

ABSTRACTS AND BOOK REVIEWS

Jacques Lacan. *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book I: Freud's Papers on Technique 1953-1954*. Edited by Jacques-Alain Miller, translated with notes by John Forrester. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1988.

Jacques Lacan. *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book 11: The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis 1954-1955*. Edited by Jacques-Alain Miller, translated by Sylvana Tomaselli, with notes by John Forrester. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1988.

Catherine Clement. *The Weary Sons of Freud*. Translated by Nicole Ball. London & New York: Verso, 1987.

Lacan's central theme in his first two seminars is that the essence of the Freudian discovery is the decentering of the subject in relation to the ego; this places him in head-on conflict with American ego psychology, and allows him to develop what is to be his monumental lifework in clinical and theoretical psychoanalysis. Brilliant, never quite graspable, immense in their range, these two books are compulsory reading and re-reading for anyone concerned with Freudian theory and with its elucidation and reshaping by Lacan. His themes range from repression, resistance, narcissism, desire and object-relations theory, to questions concerning meaning, beyond the pleasure principle, the Freudian schemata of the psychic apparatus, and Edgar Allen Poe's *The Purloined Letter*. Irrupting through this, notably in the two magnificently developed passages concerning Freud's dream of Irma's injection (*Book 11, 146-71*) and the discussion of Sophocles's *Oedipus at Colonus* (*Book 11, 229-33*), are the great bloody flowers of a Lacanian

"truth": that life doesn't want to be healed, that putrescence is that to which we finally awake, and that life is to be characterized by its aptitude for death. By the `seventies the theory of the symptom, the centrality of *jouissance* and the place of the Real are to be issues of destiny for Lacan; the terror behind beauty that is to be displayed and that is not easy to assimilate, will occupy the place of the inferno and of paradise. These three, the Real, *jouissance*, the symptom: they are here in these two books, but Lacan has a lot of talking over the years yet to do, and we, from this late date in the `eighties, have a lot of reading and listening to do also.

In the United States there is a literary academy that discovered in the "letter" of Lacan what it thought was the "letter" it knew about through scholastic right. This academy also believed it had direct access through its authority to the meaning of, for example, metaphor and metonymy as Lacan used them, without having to give consideration to problems such as the place of the unconscious in Lacanian theory. Consequently a bastardized version of Lacan has emerged which has little concern with the core of his theory, the place of the unrealized in speech. I emphasize, therefore, that insofar as these translations are early, some readers may insist on turning Lacan into a post-structuralist. *Seminar XI* will help readers of Seminars I and II remember they are always confronted by that which speaks behind the ego, by that which is the lure in language. In this way, those who seek Lacanian teaching in the English-speaking world will be able to continue listening with attention to the non-parodied voice of the originator.

It is to those who profess to know but who do not have the desire to understand that Catherine Clement addresses her book, *The Weary Sons of Freud*, a book first published in 1978, three years before her *The Lives and Legends of Jacques Lacan*. In that book she shows her love for Lacan, for the idea of Lacan, as

well as her fascination with a Lacan depicted as sorcerer and shaman. In this earlier work, she directly attacked the intellectualization of the caring profession of psychoanalysis in France, for she is desperate to assert the duty of psychoanalysts, whom she saw in the 1970s as changed into dilettantes, word users, clowns, idiots caught in babble. Lacan, the teacher, hovers in the background, rounded on occasionally for some inadequacy, not quite implored; but while more than a residue, someone who has disappointed for a while; the great one who is and is not responsible for the self-aggrandizing disciples.

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This book was written because a flame was being smothered and turned into speeches, books, and bla bla bla; because that beautiful thing that Freud had fathered was becoming a masquerade (114): psychoanalysis was being led by those who only exploited the past in the interests of cultural prestige. It is, therefore, against these passionless analysts who are unaware that nobody has ideas of their own that Clement places Mme Victoire, a working-class woman who happened upon an analysis which lasted four years, and who developed that rare capacity to listen with the assenting loneliness that marks the true analyst. But Mme Victoire never was able to become an analyst, Clement argues, simply because she was a cleaning woman, and so set apart from the babbling intelligentsia.

At this moment in her work Clement looked away from the Parisian bourgeois fraternity-Georg Groddeck, a student of Ernst Schweninger, who developed his view of the unconscious as It in *The Book of the It* (1923) before he was acquainted with Freud (who came to use Groddeck's term It as the Id). It is the Groddeck who talks of pain with love in his voice, who addresses the toilsome business of living with the unconscious, to whom Clement here turns for wisdom. We can be grateful to her for her awareness of what Lacan named extimacy, but should keep in mind that the willingness to show others her symptoms belongs to an earlier period in her continuing work.

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David Macey. *Lacan in Contexts*. London: Verso, 1988.

