

On the role of speech in psychoanalysis: Revisiting Lacan's 'Function and Field'

Derek Hook

Abstract

A number of underutilized concepts in Lacan's "Function and Field of Language and Speech in Psychoanalysis" are examined with an eye to rendering them accessible and practicable to analysts from outside the Lacanian tradition. The concepts of empty and full speech are discussed, along with the notions of the subject of the unconscious, and speaking as itself a mode of intersubjectivity. Attention is afforded the future-oriented mode of psychic temporality that Lacan argues pertains to psychoanalytic practice (that of the future anterior tense, the standpoint from which analysands situate themselves in respect of what they "will have been"). These concepts are then linked to technical initiatives—such as punctuation (the "editorial" role the analyst plays in reference to the analysand's speech) and scansion (the use of suspension, interruption, or cutting to highlight facets of that speech). These techniques can be read as extensions of Freud's fundamental rule of free association insofar as they aim to disrupt defensive ego narratives, engage unconscious processes, and draw analysands' attention, in a potentially transformative manner, to their speech and what it does.

Introduction

In August 1953 Jacques Lacan buried a time capsule. Just weeks prior to the formal beginning of his annual Seminar, on the eve of a trip to the Eternal City, where, on the 26th of September, he would deliver the celebrated *Rome Discourse* - a broadside aimed at the prevailing orthodoxies within the international

psychoanalytic community - Lacan completed his landmark essay, *The Function and Field of Language and Speech in Psychoanalysis*. *Function & Field* is an immensely rich and condensed text, at once a kind of manifesto – the Magna Carta of Lacan’s contributions to psychoanalysis, as Muller & Richardson (1982) put it – and a blueprint for the next decade of Lacan’s teaching. This document represented a turning-point for Lacan, marking as it did, a clear separation between the beginnings of his teaching proper and his prior writings, which were then consigned to the status of his antecedents.

While *Function & Field* is frequently cited in the secondary literature, it contains much that remains recalcitrant, untimely, in need of further excavation. It is, as Verhaeghe (2020) has suggested, an under-studied document, whose full significance has yet to be realized. Hence the idea of a time capsule: many of the ideas encrypted in this text have still not, 70 years later, been properly explored, unraveled, utilized, particularly so outside of the domain of explicitly Lacanian schools of practice. The aim of this paper is to excavate a series of the more oblique, under-utilized or just plain counter-intuitive concepts pertaining to the role of speech within *Function & Field*, and to thereby render them more accessible - and practicable - to theorists and clinicians alike. In what follows, I introduce a variety of perspectives that Lacan develops on this topic, perspectives which, in turn, led

to technical initiatives, many of which can be read as extensions of Freud's most elementary technical procedures. While Lacan will bring much intellectual firepower to the task of rethinking the role of speech, his is not merely a theoretical exercise: it has direct clinical implications. As Lacan puts it: "Bringing psychoanalytic experience back to speech and language as its foundations is of direct concern to its technique" (2006, p. 239).

Facilitating speech

Lacan wastes little time, at the outset of *Function & Field*, in advancing a prospective solution to the myriad problems which had, in his view, beset post-Freudian psychoanalysis by the beginning of the 1950s. Language and speech were being increasingly neglected as topics of study and technical consideration, so much so that they were by then considered of secondary importance relative to the increasingly dominant notions of (preverbal) fantasy, libidinal object relations and countertransference. Psychoanalysts, lamented Lacan, had attempted to "abandon the foundation of speech" (2006, p. 202). Analysts, at this point in the historical development of psychoanalysis needed, as Bowie puts it, "to be reminded that the unconscious is available ... only in the form of language," particularly so

given the temptation “to think of the unconscious as a place, a force ... a collection of wordless drives or as-yet unworded thoughts or ideas” (1991, p. 48). Hence the Lacanian insistence that the unconscious is expressed in - and *should thus be analytically accessed through* - speech and language, and not by means of reference to something ostensibly more primal or substantial such as affects, the domain of the pre-verbal, the dynamics of (counter)transference, libidinal objects relations or fantasy, all of which can, after all, only be rendered intelligible via speech. Lacan thus insists that psychoanalytic concepts “take on their full meaning only when oriented in the field of language and ordered in relation to the function of speech” (p. 205).

