

Echo Compulsion: Formative Trauma in Leopold von Sacher-Masoch's *Venus im Pelz*

ISABELLE JENKINSON

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Abstract. This essay argues that the sexuality of *Venus im Pelz's* masochist protagonist, Severin, is characterised by what I term the 'echo compulsion' of a traumatic, childhood scene. This term is a development of Freud's notion of the subject's 'compulsion to repeat' traumatic scenes but which emphasises the impossibility of any perfect repetition of such scenes — an echo literally being, in Joan Scott's words, 'an imperfect return of sound'. My argument draws on the work of psychoanalytic theorist Jean Laplanche and in particular his account of Copernican (exogenous and traumatic in origin) and Ptolemaic (biological and endogenous in origin) subject formation. This dichotomy of Copernican and Ptolemaic subjectivity plays out at each erotic re-enactment throughout *Venus im Pelz*. While Severin labours under a Ptolemaic illusion that his masochism is innate, the Copernican truth undermines the illusion as each erotic re-staging exposes his compulsion to echo the formative trauma. The echo compulsion reveals the fallacy of Severin's claims of sexual autonomy by highlighting the re-enactment's distortion, but the notion of the echo also highlights a further removal of Severin's sexual autonomy. An echo is not only a distorted return but it is an externalised manifestation of its own source. Severin may believe he regains control of his sexuality in choreographing restaged scenes of his childhood trauma, but like an echo, the scenes become externalised from him as they are performed and thus removed from his control.

* * * * *

Following Freud's comparison of the independent agency of the unconscious with Copernicus' discovery that the Earth is not the centre of the universe in 'A Difficulty in the Path of Psychoanalysis' (1917), Jean Laplanche mobilises 'Copernican' and 'Ptolemaic' as descriptors of two models of subject formation present in Freud's work.¹ 'Copernican' describes theories of subjectivity that are formed *exogenously* by *others* which see the unconscious as an internalised other, decentred from the conscious ego, while 'Ptolemaic' describes *endogenous*

¹ Sigmund Freud, 'A Difficulty in the Path of Psychoanalysis' in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XVII*, trans. by James Strachey (London: Vintage, 2001), pp. 135–44 (pp. 139–43).

theories that recentre the unconscious as a product of the *self*.² Laplanche identifies that Freud's thought alternates between 'relapses into Ptolemaism and resurgences of the Copernican, other-centered vision'.³ Freud's abandonment of seduction theory in 1897 for a theory of infantile sexuality is the most visible Ptolemaic shift — or 'going-astray' in Laplanche's words — in Freud's thought, and sees the formation of the subject's sexuality go from being conceived as exogenously formed by others to being endogenously formed from within.⁴ Laplanche, contrastingly, insists on the 'exogenous, traumatic and intrusive' formation of the sexual subject.⁵ Trauma, as discussed by Freud in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), is also subject to the Copernican-Ptolemaic duality. Freud discusses the victim's 'compulsion to repeat' traumatic events.⁶ While 'compulsion' suggests that Freud's formulation is Copernican (the subject being *compelled* to act a certain way), this is complicated by the Ptolemaic implication of the word 'repeat'. Freud's repetition compulsion sees the subject attempt to claim ownership or control of a passively-experienced traumatic event by actively bringing about its repetition, making it a Ptolemaic act of recentring agency. But, because the subject is *compelled* to this repetitive behaviour, doubt is cast upon the validity of this Ptolemaic control. Joyce McDougall, who argues that 'neosexualities' (a term including masochism, sadism, etc.) precipitate from originary trauma, identifies this when she compares the repetition *compulsion* to the addictiveness of drugs.⁷ However, the suitability of the word 'repeat' in Freud's formulation has not been subject to the same Copernican-Ptolemaic scrutiny. *Repetition*, by insinuating accuracy, serves a Ptolemaic purpose by suggesting that traumatic scenes can be revived faithfully by the subject. But *can* the subject ever exactly repeat their trauma?

