

Periscope Down! Charting Masculine Sexuation in Submarine Films

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Introduction

The question of the Other's desire is central to submarine films. Whether in the confrontation between two captains in *U-571*, a submarine and a destroyer in *The Enemy Below*, or a captain and a CIA analyst in *The Hunt for Red October*, an uncanny number of submarine films stage the same scenario: a dyad of male protagonists attempting to locate the desire of the Other through the opaque signifiers of sonar pings, radio silence, screw propellers, depth charges, and strategic maneuvers. Aided by their well-disciplined all-male crews, submarine captains sound the depths behind these submerged signifiers, searching for their signifieds: "He changes course, has he detected me?" or "The sonar comes up with nothing, is he hiding on the seabed?" The opacity of signifiers in submarine films mirrors that of language itself, effectively dramatizing Jacques Lacan's emphasis on the alienated condition of living in signification. Thus the heroes of submarine films are above all hermeneuts. How else are we to understand Alec Baldwin in *Red October*, who somehow divines in the signifier of radio silence (literally, the signifier of nothing or the real) his adversary's desire to betray his country?

Submarine films, then, give flesh to a fantasy, to the impossible desire we all harbor to understand the indeterminate desire of the Other through the murky waters of language. Submarine films begin with the question of the Other's desire insofar as they dramatize another fundamental symptom: the fraught masculine relationship to jouissance or what Lacan calls masculine sexuation. Specifically, submarine films illustrate the logic of masculine sexuation by depicting spaces held together by the bonds of phallic jouissance and sustained by the belief in a boundless jouissance that is not submitted to the phallic function. Moreover, these spaces themselves are significant, for it is the claustrophobic intimacy of the submarine and concentration of bodies within it that allows us to see both how masculine sexuation operates as well how the Lacanian account of sex cannot be reduced to language. This is the main concern of our essay, which is structured as follows. We begin by explicating Lacan's notion of sexuation and its revision of the Freudian account of sex difference. Here, we focus on how sexuation challenges historicist accounts of sexual difference and how geographers have yet to engage with this challenge. We then turn to submarine films to show how the cinematic space of the submarine sexuates crewmembers as masculine in two ways: via the

universal shortcomings of phallic jouissance and an exceptional and boundless non-phallic jouissance. We briefly conclude by suggesting how sexualization can further psychoanalytic geographies.

From Castration to the Enjoying Substance

Lacan is renowned for “de-biologizing” Sigmund Freud’s allegedly reductive theorizations about sexuality by emphasizing the role of language in the constitution of human subjectivity. In his later theorization of sexuality, however, Lacan goes beyond this well-known engagement with Saussurian linguistics and structural anthropology. The twentieth public seminar *Encore*, which took place at the Law Faculty on the Place du Panthéon in Paris between 1972 and 1973, is regarded as “the cornerstone of Lacan’s work on the themes of sexual difference, knowledge, *jouissance*, and love” (Barnard 2002a: 1). Lacan introduces his “formulas of sexualization” to theorize sexuality as a matter of psychical position, which he distinguishes from both biology and culture. Specifically, sexualization formalizes “masculine” and “feminine” structures through predicate logic that eschews dominant classical, that is, post-Aristotelian logics of totalizability, harmony, and the grammar of language.

Lacan’s formulas of sexualization are not only a fundamental concept in Lacanian psychoanalysis, they have also been central to numerous studies in the humanities and the arts and sciences that have explored, for example, capitalism and communism (Özselçuk and Madra 2005), virtual reality (Matviyenko 2009), and feminist media theory (Friedlander 2008). In geography, however, discussions of sexualization—Lacan’s canonical statement on sexual difference—are virtually absent. When geographers address Lacan’s understandings of sexuality, they typically focus on his pre-1960s writings that privilege visual identification with the (m)Other’s desire and symbolic identification with the Father. As a result, geographers have yet to reckon with the extent to which *Encore* significantly revises Lacan’s previous statements on sexuality.

