Introduction

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One of the opening caveats of *After Lacan: Clinical Practice and the Subject of the Unconscious* (2002), co-authored by Willy Apollon, Danielle Bergeron, and Lucie Cantin, is that "the academic appropriation of Lacan can function as an obstacle to understanding key Lacanian concepts."[1] The editors of the work, Robert Hughes and Karen Ror Malone, seem to be attributing Lacan's ill-deserved reputation as "all theory" in clinical circles to the stranglehold on Lacan studies literary critics and cultural theorists enjoyed in the late twentieth century. The distinction between "theory" and "praxis" is key to understanding the grounds of this indictment:

> Certainly differences in the theoretical understanding of clinical work in Lacanian circles as well as the differences in technique (variable sessions being iconic in this regard) have made some North American practitioners wary. The warm reception by academics reinforces other suspicions.[2]

To counteract the kiss of death that is the "warm reception by academics," *After Lacan* (2002) presents a collection of essays by clinicians who lead the École Freudienne du Québec and the GIFRIC group, a non-profit organization founded in 1977 to develop psychoanalysis at the intersection of sociocultural research and social work. The "suffering addressed by psychoanalytic practice"[3] is the touchstone that differentiates critical Lacanism from the clinical in this reckoning. The "After", in this predecessor *After Lacan*, reflects not only the aftermaths of Jacques Lacan's life and legacy, but also the introductory elaborations of Lacanian theory that have come before, by theorists such as Bruce Fink, Slavoj Žižek, Joan Copjec, Juliet MacCannell, Ellie Ragland, and Charles Shepherdson as well as academic/practitioner figures like Dany Nobus and Philip Hill. The editors concede that the work is not a systematic exposition of Lacanian concepts because extant scholarship has freed it up to focus on Lacan's clinical teaching instead. Ironically, therefore, the 2002 *After Lacan*'s showcasing of Lacan's enduring relevance and

salience for contemporary clinical practice is posed as a beneficiary of the very philosophical, philological, and literary critical interventions in Lacan's thought and theory that it simultaneously disavows. Published fifteen years later, this present collection of essays, also titled *After Lacan*, undertakes a syncretic critical articulation from the vantage point of academic humanities of the theory, analytic practice, and pedagogy of Jacques Lacan. For a figure who spectacularly emerged in 1953 and 1964[4] as a renegade in the Freudian institution of psychoanalysis, the *savoir* or propositional knowledge of Lacan's non-normative oeuvre is indissociable with its *savoir-faire*, its know-how, or knowing how to make.

Jacques Derrida's "For the Love of Lacan" is one of three essays in *Resistances of Psychoanalysis* (1996) where he seems to be writing private autobiography against great transferential figures: Sigmund Freud, Michel Foucault, and Jacques Lacan.[5] We could say that Derrida is playing with the psychoanalytic notion of transference neurosis, or the unconscious transfer, in long-term therapy, of the analysand's original neurosis to the figure of the analyst. The dynamics of transference, which acknowledges the presence of the other even where it is unnamed, has a parallel in the mode of deconstruction, which relinquishes the self-identical subject in favor of the expropriating self. In "For the Love of Lacan," Derrida is reminiscing about his first encounter with Jacques Lacan in 1966 in the United States, "to which both of us had been for the first time exported."[6] He makes a sly reference to the alter-egos Lauzun and Saida, thinly veiled caricatures of Lacan and Derrida, respectively, in Kristeva's 1992 novel, *The Samurai.* Lacan and I, Lacan with me, "were both of us 'adulterated products fit for exportation'," Derrida observes.[7] While Kristeva, the bad novelist, had relegated Lacan and Derrida to the promiscuity of the same export container, the essay suggests that the relationship between the psychoanalyst and the philosopher is better represented by a chiasmus. Philosophy finds in psychoanalysis all the motifs that were offering themselves, although not without resistance, to a "genealogico-deconstructive interpretation":[8] psychoanalysis, in turn, finds itself at home with philosophy despite all sorts of disavowals (within philosophy) on this subject. Speaking of *his* role in this criss-crossing of opposed trajectories, the philosopher sounds psychoanalytical himself, bypassing egological consciousness for unconscious and accidental patterns:

