of language, something alien⁶³, totally strange, as far as our common, ordinary knowledge and beliefs are concerned. In the XX volume of Lacan's seminar there appears even the neologism *être-ange*, designating such another, 'strangelic' kind of being, logically preceding the dichotomy of sexes. However, it can't be denied that in virtue of the force of logic, after the division into the masculine sex and the feminine one, there arose a breach, difficult to fill up, which gives the dynamics to the whole sexual functioning of an individual.

Perhaps this throws some light onto the (mentioned above) highly intensified production of the unisex perfumes, the more and more increasing supply and demand for them, almost in the measure comparable to a new breakthrough – the discovery of the scientific or artistic range. The perfumes that can be applied by women as well as men gain more and more quickly rising popularity, become the object of desire of connoisseurs (usually these are the very expensive niches). Besides, they are often used by the both partners in the pair, at the same time or alternately.⁶⁴ Incidentally, doesn't it refer to the way of being before the dichotomous division into the male and female sexes, this angelic state preceding the 'falling' into sexuality? The third sex, or rather its surrogate, can be a phenomenon exceeding the individual existence but it can also be a forerunner of a certain new evolution (or revolution?) in the sphere of experiencing one's own sexuality by the human being in the XXI century. Interestingly, there are new perfumes created for children⁶⁵, newborns⁶⁶, for animals⁶⁷, for flats/houses. What can be told about the behavior of a domestic dog, demanding the ritual sprinkling its favorite perfume on its fur before going for a walk, announcing the encounter with befriended pets from the neighboring staircase or block of flats, surmounted by the exchange of gazes, barking, sniffing at one another? Would it be

⁶³ And so after famous 'Angel' and 'Innocent' (curiously, used by both men and women) the time has come for the new line of perfumes to be composed, designated by just this name 'Alien' and its siblings created by Thierry Mugler, as if specifically designed to be perfectly suitable for those who identify themselves with such quasi-cosmic, strange beings.

⁶⁴ The example was a great wave of popularity gained by Calvin Clain's 'One' – the fragrance applied equally by both partners in relationships made at the time.

⁶⁵ And so, according to the theory of seduction by Laplanche and Pontalis, the process of seducing is initiated by parents or those who take care of a child, in order to, so to say, invite it to life, incite the instinct of survival in the newborn, who perhaps not always is willing to continue the not usually easy and painless existence. Frankly speaking they seduce it. But the process can be the two-directional: the young child seduces with his/her smile, gaze, first trials of vocalization, the helplessness and trustful, sometimes desperate clinging to the caring person. With the addition of perfumes the seduction of an adult by a newborn may be more intensified.

⁶⁶ For example, 'Baby Touch' by Burberry. Perfumes for children at the age of nursery school are nothing strange or unusual today but perfumes for newborns are quite a novelty nowadays. As the producer conceives of their fragrance, they should render the atmosphere of warmth and the unusual bond between mother and the newly born child (or even existing in the prenatal period). Their ingredients are delicate herbs and the note of milk.

⁶⁷ Like, e. g., 'Oh My Dog?' and 'Oh My Cat?' by Dragoco. These perfumes are common for animals and their owners, used by both. As those who love animals often share their favorite food or bed with their pets, now they will have the opportunity to share the good perfumes with them. There's an opinion that animals and their owners make themselves similar to each other, perhaps this thesis would find its additional confirmation?

possible to speak about something of the order of 'desiring desire' in the animal world, at least in a certain rudimentary sense?

The 'desire for desire' finds its grateful, ideally fitted cause in the human body's smells and their imitators in the world of fragrances, scents, aromas, etc. The more Western societies become schizophrenic⁶⁸, the more the 'desire of desire' gets urgent and imperious, gaining more and more force, and finding perhaps new 'little objects' to arouse it and search for its fulfillment. This explains the intensified production of the so-called 'killers' – perfumes that play their role by 'attacking, with impetus, crushing, absorbing and overwhelming all the other smells in the environment'⁶⁹. The ambiguity⁷⁰ (or perhaps it should be said 'a-mbiguity?') of many newly created perfumes is also more marked than in the beginnings of the perfumery artistry and industry. As announcing more explicitly than previously possibilities of the forbidden enjoyment – *jouissance* – these aromatic compositions can't be utterly tamed and subjugated to any classical form, escaping⁷¹ more traditional epithets and their oppositions: neither sweet, nor bitter; neither warm, nor cold; neither light nor weighty; neither weak nor strong; or both⁷² at the same time.

