

Perversion as act, gaze and structure

Derek Hook

Duquesne University and the University of Pretoria

Abstract

Taking its impetus from a piece of clinically derived creative non-fiction, this paper offers a tentative sketch of the basic features of perversion as understood through the lens of Lacanian psychoanalysis. While this piece of creative non-fiction cannot, by its very nature, be utilised in any direct manner as a clinical tool – its imaginative dimension mitigates against such a use – it can be used in a cursory manner as an illustrative device that helps introduce a series of Lacanian concepts. The fragment of the author’s creative non-fiction helps illuminate Lacan’s idea that the perverse subject makes themselves the object of the Other’s *jouissance*. A series of corollary ideas flow from this puzzling diagnostic maxim. These include the ideas that there is always a perverse *couple* (as opposed to an isolated perverse individual) and that perversion invariably entails the performance of a demonstrative act staged for an Other of sorts (whether this Other be understood as standing in for the public or as embodying the institution of the law). Additional ideas discussed include the scopic drive and the phallic gaze as a vehicle of exhibitionism.