From a Lacanian perspective, “sex is produced by the internal limit, the failure of signification” (Copjec 1994: 204) and therefore “only the failure of its inscription is marked in the symbolic. Sexual difference, in other words, is a real and not a symbolic difference” (Copjec 1994: 207). By claiming that sexual difference is rooted in the real, Lacan does not consider sexual difference as a prediscursive entity, but rather as a stumbling block for discursive practices. The formulas of sexualization define two ways in which language falters, corresponding to two different modes of “jouissance”, which is Lacan’s term for an extreme extra-discursive libidinal enjoyment that is aggressive and painful yet alluring insofar as it is something people feel compelled to pursue (Kingsbury 2008). On the one hand, there is masculine “phallic jouissance”, which refers to ways of enjoying like a man (regardless of sex or gender) that abound in neurotic failure and disappointment. On the other hand, there is feminine “Other jouissance”, which refers to enjoying like a woman (again, regardless of sex or gender). This

Other jouissance, while equally fallible, is nonetheless capable of encountering the ineffable poetics of love or what Lacan called “*lalangue*” (Barnard 2002b: 183-4; Lacan 1998).

Much of Lacan’s writing on sexuality revises Freud’s concepts of the castration complex, the Oedipus complex, and the phallus. Briefly, according to Freud, humans only become sexed subjects once they are consciously aware of sexual difference. This realization is accompanied by the emergence of the castration complex wherein a boy unconsciously fears that his penis will be cut off by his father and a girl unconsciously believes that her mother has already castrated her. Furthermore, Freud argues that the girl will unconsciously want a penis (penis envy) and upon realizing that her penis-less mother cannot give her one, may turn to her father to provide a baby as a symbolic substitute for an absent penis. Crucially, such assumptions exemplify how in psychoanalysis, human sexuality is borne out of an infant’s flawed sexual knowledge (Freud 1905: 194-197).

In Freud’s account of the Oedipus complex, which begins around the age of three and ends around the age of five, boys and girls continue their different journeys through unconscious dramas of familial hostility and desire. The so-called “positive” form of the Oedipus complex consists of the following: for the male child, the sex upon which the Oedipus complex is modeled, the Oedipus complex is the culmination of the traumatic castration complex because in fearing the punishment of castration from his father, the boy stops coveting the mother and enters the latency period. For the female child, the castration complex inaugurates the Oedipus complex wherein her anger, directed toward a penis-less mother whom she blames for her own lack of a penis, results in the redirection of desires to her father (Freud 1927: 256). Freud’s notions of the castration and Oedipus complexes, then, assert that children assign a great deal of value to the penis.

While Freud sometimes uses the term “phallic” and (less commonly) the “phallus” in ways that are synonymous to the penis, Lacan makes a sharp distinction between the penis and the phallus. For Lacan, psychoanalysis is not primarily concerned with the penis as a biological sexual organ, but rather its status as an imaginary and symbolic object in fantasy space. During the pre-Oedipal phase, Lacan situates the phallus as an imaginary object of desire that circulates between the mother and the child. The father plays the role of castrating agent for both male and female infants by making it impossible for them identify with the imaginary phallus, that is, by forcing them to accept the impossibility of being a phallus for the mother. Girls *and* boys, then, assume castration by accepting that they cannot be the “unsymbolized, nonfungible, undisplaceable object” (Fink 1997: 175) of the mother’s desire. Thenceforth, both sexes begin their different journeys of identifying with the symbolic phallus that inaugurates questions about sexual difference.

Lacan’s writings on the phallus have generated a vast literature, especially in feminism and poststructuralism. Informed by these paradigms, geographers’ evaluations of Lacan’s writings on the phallus are typically negative. Exemplary are Virginia Blum and Heidi Nast (2000: 183),

who, alleging the “*spatial* limitations of his theory... [and] the unstated but nevertheless implacable limitations placed upon subjectivity”, argue that Lacan’s

anti-biologism, his implicit condemnation of the prevailing insistence upon a corporeal innateness and inevitability of masculinity and femininity, leads him to the extreme: He locates subjectivity entirely in language – of which the body becomes merely an effect. Lacan’s assertion that the symbolic order precedes the human subject, means, then, that subjectivity comes at the price of shedding the body altogether (Blum and Nast 2000: 197).