14. 'Fallen angels'

Nowadays, more often than a few years ago, such kind of perfumes are more and more frequently chosen as one's 'signature scent'⁷³ (although it's a vague, undetermined, undefined

⁶⁸ For example, in the sense of Deleuze's analyses (like in *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, etc.).

⁶⁹ The example is, mentioned above, 'Angel' EDP by Thierry Mugler: the 'angelic' presence manifests itself at first as omnipresent, overpowering, not tolerating any objections. As the incarnation of dazzling, blinding glare of divine bliss, it fills up with its être-ange all the environment, for example the whole room, which – as it often happens – quickly gets empty under the influence of the offensive onrush of the powdery, highly condensed sweetness, said by the declared adversaries to be reminding more some unsupportable sugary syrup, julep, than anything similar to perfumes. As time passes on, the fragrance softens, comes down, becomes more delicate, leaving behind only a lightly sweetish, sillageous voile, lasting even a few days and tempting one to run after that tail into the rabbit's burrow, not realizing oneself that it threatens falling deeply down, perhaps into a kind of the hidden Wonderland... Definitely, one has to do with the scent that one can either love or hate, with any 'middle' excluded altogether.

⁷⁰ For example, 'Innocent' (all too often mistakenly taken for the lighter, summery version of 'Angel', although it is a totally different fragrance) was commented on one of perfumery forums in the following way: 'Innocent' is so innocent as Kim Basinger in *Nine ½ Weeks*. The fragrance could be called by any name but 'Innocent'. By the way, recently certain versions of outrightly non-innocent perfumes appeared, like 'Gucci Guilty' by Gucci or what can be quite properly defined as – l'envers – the other side, the reverse, the perfume that seems a bit perversely and playfully, jokingly called 'Good Girl'. Designed not without a bit of subversive pleasure of being a 'bad girl', this scent was created by Carolina Herrera. What is very remarkable is the fact that this fragrance is stored in the 'killingly' distinctive flacon, perhaps too frenzy and dangerously approaching kitsch (a stiletto shoe with a golden, very high narrow spike hill). This and similar examples show that seductive stakes of perfumery business take into account more what we call *jouissance* rather than pure enjoyment in the human sexual life.

⁷¹ As it will be noticed below, the idea of evasion, of elusion, etc., is more and more often reflected in the names of the newly created perfumes, as well as the idea of preserving of underlying oppositions, like e. g. 'Escape' and 'Contradiction' by Calvin Klein.

⁷² 'It can be shown how the contradictory characteristics interweave by means of an example of the mentioned fragrance 'Innocent', where the element of the morning mist's chilliness is inseparably entwined with the temperature of fruits just warmed in the sun, which finds its reflection in the greyish (the mixture of blue and grey) shade of the color of its content, as well as in the form of the bottle, where the star (evoking the warm of fire) symbolizes the slightly smoky (suffocating for some) aroma, at the same time subdued with an aura of soft, muted freshness.

⁷³ As Lacan underlines the distinctive role that is played by the anal object, can't it be asked if 'signature scents' might possibly fulfill any function in 'the subject's necessity of constituting himself first and foremost in the signifier.' (*Anxiety*, p. 298) Perhaps this reflection goes too far, however it seems important to examine possible connections between the relevant phenomena if that could help to discover ways of helping these suffering subjects. The author also underlines the connection between breathing and anxiety disorders, giving even an example of panting by mother or father during the (treated, often retroactively, by a child as traumatic) 'primal scene', accounting for the close association between the 'respiratory function'

