

# Introduction

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Why do we—or at least some of us—continue to desire psychoanalysis? How might that desire contribute to the project of interpreting, perhaps even changing, the world in which we find ourselves at the dawn of a new millennium? What, finally, is the relationship between the desire for psychoanalysis and the domain of expressive culture, a relationship that the title of this collection assumes in its yoking of “psychoanalysis” with the enterprise of “cultural criticism”?

These questions in part reflect longstanding concerns among cultural critics, but they have a special urgency in the current intellectual climate, for there has recently been much talk of the death or irrelevance of psychoanalysis. The proclamation has come from many quarters. Psychiatrists have trumpeted new discoveries in biochemistry that they say render quaint such concepts as repression, displacement, transference, unconscious motivation, and even the mind itself (as opposed to the brain). They contend that we must confine our discussions of mental activity to empirically verifiable facts, implying that the intangible quality of “the psyche” renders it no more than a metaphysical leftover of religious belief in the soul. Perhaps most damningly, these critics point to the development of powerful psychotropic drugs, especially for the treatment of depression, as proof of the obsolescence of Freud and his followers. For if depression is simply the effect of a genetically influenced chemical imbalance, and if this imbalance can be redressed through the diligent application of Zoloft, who needs talk therapy of any kind, let alone of the kind that can take years and perhaps cost thousands of dollars?<sup>1</sup>

A similar form of skepticism has come to prevail in the humanities and social sciences. In the latter field, the criticisms leveled are closely related to those in psychiatry. Freudian thought is disreputable, on this view, because the existence of unconscious processes cannot be empirically verified.

Or else—and sometimes the two criticisms are paired—the problem is with the non-falsifiability and testability of psychoanalytic claims, with the fact that the hypothesis of unconscious intentionality means that no instance of human behavior remains insusceptible to psychoanalytic interpretation (Grunbaum; Salter). As in the case of psychiatry, both complaints reveal a strong empiricist bias. What “is” here is what can be seen, measured, quantified, manipulated; whatever cannot be (seen, measured, etc.), by definition, does not exist. Ironically, this ontology excludes “conscious” every bit as much as “unconscious” intentions. Empiricist arguments against the unconscious are therefore self-refuting.

Moreover, the emphasis on “testability” in such contexts refers, above all, to the production of quantifiable, repeatable results. These are good things if one wants, for example, to launch a rocket or measure recidivism rates for juvenile offenders. But the psychology presupposed by such requirements is of necessity normative, since the aim of science and social science is to produce models that are as widely applicable as possible. This is the psychology of institutional normalization, industrial management, and criminology. It is, in short, the reified psychology of the subject as object of taxonomical knowledge. In this sense, it is by definition at odds with the methods of the talking cure. Free association, the interpretation of dreams as described by Freud, and the practice of the case history are tied to the unrepeatability of the signifying chain as enunciated by a specific speaking subject. In the last analysis, this logic of the signifier, its irreducible particularity and structure of difference, precludes the talking cure’s results from being reduced to the repeatable, and thus from becoming the basis of a normative science or social science.

The ebullience with which humanists from the sixties to the eighties turned to psychoanalysis as a tool for exploring the intersections between individual experience and large social forces has also dampened considerably. But the reasons for this are more complex than in the case of the “hard” and social sciences. In part, they have to do with the extravagance of critics’ initial investments in Freud. One is often struck, for example, by the similarity in tone of a critic like Frederick Crews, who has made an entire second career out of his hostility to Freud, and those ex-Communists or fellow travelers whom we now associate with the God-that-Failed syndrome.<sup>2</sup> For these critics, psychoanalysis was indeed like a religion; having once ferociously idealized it, they were led by the revelation of cracks in its edifice to denounce it with the zeal of the convert. They are in this sense perhaps best seen as disillusioned apostates, as thinkers for whom the

discovery of frailty in a God they had trusted led (for psychoanalytically explicable reasons) to that God's unequivocal repudiation.<sup>3</sup>

The reasons for the initial "overestimation" of psychoanalysis are, however, worth exploring. They were inextricably tied to the radical project of the sixties (a "decade" that, of course, lasted into the seventies), and in particular, with the feminist insistence that "the personal is the political." Psychoanalysis provided adherents of this view with an exhilarating method of investigation that promised to reveal how domination was internalized and lived at the deepest subjective level, and thus to make the self and body central sites for political struggle. Many of the earliest inquiries of this sort were politically and theoretically naïve; they were also often based on questionable interpretations of Freud. Others, however, were extremely sophisticated and politically fruitful. In the American context, the latter included Herbert Marcuse's *Eros and Civilization* (1955), Norman O. Brown's *Life Against Death* (1959),<sup>4</sup> and such radical feminist interventions as Nancy Chodorow's *The Reproduction of Mothering* (1978) and Dorothy Dinnerstein's *The Mermaid and the Minotaur: Sexual Arrangements and Human Malaise* (1976). Britain witnessed, in roughly the same years, the emergence of a sophisticated Marxist psychoanalysis at the film journal *Screen* as well as the publication of Juliet Mitchell's groundbreaking *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* (1974). And in France, too, as Sherry Turkle has shown (chap. 3), a highly idiosyncratic, Lacanian-inflected discourse of militant intersubjectivity was central to the euphoria that gripped participants of the student uprising in May 68—and that seemed for a brief, incantatory moment to prophesy the surmounting of destructive social differences. (Lacan himself expressed reservations about the uprising, in a manner consistent with what Joseph Valente has called his "notorious allergy to institutionalized political commitments" [153].)