This essay proposes that revising Freud's repetition compulsion, into an *echo* compulsion, more comprehensively grasps the Copernican nature of trauma in conceding that exact repetition is impossible. Two formal aspects of echoes make them suitable metaphors for trauma. The first is that, in Joan Scott's words, they are 'incomplete reproductions...giving back only the final fragments of a phrase'.⁸ That is, an echo is an inherently distorted and fragmentary reproduction of sound. Used figuratively within the echo compulsion this means that revived traumatic events are also distorted — their

² Jean Laplanche, 'The Unfinished Copernican Revolution', trans. by Luke Thurston in *Essays on Otherness* (London; New York: Routledge, 1999), pp. 52–83 (p. 60).

³ Laplanche, 'The Unfinished Copernican Revolution', p. 60.

⁴ Laplanche, 'The Unfinished Copernican Revolution', p. 60.

⁵ John Fletcher, 'Introduction to Laplanche' in *Essays on Otherness*, pp. 1–51 (p. 6).

⁶ Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* in *The Standard Edition, Volume XVIII*, trans. by Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1955), pp. 7–33. Freud describes as 'traumatic' any excitations from outside which are powerful enough to break through the [subject's] protective shield', p. 29; for repetition compulsion see pp. 18–23.

⁷ Joyce McDougall, *Theatres of the Mind: Illusion and Truth on the Psychoanalytic Stage* (London: Free Association Books Ltd, 1986), p. 255.

⁸ Joan W. Scott, 'Fantasy Echo: History and the Construction of Identity', *Critical Enquiry*, 27, 2 (2001), 284–304 (p. 291).

organic unity as scenes being fragmented in and by their reproduction. The second formal aspect is that an echo is a *reverberation*: a sound reproduced *externally* from source. If an echo is an externalized noise then traumatic events are also externalized from the subject's power in their re-enactment. The agency belongs to the scene, not the subject re-enacting it.

To illustrate the Copernican potential of the echo compulsion, this essay explores the traumatically formed masochist protagonist of Leopold von Sacher-Masoch's *Venus im Pelz* (1870).⁹ The novella contains the memoirs of Severin von Kusiemski that narrate his affair with Wanda von Dunajew — a relationship driven by Severin's specific masochistic needs and punctuated by choreographed erotic scenes of domination and beating in which he roleplays as her slave. Despite playing the passive role, these scenes are carefully directed by Severin. The formation and activity of Severin's masochism, I argue, exist within the Copernican-Ptolemaic tension Laplanche identified in Freud's work. While Severin operates under a Ptolemaic illusion of ownership and control over his preferences, within his own narrative the Copernican fact of his traumatic and exogenous sexual formation undermine his attempts to recentre his sexual agency. Over the past two decades critics have identified how Sacher-Masoch's writing, especially *Venus im Pelz*, was reductively treated as evidence for the author's own masochism. Albrecht Korshorke reads the novella in dialogue with Hegel, Sean Kelly argues for a political Sacher-Masoch whose masochistic writing asserts the need for universal human rights, and Birgit Lang analyses the novella's critical treatment as a psychoanalytic case study.¹⁰ This essay, while remaining within a psychoanalytic theoretical framework, is not interested in Sacher-Masoch's personal history, but seeks to demonstrate the traumatic effect of what Kelly calls 'the unjust domination of one creature over another'.¹¹ It explores how Severin's childhood trauma is compulsively *echoed* throughout the affair with Wanda and in the retelling of his childhood — during which the formative trauma occurred. Before examining his echo compulsion though, it is necessary to analyse his Ptolemaic fantasy of owning the origin of his 'Seltsamkeiten'.¹²

Severin tells Wanda that his sexual tendencies are innate and were present even during infancy. The term he uses to describe taking pleasure from

⁹ Masochism was named after Sacher-Masoch by Krafft-Ebing who identified it as a specific sexual behaviour in Sacher-Masoch's writing. See Richard von Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis, with Especial Reference to Contrary Sexual Instinct: A Medico-Legal Study*, trans. by Charles Gilbert Chaddock (Philadelphia; London: The F.A. Davis Co., Publishers, 1892), p. 89.

¹⁰ Albrecht Koschorke, 'Mastery and Slavery: A Masochist Falls Asleep Reading Hegel', trans. by Joel Golb, *MLN*, 116, 3, German Issue (2001), 551–63; Sean K. Kelly, 'Leopold von Sacher-Masoch and Human Rights', *Modern Austrian Literature*, 2010, 43, 3 (2010), 19–37; Birgit Lang, 'The shifting case of masochism: Leopold von Sacher-Masoch's *Venus im Pelz* (1870)' in *A History of the Case Study: Sexology, Psychoanalysis, Literature*, ed. by Lang, Joy Damousi and Alison Lewis (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), pp. 19–54.