'signature') In Lacanian terms, it may signify the progressive hysterization of Western/North-American societies: as is known, the person (for example, a patient undergoing the process of analysis) passing to the hysterical discourse rejects all symbolical 'labels' with which others try to tag him/her, since he/she has just taken the place (one of the four positions, 'moving' at the specified direction as the successive discourses occur) of the object little *a*. Perhaps this can also have something to do with the mentioned 'third sex'⁷⁴, with the preservation of one's *a*-ngelic, *a*-narchic, *a*-nonymous nature? Then the idea of 'little objects' and *a*-sexuality would have more to do with what Lacan called 'Other *jouissance*' as non-phallic but oriented towards another person as absolutely Other, and with the desire of being oneself desired and perceived as uniquely Other.

15. Twilight of Phallus and the Other *jouissance*?

Contemporary psychoanalysis is deeply penetrated and inspired by some physical, astrophysical, mathematical or logical ideas, which were welcomed by Lacan and his analytic colleagues. It seems that the perfumery industry follows this track⁷⁵ and uses some of these ideas in its own language even if it's devoid of letters, non-literal but nonetheless has effects similar to those of linguistic systems. The composition of fragrances also reflects the change

and sexual intercourse (Anxiety, p. 299). This connection through substitution (metaphorization) can cause certain symptoms as being afraid of suffocation, fear of a possibility of stopping breathing, choking, impossibility of swallowing anything, etc. However, breath as manifesting the aroma of someone's body could be a good candidate for fulfilling the function of object *a*, especially as breath is also related to the oral function. There are very rarely perfumes making use of its 'a-objectal' properties., like, for example, 'Bel Respiro' by Chanel, Les Exclusifs de Chanel or (indirectly) 'Be Delicious Electric Citrus Pulse' by Donna Karan DKNY, 'Shalimar Soufflé de Parfum', etc.

⁷⁴ As the question of the 'third sex' arose quite recently in the Lacanian thought, it would be perhaps a good idea to consider the well-known EDP 'Mania' by Giorgio Armani. This scent, closed in a salmon-pink flacon is a much lighter version of the older, first 'Black Mania'. What does it have to do with Lacan's understanding of 'little *a*'? Mania (as usually interweaving with melancholia) is another example of the narcissistic problem opposite to the pair desire/mourning). Mania is defined as 'non-function of *a* and not simply its nonrecognition' (Anxiety p. 336). A maniacal person is not burdened by any disquietudes, dilemmas, even genuine vortices, having its source in the object *a*'s peculiar points. So they evidently seem to remind angelic beings, enjoying infinitude but, as the author rightly perceives, they lack freedom (it could be an interesting philosophical problem to throw some light on the question, not only of anxiety as associated with any sorts ontological proofs, but also on more practical philosophy, implicated more in ethics – although the different fields of investigation are not always clearly separated). Object *a*, the search for it, is the constant source of freedom, and in mania they are just not 'seen' in 'black-maniacal hole' that draws everything into it or in pink-salmon, this perfectly non-differentiated color, where many colorful shades are just melted and disappear. Perhaps the human condition of being truly free is love. As Freud said in his paper On Narcissism: 'in the last resort we must begin to love in order not to fall ill [...]'. The maniacal person is unable to recognize even oneself as *a* in the field of the Other, having no distinct, differentiated erogenous zones. The question appears: does the narcissist, often feeling omnipotent, like an eternal angelic being, feel anxiety (not fear)? Since anxiety is never 'without object', what is the experience of this affect in case of narcissism? Does it have anything to do with the frequently unconscious inability to love? And shame – isn't this experience somehow related to anxiety? The *ἄγαλμα* in the other must be recognized as the trace leading to love. And as the author says: 'Anxiety is only ever surmounted when the Other has been named, as everyone knows from experience. The moment the name of he or she to whom we address our love is uttered, we know very well that this is a threshold of the utmost importance.' (Anxiety, 336–337). Incidentally, it would be interesting to know, if perfumes can play the role of making one conscious of one's deficiencies, shortcomings or excesses of one's subjectivity, of what is lacking? Or perhaps, it would be at least intriguing whether specific fragrances can supply for these lacks until other solutions are impossible, like, for example, (I'm saying it half-jokingly) suggesting a depressive person to use Armani's 'Mania' in order to help her function better and feel more comfortable. This is of course a part of the question whether the 'perfect' cure, the reliable way of healing (be it psychoanalysis or anything else...) is possible and viable, or if we are limited to content ourselves with substitutes and 'palliatives'? If perfumes, fragrances, scents (and if one's particular smell can be regarded as one of objects *a*) are so broadly used, enjoyed, and composed with sometimes nearly the utmost artistry and engagement, this is the issue at least worthy of serious attention.