This joining of psychoanalysis with radical politics had, of course, a distinguished history, despite Freud's own political conservatism and his pessimism about projects of human liberation.<sup>5</sup> In the United States in the early twentieth century, for example, those most receptive to "the new psychology" were as often political and cultural radicals as they were doctors or clinicians.<sup>6</sup> These included cultural critic Walter Lippmann, heterodox socialist writers and editors Max Eastman and Floyd Dell, feminist activist Mabel Dodge, and anarchist Emma Goldman (Goldman enthusiastically attended Freud's lectures at Clark University in 1909).<sup>7</sup> All found in Freud the prophet of a revolt against bourgeois sexual repression; all saw this revolt as a crucial part of the broader social revolution, which promised both the liberation of personality and the making of an equitable social order.

The more recent turn toward psychoanalysis had, we are suggesting, similar roots. It expressed in part that radical optimism accompanying the widespread sense in the sixties that the world was being born anew—and born in such a way as to shatter all barriers to personal fulfillment and social solidarity. That many have come to see this aspiration as hopelessly “utopian” is a measure both of the movement’s frailty and of the almost unimaginable power of the forces ranged against it. In light of that power, it’s perhaps unsurprising that some turned away from the psychoanalytic enterprise, as they did from the political one, with the violence peculiar to the disappointment of hopes that were once so central to one’s way of being that losing belief in their fulfillment leads one to scorn those very hopes.<sup>8</sup>

The failure of sixties radicalism is important for another reason as well. As many commentators have noted, it led to the displacement of political hopes into the realm of discourse—to an emphasis on discursive interventions and the disruption of linguistic hegemonies—and to an academic writing increasingly divorced from concrete political struggles. This is emphatically *not* to say that “theory” or academic work more generally always marks a retreat from politics. Our point is rather the opposite of this. Many humanists turned to theory and to academic pursuits as a way of trying to understand the forces that had thwarted their political projects, and so to build a sturdier basis for political intervention.

Perhaps the most formidable challenge to psychoanalysis emerged from this self-scrutiny, and that is the challenge of historicism. For if there is one thing that most humanists who came to resist psychoanalysis share, it’s a critique of the insufficiently historical character of psychoanalytic methodologies. Psychoanalysis, they argue, ignores historical determinations; it sees historical phenomena as the straightforward effect of psychic processes; it attributes those processes to the social “organism” as if that organism *were* a person; it fails to take account of the historically specific character of the data on which Freud’s hypotheses were based; and therefore, it at once universalizes and transhistoricizes such phenomena as the Oedipus complex, the castration complex, repression, and the contents of the unconscious—or in a more Lacanian vocabulary, alienation into the Symbolic, symbolic castration, the mirror stage, the Real, and so on.

The post-sixties version of this critique was most trenchantly developed in two quite different institutional contexts. The first was the Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham during Stuart Hall’s tenure. The outlook of Hall and his colleagues was explicitly socialist; their project was animated by a need to integrate semiotic and psychoanalytic approaches into a critique of contemporary culture, while (1) refusing

to hypostatize that culture into an irresistible monolith, and therefore (2) leaving open a space for individual agency and for subcultural reinscription of dominant meanings. Much of the felt urgency for this project came from what the Center saw as the growing hegemony of Lacanian theory (sometimes in its Althusserian form) in cultural politics on the Left—and in particular, at *Screen*.<sup>9</sup> The journal had developed a powerful analysis of Hollywood’s “cinematic apparatus”; its contributors saw that apparatus as a dominant mechanism for the subject’s captation in the Imaginary, which they tended (at this early stage) to associate unproblematically with dominant ideology. (That is, ideology was for them a function of the illusion of plenitude that came from disavowing lack.) Normative sexual difference, heterosexual identity, and nationalist ideology were all enforced through the formal codes of a narrative cinema that had its origin in D. W. Griffith: through the cuts and seamless edits that hid the mechanism of filmic production from view while suturing the (implicitly male) viewer into the position, not so much of a central male character, as of the cinematic apparatus itself. This act of suturing turned the viewer into the unseen seer and master of a universe over which he retained omnipotent (if Imaginary) control. It engorged him with an Imaginary plenitude that depended on the cinematically-facilitated disavowal of Symbolic castration, emblemized by the invisibility of the *cuts* in Hollywood film.

What Hall and his colleagues found objectionable in this theory was its perceived abstraction and structural determinism.<sup>10</sup> *Screen* theorists, they argued, had little interest in the actual subjectivity or experience of real viewers; “the viewer” was a purely structural position into which each and every viewer could not but be sutured. This conceptualization made it difficult to imagine a *resistant* reader of film—a viewer who wasn’t fully “interpellated” by the film’s effort at ideological induction. Short of a successful and total disruption of the Hollywood system itself, then—short of its supplanting by an experimental cinema that would be equally, if oppositely, deterministic in foreclosing Imaginary disavowal<sup>11</sup>—there seemed to be no possible progressive response to film, no chance even of an internally conflicted response, and indeed, in some sense, no spectatorial interiority at all (since viewers were “positions” rather than people).

Furthermore, the equation of ideology with the Imaginary and with the disavowal of Symbolic castration appeared to render the *content* of ideological belief largely irrelevant. All ideology was on this view subtended by, if not equivalent to, an illusory sense of plenitude; the formal mechanisms producing this sense could seem at times more important than the substance of the ideologies elaborated by a given film. The logical telos of

*Screen's* position was thus that even films with politically progressive content were reactionary if their style was conservative. A perspective that critics from the Frankfurt School to Jameson had used to legitimate formal experimentation against the conservative instincts of Lukács and orthodox Marxism had become a repressive mandate that ignored both the concrete experience of the viewer and the semantic richness of the filmic text (Lukács; Jameson, *Marxism and Form*; Adorno, "Commitment"). Since, moreover, the ideological content of any film invariably had Symbolic components—i.e., it was articulated in visual and verbal language—the question of *which* Symbolic order the *Screen* theorists urged one not to disavow became urgent. It made little sense to overcome disavowal and "accept" induction into the Symbolic if the Symbolic in question was entirely patriarchal and fully implicated in consumer capitalism.