¹¹ Kelly, p. 19.

¹² Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, *Venus im Pelz* (Berlin: Insel Verlag, 2013), p. 39; 'singular tendencies', *Venus in Furs*, trans. by Joachim Neugroschel (London: Penguin, 2000), p. 30.

pain and humiliation is *suprasensuality*: ‘ja schon in der Wiege, so erzählte mir meine Mutter später, war ich *übersinnlich*’.¹³ Severin’s tracing back of his allegedly inherent *suprasensuality* to his cradle sees him claiming his sexuality as his own biological nature. It surpasses even Freud’s theory of infantile sexuality in naturalizing Severin’s masochism for while Freud locates primal sensual pleasure in breastfeeding (which the child auto-erotically replicates through thumb-sucking), Severin goes a step further in claiming that his innate *suprasensuality* saw him reject the wet nurse’s breast in favour of goat’s milk.¹⁴ John Noyes explains that masochists deny masochism’s ‘essentially communicative orientation’ and divorce their behaviours from the ‘sociohistorical matrix that makes their communicative coding possible’.¹⁵ Masochism, by being ‘communicative’ in its behaviour (i.e. requiring external participants) and formation (formed by one’s social and historical placing in the world) is thus exogenously constituted. However, Noyes goes on to say that these behaviours ‘are then mapped onto a mythology of the human animal’s universal biological constitution’ by the masochist.¹⁶ This is a coping mechanism for the masochist’s lack of ownership over a sexuality that has been formed exogenously; it is essentially what Severin does when he claims the biological innateness of his *suprasensuality*. The irony is that even in Severin’s Ptolemaic myth of an in-cradle *suprasensuality*, this mythology’s communicative coding is exposed by his own admission — it is based on information told to him by his mother.

The reality of Severin’s masochistic behaviours, which manifest as specific, non-negotiable requirements in the erotic scenes between himself and Wanda, is that they were traumatically formed in the following teenage scene of beating by his aunt:

Unerwartet trat sie in ihrer pelzgefütterten Kazabaika herein, gefolgt von der Köchin, Küchenmagd und der kleinen Katze, die ich verschmäht hatte. Ohne viel zu fragen, ergriffen sie mich und banden mich, trotz meiner heftigen Gegenwehr, an Händen und Füßen, dann schürzte meine Tante mit einem bösen Lächeln den Ärmel empor und begann mich mit einer großen Rute zu hauen, und sie hieb so tüchtig, daß Blut floß und ich zuletzt, trotz meinem Heldenmut, schrie und weinte und um Gnade bat. Sie ließ mich hierauf losbinden, aber ich mußte ihr kniend für die Strafe danken und die Hand küssen.¹⁷

¹³ Sacher-Masoch, p. 39; ‘Even in my cradle, as my mother subsequently told me, I was *suprasensual*’, p. 30.

¹⁴ Freud, ‘Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality’ in *The Standard Edition, Volume VII*, trans. by Strachey (London: Vintage, 2001), pp. 125–245 (p. 181); Sacher-Masoch, p. 39; pp. 30–31.

¹⁵ John K. Noyes, *The Mastery of Submission: Inventions of Masochism* (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 1997), p. 32.

¹⁶ Noyes, p. 32.

¹⁷ Sacher-Masoch, p. 41; ‘Unexpectedly she entered in her fur-lined kazabaika, followed by the cook, the kitchen maid, and the little cat that I had spurned. Wasting no time, they grabbed me and, overcoming my violent resistance, they bound me hand and foot. Next, with a wicked smile my aunt rolled up her sleeves and began laying into me with a heavy switch. She hit me so hard that she drew