This criticism plainly stated, Lacan offers a first conceptualization of how intersubjective speech works. Speech, he says, always supposes an answer or response, even if it is met with silence. This is certainly the case in the analysand’s “empty speech” (*la parole vide*), a type of speech which constantly seeks the affirmation of others as a way of providing the illusion of fullness or wholeness to the ego. If an analysis remains stuck in empty speech, that is, in the ego’s chosen mode of self-narrativization which defensively and narcissistically repeats its own preferred idealized images of itself to others, then it is unlikely that the unconscious will be heard or that any change will occur. However, while empty speech can

hinder the proper beginning of an analysis, it cannot be avoided; it in fact entails a useful prospective trajectory. How so? Well, the fact that speech is always received or apprehended by an Other highlights that different "hearings" are possible, that what is *not* being said might also be considered; in this sense the speaking subject is making "an appeal to [a] truth"... "beyond the emptiness of [their] words" (p. 206). And yet, at the same time, the analysand does everything they can to avoid a confrontation with (unconscious) truth, preferring instead to aim a series of demands upon the figure of the analyst, attempting to utilize them in the transference, as a means of affirming their own imaginary (ego-sustaining) identifications. This imaginary aspect of meaning-making – of empty speech – engenders illusions; it functions to create effects of completeness, consistency, and ego-coherence. We can understand then the clinical agenda Lacan presents us with, one in which the analysand becomes aware of the imaginary dimension of their experience of themselves (their self-impressions, images, idealizing objectifications, etc.) as it can be called into question by their symbolic productions/enunciations as subjects of speech. The course of an analysis helps to challenge and question the various forms of misrecognition (or *méconnaissance* [mis-knowing, misconstruing, "me-knowing"]) that the ego produces and to do so through the undoing medium of speech in its symbolic dimension. Analysis can thus

be construed as a working through of the fixations of the ego: "The analyst's art ... involve[s] suspending the subject's certainties until their final mirages have been consumed" (Lacan, p. 209).

This gives us a distinctive way of thinking about free association: the fundamental rule is precisely a means of disrupting the ego-affirming, self-narrativizing functions of egoic empty speech. In this way the speech of the analysand might be disconnected from its imaginary contents. Psychoanalysis is thus not a matter of (imaginary) introspection; it is a (symbolic) inter-subjective procedure in which the speaking subject realizes their status as divided precisely when one addresses one's speech to a transferential Other. We might distinguish here between the self-reflexive patient taking on the conscious task of exploring what the ego allows them to "discover," and the more startling moments in which speech, encouraged beyond the re-affirming confines of what is already known, enunciates instances of an Other desire not so easily accommodated by the ego.

Lacan can thus be said to be expanding the terrain of free association with his conceptualization of full speech: full speech (*la parole pleine*), says Lacan (1988), is "speech which aims at, which forms, the truth ... [it is] speech which performs" (p. 107). It is the speech of the subject's realization, in which – as in the case of a lapsus, a slip of the tongue – a truth of desire is enunciated, and by means of which

the speaking subject “finds himself, afterward, other than he was before” (1988, p. 107). At such moments, the speech of the analysand reveals something Other than the imaginary intentions of the ego; words, signifiers, well-worn phrases, figures of speech, discursive tropes, etc., always ultimately being derived from the symbolic order, from the Other, invariably signifying more than what the speaker aims at.

The analyst can facilitate such moments by means of interventions, interruptions or, as Lacan puts it, by “propitious punctuation” (2006, p. 209), the most dramatic of which is probably *scansion*, which refers to forms of suspension, interruption, or cutting involved in the analyst’s precipitous interruptions or endings of sessions. Scansion, for Lacanians, deserves the status of a psychoanalytic intervention. (A detailed description of punctuation and scansion follows below). One begins to appreciate then how the technical suggestions Lacan proposes – particularly those of punctuation and scansion – can be viewed as extensions of Freud’s fundamental rule, at least insofar as they disrupt the hegemony of egoic self-narrativization by breaking up empty speech and prompt instances of full speech.