Asserting that Lacan locates the subject entirely in language, however, only tells half of the story. For Lacan, “there are actually two subjects ...the subject of the signifier and the subject of jouissance” (Fink 2002: 22). Geographers have traditionally focused on the former subject, which Lacan theorizes via the science of linguistics, at the expense of the latter subject that is aligned with the embodiments of jouissance and the drives. In *Encore*, which importantly is a homonymic pun on *en-corps* or “in-body”, Lacan (1998: 15) coins the neologism “linguistricks” (*linguisterie*) in order to bring to the fore effects of language on the embodied “subject of the enunciation”, as opposed to the linguistic “subject of the statement” that is the object of Nast and Blum’s critique. For example, when *Crimson Tide*’s Captain Ramsey exclaims, “As commanding officer of the USS Alabama, I order you to place the XO [Executive Officer] under arrest under charges of mutiny!” the subject of the statement is the “I” in the sentence whereas the subject of the enunciation is he who is “breathing and [performing] all of the movements of the jaw, tongue, and so on required for the production of speech” (Fink 2002: 24). The distinction between these two subjects is consequential. Lacan (1998: 23) refers to the subject of the enunciation as the “enjoying body” (*jouir d’un corps*), wherein the body is an “enjoying substance” (*la substance jouissante*) that “enjoys itself only by ‘corporizing’ (*corporiser*) the body in a signifying way”. Put simply, sexuation is Lacan’s way of defining how a body enjoys in a signifying way.

The Formulas of Sexuation

Sexuation is an attempt to overcome the limitations of post-Aristotelian systems of knowledge that rely on the grammar of language. For Lacan, “language remained insufficient and an obstacle to explaining the questions that Aristotle raised” (Ragland 2004: 8), not simply because language is unstable, dynamic, and differential (the standard historicist critique) but because of the conflicts and deadlocks inherent to language itself—the fact that language can never entirely signify what we want it to. From a Lacanian perspective, then, because sex takes place where discursive practices fail, “sex is ... not an *incomplete* entity but a totally empty one—it is one to which no predicate can be attached” (Copjec 1994: 207).

In order to show how sex is the result of the inherent deadlock within language, Lacan jettisons the classical logic of class and attribute and turns to the logics of propositional

function. In addition, Lacan revises the framework he developed in “The Signification of the Phallus” which sexed—via classical logic—the psychoanalytic subject as “being” (female) or “having” (male) the phallus (Lacan 1958: 575-584). Such a revision

marks a conceptual difference: the two classes, male and female, are no longer formed by gathering together subjects with similar attributes as was the case with the older terms. The principle of sorting is no longer descriptive, that is, it is not a matter of shared characteristics or a common substance. Whether one falls into the class of males or females depends, rather, on where one places oneself as argument in relation to the function, that is, which enunciative position one assumes (Copjec 1994: 215).

The above “function” is the “phallic function” that designates the impasses of language. Refusing the idea that sex can be adequately understood as a biological and/or cultural phenomenon, Lacan (1998: 10) desubstantializes sex entirely by asserting that our sexed being “results from a logical exigency in speech ... the fact that language exists and that it is outside the bodies that are moved by it”. These exigencies are explained by two fundamental Lacanian concepts: castration and the real. Very briefly, castration refers to how the human subject’s entry into a social world of language involves surrendering their access to jouissance. The latter concept, the real, refers to how language is inherently conflicted because it cannot accurately reflect or neutrally communicate our thoughts, intentions, or being. As Lacan (1990: 3) puts it: “saying it all is literally impossible: words fail”. From a Lacanian perspective, when

we speak of language’s failure with respect with sex, we speak not of its falling short of a prediscursive object but of its falling into contradiction with itself. Sex coincides with this *failure*, this inevitable contradiction. Sex is, then, the impossibility of completing meaning, not (as [Judith] Butler’s historicist/deconstructionist argument would have it) a meaning that is incomplete, unstable. Or, the point is that sex is the structural incompleteness of language, not that sex is itself incomplete (Copjec 1994: 206)