In his preface to *Lacan in Contexts*, David Macey claims that "For a long time, the reader of Lacan has been faced with a stark dilemma: Total acceptance or total rejection" (p.ix). Macey then promises that "A number of contexts in which to read Lacan are proposed here in an attempt to go beyond the dilemma of acceptance or rejection" (p.x). Given Lacan's eclectic interest in numerous academic and artistic fields, a detailed account of the historical /cultural contexts which surround the formation and development of his teaching would undoubtedly be of great value. Unfortunately, this book fails to provide such an account. Despite his claim to the contrary, Macey himself never seriously attempts to step beyond the imaginary dilemma of total accep-

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tance or total rejection. *Lacan in Contexts* is a rejection of Lacan's thought masquerading as an attempt to situate Lacan within the milieu of his life and times.

For Macey, Lacan has nothing to offer linguistics, philosophy, pedagogy or feminism. In Chapter One, "The Final State", Macey argues that Lacan's work remains plagued by a number of hero myths which have haunted psychoanalysis since Freud. In Chapter Two, Macey claims that Lacan's remark that "The best image to sum up the unconscious is Baltimore in the early morning", made at the 1966 Seminar on structuralism at John Hopkins University, indicates Lacan's unacknowledged debt to Surrealism and that by subscribing to a Surrealist aesthetic Lacan remains tied to a fundamentally sexist iconography which

postulates woman as the mysterious Other. Macey accuses Lacan of overstating his debt to Saussure and of failing to enter into "any serious engagement with any rigorous linguistics" (p.x). In Chapter Four, Macey confidently claims that Lacan viewed philosophy merely as "a field in which tactical alliances can be formed and exploited to promote the Freudian cause" (p.86).

Yet what kind of context is Macey hoping to provide for his reading of Lacan? Is it an historical context? In Chapter One, Macey's distinctly hyperbolic prose informs us that during the early 1970's: "*Yale French Studies* introduces an element of intellectual terrorism in its "French Freud" issue, and *Screen* refines the climate of terror by failing to resolve the contradiction between its supposed pedagogic aims and its reliance upon decontextualized theories for the furthering of its theoretical project" (p.17). Lacan and *Screen* have been accused of many things, but refining a "climate of terror" takes the proverbial cake. Did intellectuals at the time truly feel that they were being terrorized by a film magazine and an issue of *Yale French Studies*? *Lacan in Contexts* fails to resolve the contradiction between its supposed aim of stepping beyond the stark dilemma of acceptance or rejection and its reliance upon pseudo-historical claims for the furthering of its own critique of Lacan. The book's strength lies in its presentation of a detailed *Curriculum Vitae*, which serves as a useful overview of the major events in Lacan's career.

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Macey, David, *Lacan in Contexts*. London and New York: Verso, 1988.

Concerning his first "context"-early French psychoanalysis and 20th-century psychiatry-Macey calls attention to Lacan's participation in the work of the Societe Psychanalytique de Paris, and to Lacan's alleged debts.

In his chapter on Lacan's linguistic turn in the "context" of rigorous linguistics one could take issue with almost every point made by Macey. Macey tirelessly traces the "inconsistencies, divergences, and contradictions" (123) in Lacan's references to linguistic science, in order to show that these references amount to little more than a confused "fascination" (123) with language.

Finally, Macey places Lacan in the "context" of feminism. He attempts to show that the Lacanian motif of the phallus is another version of "anatomy is destiny," despite Lacan's attempts to distinguish between the phallus and the penis. Macey writes that, "Feminism, and indeed any sexual politics, is constantly trivialized and dismissed [by Lacan] as pathological" (209). Here as elsewhere Macey radically *underestimates* the range of the "pathological" for Lacan, and the extent to which psychoanalysis *belongs* for Lacan to its pathologies.

In the section on linguistics, he somewhat naively accuses Lacan, Heidegger, and Derrida of grounding their arguments in an etymologizing mysticism of the origin: ". . . there is a common core to the etymological and para-etymological arguments deployed by Lacan and Heidegger. The philosopher frequently fractures or segments words into supposedly significant elements, thereby anticipating and authorizing one of the more irritating mannerisms of Derrida and the deconstructionists, and there is a definite parallel there with Lacan's 'separation' conceit" (142). The passage is amusingly typical: Macey condemns the mistaking of mere arbitrary phonemic similarities for signified origins, but his condemnation is vehiculated by a superficial similarity ["there is a definite parallel there"] between fracturings of words that in each case signify appeals to origins for Macey, originarily or finally.