⁷⁵ Some of the examples of this interpenetration of different domains are perfumes named after certain concepts that appear in these domains of knowledge, like the famous, experimental 'Entropia', created by a few students of Warsaw University of Technology, or less known 'Chaos' by Donna Karan or 'Antimatière' by Les Nez.

in the way of looking at the matter⁷⁶ as such, regarding it as having its own latent kind of living, having its own memory, etc. And also the angelic (or *a*-ngelic) entities aren't totally immaterial beings⁷⁷. Perhaps there is a sort of *a*-material way of subsisting, imperceptible if one only concentrates on what is traditionally understood as hard, tangible, the attributes of which are palpable or measurable. The perfumery art would be going in the opposite direction, rendering justice to 'the fallen' by the return from the signified to the signifying side of reality.

Another remarkable experiment undermining the traditional way of producing fragrances was the idea of Christopher Brochius, who renounced creating perfumes containing any alcohol, as contradictory to scents that are met in nature. This sort of 'return to innocence' was crowned by founding the brand-mark provocatively named: *I hate perfume*, which launched an unconventional composition 'Burning Leaves' (inspired by the memory of the ritualistic burning, every autumn, together with his father, old maple leaves, building heaps of them and, with other children from the neighborhood, playfully throwing these leaves at one another. This is ideal proof that even a very unusual smell (even that is perceived by some people as an unpleasant one) may take over the role played by a chosen object *a* in an everlasting, unforgettable way. As the true cause of desire, the scent of burning maple leaves can initiate the vague, nostalgic longing in the adult sensing just this smell.

'Little objects' experienced in their purity, without anxiety, have another, amazing, nearly miraculous⁷⁸ feature – they are like the healing, almost life-giving elixirs, restoring youth, health, strength, hope, as if some mysterious spell were thrown on the one who happens to undergo their influence. This is the effect of the usually unrecognized cause that propels desire, gives it its momentum and direction, orienting the subject to perceive totally anew that particular person (even if one can't tell what is so specifically wonderful about him/her) and to become – literally – subjected to the captivating image. Infatuation as the best cure for many, especially nervous illnesses, was recognized as such for centuries and nearly everyone knows the energizing, rejuvenating effect of enamoration, or at least as bringing relief, consolation or comfort (of course, it doesn't always bring such optimistic results, when the love is not reciprocal – but even in such circumstances it exerts reviving effects on the 'captured' and makes him/her feel alive, feel they're living for real. It's still very much in the depersonalized existence of many of our contemporaries.

⁷⁶ The example are these fragrances that try to render the 'spirit' of matter or different, organic as well as non-organic, material objects, focus on their essence, as if to make them play the role of 'subjects' rather than pure 'objects': 'La Nuit de Cellophane' by Serge Lutens, 'Folie de Figue' by Esteban, or 'Larmes du Désert'; by Atelier d'Ors'. Some compositions focus on rendering the scent of various basic materials, used by people on everyday basis: 'Terracota' by Guerlain or 'Petroleum' by Histoires de Parfums (the scent of crude oil), or even something like 'A New Perfume' by Comme des Garçons (the smell of adhesive tape). What is the base, what is, underestimated and unnoticed, so to say, 'fallen' arises and becomes clear and brightens up for a moment with the light of a signifier before falling into its ordinary state.