Trauma, say Laplanche and Pontalis, is ‘characterised by an influx of excitations’ that exceed ‘the subject’s tolerance and capacity to master such excitations’.¹⁸ ‘An *influx* of excitations’ [My italics] necessitates that trauma invades the subject exogenously, which Freud corroborates in *Beyond*.¹⁹ The binding of Severin’s limbs and the whipping he receives from his aunt in this authentically passive position sees Severin totally mastered by such an influx of violent excitations. He can tolerate this influx no more than he can master it, screaming and begging for mercy. This scene retains a hold on Severin’s erotic desires, which is evidenced in the following extract of a later scene that clearly echoes the original:

drei junge, schlanke Negerinnen, wie aus Ebenholz geschnitzt und ganz in roten Atlas gekleidet, hereintreten,...Wanda, welche, hoch aufgerichtet, ihr kaltes, schönes Antlitz mit den finsternen Brauen, den höhnischen Augen mir zugewendet, als Herrin gebietend vor mir steht, winkt mit der Hand, und ehe ich noch recht weiß, was mit mir geschieht, haben mich die Negerinnen zu Boden gerissen, mir Beine und Hände fest zusammengeschnürt und die Arme wie einem, der hingerichtet werden soll, auf den Rücken gebunden, so daß ich mich kaum bewegen kann. »Gib mir die Peitsche, Haydée«, befiehlt Wanda mit unheimlicher Ruhe.²⁰

This may look like a repetition of the original scene, but on inspection the elements comprising it are distorted. The three servants, rather than whatever household staff were available, are exoticized African women who resemble ebony statues (‘wie aus Ebenholz geschnitzt’). The wearing of the fur coat by the women brandishing whips may be the same, but the swiftness of his aunt’s rapid activity is distorted as Wanda’s movements are slowed until she ‘freezes into postures that identify her with a statue’.²¹ The erotic scene covers two pages whereas the traumatic one is only one paragraph. Finally, Severin does not protest his being bound this time precisely because he has coached Wanda into playing the dominant role to his submissive slave. Koschorke notes how ‘despite all self-styling into victim of his mistress’s unfettered caprice: the masochist knows very well how to assure primacy for his pleasure principle’.²² Severin’s passivity and Wanda’s activity are thus both directed by

blood, and for all my heroic valor I finally screamed and wept and begged for mercy. She then had me untied, but I was forced to kneel down, thank her for the punishment, and kiss her hand.’, p. 32.

¹⁸ Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith (London: Karnac Books, 1988), p. 465.

¹⁹ Freud, *Beyond*, p. 29.

²⁰ Sacher-Masoch, p. 89; ‘Three young, slender African women came in — carved out of ebony, as it were, and clad entirely in red satin...Wanda, standing erect before me, turning her cold, beautiful, and somber face, her scornful eyes toward me, imperious as my Mistress, gestured. And before I even realized what was happening, the Africans had yanked me to the floor, bound me tightly hand and foot, with my arms around my back, so that I was like a man about to be executed, barely able to move. “Give me the whip, Haydée,” Wanda ordered with sinister calm.’, p. 75.

²¹ Gilles Deleuze, *Masochism: Coldness and Cruelty*, trans. by Jean McNeil (New York: Zone Books, 1991), p. 33.

²² Koschorke, p. 553.

him. Moreover, the artistic control he has over her activity in the slowness and stillness of her motion reinforces the notion that through re-enactment comes recentred agency for the once-beaten child. However, in aestheticizing these elements, Severin loses the organic unity of the original scene and the elements of the servants, the woman in fur, and the beating all become increasingly distanced and fragmented from one another. The scene therefore echoes rather than repeats. Given this, Severin cannot gain control over the scene which has made him compelled to reproduce it because it is *now* only available to him in this echoed form.