A further counter-imaginary strategy should be noted here: the imperative to attend to the *materiality of the signifier* as opposed to the *signifieds* (that is, the meanings) in the speech of the analysand. There are various ways of emphasizing

this distinction, by pointing, for example, to the well-known Freudian difference between what was actually *enunciated* by the speaker as opposed to what they had consciously intended to convey. Our natural every-day tendency, of course, is to listen in a very different way: we filter the speech of others, delimiting the relevant meaning of what is said according to who is speaking, in what context, to whom, and in view of a given prospective agenda. Lacan, by contrast, encourages us to listen more widely, to listen outside of such confining factors of intelligibility, to eschew the “filter ... of the subject’s discourse,” instead “bringing out from the start the three or four registers on which the musical score constituted by the subject’s discourse can be read” (p. 210). Having briefly noted two of the analogies at work here – analyst as reader, analysand’s speech as a type of text – we can extend Lacan’s broader metaphor: as analysts we should avoid focusing on the obvious melody that we are presented with and attend to the many other instrumental elements making up a piece of music, including that which typically fades into the background, the countermelodies, the contrapuntal effects.

We might likewise highlight here the attempt to attend rather to the “ribbon of sound,” the “sound pattern” (to use the linguistic terminology of Saussure (1974), that is, *paraverbral features of speech*, as opposed to the semantic units within a given piece of speech (Fink 2004). This results in an interesting inversion:

the *surface* of speech – so easily dismissed as superficial – is often far more telling, more "substantial," than the apparent depths of supposedly unconscious *meanings*. Rather than being fixed at the level of imaginary meanings (*signifieds*) the analyst attends to signifiers, as they might be mobilized and "speak" by means of a variety of signifying connections and associations. This means attending to what is said *sounds like*, is suggestive of, rhymes with, what micro-phrases it contains, is homonymous with, gives idiomatic expression to, such as, for example, "Formica" sounding like "For Michael" (Miller 2011), how reference to "a setting sun" might invoke also a "setting son," or how a dream scene picturing "too much baggage" might give voice to the well-known figure of speech. Such a shift in analytic listening practice allows us to better grasp the polyvalence of the spoken word and prompt full speech. As Benvenuto & Kennedy (1986) stress: full speech can best be reached by intervening at the level of the signifier, rather than through (imaginary) meaning. It is for this reason that Lacan urges analysts to "listen for sounds and phonemes," and to be attentive also to "pauses, scansion, cuts, periods and parallelisms" (2006, p. 471).¹ Once again, we might detect an extension

¹ One might question why an analysand paused, broke off, or suspended their speech at a given point, prompting them to finish the thought. Likewise significant are abrupt changes of topic or the analyst's need to move and terminate a given account. Parallelism refers to successive verbal constructions, to a connection of meaning through an echo of form, the repetition of phrases, words or sounds for a rhetorical effect ("Veni, vidi, vici", for example, or "In for a penny, in for a pound," "No pain, no gain").

of a Freudian technique here: attending to the materiality of the signifier is a natural ally to Freud's technical requirement of the analyst's free-floating attention ("*Gleichshwebende*"), which is itself, of course, the counterpart of – perhaps even the condition of possibility for – the analysand's free association.

The subject of speech

One way of consolidating these ideas of practice is to suggest that the analyst is in fact listening not so much to the *ego* of the analysand (conveyed in the signifieds/meanings of their empty speech) as to the ever-multivalent signifiers of *the subject of the unconscious*. That is to say, the analysand's imaginary "*moi*" (their "me") is useful only insofar as the "*je*" (the "I" as the speaking function) is adequately highlighted. Drawing attention to the discontinuity between the *moi* and the *je* proves to be a vital facet of the analytical work. In this way the subject eventually arrives at the formula Lacan cites: "I was this only in order to become what I can be" (p. 209). Or, as we might rephrase: "I was and am an imaginary ego, a *moi*, but my fate is not to remain this; it is instead to realize, via the speaking function of the *je*, the subject I can come to be." This is itself, of course, a reformulation of the Freudian declaration, "*Wo Es war, soll Ich werden*", which, in

marked contrast to how it is often read, that is, in ways which center the ego as mastering the id, is afforded a very different articulation by Lacanians: “Where It (the unconscious) was, there I (the subject) shall come to be” (see Neill 2014).