Macey measures Lacan by the yardstick of a pre-psychoanalytic, scientific rigour itself defined by the exclusion of figurality (as the impropriety of the proper) from reason, not to mention desire, lack or *jouissance*. Macey attempts to legitimate the tone of exasperated resentment that pervades his book by repeatedly denouncing an "ana-

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logical reasoning" that frustrates his apparent desire for Cartesian clarity, for the mastery that would result from a final dissolution of all overdetermination. But how does one establish, at an absolute distance from all "analogical reasoning," the belonging of a particular text to a particular "context"? The answer that Macey most often provides is this: by the statement of "parallels" or "similarities". How does the establishment of "parallels" historicize, how does it place into a "context" or put into "relief"?

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Psychosis and sexual identity: toward a post-analytic view of the Schreber case. eds. David B. Allison, Prado de Oliveira, Mark S. Roberts, and Allen S. Weiss, Albany, New York: SUNY Press, 1988. 343pp. + bibliography + index; paper \$16.95, cloth \$49.50.

Psychosis and Sexual Identity-a collection of twelve essays on psychosis, psychoanalysis, Schreber, and sexuality, and of several of Daniel Paul Schreber's previously untranslated poems, scribbles, and documents on the Schreber societies-claims for itself a post-analytic view. That is, this anthology claims a critical view that focuses on "the kinds of considerations that were simply not available to Freud," concerns with the symbolic/metaphorical role of the father, with linguistics, with the (often complex and more often unstated) relationship between psychosis and sexual identity on the one hand and post-structuralist interpretation and feminism on the other, and finally with possible issues of writing and aesthetics that accompany the Schreber case and Schreber's *Memoirs* (6-7). This specific kind of post-analytic view, the editors inform us in the anthology's introduction, although it traces its roots back to Freud through Lacan's work on psychosis, both in his *Seminaire III, Les Psychoses*, and "D'une question preliminaire a tout traitement possible de la psychose," purports to move away from a specifically psychoanalytic investigation of psychosis, rather, placing the analysis of psychosis "within the ambit of a number of other disciplines" (9). But, if in the introduction the editors claim to move from the psychoanalytic to the post-analytic, the essays in this anthology do not necessarily allow for so easy a conceptual shift. At their best, these essays foreground their difficult position in relation to psychoanalysis, though I must add that the difficulties of this position come forward in

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contradictions in and among the essays as much as it does in a general critique of the psychoanalytic base that these essays assume.

My contention is that the psychoanalytic value of an attempted move beyond Freud and Lacan in the name of psychosis and sexual identity as well as the value of this shift for "other disciplines" must be placed in question when approaching this collection, and placed in question more radically than the anthology itself thematically allows. For, a refusal to question this relationship may well return theories of psychosis, analytic and post-analytic, to what Lacan called in 1959 the *status quo ante*.

The post-analytic exploration of psychosis is most valuable in this anthology when it forces a radical reconceptualization of psychosis in relation to sexuality and to sexual identity. This should not, however, be surprising. After all, Freud's case history revolves around Schreber's paranoid speculation that it

would be lovely (*recht schon*, in German) to be a woman submitting to intercourse. Several of the essays focus on this loveliness and the transexuality that follows in order to open up quite provocative readings of the relationships between psychoanalysis, sexuality, and sexual identity. For example, Janine Chasseguet-Smirgel begins with this loveliness to develop an aesthetic of transexuality that ultimately calls into question [her conception of] Lacanian psychoanalysis, "whose entire edifice rests upon a single pillar: the phallus" (166). Or, as another example, Prado de Oliveira analyzes the Schreber case in order to show how the institution of Freudian psychoanalysis itself rests upon a repression of masculine homosexuality that returns re-organized as an analytic of feminine homosexuality. Or, Alphonso Lingis, whose insistence on the erotics of being leads him to make such bold and playful statements as "all sex is lesbian" in-order to subvert [what he understands to be] the universalizing drive of the phallic law (140). These examples, and there are others, speak directly to psychoanalysis as a theory of the formation of sexual identity.

But I raise the question of the value of post-analytic insights and speculations for psychoanalysis and "other disciplines" not just in order to show that several of the essays in this anthology hold themselves up as a critique of psychoanalysis. For, this is not the only use of psychosis operating in these essays. Another of the currents running throughout this collection is the placement of psychosis in relation to transformational politics. For example, the first section of the anthology, entitled "Psychosis," which begins with several fairly traditional Lacanian explications of psychosis, ends with a very provocative