It is not just that the originary traumatic scene is distorted and fragmented by its erotic re-enactment, but the scene itself acts as an echo of the 'matrix of sociohistorical' influences upon the child Severin's sexual formation.²³ In Scott's words, the scene of beating is but 'the final fragment' of the whole phrase which constitutes Severin's sexuality.²⁴ The most complex object of Severin's masochistic imagination gives the novella its title. In order to unpack the matrix of exogenous influences that constitutes the imaginary figure of Venus in furs, it is necessary to trace it back to his childhood. Severin describes to Wanda how, afraid of the imagery of the church, he would sneak into his father's library to admire instead a plaster statue of Venus. However pagan the object, the devotion he shows it is Christian: '[ich] kniete nieder und sprach zu ihr die Gebete, die man mir eingelernt, das Vaterunser, das Gegrüßt seist du Maria und das Credo'.²⁵ The Hail Mary becomes more significant when Severin describes how one night the moonlight fell on the Venus giving her a blue hue and causing him to throw himself at her feet and kiss them, 'wie ich es bei unsern Landleuten gesehen hatte, wenn sie die Füße des toten Heilands küßten'.²⁶ The statue is now conflated with Christian worship and the image of the Virgin Mary, who is conventionally rendered wearing blue in artistic representations. On this same night however, he describes how, having lost control of himself, he stopped kissing the statue's feet and kissed its lips, but on pulling away is filled with dread, flees and has dreams of Venus' raised arm threatening him.²⁷ The figure of Venus later becomes combined with the image of his fur-wearing aunt but even the foundation for this is laid by the earlier association his family have made of her with Messalina.²⁸ Messalina, the infamous wife of Claudius, is another classical figure who, like Venus, is the subject of much erotic art. We know that Severin is familiar with antiquity and its artistic rendering because he admits to spending his adolescence obsessively studying Classics. As quoted

²³ Noyes, p. 32.

²⁴ Scott, p. 291.

²⁵ Sacher-Masoch, p. 40; 'I would kneel down and recite to her the prayers that had been inculcated in me, the Lord's Prayer, the Hail Mary, and the Credo', p. 31.

²⁶ Sacher-Masoch, p. 40; 'as I had seen our farmers do when they kissed the feet of the dead Savior', p. 31.

²⁷ Sacher-Masoch, p. 40; p. 31.

²⁸ Sacher-Masoch, p. 41; p. 32.

earlier, when his aunt ceases beating him she makes him kneel, kiss her hand and thank her for the punishment.²⁹ Again he is kneeling before, admiring and kissing a threatening woman (like he had done with the statue in his father's library), but if he is familiar with art and literature about Messalina then he will not only have seen her as the adulterous wife of Claudius, but also from the submissive perspective of slave-lovers.³⁰ Elsewhere Severin talks of having read Tacitus' *Germania*, which details the ancient Germanic tribe, the Sitones, the men of which are so ruled by women that 'they sink not merely below freedom but even below slavery'.³¹ It is not inconceivable then to think that he has also read Tacitus' work on Messalina which figures her in terms of chaotic but potent desire.³² When his aunt beats him then, he has already been instructed to view her through slave's eyes. The figure of Venus in furs, which crystallises in the scene of trauma, therefore sees Severin combine the images of his aunt and Venus into one erotic object. However, this figure has actually been forged over time and is made up of Venus, Mary, Messalina and then his aunt, although the remembrance of Messalina and Mary are no longer consciously kept. Venus in furs, by consciously being the conflation of Venus and Severin's aunt but forgetting Messalina and Mary, is thus the echo — the last and lasting fragment — of the whole complex of exogenous influence that formed it.

The second formal feature of echoes which makes it a suitably Copernican metaphor for trauma is that echoes are *externally* reproduced from their source. The moment where Severin describes hearing his escaped laughter echoed captures the external nature of echoes: 'Ich muß unwillkürlich laut lachen, so daß es widerhallt und ich über mein eigenes Gelächter erschrecke'.³³ His laughter is externalised by its reverberation against the walls of the room and it startles him. It is important that Severin is startled by the echo and not the laughter itself. The echo's externality from its source signals the lack of ownership Severin had over the laughter in the first place *and* the lack of control over the precipitating reproduction of it. During this period in the novella, moreover, Severin is effectively method-acting the part of Wanda's slave Gregor, yet something unknown to him makes him break character and laugh. It is the externality of his laughter in its echo which he hears, but it is the 'mirth' ('Gelächter') that it evidences which really shakes him. This is his fantasy being enacted, but in this moment of echoed laughter he is confronted with the fact of his lack of control over his own place within it.

This is not the only occasion where Sacher-Masoch presents Severin being

²⁹ Sacher-Masoch, p. 41; p. 32.

³⁰ Sandra R. Joshel, 'Female Desire and the Discourse of Empire: Tacitus's Messalina', *Signs*, 21, 2 (1995), 50–82 (pp. 54, 61)

³¹ Tacitus, *Germania*, trans. by J.B. Rives (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), p. 96.