The second context in which a sophisticated historicist critique of psychoanalysis developed after the sixties was that of French philosophy in the seventies and eighties—in particular, the strand of historically based philosophical inquiry initiated by Michel Foucault. Here, the critique was aimed less at the determinism of psychoanalytic theories of subject formation than at the pretension of psychoanalysis to have discovered (rather than produced) a truth about human beings. Foucault, that is, attacked what he called the "repressive hypothesis" proposed by Freud. He argued in *The History of Sexuality* that human beings are not in fact constituted by a sexuality they have repressed; it's rather the case that, at a specifiable moment in time, a range of social practices that included psychoanalysis led people to develop a sense of themselves as having deep subjective realms by encouraging them to talk incessantly about the sex they were said to have repressed. Such a critique called into question the transhistorical reality of human sexuality by insisting on its discursive production. The discursive production functioned, in turn, to facilitate social control. By encouraging patients to talk about their hidden sexual secrets, and by disseminating throughout the culture an elaborate vocabulary for doing so, psychoanalysis furthered what Foucault considered the quintessential project of modernity: the project of colonizing individual selves with an impersonal discursive power, whose incitement to speech merely guaranteed conformity to the new "common sense" that our true selves are our deep selves, which are in turn our sexual selves.

Psychoanalysis was thus for Foucault, or at least for a strand of his late thought, at once an institutionalized self-delusion and a technique (or ruse) of power. It not only mistook for ontologically real what it had in fact invented—a deep subjectivity whose "truth" is sex; in doing so, it also helped

naturalize and render opaque the modern self's "voluntary" docility, its self-subjection to the emergent regime of (sexual) knowledge, and thus its conformity to norms that, because of this self-subjection, no longer required external coercion (*Sexuality*, Part Two).

Both these critiques seem to us important and in some respects persuasive. The acceptance of neither one of them *requires* us to repudiate psychoanalysis altogether, however much the Foucauldian critique has sometimes been read in that way.<sup>12</sup> Their effects on this side of the Atlantic, however, have not always been benign. A striking irony of both traditions is how much of a *historical* character has been lost in the process of their migration. The Birmingham position made its way to the States in the form of "cultural studies," and in particular, in the virtual domination of American Studies programs by an historicist, antitheoretical, and even antimethodological method. Birmingham's critique of psychoanalytic abstraction in the name of reclaiming the agency of cultural "decoders" has turned into a suspicion of theory as alien to those decoders' lives—and thus, as reactionary elitism. The result has been a mode of analysis that declines to universalize psychic processes, to be sure, but at the cost of rigorously avoiding the question of how historical, cultural, and psychic determinants *interact* in the encoding and decoding of discrete cultural forms. Indeed, the result has been too often to discard altogether any usable theory of the subject and consequently of the social determinants of subjective experience.

The fate of the Foucauldian critique in the United States has proceeded in a different but parallel fashion. This critique migrated largely into literature departments by way of the University of California at Berkeley (where Foucault taught in 1975 and then again in 1983–1984), and became what would later be called the New Historicism.<sup>13</sup> The cultural analyses produced under this banner, like those of Foucault in his archeological and genealogical periods,<sup>14</sup> have tended to be studiously "synchronic" and thus evasive of problems of historical causation. They have also been mostly uninterested in the psyche as a domain with even a relative autonomy from others: all domains are equally "discourse," and all serve power equally, so that individual psyches become mere conduits for a carceral force that functions in the modern episteme to produce the illusion of that psyche's freedom. Finally, though not as adverse to abstract thought as the proponents of cultural studies, the neo-Foucauldians' suspicion of narratives of liberation has led them to avoid any serious engagement with the powerfully historical and utopian versions of psychoanalysis developed by such figures as Adorno, Marcuse, and Jameson.<sup>15</sup> A great deal of potential value for cultural criticism has been lost in the process.

It is worth remarking here that Foucault's texts as a whole exhibit a much greater ambivalence toward psychoanalysis than his American followers allow. *Les mots et les choses* argues, for example, that psychoanalysis is not one of the human sciences (and thus not merely a mechanism for the exercise of power/knowledge), but rather a mode of inquiry into those sciences' condition of possibility (385–86). Similarly, at the time of Lacan's death, Foucault declared that what Lacan had "sought was not a process of normalization, but a theory of the subject" (*Dits et Ecrits* 4 204).<sup>16</sup> And in his 1982 course at the Collège de France, he directly stated that only two twentieth-century thinkers had anticipated his inquiry into the relation between the subject and truth: Heidegger and Lacan (*Herméneutique* 180–82). On the basis of these and other comments, Christopher Lane has persuasively shown that Foucault's engagement with psychoanalysis was, while undoubtedly conflicted, serious and sustained in ways the New Historicist position consistently (though not uniformly) ignores.