> My theoretical coming-to-terms with Lacan consisted in pursuing my own work according to its specific pathways and requirements, whether or not this work should encounter Lacan's, and Lacan's – I do not at all reject the idea – more than any other today.[9]

"Was this not a way of saying that I loved and admired him a lot? And of paying homage to him, in a way that pleased me?" Derrida asks. Derrida's tribute to Lacan, besides emphasizing the significance of Lacan's contribution to poststructuralist thought, raises two key questions about the way in which scholarship creates intellectual genealogies and affiliations and self-situates in their intersections. How does one say "we" when speaking all alone, as Derrida observes, after the death of the other? The second question is that of archivization. How does one archive he who does not remain? What remains of the historical Jacques-Marie-Émile Lacan (1901–1981), who does not remain? Psychoanalysis, Derrida observes in *Archive Fever* (1998), is inherently a thinking of the archive: the term "archive" here refers to not simply the systematized textual corpus of psychoanalysis but a memory system or mnemotechnology. As Simon Morgan Wortham observes:

> Derrida . . . moves us away from the idea that the archive simple accommodates, violates, monumentalises, and amortizes the event. Certainly in *Archive Fever*, the question of the psychoanalytic archive is bound to a thinking of the psychoanalytic event to come, an event which not only marks "in advance" the entire landscape of our intellectual, disciplinary, historical and cultural "archive," but which is still destined to transform it.[10]

The psychic procedures of archivization associated with psychoanalysis are not merely conservational, monumentalizing the past, but also intent on the erasure of memory or for history that is written in the future anterior. The aggression–destruction–death drive of psychoanalysis, which is its peculiar logic of supplementarity, binds it to its own finitude, its other, and to the arrival of the event. Keeping in mind the specificity of Lacan's contribution to the letteration of psychoanalysis, this collection of chapters, titled *After Lacan*, addresses the archive as well as the "archive fever" of Lacan's output in the academy and psychoanalytic clinic, both the archivable corpus and its anticipation of the "psychoanalytic event to come."

"Without written documents, you know you are in a dream," Lacan stated in a lecture at Yale University.[11] Élisabeth Roudinesco addresses Lacan's relationship with the archive in *Lacan: In Spite of Everything*. She interprets "archive," as I have done, as the moment of movement between filed, monitored, carefully considered history – pedagogic history – and the performative history of creativity.

> Between these two impossibilities, which are like two boundaries of the same prohibition – prohibition of absolute knowledge, prohibition of the interpretive sovereignty of the ego – it must be accepted that archives – destroyed, existing, excessive or erased – are the precondition of history.[12]

The way in which this collection approaches the oral and written oeuvre of Lacan reflects what Roudinesco rightly identifies as Lacan's own ambivalence about written traces: neither subscribing to the positivity of the inventoried whole, nor denying the need to bequeath to posterity a body of work associated with his teaching and his person. The belatedness implied by the *After* in this book's title is mobilized as a privileged entry point to examine the unthought elements and the unlived-out amplitude of Lacan's theory of the 1950s, 60s, and 70s in new fields of inquiry, such as disability, race, or new media studies. These thriving elaborations of or critical departures from the classical theory informing Lacanian work are examined in their varied, often non-synchronous, cultural, geopolitical, and disciplinary contexts. This critical retrospective also adds a multidimensional understanding to the epistemologies the historical Lacan came after and returned to, the Freudian field of psychoanalysis in particular. In its wider aims, *After Lacan* is a focalized examination of the futures of psychoanalysis, as they are developed beyond the routes of analysis in the clinic, and in the dimensions of language, literature, logic, philosophy, visual culture, gender and sexuality, and politics. Along the way, we reexamine some of the fundamental concepts of Lacanian psychoanalysis, both the topological structures he inaugurated, and the regimes of the imaginary, symbolic, real, and the symptom that these structures give temporal and spatial delineation to. We examine the objective of analysis and the nature of truth associated with the Lacanian School of psychoanalysis, with its difficult negotiation of idealism and materialism, and its logic of the real, whose impossibility leads to a structural impasse. The chapters consider also Lacanian concepts of aporetic subjectivity which have gained traction in postmodern literary studies and its cognates: the gaps in the body, jouissance, sinthome, object a, drive, the divided/barred subject, and the four discourses, among others.