⁷⁷ The noteworthy fragrance we could reflect on in this context is 'Cuir d'Ange', composed by Hermèsence. The angel is not at all a purely immaterial, spiritual being, but has a body with all the complex ramifications of this fact. The skin (cuir) – seeming completely superficial, pure surface, is in fact – as Deleuze strongly underlies – that which is the deepest with all of its erogenous zones, and as organized around the 'peculiar points' ('little objects'), is the most sexual 'organ' of our body (Deleuze, *Logique du sens*). The deepest lies not in the signified but in the signifying.

⁷⁸ The famous EDP 'Miracle' by Lancôme illustrates this idea not only by its name but also its content: believe it or not, it can somehow help to achieve the same state of mind you experience in face of some miraculous happening.

And so the next characteristic trend in the perfumery industry is producing unconventional scents, the ideas of which can be said to have roots in all sorts of medicaments. Of course, ingredients of different medical substances have been used in the perfumery art for a long time now, like for example labdanum, castor, styrax, camphor, opopanax, jojoba, valerian, heliotrope, mandrake (mandragora), archangel, lavender, patchouli, cinnamon and various ethereal oils or extracts from different plants⁷⁹ traditionally used in healing all sorts of illnesses and ailments. The true phenomenon in the perfumery art was creating the scent that would remind the aroma of the tiger's ointment, 'Esprit du Tigre' by James Helley who, while studying philosophy and esthetics in University of London, had taken deepened interest in the unusual, highly aromatic fragrance of the healing⁸⁰ balm⁸¹ and started composing the perfumes in Paris as an independent perfumer.

16. Desire for infinity

The important part of the Lacanian conception of sexuality is the abundant quantity of reflection on death⁸² and mortality, as well as infinity/eternity⁸³. The moment a living being acquires the ability of sexual reproduction, it loses its immortality. In the process of the meiotic division, a certain part is irretrievably separated from the cell and lost forever. This infinitesimal reminder is the only rudimentary piece of organic matter that preserves something of eternal (*a-ngelic?*) existence. The fallen 'matter', progressively being shaped and developing into the form that can mature and become an adult organism, in a sense 'remembers' that lost, now impossible mode of being an entity that is not threatened by death and decay. The nostalgia of 'fallen angels' gives an impetus to look for the return to the infinite, godlike existence. The earthly way is to reproduce oneself – to transfer one's genetic material to the descendants through a sexual act with a chosen (or not quite chosen) partner. Exchanging one's infinitely personal, conscious existence for impersonal eternity is the price paid for the possibility of enjoying (in the phallic way) the body of the Other, desiring it as caused by this or that 'little object'. But it doesn't sound fully satisfactory, rather: it's a rather melancholic, surrogate way of prolonging one's being: what's the point of further existence

⁷⁹ , The controversial (because of the present debates regarding healing vs addictive properties of that plant) project was the perspective of creating the perfumes having the smell of marijuana. Luckily, the producers succeeded in realizing the enterprise, calling the new product 'Kush', without adding any ingredients of 'grass'.

⁸⁰ Of course, what cures can be poisonous as well, it depends on the quantity and structure of the composition of ingredients. As they say (with a certain right): everything can be cure and everything can be poison, or at least intoxicating or inducing a sort of trans-like experience. This ambiguity, so similar to that of the 'little objects', is present in the kingdom of perfumes, too. To reference a few examples: Christian Dior's families of 'Poison', 'Hypnotic Poison' and 'Addict'; Jean Louis David's series of 'Opium', 'Samsara' by Guerlain, etc.

⁸¹ The balm has nothing to do with tiger, only the head of this animal is featured on the cover of the box, as the symbol (in the Asiatic culture) of strength and life energy. The ointment gained in popularity in Poland during a long period of time, as the cure for nearly everything, and known under the name of 'Kitten' (in Polish 'Kotek'), appreciated for its pain-relieving attributes (used in migraines, rheumatism, etc), warming and the same time pleasantly chilling and relaxing.