We should note the temporal dimension to this theorization (something we will return to) and pause for a moment over the somewhat unusual opposition between *ego* and *subject* being asserted here (after all, these are two terms which are often considered to be synonymous). The Lacanian notion of the subject is as distinctive as it is counterintuitive, and it is radically incommensurate with the ego. This subject, says Bowie, “is no longer a substance endowed with qualities, or a fixed shape possessing dimensions, or a container awaiting the multifarious contents that experience provides: it is a series of events within language, a procession of turns, tropes and inflections” (1991, p. 76). Such a conceptualization refutes the assumption, commonplace to much psychology, of a reflexive subject – such as the participant of psychotherapy intent on gaining insight – who might directly access the underlying elements of their subjectivity. The Lacanian subject – subject understood here not as a kind of psychological substance, but as speech events, points of slippage in enunciation – does not exist outside speech, beyond the communicative activity of utilizing signifiers, and it lacks the minimal continuity

or permanence that underlies many of our basic assumptions as to what "subjectivity" is.²

The Lacanian subject is not a permanent or constant entity, it is an episodic, or vanishing phenomena. It is the subject-as-event which, like the unconscious itself, fades and resurfaces, proving not just elusive but essentially discontinuous. This subject is not in fact an entity at all, certainly not in any substantial sense. It is rather a flash, a pulse, a spark, a type of truth-possibility. Utterly contingent on the productions of speech that, paradoxically, it itself produces, this subject is at once constituted *in* and *as* speech. In this sense the subject encompasses an irreconcilability: it is the disjunction evinced between *the act of speaking* (enunciation) and *what is spoken* (statement), two facets of speech which can never quite be fully reconciled. At once something that is constituted (by speech) and self-constituting (in speaking) this subject-as-irreconcilability is nothing other than the subject of the unconscious. It perhaps helps to reiterate here also that in Lacanian terms the unconscious is best approached as a series of symbolic

² Interestingly, the implication here is that a sense of subjective continuity, permanence, and identity-across-time are largely *imaginary* in nature in much the same way that impressions of a coherent, whole, substantive sense of self is imaginary, based, in other words, on images the ego identifies with. While the ego's use of imaginary identifications surely goes a long way in this regard, we should not ignore the role of the symbolic operations (such as those of identity-markers (gay, straight, CIS-gendered, Black, Latinx, etc.), various naming-functions (how one is referred to in varying social situations), the factor of symbolic/reciprocal relations, roles and obligations, and the marking of dates, events and periods (anniversaries, deaths, retirements, etc.) across the span of a life). These operations likewise enable a binding of (symbolic) identifications across time.

operations; the unconscious is not a repository of contents, a storehouse of id-impulses and memories, but is instead – as accords with the idea that ‘the unconscious is structured like a language’ – a processing system which produces (metaphoric) condensations, (metonymic) displacements, rebus effects (images standing in for signifiers), symbolic substitutions, and the like.

We can find an instantiation of this idea of subject-as-irreconcilability by returning to Lacan’s assertion that any instance of speech necessarily implies a listener/respondent. In an insightful analysis, Alexander Miller (2022) describes the technical linguistic basis for the idea in question (derived in large part from the work of Émile Benveniste) and points also to its significance for Lacanian psychoanalytic practice:

Lacan stressed ... that the speaking subject’s act of allocation – or of addressing themselves to an other in speech – necessarily brings with it an addressee ... the implication being that in the act of speech, the speaker does not simply enter into a relation of intersubjectivity, but more strongly, is constituted *as* intersubjectivity To say that the speaker is constituted as intersubjectivity is to attest to a redoubling division of the subject implicit to the very act of speech: on the one hand the address must be understood

not as the external "target" of speech but as internal to the psychical processes involved in its production, while on the other, the speaker ... finds themselves in the position of hearing their own words and thus as a witness to the irreducible alterity of the signifiers they articulate (p. 163).

This approach to language affirms the fundamental Lacanian postulate of subjective division (indeed, of subject *as division*): to speak is necessarily to be subjected to the division (the irreconcilability) of being simultaneously one's own listener and enunciator. It also suggests a very different way of approaching the much vaunted inter-subjective or relational dimension of psychoanalysis. Crucial here is the implication for how the analyst should be positioned: not as a relational partner, an (imaginary) other with whom a type of focalized transference relationship is formed, but as a listener who points to certain facets of the subject's own "inter-subjective" relation to their own speech productions. This helps us better understand why Lacan, in describing how the analyst should position themselves in the treatment, utilizes the metaphor of the game of bridge, specifying that the analyst should assume not the position of the other (i.e., opposing player or team), but of the dummy, whose cards lay face up, for all to see; one does so "in order to bring out the fourth player who is the analysand's partner