These institutional critiques of psychoanalysis have been accompanied by a widespread consensus about the depthless character of contemporary, postmodern experience. The terms of that consensus are well-known. Postmodern culture, we are told, is characterized by the obsolescence of narrative as a meaningful way of organizing experience; by a corollary liberation of self from "depth" and from the claims of history (both personal and social); by fragmentation as a self-dispersive and wholly surface phenomenon; and by a knowing affirmation of identity as itself a series of recycled quotations, simulations without originals, bits of borrowed and flattened materials that neither "express" interiority nor bear any relationship to a lived past. That the triumph of such a view has coincided with intellectuals' renewed suspicion of psychoanalysis should, we believe, give us pause. For though the political implications of postmodern culture are no doubt multivalent, it seems to us undeniable that such a culture works to produce modes of subjectivity that, in their sociopathic lack of affect,<sup>17</sup> are hospitable to the work of global capitalism. As Fredric Jameson has noted:

The new or postmodern development . . . remains progressive to the degree to which it dispels any last illusions as to the autonomy of thought, even though the dissipation of those illusions may reveal a wholly positivist landscape from which the negative has evaporated altogether, beneath the steady clarity of what has been identified as "cynical reason." (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 323, see also 12)

The price of postmodern demystification, in other words, is the capitulation to a consumer culture in which one knows oneself to be implicated—



from which one knows thought has no “autonomy”—but whose negation becomes inconceivable once one grants this implication.<sup>18</sup> The depthlessness of postmodern culture is merely a symptom of this general effacement: the eradication of any space, whether psychic, cultural, or political, from which one might articulate opposition to the current social order.<sup>19</sup> To dispel the illusory transcendence of the given is thus to sanction a cynical (because knowing) cooperation with the coercions of late capitalism.

The hostility to the psyche among intellectuals risks, in this context, lending authority to an amnesiac culture of depthlessness whose disavowed condition is the machiadora and the literally “projected” sweatshops of the third world. As Derrida writes in his meditation on Marx, “no progress permits us to ignore the fact that there has never on earth been a time when, in absolute numbers, so many men, women and children, have ever been enslaved, starved, or exterminated” (*Spectres de Marx* 141, our translation). For this reason alone, it appears to us worth trying to reclaim the critical power of a mode of thought that honors the materiality of psychic suffering in the name of enriching our expressive projects and our material analyses of culture.

The need for this reclamation is rendered especially urgent by recent history. The conference on which this volume is based was conceived before September 11, 2001, but the events of that day and the U.S. response to them have created a moral and political climate that cries out for psychoanalytic understanding. This is perhaps most evident with respect to the torture of Iraqi prisoners by U.S. soldiers at Abu Ghraib. In a grotesque inversion of the libratory psychoanalysis discussed earlier, that torture seems to have been based on a “psychological” understanding of Arab beliefs and practices. The Pentagon, the military, and neoconservatives close to the Bush administration circulated Raphael Patai’s *The Arab Mind* in the months leading up to the invasion. This book is, according to one source, “probably the single most popular and widely read book on the Arabs in the U.S. military.”<sup>20</sup> The lessons it teaches are crudely racist and psychologically dehumanizing. Seymour Hersh has called attention to two ideas that especially impressed and influenced U.S. policymakers: that Arabs are responsive only to violence, not to rational discourse; and that they have a special vulnerability where matters of sex are concerned, since they have been taught to think of nudity and sexual activity as sources of shame (38–39). With these views in mind, and with the hysterically reiterated cry of a “war on terror” in one’s ears, it’s a very short step to exploiting the vulnerability of “the Arab mind” for the sake of “national security,” as well as to chronicling the sexualized torture in photographs that can be used as blackmail in the gathering of “information” (“If you tell us what we need to

know, we won't show the pictures to anyone else"). The question of links in the chain of command becomes almost irrelevant in such a climate. By denigrating earlier concerns over prisoner mistreatment as "isolated pockets of international hyperventilation" (Hersh 17), Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld transmitted, in public and therefore to our troops, precisely the message privately conveyed in Administration memos dismissing the Geneva Conventions as "quaint" and suggesting that any strictures against torture would impinge upon the president's boundless authority as Commander in Chief.<sup>21</sup>

The questions raised by such a scenario are of an urgently psychoanalytic kind. They include the question of where the psychic sanction for humiliating the Other comes from; how that authority is transmitted (if not by direct order); on what cultural understandings the authority is based; the pleasure involved in instrumentalizing and torturing others; how this pleasure might be related, not merely to the Imaginary jubilation that comes from mirroring one's leaders dominative wishes, but to the much more terrible sense that in this mirroring something gets lost, some vital ideal of the nation dies; and how these largely *psychic* questions relate to such *social* ones as the invasion's imperialist motivations, its world-hegemonic and economic implications, the problems of a "volunteer" army that disproportionately conscripts minorities and the poor, and the relationship between masculinist violence and the increasing militarization of our society.

Finally, the example of Iraq is useful in suggesting how a genuinely social psychoanalysis may sometimes find it fruitful to pursue the most apparently asocial of Freud's concepts. In a speech delivered at the signing of a \$417 billion defense bill, George W. Bush made the following slip: "Our enemies are innovative and resourceful, and so are we . . . They never stop thinking about new ways to harm our country and our people, and neither do we."<sup>22</sup> The President's difficulty with his native tongue is sufficiently well-known that it might seem fruitless to belabor it. And yet this slip is unusually alarming. To take it seriously *as* a slip is to conclude that, in a post-cold war, post-bipolar world, a world as complex as the one we now live in, the pursuit of a doctrine of preemptive war that's rooted in theological paranoia (you're "with us or against us") may be a displaced expression of the death drive. The very weapons whose purchase the speech honors are perhaps the instruments of our own destruction. They are weapons deployed for our own protection that will instead rebound upon us, since the objectification of an "enemy" against whom missiles must be launched secures the anger of those already impoverished and rendered desperate by our foreign policy, and whom we then purport to "free" with Apache heli-

copters and F-16s. If the Freudian death drive means anything it is this: there are many ways to commit suicide, and a nation that must have enemies to strike is perhaps after all not without remorse for its historical crimes. The president's slip reveals, however, that the inner-directed destructiveness of remorse (i.e., the guilt and self-beratement) is in this case unconscious; it reveals itself only in parataxis because it is usually deflected outward onto an Other whose aggression our president solicits as punishment for our national crimes, while simultaneously believing himself an unwilling victim of the Arab people's dark, inscrutable hatreds.