³² For discussion on the historian's difficulty in describing Messalina outside of Tacitus' characterisation, see Joshel, pp. 50–82.

³³ Sacher-Masoch, p. 78; 'I couldn't help bursting into raucous laughter, which echoed so loudly that I was frightened by my own mirth', p. 65

startled by a confrontation with his decentred agency. Chronologically in the book, the first of these occasions involves the statue of Venus in the garden shared between himself and Wanda and occurs before they have begun any meaningful relationship. Severin has become enamoured with this statue: 'diese Venus ist schön und ich liebe sie, so leidenschaftlich, so krankhaft innig, so wahnsinnig...'³⁴ Severin has lent Wanda a book but has left inside its pages a small reproduction of Titian's *Venus with a Mirror* on which he has written the words '*Venus im Pelz*'.³⁵ Having found the picture she places a fur on the statue in the garden, then one on herself and waits on a nearby bench. His reaction is first to the statue, then to her. On seeing the statue in fur, his fantasy brought about by *another*, he is arrested by anxiety before trying to flee.³⁶ He is so dazed by this external manifestation of his fantasy though that he loses his way and stumbles upon Wanda, wearing a similar fur.³⁷ The initial anxiety at seeing the furred statue escalates now on seeing his stone ideal made flesh. Earlier I cited Deleuze who notes the becoming-statue of Wanda during the erotic scenes directed by Severin. His ideal is not the statue becoming woman but the reverse. This makes perfect sense given that stone cannot have any independent agency unlike a real woman. It is significant therefore that it is her laughter at him in his shock that leaves him breathless.³⁸ His fantasy-ideal of Venus in furs, like his laughter when he hears its echo, has externalized itself and laughs at him.

That this incident of Wanda externalizing a distorted and traumatic version of Severin's fantasy marks the beginning of their interaction is significant, because a parallel episode marks the end of their affair. Throughout their relationship Wanda warns Severin that he does not actually want what he asks her for, that his ideas will give her independent ideas of despotic cruelty that will exceed his desire and tolerance: '»ich bin ein leichtsinniges, junges Weib, es ist verkauft für Sie, sich mir so ganz gehörtgeben, Sie werden am Ende in der Tat mein Spielzeug«'³⁹ He does not heed her. The final erotic re-enactment of the traumatic scene makes clear, in brutal detail, just how reliant on the compliance of external others his masochistic fantasy was. In this episode, Wanda ties Severin so he cannot move and puts on the fur as usual, but then she invites another man inside to whip him.⁴⁰ He demands to be untied but is not. The man, referred to by Severin as 'der Grieche', adorns the fur before whipping him more powerfully than Wanda could. The originary trauma is echoed far beyond his control as he is once more authentically passive to being beaten by a stronger individual wearing fur. The believed ownership of the scene is exposed

³⁴ Sacher-Masoch, p. 19; 'this Venus was beautiful, and I loved her as passionately, as morbidly and profoundly, as insanely...', p. 12.

³⁵ Sacher-Masoch, p. 20; p. 13.

³⁶ Sacher-Masoch, p. 22; p. 15.

³⁷ Sacher-Masoch, p. 22; p. 15.

³⁸ Sacher-Masoch, 'es benimmt mir den Atem', p. 23; 'took my breath away', p. 16.

³⁹ Sacher-Masoch, p. 49; 'I'm a young, frivolous woman. It's dangerous for you to submit to me so completely. You'll actually wind up as my plaything', p. 39.

⁴⁰ Sacher-Masoch, pp. 134–35; 'the Greek', pp. 114–16.

as the mere illusion of control as he is now unwillingly subjected to the echo of his traumatic sexual formation as reverberated and distorted from without.

This essay has examined the sexual formation of the protagonist of Sacher-Masoch's *Venus im Pelz* as it engages with Laplanche's terms of Copernican and Ptolemaic subject formation. The novella showcases the double nature of masochism which, on the one hand, is formed Copernically (exogenously and traumatically), and on the other, encourages the masochist to conjure myths and behaviours of Ptolemaism (that attempt failingly to recentre ownership and agency onto the subject). This essay, moreover, has deployed a revision of Freud's repetition compulsion in the form of the trauma victim's compulsion to *echo* their traumatic past, in order to reinforce the truly Copernican nature of traumatic sexual formation.