Lacan’s infamous claim that “there is no sexual relation” refers to how sex, in opposing sense, communication, and relation, can misfire in two ways: a masculine way and a feminine way. In the seventh meeting of *Encore*, “A Love Letter”, Lacan (1998: 78) draws on predicate logic schematize these as formulas of sexualization:

	—		—		—
$\exists x$	Φx		$\exists x$	Φx	
			—		
$\forall x$	Φx		$\forall x$	Φx	

The left side of the schema is masculine and the right side is feminine. The formulas consist of the following terms: Φ is the symbol for the phallic function; x is a variable usually designated as jouissance; and \forall and \exists are quantifiers wherein the \forall refers to universal quantifiers such as “every, all, and none” and \exists refers to existential quantifiers such as “some, one, at least, certain, most” (Copjec 1994: 214). The quality of each proposition “is determined by the quality of its copula, either affirmative or negative” (Copjec 1994: 214): negative with a bar above the predicative term and positive without the bar. The formulas, then, can be read as follows:

Masculine

$$\overline{\exists x} \quad \Phi x$$

*There is at least one x that is
not submitted to the phallic function*

$$\forall x \quad \Phi x$$

Every x is submitted to the phallic function

Feminine

$$\overline{\exists x} \quad \overline{\Phi x}$$

*There is not one x that is not submitted
to the phallic function*

$$\forall x \quad \Phi x$$

Not all x is submitted to the phallic function

The two formulas that comprise the masculine side appear contradictory: on one hand every x is submitted to the phallic function while at the same time, one x is not. Bruce Fink translates the male formulas as follows: “All of man’s jouissance is phallic jouissance. Every single one of his satisfactions may come up short... Nevertheless, there is a belief in a jouissance that could never come up short, the belief in another jouissance” (2002: 38). This translation is where our reading of submarine films begins: with the idea that masculinity itself is a fantasy, a neurotic relationship to an inaccessible jouissance, and this is nowhere more in evidence than aboard a submarine.

Submarines and Genre

When one watches films set on submarines, it quickly becomes apparent that they share a set of genre conventions in the same way as the Western or horror film. Just as the Western would be incomplete without the “showdown” and the horror film incomplete without the protagonists “splitting up” in order to find the killer, the submarine film is almost unthinkable without the sub diving below “hull crush depth” or submariners listening anxiously to the sound of depth charges detonating overhead. Following the tenets of genre theory (Grant 2003), we elaborate a series of recurring conventions in submarine films that stage masculine sexualization, including the obsession with the military chain of command as a fetishization of the

symbolic order, the tyrannical figure of the submarine captain, and the Oedipal structure of the relationship between the captain, executive officer (“XO”) and crew. Our argument is that these seemingly hackneyed clichés perform an ideological function within the genre and illuminate key elements of Lacan’s theory of masculine sexualization.

Interestingly, the most significant conventions in the genre have their roots in the naval dramas of the 19th century, predating submarines entirely. While sailing ships do not spatialize the containment within the phallic symbolic order quite as potently as submarines, it is essential to note that we nevertheless find antecedents of the submarine genre within these earlier masculine microcosms. Herman Melville’s posthumously published novella *Billy Budd* is arguably the most important text in this lineage, setting down the central themes of law, military order, and the ever-present threat of mutiny (Melville 1924). *Billy Budd* tells the story of a young seaman impressed into service aboard a British warship during the French Revolutionary Wars. The charismatic Budd arouses the antipathies of a superior officer, Claggart, whose jealousy leads him to accuse the young seaman of conspiring to mutiny. In the confrontation that follows, Budd accidentally kills Claggart, which leads to the central drama of the novella, wherein the sympathetic Captain Vere must decide the fate of Billy Budd, of whom he is both fond and inclined to believe over Claggart. At the same time, Vere sees himself responsible to the law above all, which is unequivocal on the matter: any seaman who kills an officer during wartime must hang. Set against a backdrop of mutinies in the Royal Navy, Vere eventually chooses the law over the just and orders Budd’s execution. Incredibly, Budd walks to the gallows without complaint, and even endorses the captain’s fidelity to the law when he declares: “God bless Captain Vere” as the noose is put around his neck.