The importance of reclaiming a psychoanalytic method that is fully social and culturally critical should be clear from these examples. And yet there is a curious sense in which that reclamation has already begun—or in which psychoanalytic thought has never been fully stifled. We have only to look around us, indeed, to find that assumptions derived from Freud continue to exert a peculiar fascination in nearly every corner of our culture. A psychoanalytic psychotherapy serves as a central, organizing principle for the HBO hit *The Sopranos*. The culture of TV advertising, for all its reliance on nonnarrative techniques and its cult of the reified image, betrays everywhere its belief in an unconscious to be solicited and ideologically bound through images of phallic potency and sexual satisfaction.<sup>23</sup> And the “virtual war” that seemed at first to take place on TV and so to implicate neither minds nor bodies has given way to wrenching stories about the trauma of battle, the radicalization of American families through the psychic suffering caused by war, and the devastating results for veterans of having been granted license to kill by a society that institutionally disowns the damage inflicted upon them when they exercise that license.<sup>24</sup> In a world where videotaped beheadings, performed in the name of a transcendental father, are among the most frequently visited sites on the Internet; where reality television stages spectacles of sexuality, abjection, and sadism for a global audience; and where the appeal to unconscious, inchoate fears and desires constitutes the express stock and trade of advertising executives and political consultants alike: might not psychoanalysis constitute the untranscendable horizon of our current predicament?

The media's concern with psychic suffering and the continued appeal to unconscious desire are, of course, as often exploitative and sensational as they are culturally critical. The same cannot be said for the persistence of psychoanalytic thought in intellectual circles. For here, too, rumors of Freud's death turn out to have been greatly exaggerated. One could in fact persuasively argue that, throughout the period of psychoanalysis's ill-repute, our *most* influential critics and theorists have made an engagement with

Freud, Lacan, Klein, and others indispensable to their inquiries. In the humanities, what serious work is done today that does not, at least tacitly, assume the existence and centrality of a concept of the unconscious, of repression, of desire, and of the sexed subject? Judith Butler, Kaja Silverman, Slavoj Žižek, Toril Moi, Leo Bersani, Jacqueline Rose, Fredric Jameson, Gayatri Spivak, Edward Said, Homi Bhabha—these have been among the most significant contributors to a vibrant intellectual life in the United States over the last two decades. None of them employs psychoanalytic categories dogmatically. Many profess other, perhaps more personally significant intellectual allegiances, and some have offered detailed critiques or modifications of psychoanalytic concepts. And yet the work of each is inconceivable without psychoanalysis itself, with which each has engaged in a persistently fruitful dialogue. Furthermore, each of these thinkers has embarked on that engagement in the name of anatomizing historically specific cultural and social institutions, deploying psychoanalytic theory with the critical audacity necessary to cultivating radical forms of dissent. A psychoanalytic cultural criticism has remained in this way central to intellectual discourse even as the trends we have described have worked in part to marginalize it. There is perhaps no greater confirmation that the radical possibilities unearthed by the talking cure remain relevant for us today than this intellectually inexpugnable residue (of those radical potentials).

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Thus do we desire analysis, and as (cultural) analysts, we desire. The pun in our title—the desire both of and for analysts/analysis—comes from Jacques Lacan, who for the thinkers just mentioned is the pivotal, inescapable figure. (This is true even for those who, like Bersani, can in no sense be called “Lacanian.”) One could point to any number of reasons for this centrality. These range from the undoubted appeal of Lacan’s anarchic intellectual omnivorousness to the suggestion that Lacan has offered the most serious effort to “return” to Freud by revising him, emphasizing those aspects of Freudian thought that have turned out to resonate in our intellectual moment. For us, however, the most persuasive reason remains that offered by Jameson in the seventies (“Imaginary and Symbolic”). Jameson argued that at a moment when Freud had been all but fully domesticated by a revisionary ego-psychology in American psychoanalytic circles—at a moment, too, when psychoanalytically inclined humanists had become frustrated by Freud’s political pessimism and transhistoricism—the Lacanian emphasis on induction into language as the condition of human subjectivity promised a psychoanalytic theory that was fully social, and therefore political. For what could be more social than language? Is language not by def-

initiation “communal,” the very medium of intersubjective relations? If one could then trace the formation of human subjects to the process by which a language that’s necessarily “other” and prior to those subjects is internalized *by* them, one might begin to understand how an entire set of social meanings concerning gender, race, and class position were consented to and claimed as one’s own. One might start to see how linguistically encoded social ideologies are inscribed at the deepest levels of the self, precisely inasmuch as each one of us internalizes the “desire of the Other” in and through the Other’s *language*—a language we did not choose, yet to whose protocols we must accede if we are to participate in the symbolic exchanges so central to any community of rational, “sane” human beings.

Lacan’s work has of course been criticized—not least by Jameson himself—for failing to make good on this promise of a psychoanalysis that was fully social and politically critical. A central impulse of this volume is to recover and reactivate the promise itself. The essays that follow do so largely by engaging and seeking to extend the ethico-political dimensions of Lacan’s thinking. We want, therefore, to trace in brief the lineaments of this dimension. To do so, it is crucial to indicate that, for the Lacan most centrally concerned with ethics, the emphasis on language as a realm of socio-symbolic exchange is inseparable from the concept of *desire*.