If the twentieth century was Freudian, "the twenty-first century is already Lacanian," according to Roudinesco.[13] In recent years, Jacques Lacan has been readily and creatively used to talk about the political: Holocaust to the Arab Spring, capitalism, neoliberalism, consumerism, publics, post-democracy, advertising, new media, entertainment, sex change, and Donald Trump. Lacanian theory in the twenty-first century is indeed a theory in action, but its politics cannot be limited or reduced to "the level of strategic-pragmatic interventions," as Slavoj Žižek terms it.[14] In fact, Lacanian theory as political act is impossible, Alenka Zupančič has written; not impossible in the sense of "impossible to happen," but in the sense of "an impossible *that* happened," an "impossible

gesture of pure expenditure" that, to quote Žižek again, changed "the very coordinates of what [was] strategically possible within a historical constellation."[15] This is hardly unexpected of a theorist who imagined history (*histoire*) itself as hystory (*hystoire*), a story with hysterical potential.[16] As in the last decade and a half of Lacan's teaching, the emphasis in Lacanian psychoanalytic theory has steadily moved beyond the transcendental logic of the signifier to the predominance of the drive, the non-linguistic or extra-discursive dimension of language and subjectivity: jouissance, excess, enjoyment, or the Lacanian real, which Ellie Ragland describes as "the algebraic x, inherently foreclosed from direct apprehension or analysis."[17] *After Lacan* analyses and interrogates the trajectory from the signifier to the symptom through the wide-ranging reading protocols which reveal the transformative ethico-political possibilities of Lacan's enduring concepts. Like the Lacanian analyst, Lacanian discourse does not impose prescriptive interpretations but allows the (analysand's) unconscious to analyze itself. As Roudinesco observes, "in the end, the true form of the patient's desire becomes interpretable to the patient, in his or her own terms, for his or her own ends."[18]

Lacanian theory is testing for psychoanalysis in particular and the history of consciousness in general for the way in which it introduces to the cognitive register and reading practices "the impossible thing" that will turn them upside down. Whether it is in his theories of the gaze, voice, desire, jouissance, or the category of the real, which does not refer to reality, objects in the world, or some phenomenological thing-in-itself, Lacan documents the overlap of traumatic knowledge or lack with symbolic or imaginative orders. "Every truth has the *structure* of fiction," Lacan argued in Seminar VII, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis.*[19] This traumatism at the heart of signification is not, for Lacan, a primordial scene but, to cite Ellie Ragland, "an interior knowledge that breaks up the imaginary consistencies to which a given subject clings in a willed *méconnnaissance* (misrecognition)."[20] Jacques Lacan is the confidence trickster who privileges *lettre* over being, who plunders literary language for the sense that lies outside its historical reality, a *sens jouis*, and who seems to say that psychoanalysis is an impossible and unrealized art. He "emphasizes *accommodation* of the id rather than its *assimilation* by the ego," as Mark Bracher puts it.[21] Lacan is also notorious for locating the truth of the symptom in the future, not the past, claiming for psychoanalysis, as he does in his Rome discourse, "the future perfect of what I shall have been for what I am in the process of becoming."[22] Instead of being programmed by events completed in the past, Lacanian analysands

"are given the key to their own destiny," states the psychoanalyst Dany Nobus. Instead of the "classical analytic question, 'What has happened to me . . . that could possibly explain my present misery?'," Lacanian analysis, Nobus adds, "ushers the patient to ask 'What is going to happen to me that will explain both my current situation and my life-history?'"[23]