here ... whose hand the analyst ... strives to get the analysand to guess" (2006, p. 492). In terms of the linguistic concepts noted above, this means not assuming an inter-subjective relation with the analysand, but instead facilitating a type of inter-subjectivity by pointing to the splitness/Otherness evinced within their own speech. Hence the challenge issued by Lacan to those forms of psychoanalysis which would seek to locate the analyst as a kind of ally of the analysand's ego. This, for Lacan, would mean capitulating to the demands of the analysand and being complicit in the ongoing alienation of the subject's desire (Benvenuto & Kennedy 1986). As such the analyst should respond at a different level, not that of the imaginary discourse of the analysand's ego, but at the level of the symbolic, by playing up the Otherness of their speech such that unconscious desire might be heard.

The Lacanian distinction between imaginary and symbolic modes of transference comes into play here. The aim is to differentiate between transference as it becomes fixated at the interpersonal or imaginary level – that is, upon the figure of the analyst – on the one hand, and transference at a more symbolic level as it occurs between *the subject and the Otherness of their own speech and symbolic/unconscious acts*, pronouncements, slippages, bungled actions, etc., on the other. While the imaginary transference – much like empty

speech – remains an unavoidable aspect of the clinical work, it can, if handled adeptly, serve as a basis for something less submerged in – or fixated by - imaginary (ego-substantiating) psychodynamics and provide a surface of emergence for the subject of symbolic (and thereby) unconscious enunciations. This focusing of the analysand's transference energies and curiosity on their own speech and symbolic productions – and, indeed, on the gaps and contradictions of their own history – is also why Lacanians as a rule do not interpret the (imaginary) transference onto the figure of the analyst. To do so would divert attention away from the analysand's speech and their associated symbolic/unconscious acts and – as importantly – from their attempts at interpreting such symbolic productions.

Speaking in the future anterior

One of Lacan's distinctive contributions to psychoanalytic theory was to extend Freud's ideas on the temporality particular to the unconscious and to the course of a psychoanalytic treatment. This helps explain what at first seems curious, the fact that Lacan refers so frequently in *Function & Field* to his early paper, *Logical Time and the Assertion of Anticipated Certainty* (originally written in 1945). Without rehearsing this oft-revisited article (for commentaries, see Hoens 2022; Hook 2016;

Wang 2019), we can note several of its important assertions. The paper gives an example of an anticipatory or pre-emptive act of identification, namely that of a prisoner needing to identify themselves as wearing either a white or black disc as a condition of being freed (something they need to deduce in a logical manner, without being able to see the disc and without being able to consult with any of their rival competitors).

While there is a logical solution to this conundrum, it remains always pre-emptive, never certain or fully guaranteed because it occurs as part of a highly anxious situation in which one's identity is always (at least in part) the function of the reaction of others. Despite this pre-emptive quality, this act has a declarative aspect; it will be determinative for the subject themselves. In a nice example of philosophical wit, Lacan notes that Pascal's famous wager about the existence of God can be read in just such a way: even if I do not believe in God it makes sense to pronounce myself a believer, to act as if I do, because only a finite loss will be incurred if in fact He does not, whereas there will be infinite gains if he does and I am a believer.

We should briefly note here an important point about the subjective impact of such pre-emptive acts. Certain truth-effects accrue to such a precipitous mode of temporality; there are some truths which are only truths because they were

anticipated, pre-empted by a subjective act of wagering, by virtue of being stated, pronounced, declared by the subject themselves under conditions of uncertainty. This of course gives an additional level of significance to the technical device of scansion which – as will soon be discussed – not only induces a type of time pressure (as in the prisoner’s dilemma noted above), but also situates the analysand in respect of a future, and a backward-reaching future at that. As we will see, scansion can be understood as an experience *of something that has yet to be understood*, reaching backwards in time, so as to interrupt, to mark, or to call into question what I, the analysand, am saying or doing at any present moment of the clinical work.

Before moving on to this intriguing topic, we need to highlight the privileged relationship that, for Lacan, obtains between speech and truth. Truth, following Lacan’s clinical focus, is necessarily both related to subjective realization and what is yet to come. Hence Fink’s remarks:

Truth, as experienced by the analysand in the analytic context, has to do with what remains to be said, with what has not yet been said [T]ruth in psychoanalysis has to do with the experience of symbolizing what has never before been put into words ... truth [is] more closely linked with enunciation

(that is, the act of speaking) than with the enunciated (the statement thus made ... the content) (2007, p. 76, *emphasis in original*).