Lacan codified both the vitality of the talking cure (as exemplary symbolic exchange) and the potential dangers of that cure in the concept of “the desire of the analyst,” a term in which, as is often the case in Lacan, the genitive is both objective and subjective. This concept, while directly aimed at the practicing analyst, as all of Lacan’s teaching was, has clear implications for the cultural critic as well, and it will repay our time if we linger a moment over the details of his formulation. In the analytic situation as formulated by Freud and Breuer in their initial *Studies on Hysteria*, the analyst both becomes the object of desire, and his or her desire is also necessarily solicited. This is the phenomenon known as transference and countertransference. Lacan formulated this concept in his reading of Plato’s *Symposium*, which opened the seminar on *Le Transfert* (VIII). It is not coincidental that this seminar followed immediately after that on *L’Éthique de la psychanalyse* (VII): the talking cure is centered on the double demand that characterizes the transferential relationship; and the ethics (as well as the politics) of analysis is necessarily implicated in this complex interplay between the desire for the analyst and the analyst’s desire (Chaitin 180–84). Indeed, the analytic situation is precisely the moment in which our own, individual ideological and libidinal investments come face to face with those of the other whom we seek to understand, to liberate, and ultimately to aid to

realize his or her desire in a way that must fundamentally speak to our own (otherwise, why would we become analysts at all?) without becoming our Imaginary double. The ethics of analysis and the ethics of interpretation, then, whether clinical or cultural, demand a radical openness to the desire of the other and a simultaneous refusal of a false objectivity, of a disavowal of our own inescapable demand.

More precisely, in the analytic situation, the analysand, through transference, metaphorizes the analyst into the place of his or her desire. The analyst comes to occupy the position of that desire, and his or her refusal to comment directly on the associative chain of the analysand serves as the surface on which the analysand in turn comes to recognize the nature of his or her own desire. The danger comes precisely in the possibility—indeed the necessity—of countertransference, that is, in the process whereby the analyst's own desires are solicited by the discourse of the analysand. Like Socrates in his relation with Alcibiades in Plato's *Symposium*, the moment the analyst yields to these solicitations, the analytic situation is reversed and the doctor becomes the patient, the beloved the lover, and the chain of association is short-circuited. By the same token, the moment the analyst refuses the countertransference, the moment Socrates refuses the affective relationship, then all hope of Alcibiades' pursuit of the good per se is lost, the transferential relationship is broken (Lacan, *Séminaire* VIII 185–86).

It is thus only through a profound knowledge of the nature of his or her own desire that the analyst can serve as the mirror for the analysand and that the countertransference can be turned into a means of investigating, rather than satisfying or frustrating, the desire of the other. It is only through an understanding of the fundamentally empty nature of his or her desire that the analyst can serve in this role (Lacan, *Séminaire* VII 347–51; *Séminaire* VIII 127). That emptiness, however, is not a void or absence, but a refusal of every fetish, a fundamental openness: the recognition of desire per se (Žižek 131; Gurewich 369; Freiburger 225–26). As Diotima teaches Socrates in the *Symposium*, Eros (Desire) can never be any specific good (beauty, wisdom, wealth, happiness), but can only be the process of the pursuit of the good per se. Transference, metaphoricity, and substitution are thus not means to an end, but the nature of desire itself (Julien 120). Suffering is the product of a refusal to accept this pursuit or of its fixation on a single object that in the end can only disappoint. Like Socrates, the analyst must be able to lie on the couch with Alcibiades and arise in the morning unstained.

On the level of cultural criticism, the desire of the analysts is precisely the attempt to collectivize this process. It is the refusal of the authoritarian

discourse of the master and ultimately of the didactic discourse of the university as well. It is a commitment to a radical democracy that refuses all reified fetishes (the flag, the party, the constitution, capitalism, the class struggle), but at the same time recognizes that metaphorizations and fetishes are inevitable and necessary, that desire must be solicited and concretized both personally and socially in order to be realized. The transference, the search for a subject supposed to know, cannot be escaped (Žižek 168). The analyst is always desired and always desiring. But the cultural analyst must respond with a relentless and ascetic negativity<sup>25</sup> that reveals the illusory nature of each fetishistic substitution, each neurotic displacement, without yielding to the temptation of countertransference, of imposing one's own fetishes, one's own object of desire, as a totalizing discourse of mastery.

Analysis is both the product of and an answer to suffering. It demands an ethics of care (Silverman 29–50) and listening, a loving Socratic asceticism, and a relentless criticism of all attempts to arrest the discourse of desire, to normalize it, to cede on the possibility of its realization by accepting the decreed range of acceptable social goods as the definition of our being. It is for this reason that we continue to desire analysis. The essays in this volume all demonstrate this level of care, criticism, and analytic rigor. They refuse the mantle of mastery even as they insist on their desire as a desire of and for the desire of the others. Each essay represents an open-ended commitment to hear the suffering that lies at the heart of the analytic situation and to make articulate its desire in a world that seeks to silence the demand of the other, whether through violence or intellectual, political, and cultural terrorism.

Part One, "Psychoanalysis and the Future of Cultural Criticism," addresses a question that arises organically from the interdisciplinary character of psychoanalytic criticism: why study *this particular* object or practice, the domain of "culture" at all? If the phenomena one finds in this process are after all *psychic* phenomena, why introduce a mediating object in the first place—why not simply study the mind? To legitimize this move by saying that literature, for example, is a product of the mind and that it therefore repays psychoanalytic attention is merely to restate the problem. For such a response risks reducing literary texts to the psychic phenomena they "contain" or "express" or (in a more contemporary vernacular) "expose," "enact," and "perform." The specificity of literary representation then becomes epi-phenomenal in ways that repeat the epistemological error characterizing the hunt for sexual symbols among an earlier generation of psychoanalytic critics.