At the heart of Melville’s novella lie fundamental questions about the law, authority, and the threat posed by mutiny. We understand these questions as castration anxieties (in the Lacanian sense) concerning the phallic function that grounds the symbolic order. These anxieties persist as the most enduring themes in contemporary submarine films: from *Billy Budd* to *Crimson Tide*, we find a genre that is intimately, perhaps even obsessively, concerned with phallic authority and the role it plays in regulating the masculine symbolic order.

∀x Φx: All of man’s jouissance is phallic jouissance. Every single one of his satisfactions may come up short.

The symbolic order emerges most powerfully in submarine films’ all-consuming fascination with the military chain of command: the rules governing rank, authority, and the division of labor. In some films, this fascination crosses over completely into fetishism, lavishing attention on the minutiae of military order and protocol, luxuriating in each performance of the chain of command. Tony Scott’s *Crimson Tide* is both exemplary and typical in this respect, devoting considerable screen time to Gene Hackman’s Captain Ramsey drilling his crew in the byzantine bureaucracy required to launch a nuclear strike. From the

communication officer's reception of the order and the senior officer's concurrence that the order is properly formatted, to the XO's order to unlock the safe and compare the authentication codes, each elaborately stylized link in this chain is scrutinized with the attention of a lover to his beloved. Arguably the greatest pleasures offered by submarine films are these scenes where we observe the crew executing the complex, ritualized actions of their duties. Indeed, the genre is defined in many ways by scenes that depicting the submarine and its crew as an Oedipalized body-of-organs: the sonar man intercepts a new contact and relays its coordinates to the "con", the captain calls out the depth to the Chief of the Boat, who in turn orders the planesman to dive, and each order in turn is echoed by the crew in a syncopated call and response that gives submarine films their distinctive rhythm and cadence.

Such scenes call to mind Lacan's (1966: 700) argument that the *jouissance* one loses when one submits to the phallic function does not disappear but is transferred to the Other. What the men pursue in the compulsive repetition of missile launch drills is a thoroughly libidinated enjoyment of bureaucracy: a symbolic order where the "mere pittance of pleasure" (Fink 1997: 100) that remains for the castrated subject is only accessible through language and obedience to rules. *Crimson Tide*'s fetishistic treatment of these arcane military structures allows us to see this psychical structure at work, for what should theoretically be the most mindless, stultifying bureaucracy is depicted in quasi-pornographic detail: every command, every order, every instance of the law is treated as a love object.

We can read this devotion to the chain of command as an expression of submarine films' staging of masculine sexualization. The fantasy of military order and the chain of command is a materialization of the obsessional neurotic desire for the smooth functioning of the symbolic, for the perfect operation of the pleasure principle. To live completely within the chain of command is in essence to foreclose the question of desire by reducing it to demand, which is a key element of how Lacan defines neurosis (Fink 1997: 63): the space of ambiguity, or more accurately, lack that makes desire possible is effaced by the chain of command's commitment to order and control.