Jacques-Alain Miller has divided Lacan's theory into three phases: the 1950s and early 1960s, 1964–1974, 1974–1981. *After Lacan* draws selectively on these distinct archives to show the exfoliation of Lacanian thought and the ways in which Lacan, in his lifetime, outlived, outgrew, or outdid his discourse. In that sense, the book should be titled *After Lacans*, tracing, as it does, the afterlives of different, self-othering Lacans, including the Lacans posited retroactively in the course of our ongoing critical evaluations. *After Lacan* alludes also to Lacan's term for the Freudian word "Nachträglichkeit," which means deferred action, *a posteriori*: "après-coup," or afterwardness, through which an event becomes significant (or traumatic) retroactively, in the act of looking back. It could be argued that *After Lacan* embodies the logic of après-coup, coming after psychoanalysis and acting out its capacity to endow events with significance retrospectively. The logic of "après-coup" is related also to a reordering or "remémoration" of history. While Freud cast doubt on the hysteric's reminiscences, despite busily articulating the same into the coherent purposiveness of the talking cure, Lacan maintained that the ambivalence of the hysterical revelation was not due to a vacillation between the imaginary and the real: the ambivalence was due to the fact that the utterance belonged to both registers. As he states in *Écrits*, "in psychoanalytic anamnesis, it is not the question of reality, but of truth," whereby past contingencies are re-collected and re-ordered in full speech "by conferring on them the sense of necessities to come."[24] Lacan defines the act of re-collection and re-ordering as the "assumption of his history by the subject, in so far as it is constituted by the speech addressed to the other":[25] this is a foundational moment for Lacanian psychoanalysis, dealing, as it does, a death blow to the intersubjective constitution of its Freudian predecessor.

Fundamental Concepts

The book has three parts. The first, "Fundamental Concepts," alludes to Lacan's Seminar XI, also known as the *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis.* Arguably his most influential work, *Four Fundamental Concepts* draws on four basic Freudian concepts – unconscious, repetition, transference, and drive – to arrive at unique formulations and

foundational ideas. This section examines the medical and intellectual history that (fore)shadows the Lacanian operational field and is often radically rewritten by it. Examining the genesis of Lacanian revolutionary psychoanalytic thinking in the works of Sigmund Freud, poets, and philosophers, in literature, clinical theory, and analytic practice, "Fundamental Concepts" provides the context (the "before" for the "after," if you will) of the profound impact Lacan has had in the interpretive humanities, and in the shaping of psychoanalytic discourse and a wider psychoanalytic culture. This part of the book contains four chapters, by Mladen Dolar, Anna Kornbluh, Tracy McNulty, and Dany Nobus, respectively. Mladen Dolar's "Voice after Lacan" examines the fundamental Lacanian concept of "voice." As Jacques-Alain Miller points out, psychoanalysis had been oriented by a diachronic scheme of object relations – the developmental stages defined by oral and the anal objects – until the "structural" turn ushered in by Lacan, which highlighted the unfolding of the unconscious in the structure of language.[26] The voice qua object, the object little *a* in the Lacanian algebra, is not to be found in the audible register. It is to be glimpsed – or heard – in the interstice of sense and presence, Dolar argues, and marks not their intersection but divergence. Voice, in Lacan's thought, is associated not with full presence, but with the negative entity of the subject. It is a leftover of the symbolic, its meaningless byproduct. The subject "emerges only in an impossible relation to that bit that cannot be present," Dolar argues in an earlier essay, titled "The Object Voice." "Only insofar as there is a Real (Lacan's name for that bit) as an impossibility of presence is there a subject."[27] Dolar's chapter in this collection is a further elaboration and provocation of the "almost nothing" of the hallucinatory and paradoxical object voice, as glimpsed through literary works by William Shakespeare, Italo Calvino, and Samuel Beckett.