⁸² The relevant example would be the death-smelling perfumes, e. g., 'Funeral Home' by Demeter and 'churchly' scent of incense, or 'L'Orpheline', designed by Serge Lutens.

⁸³ Which is reflected in multitude of perfumes named perhaps under the influence of this longing: like the famous 'Eternity' by Calvin Klein, 'Infinite' by Bentley, 'Rêve d'Infini' by Lalique, etc.

if we don't know anything about just this fact – that our being continues, although in an impersonal way. There's, however, a more ascending way of tasting something of the true, absolute infinity: it's through the Other *jouissance* that can elevate one up to the heavenly spheres when the condition of being mortal loses its threatening meaning altogether. Of course, it's extremely difficult, even perhaps impossible to put it in words, one has just to experience it but surely will not be able to describe that. It can just be said that it has something to do with the above-mentioned quasi-angelic, *a*-sexual subsistence. Taking the risk of simplification, it could be said that the phallic *jouissance* has more to do with 'having' and it's never enough, it's always lacking, insufficient. On the other hand, the Other *jouissance* has much in common with being, and being, if only for a short while, is a glimmer, a spark of infinity that flashes for a moment but it's a moment of eternity⁸⁴.

And what is left to be said on the considered topic (already marked in passing in the above part of the text), is to underline, forcefully emphasize the more and more uniquely singularizing character of the newly created perfumes. They often assume the names of celebrities but not only of them, rather: all people who have become famous for some artistic, scientific, sportive, in general: cultural achievements, or the ones concerning the progress of our civilization. In the spirit of their heritage or as the homage paid to their talents, hard work, and (often) sacrifices, a new line of perfumes has come into being, under the name *My DNA Fragrance*. These are the individualized perfumes, based on the fragrance of the deceased stars. Thanks to the genotype, which can be preserved for years, for example in hair, the enterprising has become possible. And so transferring to the mentioned company one's own genetic material enables one to project inimitable, one-off fragrance, adjusted to one's own needs and desires. Contrary to the concerns and fears of some clients, tperfumes based on DNA smell good and don't have any pheromones as ingredients. Thanks to the possibility of using the genetic codes of certain stars and other for any reason famous people it has become realizable to create the unique perfumes memorizing such personalities as Michael Jackson, Marilyn Monroe, Elvis Presley, John and Jackie Kennedy, Albert Einstein and even Napoleon Bonaparte. Another, similarly breathtaking discovery and possible breakthrough in the world of perfumery engineering would be the group of perfumes destined to be swallowed and to change the smell of one's sweat. These are eatable pills that by reacting with one's metabolism, would excrete molecules, getting out on the surface of the body together with sweat. According to the author of the idea, Lucy McCree, this should help to eliminate the unpleasant smell of one's sweat. After using 'Swallable', everyone – thanks to the individual properties of one's organism – would smell differently, although better than before their application, as the creators assure potential consumers (the perfumes haven't been yet introduced into the market).

⁸⁴ 'Eternity Moment' and 'Eternity Now' designed by Calvin Klein are perfect examples, as they attempt at perpetuating just the ephemeral moment of this experience of infinity in the encounter and exchange of gazes, etc., between two subjects, suddenly 'captivated'. The shortest while may seem immortalized, however the history of the relationship will proceed, whatever its fate, lucky or not, both of them will memorize the touch of that caressing breeze of eternity.

What to think about all of this? The mixed feelings are nothing surprising or exceptional. The 'little objects' belong more to the Real, to what escapes any symbolization) not suitable to undergo any technological enterprises. The sweat of a loved one can be as exciting as the most precious perfume... However, the border-lines of human body are still shifted, moved further and further. The gaze can be underlined by using mascara, kajal or eyeliner, eyeshadows, eyebrow pencil, etc. All of this emphasizes the distinctness and expressiveness of one's gaze, and make it seem more enigmatic, nostalgic, melancholic, or just inscrutable... If the smell could be regarded as one of objects *a*, why shouldn't it be corrected, made better, more fascinating, and at the same time associated closely with this particular person of our adoration? The formation or constitution of 'little objects' (if they are really constituted, transformed, etc., engages 'the subject's most opaque dynamism, right where what he feels as need is modified into the forms of desire, forms, that are always more or less paradoxical with regard to their presumed naturalness' (*Anxiety*, p. 297).