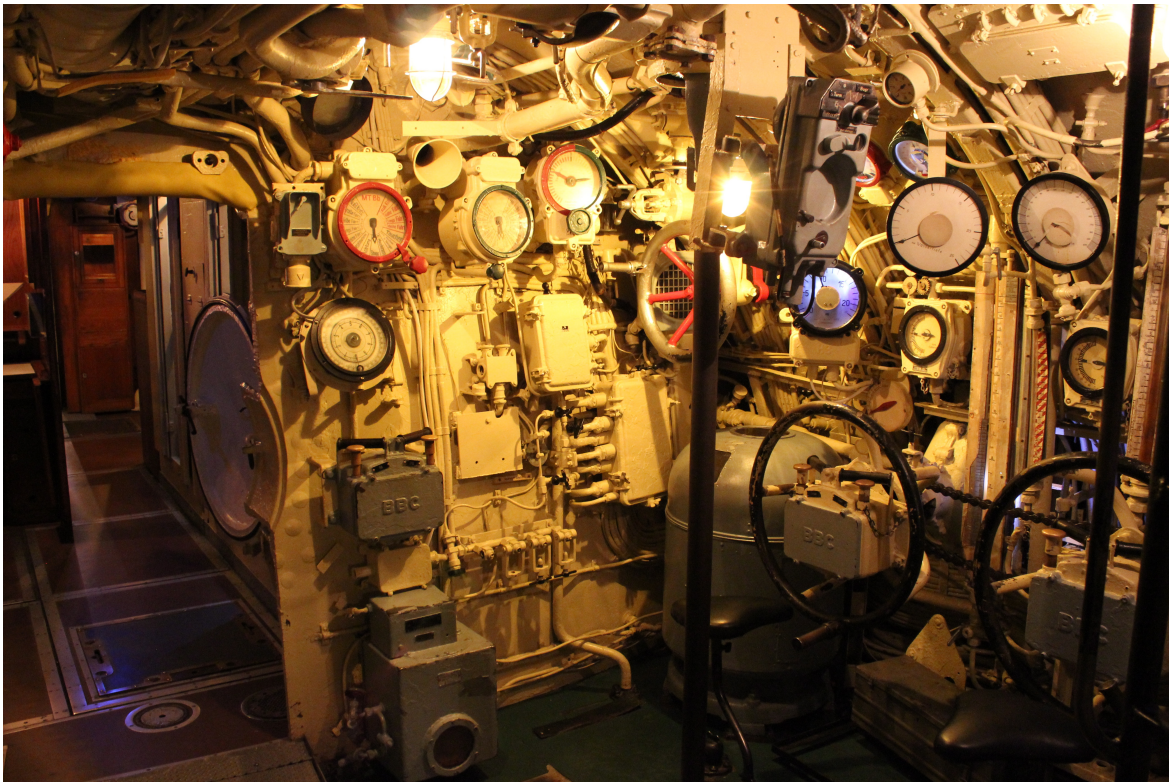


Figure 1. Chain of command: cables and gauges as love objects. Submarine U-505's control room, The Museum of Science and Industry, Chicago. Photograph by Jesse Proudfoot.

Thus submarine films provide a window onto obsessional neurosis, which is the paradigmatic masculine symptom because of the particular way that it represses the lack in the Other. When systems function perfectly there is no lack, no need for doubt, and no space for the terrifying uncertainty of desire: the Other commands and the subject obeys. In this way, the Lacanian overtones of the *chain* of command become clear: the chain of command is a metonymy for the signifying chain itself and military order is the fantasy of perfect signification and pleasurable repetition. Here we see dramatized a crucial aspect of masculine sexualization: for every x who is subject to the phallic function in submarine films, who accepts castration and submits to the law, the consolation prize for surrendering *jouissance* is the phallic *jouissance* of the symbolic order. As Lacan puts it, “castration means that *jouissance* has to be refused in order to be obtained on the inverse scale of the law of desire” (1966: 700). Small wonder then that submariners should enjoy the chain of command, mining it for the scant pleasures that remain.

Ξx Φx: Nevertheless, there is a belief in a jouissance that could never come up short, the belief in another jouissance.

What about the other side of masculine sexuation? And what about the jouissance that allegedly escapes the phallic function? If submarine films fetishize the symbolic order, it is only because they are grounded in the belief that someone enjoys outside of it: the constitutive exception of the Freudian primal father who masters the excess and holds the real at bay. Here, we turn to the genre's seemingly endless cast of steely-eyed patriarchs, from *Crimson Tide*'s Captain Ramsey to *Run Silent, Run Deep*'s Captain Lancaster. These men personify the fantasy of someone who, exempt from castration, is able to stand outside the symbolic order and access the jouissance that others have renounced. Submarine captains perform this role by behaving like Freudian tyrants, mercilessly drilling the crew and disciplining their bodies. Robert Wise's *Run Silent, Run Deep* is paradigmatic here, with Clark Gable's Captain Richardson driving his crew to exhaustion, commanding them to repeat the same surfacing and diving sequence until his repetition compulsion becomes the very structure of the film itself.