To justify what we do as *cultural* critics, then, especially as we move into a new millennium whose "common sense" includes a suspicion of

psychoanalysis and of humanistic inquiry, we need a more nuanced understanding of what cultural texts do that other texts do not. Paul Allen Miller's "Sartre, Politics, and Psychoanalysis: It Don't Mean a Thing if It Ain't Got *das Ding*" provides one version of such an understanding. Drawing on Sartre's well-known question, "*Qu'est-ce que la littérature?*," Miller challenges the caricature of Sartre so common among contemporary intellectuals, in which his "literature of engagement" becomes a euphemism for literature as propaganda. According to this caricature, Sartre's call for a literature that's "engaged" is understood as the demand for a linguistically unambiguous indictment of the dominant social order. Miller focuses instead on Sartre's insistence that literature is an *act* that entails the *unveiling* of a fundamentally new object. Attending to the Heideggerian echoes in this formulation, he links it to the Lacanian concept of the Real, suggesting that what literature does is to enact the unveiling of a Real "object" beyond yet subtending the historically particular Symbolic order in which the literary text is produced and consumed. The exposure of this nonsymbolic object takes place paradoxically *through* language; it is the effect of a linguistic concentration peculiar to literary representation, in which the deepest recesses of a language are mined for the internal contradictions whose repression and radical forgetting make possible a culture's symbolic universe.

These contradictions are, in Miller's view, what author and reader collaborate to "unveil" in any literary engagement. The political value of Sartre's call-to-arms resides for him less in its appeal to action than in its insistence on the critical capacity of literature as what Miller calls a "practice of the letter": a linguistic practice that reveals what that very practice has had to negate and deny in order to be comprehensible within the system of dominant meanings in which it participates. Miller demonstrates this theoretical argument through exemplary readings of four literary texts: Juvenile's *Satire* 1, Stéphane Mallarmé's "Sonnet en—yx," Mark Leyner's "The Young American Poets," and Sartre's own *Les chemins de la liberté*. He asks us to hold in dialectical tension the concrete historical instances in which these texts were produced, on one hand, and their intervention in the transcendental, interlocking registers of Symbolic, Imaginary, and Real, on the other. One of the essay's most suggestive contributions is in this sense to distinguish between these registers' historical *persistence* with respect to the *form* of their interaction and their historical *variability* with respect to their social "content."

In "Psychoanalysis, Religion, and Cultural Criticism at the New Millennium," Henry Sussman, most squarely of all our writers, responds to the



twin questions that motivated this volume: why do we continue to desire psychoanalysis, and what should its role be in the cultural criticism of the new millennium? Sussman's wide-ranging essay offers a tour de force overview of many of the most immediate challenges facing both analytic thought and contemporary culture. He contends that the most basic categories of the analytic clinic—"recapitulation, *revenant*, reproach, resolve, revelation, apology, complaint, complicity, manipulation, transference, projection, and fragmentary and always provisional healing"—remain central to all contemporary forms of cultural analysis, so central that we no longer even recognize their nature or their provenance. We desire analysis, Sussman persuasively argues, because it is the condition of possibility for clarity and comprehension of the very fabric of our existence. These terms represent not only the all but Kantian categories of our tortured individual psyches but also the working assumptions of our collective institutions "whether defined by kinship, ethnicity, religion, or occupation and class." The condensation, displacement, and return of repressed desire is now the explicit fabric of our complex, interrelated, and discontinuous postmodern existence.

Therefore, the role of psychoanalysis in the cultural criticism of the new millennium, Sussman contends, should be to provide for a great communal transference, a kind of collective metaphorization, clarification, and in the last instance (but as Althusser reminds us, the last instance never comes) realization of our desires. Cultural analysis is to offer a means of reflection, a series of feedback loops and interventions. One specific area that Sussman proposes for analytic intervention is that of religion. In a world of competitive fundamentalisms, of projection and disavowal in the name of an all-powerful, castrating father, we must ask what psychoanalysis can contribute to our religious understanding, beyond impotent denunciations of the future of an illusion. Psychoanalysis, Sussman argues, must take religious speech and religious desire seriously if it is to have a role in fashioning a meaningful collective discourse in the new millennium, if it is not to capitulate to the "official religion" of commodified intolerance and self-satisfied moralizing. Sussman closes with a finely nuanced reading of the film *Far from Heaven*, showing how the psychoanalytic critic is able to offer a carefully calibrated response to the latter's dramatization of the racism, homophobia, and anticommunist hysteria that constituted the official religion of classical postwar American culture.

The essays in Part Two, "Psychoanalysis and Collectivity," focus on what Freud once named "group-psychological" processes: the psychic forces that bind human beings together into groups, as well as those that thwart or undermine—or even destroy—group formations. Among Freud's

most influential accounts of these forces is that of *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930).<sup>26</sup> There he focused on what we might call the intrapsychic legacy of group-psychological dynamics. He argued that the very condition of human groups—of civilization itself—is the renunciation of innate aggression and the sublimation of directly sexual Eros into “brotherly love.” The problem, in his view, is that the aggression renounced toward others is redirected toward the self, in the form of guilt and through the agency of the now-internalized authority figure, the super-ego. The price of civilized relations is thus a permanent and ever-intensifying unhappiness: the more one refrains from acts of aggression, the more intensely one wishes to commit them; and the more intense the wish, the more severely does the super-ego punish the psychic impulse toward renounced acts.

The essays in Part Two draw upon Freud’s discussion of these matters while seeking to resist his political pessimism. In “Lacan’s Four Discourses: A Political Reading,” Slavoj Žižek traces the lineaments of a new kind of political community based upon the collectivizing of the analytic relation. The desire of the analyst, as Žižek notes, is in fact a fundamental historical fact, discerned by Lacan in figures ranging from Socrates to Hegel. It is not an illusion, not something that can be set aside in the name of either a specious scientific objectivity or an opiated spiritual quietism. For this reason, as Žižek notes, psychoanalysis is the enemy of all forms of new age Buddhism<sup>27</sup> and pseudo-spirituality that, through the discourse of the master, seek to put aside or quench the passions. Psychoanalysis, rather, seeks to rouse them, to incite us to insist on our desire and not to settle for any substitutes. It “asserts a violent passion to introduce a Difference, a gap in the order of being.”