Anna Kornbluh's "Freud's Return to Lacan" examines Freud's works as a corpus of language and a literary form to be worked through and rethought repeatedly. Scholars such as Juliet Mitchell and Jane Gallop have long asserted that only after reading Lacan can one read Freud and truly understand what Freud was saying. Lacanian theory is often interpreted as a "return to Freud," a return *to* the meaning of Freud, or a retrieval and reclaiming of Freudian doctrine that can itself be analyzed as a return *of* the repressed. Lacan's return addresses unresolved questions in Freud's writings relating to the ego and the subject of knowledge, the Oedipus complex, feminine sexuality, society, and law. That said, he does not exactly gloss or translate Freud: instead, Lacan symptomatically

repeats the untranslatability of Freud. Lacan's reinterpretation of Freud, or the repetition of Freud's own persistent reworking of psychoanalysis, makes for what Jean-Michel Rabaté calls "an endless task of rereading."[28] The chapter critically questions received ideas about Lacan as a Freudian as well as Lacan's reinvention of Freud. Freud after Lacan is "Freud plus language," Kornbluh formulates, defamiliarized, refined, and disfigured at the same time. The chapter pays attention to the symptoms and fictions in Freud's designation of the laws of psychoanalysis (as revealed in Lacan's rewriting), to its political unconscious and aberrant relationship to the social, all of which go beyond the schematic reductions or what Freud, in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, called the "artificial structure of hypotheses" constituting psychoanalytic thought.[29]

Tracy McNulty, like Kornbluh, discusses the Dora case and the dynamics of transference, but in a substantially different way. For instance, if in Kornbluh's chapter "transference" ushers in the intersubjective dimension of psychoanalysis, and its return to the social, in McNulty's reading transference is the expedient modality linking the imaginary to the symbolic, or "the complaint to the transference properly speaking (the address to the locus of the Other as the locus of knowledge)." McNulty's "Beyond the Oedipus Complex" addresses another crucial facet of the revisionism that defines Lacan's Freudian genealogy while also demarcating his departure from his disciplinary origin. In the seminars of the 1960s, in particular, Lacan had proposed that the function of the symbolic is to be sought not in the Oedipal prohibition. In Seminar XVII, for instance, Lacan called the Oedipus complex "Freud's dream," one whose universalism needs to be interrupted by the theory of the four discourses (the master's, the university's, the analyst's, and the hysteric's). Focusing on Lacan's reading of Freud's case study of Dora and his interpretation of Antigone, McNulty outlines the anti-Oedipal or feminine-Oedipal logic of Lacan's "Discourse of the Hysteric" as his manifesto of symbolic law. The chapter revives and refines the Lacanian definition of the "symbolic" as an enabling constraint that can usher in genuine "creativity, invention, and novelty," as McNulty puts it in an earlier work.[30] It also demonstrates the process of the "worlding" of psychoanalysis through literature, reminding us of a neologism coined by Lacan – "lituraterre" – meaning writing and/as erasure on earth, and the ways in which the subject creatively renegotiates the lack in the Other to articulate its desire and freedom.

Elizabeth Wright delineates two perimeters of Lacanian literary criticism, the pro and the anti: "criticism in the mode of Lacan and criticism

of and beyond the mode of Lacan."[31] Both bear testimony to Lacan's virtuoso reading of psychoanalysis with literature – the ancient classics, Shakespeare, Joyce, Kafka, Blanchot, and Duras, among others – and his extensive knowledge of literary genres, not just tragedy, comedy, and rhetoric, but also the essay and symposium forms. As the scholarship of Jean-Michel Rabaté, among others, has demonstrated, this essay implicitly claims that Lacanian psychoanalytic theory is not only a hermeneutic but a literary event in itself. Dany Nobus's chapter, on psychoanalysis and/as poetry in Lacan's late clinical paradigm, examines the similarities between the interpretive and analytic acts as they apply to poetry and psychoanalysis, respectively. If meaning-making in poetry necessarily involves a loss, a translation that is not-all, psychoanalysis provides an analogue of this lack in the impossible logic of the real, helping the analysand come to grips with the most valuable element of the treatment. Nobus draws on Lacan's reflections on poetry in public seminars, his response to the French essayist and poet Léon-Paul Fargue in particular, and his own youthful poetic dabbling to examine the "'field of language' in psychoanalysis" and "'the field of meaning' in the direction of treatment."