The captain's privileged position is nowhere more apparent than in the cliché of diving the ship below "hull crush depth", an iconic scene of the submarine film genre that captures the ideological role that the captain as *Urvater* plays in the psychic economy of the submarine. In Kathryn Bigelow's *K-19: The Widowmaker*, the despotic Captain Vostrikov calmly instructs his crew to dive the ship to suicidal depths while the crew nervously obey, sweat glistening on the foreheads of sailors listening anxiously to the metallic groans of distressed steel and the horrifying ricochet of bolts popping loose from the pressure. As the Chief of the Boat calls out the depth with increasing alarm ("280... 290... 300 meters, captain!"), Vostrikov calmly sips his tea, unperturbed by the mounting panic around him.

What such scenes show us is the position that the captain occupies with respect to the symbolic order of the ship. Diving the ship below hull crush depth is supposed to be impossible; according to accepted engineering knowledge it should not be able to go that deep. By doing so—and, crucially, by appearing indifferent to danger—the captain demonstrates to the crew that he stands outside of the symbolic and is not subject to its castrating effects. We could argue that the captain stares into the watery real and dares it to break through and flood the phallic submarine symbolic—shoring up its hull with his own imaginary bravado. Perhaps the surest sign that the submarine is a signifier for the phallic symbolic order comes from its opposite, as in Blake Edwards' 1959 comedy *Operation Petticoat*. Here, the submarine genre is inverted to comic effect when the captain of a bombed submarine is forced to take on women as passengers and eventually paint the submarine pink. The film's comedy is thus derived entirely from the castration of the phallic submarine.

The Captain Vostrikov scene also demonstrates how, rather than being drained of enjoyment, the *problem* with the symbolic is that it nevertheless still drips with reckless, terrifying jouissance. The captain's object-lesson is thus two-fold: by taking the ship where it should not possibly be able to go, he reminds the crew (and us as viewers) that their neurotic phantasies about the perfect functioning of the symbolic are just that, fantasies, while simultaneously positioning himself as the primal father who circumscribes the symbolic as an exception to the law of castration.

Despite the elaborate displays of potency put on by captains in submarine films, it is essential to remember that the role of captain, like that of the Father, can only ever be a role, a position, or *function*—it can never be synonymous with the individual who tries to occupy it. To be a father, Lacan reminds us, is to fulfill a function, to fulfill the phallic function of guaranteeing meaning and regulating jouissance. But while it is essential that someone fill this role, it is impossible for a living, breathing person to coincide with the position of the Father in fantasy space. This idea is perfectly illustrated by *Run Silent, Run Deep* during a scene in which an accident occurs in the torpedo room.



Figure 2. The intimacies of war: domesticity and weapons of destruction. Aft torpedo room of submarine U-505, Museum of Science and Industry, Chicago. Photograph by Jesse Proudfoot.

During an enemy attack, chaos among the crew results in armed torpedoes malfunctioning and nearly detonating inside the ship. In a thoroughly uncharacteristic act, Captain Lancaster runs to the torpedo room to save his men. This is significant because up until this point in the film, Gable's character has ruthlessly governed the crew as a fearsome patriarch. When the accident occurs, he rushes to his men's aid not as the aloof captain who values the mission over the crew, but as a father concerned for his children. The narrative of the film makes clear the cost of this breakdown in the symbolic order: the captain is mortally wounded in the accident and dies by the film's end. What *Run Silent, Run Deep* suggests apropos the phallic function is that the structure must be upheld at all costs: when the patriarch abandons his position as patriarch, he becomes a man again, and is revealed to be nothing more than another fallible—which is to say, phallic—individual.