Such a position has direct political and personal consequences. If, as Žižek contends, the “climax of analytic treatment is a momentous insight into the abyss of the Real,” which nonetheless leaves us to return us to our established social roles the next morning, then we must ask: is the talking cure just a one-night stand, or does it raise issues of deeper collective significance? Žižek’s answer to his self-posed question is an emphatic affirmation of the political significance of analysis, and he proposes to demonstrate the nature of this significance through a reading of Lacan’s four discourses: those of the master, the university, the hysteric, and the analyst. Lacan’s goal, he argues, is to produce an analytic collective whose discourse is not sustained by any claims of mastery or authority but by the very surplus of enjoyment that figures the *objet a*’s relation to the Real. The four discourses thus come to map the “properly LENINIST moment of Lacan.”

Žižek undertakes his reading of the four discourses as a strategy of collective action through an examination of Seminar XVII, *L’envers de la*

*psychanalyse*, which constituted Lacan's response to the events of May 1968. In this seminar, Lacan was concerned primarily with "the passage from the discourse of the Master" to that of the "University as the hegemonic discourse" of capitalist modernity. This discursive shift signaled a move from ecclesiastical and monarchical forms of domination based on sovereignty to new forms founded on scientific and technical reason. Lacan's analysis here anticipates Foucault's analytics of power in Volume One of the *History of Sexuality*. But the analyst, unlike the priest and his heir, the therapist, does not seek confession and does not offer empathy; rather, through his specific discourse he offers the *objet a* to the split subject (\$) by means of his originary signifier ( $S^1$ ), which in turn engenders the signifying chain ( $S^2$ ), by means of which the analysand traverses the fantasy screen and encounters the Real. As Žižek summarizes in *Looking Awry*:

The *discourse of the analyst* is the inverse of that of the master. The analyst occupies the place of the surplus object [*objet a*]; he identifies himself directly with the leftover of the discursive network. Which is why the discourse of the analyst is far more paradoxical than it may appear at first sight: it attempts to knit a discourse starting precisely from the element that escapes the discursive network, that "falls out" from it, that is produced as its "excrement." (131)

To collectivize the desire of the analyst, then, is precisely to collectivize this ec-centric discourse as a form of political practice.

Deneen Senasi's "Signs of Desire: Nationalism, War, and Rape in *Titus Andronicus*, *Savior*, and *Calling the Ghosts*" expands the inquiry into collective psychic processes by focusing on the relations among nationalism, trauma, and gender. Senasi juxtaposes two debates that have rarely been brought together: the debate surrounding the definition and dating of nationalism, and the debate about trauma and witnessing, especially in relation to the problem of historical (as opposed to purely personal) trauma. The first of these allows her to address the "transnational" and transhistorical features of nationalism. Drawing on recent historians who have challenged the equation of nationalism with modernity, Senasi argues that nationalistic enterprises both predate the modern period and have a theorizable consistency. They are based in aspirations toward cultural homogeneity that emerge (paradoxically) in response to perceived threats to that homogeneity. Furthermore, the aspiration toward homogeneity has historically entailed the symbolic appropriation of women as tokens in the narrative of nationalist identity. This appropriation robs women of linguistic

agency, diminishing their capacity for self-narration in direct proportion to the increase of their value in masculine narratives of the state. Since, moreover, the demand for cultural homogeneity requires that women incubate and transmit the seed of a given “nationality,” the woman’s body becomes a central battleground on which the nation is preserved or sullied. For an ethnic “other” to rape “my” woman is for him to engage in an act of violation that, though aimed principally at my “nation,” threatens the structures of patriarchy as well, while making the woman an abjected instrument in a battle fought principally between men.

Senasi’s innovation in the debate about trauma emerges from her analysis of nationalism. The centrality of *witnessing* in recent trauma theory, she argues, works at the expense of the *victims* of trauma. For while it may be true that a dispassionate facilitator is necessary to enable women victimized by nationalist violence to narrate the tales of their violation, Shoshana Felman and (especially) Dori Laub have tended to see the witness herself as a heroic figure through whom alone the victim’s narrative is able to take form. In this sense, the theory of witnessing instrumentalizes the female victim of trauma in the name of the witness’s aggrandizement. Senasi’s essay derives this critique from an analysis of Mandy Jacobson and Karmen Jelini’s documentary *Calling the Ghosts* (1996)—a film about women raped in the Omarska concentration camp during the Bosnian war. One of these women, Jadranka Cigeli, is a striking antithesis to Laub’s model of the victim as someone without memories and with no will to speak on her own. “While Jadranka considers remaining silent, she ultimately makes another choice. . . . Moreover, [this] decision . . . is entirely her own; it is not mediated by a listener but instead appears to come directly from her own memories and cognizance of the trauma she has survived. In this way, the film implicitly emphasizes the agency of the survivor and her sense of self-possession in both the decision to speak and the account she narrates.” The documentarian’s act of witnessing becomes, in this context, a collaborative act, one that subordinates the project of bearing witness to the desire and knowledge of its female subjects.

Part Three focuses on the recently renewed question of “Psychoanalysis and the Author.” This question has been reopened on the “other side,” so to speak, of poststructuralism, by critics and theorists concerned to reground their analyses in complex forms of human sentience. Those engaged in this regrounding neither abandon the poststructuralist critique of an internally coherent subjectivity nor ignore the social and discursive forces that decenter that subjectivity. Rather, they argue that the critique of subjectivity can and should be enriched by an attention to subjective