After Lacan

The chapters in Part II, titled "After Lacan," examine the chronological and qualitative effects of Lacanian theory. They show how the relevance and influence of this theory have been instrumental in linking psychoanalytic reason and treatment to literature, the arts, identity politics, and cultural production. The chapters by Merrill Cole and Todd McGowan explore Lacan's reinvention of the unconscious and its implications for the psychoanalysis of language and image, pertaining to their discursive organization as well as their relationship to phenomena irreducible to symbolization. They examine the deployment of Lacan, especially his writings on sexuality in the field of vision, power, and fantasy, in the psychoanalysis of cinema, and the development of queer theory. McGowan's chapter, and that contributed by Jodi Dean – a psychoanalytic reading of the party form – also shed light on the enormous impact Slavoj Žižek's version of Lacan had in the 1990s and beyond, and on Lacan studies after the high noon of the Slovenian School. The final chapter, written by Azeen Khan, reclaims Lacan's scattered speculations on race and poses the same as a vital contribution to critical race studies. Deploying the concept of jouissance, and the hatred of the Other's jouissance, Khan deftly

demonstrates how racism is the libidinal economy of being linked to a foreign body.

For Lacan, sexuality is indissociable from language and linguistic processes, and is a matter of speech and discourse, not biology. Sexuality, whose Lacanian definition, according to Elizabeth Grosz is "a pleasure marked by a lack," is the privileged field where desire is played out as a search for meaning, or particular meanings.[32] In fact, it could be argued that Lacanian theory foreshadows discourses of sexuality where the gender of object-choice is inconsequential. Lacan's seminar on "sinthome," which yokes the psycholinguistic dimensions of the imaginary, symbolic, and real, lays the groundwork for future elaborations of what Lee Edelman calls the economy of "*sinthom*osexuality," as it applies to the reinstallation of gender and transgender norms.[33] Whether it is in his critique of ego psychology and normative sexuality, his reconceptualization of the unconscious, or his imbrication of the death drive with jouissance, Lacan, Tim Dean has argued, makes psychoanalysis look rather queer.[34] The chapter by Merrill Cole offers a genealogy of the field of queer studies to examine its avoidance of Lacanian psychoanalysis despite several influential interventions, notably Tim Dean's *Beyond Sexuality* (2000). Focusing on repression – and queer theory's curious rejection of the discourse of repression – Cole offers a Lacanian reading of unconscious desire. This chapter offers a valuable overview of the disagreements between psychoanalysis and queer theory, and suggests alternative deployments of psychoanalysis that promise to disrupt the "commodified homonormative, heteronormative, and cis-gender continuums of the present." Cole reinforces his argument with a reading of the foreclosure of psychoanalysis in Paul B. Preciado's "postqueer" manifesto, *Testo Junkie*.

As Stephen Heath stated, cinema, especially after the psychoanalyzing of cinema by the Slovenian Lacanian School, is not merely "the vehicle of an exposition" but "a matter of experience."[35] The Lacanian meditation on optics in particular, and the centrality of the image and apparatus in Lacan's psychoanalysis in general, have both drawn on cinema and proved enormously influential for film theory. Metz turned to Lacan for an account of the "*other mirror*, the cinema screen,"[36] and cinema, in turn, has been widely used in discussions of imago, image, and identity, or image and identification in psychoanalysis. The chapter by Todd McGowan, which looks at film theory after Lacan, shows how the point of connection between psychoanalysis and cinema is often in the modality of shock as each commutes the unrepresentable into language, image, signs. In "Cinema after Lacan," McGowan analyzes the importance of