17. Objects *a* as 'eccentring molecules' of the human psyche.

In this essay I wanted to show, by means of the world of perfumes, how the decentered objects little *a*, in spite of their 'eccentricity', play the central role in the process during which human psychic life is dynamically structured in such a way that desire is exited in order to and organize human relationships that make us true, mature subjects.

Perfumes, the multiform itineraries, and wanderings of scents and fragrances are similar to those of musical language. However, even if this essay was an attempt at rendering the (post)structural dynamics of the functioning of these human artifices, sadly, I'm a bit of disappointed and feel a dissatisfaction with myself as I'm not convinced it was a successful enterprise. Here I was going to render – by exposing the composition and interplay of ingredients of any pair of the sequence of *Eccentric Molecules* – the topological nuances that I thought would be a kind of a non-imaginary, structural, symbolic approach to the workings of energetic streams of drives circling around certain strange 'particles', de-centered in their eccentricity. But the border-line between the imaginary and non-imaginary seems to be sometimes vague and obscure in itself, and perhaps this is the case here. At least I hope that my exposition hasn't made matters more intricate, unclear, and incomprehensible. If it has, I forcefully apologize. The problem perhaps resides in the fact of the impossibility of 'catching' any of objects little *a* in the net of linguistic or quasi-linguistic systems. These systems are also sort of 'incomplete'⁸⁵, although 'little objects' must be regarded as the most fundamental condition of their possibility.

Now I realize that if I were to continue these investigations, it would take much more place that is supposed to accommodate an essay, as this topic is one of my vivid interests

⁸⁵ Does it have anything to do with Hilbert's program and its undermining by Gödel's theorem? I think so (although the justification I could give would make these elucubrations much longer...) since what Lacan regarded as object *a* and anxiety as such was meant to be a source of all possible proof, of all possible certainty, surety, reliability and... consistency and completeness of anything at all.

and I would be happy to have an opportunity to continue this discussion in infinity. So it's perhaps time to punctuate my loose remarks with a period and ask the reader to forgive me for the numerous repetitions and not always clear attempts at explicating some ambiguities of Lacan's teachings on sexuality as based on the idea of objects *a*. I also couldn't describe all the aromatic compositions, dispersed in the whole text, because it would take too much time and would perhaps demand an enormous amount of patience on the side of the reader (however, any of the fragrances described here are worthy of such a more detailed exposition, as any of them has its 'soul', so to say, and is worthy of experimentation in the immediate contact with a particular person's skin). And if the 'perfumery' parts of this essay were boring, I'm begging for forgiveness all the more keenly.

Gabrielle Chanel's relationship with Arthur Capel wasn't as ideal as she wanted to remember it (neither were her relationships with other men). However, she strongly desired to eternalize the most beautiful memories of their mutual love in the form of enchanting them in the dreamed-of fragrance and sharing it with the world. She loved and worked hardly although it was not the easiest way and it took years before she could finish this last, so crucial for her, project she had planned to accomplish with her lover and friend.

18. 'Extimate' object on the way to love–encounter with the Other?

In *Encore* Lacan calls little *a* by name of a soul one has to take as one's own. If one overcomes one's anxiety (perhaps it's not a good word) – if one yields to one's own particular *a* and accepts it as a cause of one's desire, one can become able to love and let life fall and rise, and fall and rise again, etc. One can always choose: between being 'une enfant du monde' or 'l'orpheline'. *Ainsi bas la vida!*

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HANNA LUBOWICZ: Master's degree, graduated in philosophy and psychology from the University of Warsaw. She also studied at the School of Social Sciences at the Polish Academy of Sciences. Research interests: broadly understood philosophy of culture, including psychoanalysis, contemporary philosophy of language, issues at the intersection of literature and philosophy, relations between contemporary philosophy and psychology and psychiatry.