essay, "The Institution of Rot," by Michel de Certeau, who argues that the Schreber case offers points of convergence between psychoanalysis and mysticism. Schreber's revelation-that he must become a woman to preserve the Order of Things-functions like a mystic's discourse in that both proceed as "a play of identities in the empty space left open by the original name, which is foreclosed, *expired*" (91). This foreclosure of the original name, the paternal metaphor, collapses the possibilities of metaphor for both the psychotic and the mystic, for whom the law, or the Word, performs. The Word then erupts from the real as the being that Schreber accepts as his own to maintain the Order of Things, in the same way that the mystic accepts being transformed into God's prostitute in order to maintain the truth of the living Word: *Luder!* Filth! Slut! Voice no longer aims at the transgressive satisfaction of desire, metonymically displaced outside of the law. Rather, "a name, *Luder*, dictates to the subject what he must be in order for the institution to be, in order for him to believe what it shows of itself, in order for it to adopt and recognize him" (94). The name that seems to emerge from the real for both the psychotic and the mystic becomes important for Certeau because of its analogy with the structure of state repression. Psychoanalysis warns both the psychotic and the mystic, both determined to speak "maternal indeterminacy" in relation to the signifier "not to speak from that place, precisely because of what comes from it" (89). What comes from this place on the level of the state is the institutionalization of torture. Just as the psychotic and the mystic must perform and be the name of the living Word, so must the victim of torture perform and be the instrument that performs and is the truth of the state. Almost exactly opposed to Certeau, Jean-Francois Lyotard celebrates the introduction of the political with the statement "use me," a simple statement: "it is not mystical, but materialist. I'll be your imprint, your very tissues, you be my orifices, palms and membranes. Let's get lost, let's leave the power, the foul justification, behind, through the dialectic of redemption" (152). With the statement "use me," Lyotard sees Schreber escaping the rule of the master, Flechsig, whom Lyotard calls the tensor par *excellence*, and entering into a joyous libidinal flow through a celebration of anal eroticism.

Whether psychosis is a structural position to be explored or a weak link to be celebrated opens quite quickly questions of post-modern political theory, not the least of which would be what happens to psychosis as it moves from under the aegis of psychoanalysis as a potentially curative practice to the ambit of other disciplines.

Finally what this anthology does is quite impressive. It collects together twelve sometimes pedagogically interesting, sometimes controversial, and often contradicting essays, along with a series of Schreber's previously untranslated writings, all of which come together not so much as documentation on psychosis or as theoretical analyses, but as an opening of the field of psychoanalysis to other analytics. I do not think, for example, that many of these essays in this collection would be of great use to a clinical psychoanalyst, with the exception of the first three essays, by William Richardson, Antonio Quinet, and Octave Mannom, all of which are relatively traditional explications of Lacanian theory of psychosis. The anthology seems, rather, to aim at an audience more felicitous with post-structuralist theories of language and of politics. It is, in other words, an interesting collection of essays for literary theorists, for, at its best, the anthology comes forward as a tantalizing and provocative invitation for more.

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John Muller and William Richardson, editors. *The Purloined Poe: Lacan, Derrida, and Psychoanalytic Reading*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988.

With its elaborate footnotes, overview, outline, and secondary sources, this volume enters the arena of useful academic introductions. Lacan's seminar, on "The Purloined Letter" published in the *Ecrits* (1966), translated into English in 1972, continues to receive much attention in the United States. This attention, especially from literary critics, arose out of Derrida's essay on Lacan's use of Poe's story. Bringing together Derrida's attack and related essays in one volume *could* serve as a useful pedagogical tool. Unfortunately, the actual excerpts are incomplete. Indeed, the editors encourage readers to seek out Derrida's complete article in *The Post Card*, and they do not include Lacan's four-part appendix to his Seminar, although they briefly discuss those interventions in the overview. The volume includes articles by Barbara Johnson, Irene Harvey, Jane Gallop, John Muller, and others. Indeed, since Lacan first gave his seminar in 1956 writers have repeatedly glossed what they take to be *linguistic* issues. What this volume does not add to contemporary discussions of Lacan's work concerns his

graphemes and mathemes in the untranslated appendix. In that sense, for students of Lacan today, the volume's strength resides in the *missing* section.

What happens to Lacan's theory with the addition of the appendix? Stated historically, what happens to the "letter" between 1956 and 1966? Stated topologically, what happens between the Schema L and the Chain L? In the later version, the letter functions as a residue, a caput mortuum, and a cause of desire that implies structure (e.g., the minister as an obsessional neurotic). As an *objet a*, Poe's letter "signifies the cancellation of what it signifies" (*Ecrits*, 33). As Bruce Fink explains in "The Nature of Unconscious Thought or Why No One Ever Reads Lacan's Postface to the Purloined Letter," (a preface to an article on the same topic), this function of the letter proves "the absence of that which it presents [. . .] and killing what it presents in the very process of representing it". This little letter-object "a", perhaps for the adultery of logical paradoxes from the Real against the Law of our signifying chains, is as Fink writes, "the excluded letter (or letters) around which the chain is obliged to revolve-and which thus becomes, in some sense, a new center, an absent or missing center."

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