Submarine films are deeply concerned about the prospect of a failure of the phallus, as revealed by this line from *U-571*, when Harvey Keitel's CPO Klough rebukes the new captain for admitting to the crew that he does not know whether they will succeed:

This is the navy, where a commanding officer is a mighty and terrifying thing, a man to be feared and respected. All-knowing. All-powerful. Don't you dare say what you said to the boys back there again, "I don't know". Those three words will kill a crew, dead as a depth charge. You're the skipper now and the skipper always knows what to do, whether he does or not.

What Klough's speech makes clear is that the fallibility of the phallus can never be spoken, for to do so would result in the collapse of the symbolic order and even, ultimately, death.

The dissolution of the symbolic is never so central to submarine films as it is in the threat of mutiny, a theme that, as we have already seen, dates back at least as far as Melville's *Billy Budd*. In *K-19*, crewmembers angry with Captain Vostrikov's authoritarian leadership stage a mutiny at gun point and install the XO in his place. In *U-571*, CPO Klough puts down an attempted mutiny by crewmembers unwilling to follow the new captain. Finally, the climax of *Crimson Tide* consists of a dramatic sequence in which the XO seizes control of the ship, citing the captain's violation of the chain of command; only to be ousted in a Thermidorian counter-revolution led by a cadre of officers loyal to the Captain. Mutiny is such a preoccupation of submarine films that we could even argue that it is the necessary corollary of their fetishization of the chain of command. Mutiny, in effect, dramatizes the central question of the symbolic order: who is in charge? To contemplate mutiny is to restage the murder of the Freudian primal father, to refuse castration and seize jouissance. The enduring presence of mutiny as a theme is therefore the surest proof that submarine films are firmly ensconced in the space of masculine sexuation: even as we, along with the crew, take pleasure in the perfect operation of the signifying chain of command, we never stop dreaming of breaking free of our Oedipal prison, killing the captain and taking his place.

Mutiny haunts the submarine film like the repressed because it is the shadowy double of the genre's obsession with the symbolic. From *Billy Budd*'s veneration of the law to *Crimson Tide*'s fetishistic devotion to bureaucracy, these narratives obsess over what happens when the symbolic is called into question. And if the return of the repressed is the correct way of reading this repetition it is surely because mutiny in submarine films restages the murder of the primal father as a working-through of their profoundly Oedipal desiring-structure. Indeed, in every one of the films we examine, the structure is identical: a tyrannical captain-father is countered by an empathetic XO-mother with the antagonism between them played out for the crew *qua* child. Liam Neeson's XO Polenin could not make the point more explicit in *K-19* when he reminds Vostrikov that "the crew is a family; the captain is the father".

Conclusions

We hope this essay, which should be read as a preliminary exploration, will incite belated work on Lacan's crucial notion of sexuation and its relevance to geographical inquiry. For us, submarine films neatly illustrate the logic of masculine sexuation because they depict spaces held together by the bonds of phallic jouissance and sustained by the belief in a boundless jouissance that is not submitted to the phallic function.

We believe there are at least three interrelated ways that geographers can build on and go beyond our essay. To begin with, one might provide a similar introduction to how feminine sexuation is relevant to geographical inquiry. Second, one might extend the above theoretical analysis of sexuation. For instance, it is notable that we did not address the lower portion of Lacan's table of sexuation that depicts the masculine position having access to only one type of libidinal position and the feminine side having access to two libidinal positions (see Lacan's (1998: 79) "complete" graph of sexuation). In addition, while our essay focused on sexuation as a theory of masculine sexuality, it somewhat neglected sexuation as theory of space insofar as submarine spaces sexuate its crewmembers as masculine through the spatial dramas of containment, exception, and concealment. Third, rather than simply use cultural artifacts such as submarine movies to elaborate the contours of a psychoanalytic concept; one might use a psychoanalytic concept such as sexuation to psychoanalyze socio-spatial phenomena. All of these tasks are a testament to the pressing promises that continue to define Lacanian geography.

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