Truth here thus seems to coincide with a type of realization brought about in speech – a point we will return to. These ideas concerning the relation between speech and truth, and the role of temporality (and a backward-reaching futurity, more specifically), help us better grasp Lacan’s conceptualization of full speech, which is, after all, a type of speech “which performs” (Lacan 1988, p. 107). We need make mention here of Lacan’s critique of those theories of communication which focus predominantly on information transfer. This is a serious error for Lacan, one which neglects how speech impacts both listener and speaker. He insists: “the function of language in speech is not to inform but to evoke. What I seek in speech is a response What constitutes me as a subject is my question” (2006, p. 247). Speech here is accorded a kind of existential function (in respect of querying who or what one is, or, as significantly, who or what one *might be*). It is also granted a constitutive dimension, an irreducible role in the making or realization of the subject. We should not, however, skip over the more basic point about temporality that Lacan is making. Any basic speech instance entails not just the role of the Other – who might hear, react to, respond to, answer or ignore me, etc. – but also a

temporal relation, namely the future-reaching orientation inherent in speech itself. Speech, in other words, necessarily situates the subject relative to a prospective and minimally uncertain future.

Full speech is often understood – as above – as a type of unintended speaking before the transferential Other which proves disruptive of the ego, and which brings with it the potential realization of an unconscious truth or desire. Yet it is also a precipitous type of speech – hence the earlier reference to the notion of the pre-emptive act – a kind of speech which runs ahead of the subject. Hence Lacan’s claim that the effect of full speech is “to reorder past contingencies by conferring on them the sense of necessities to come” (2006, p. 213). Thus, to facilitate full speech is not only to point to the Otherness of the analysand’s speech; it is also to punctuate the subject’s prospective assumption of a different future.

These questions pertaining to the temporality of the subject – which bear the imprint of Heidegger’s influence – are explored in detail in *Function & Field*. Suffice to say that for Lacan, it is only by means of language, and, more directly, speech, that the individual can speculate about their past and put the meaning of previous experiences into question. (The prioritization of speech as a means of speculating about the future here follows, in part, from its crucial role in the communicative immediacy of the transferential domain). To speak as such is always

potentially – perhaps unavoidably – to alter one’s relationship to the past, to restructure what has occurred. As Benvenuto and Kennedy (1986) point out:

analytic experience reveals a constant rearrangement of memory-traces by the subject While talking to the analyst, the patient's history is brought to light ... [but] the patient does not simply recount events but 'assumes' [their] history In Lacan's view, only speech can do this (p. 84).

This is a crucial backdrop to bear in mind when, later in *Function & Field*, Lacan offers thoughts on the historicity of the subject:

What is realized in my history is neither the past definite as what was, since it is no more, nor even the perfect as what has been in what I am, but the future anterior as what I will have been, given that I am in the process of becoming (p. 247).

How might we develop this in more straightforward terms? Well, speaking in a context like that of psychoanalysis in which the dimension of the Other is consistently stressed within the analysand’s speech, means that they are invited to

realize themselves as something different to the ego. This realization of the subject – the grasping of a shifting Otherness to their subjectivity that exceeds their ego’s sense of itself – pertains to the different times of the subject. It pertains to the temporality of the subject as he or she is located in the past, in the present, and in the future. The subject’s Otherness unsettles, firstly, the dimension of the *past definite tense*, which is to say, the determining temporality of what definitively *was* is now considered to be over, complete, locked in place (the dimension, in other words, of *what one has always been*). The subject’s Otherness unsettles, secondly, the dimension of the *present perfect tense*, exercising thus an unsettling influence upon the ego’s ideas of what had occurred previously and continues still in the present (the aspect of “what has been in what I am” (p. 247). Thirdly, the *future perfect* (or anterior) *tense* – in which one looks toward a future event which is nonetheless punctuated by a definitive end point (the end of analysis, the end of one’s life, for example) – is likewise affected. The disruptive effects of Otherness on the ego mean that the subject here is invited to assume the contingencies of “what I will have been” – a “will have been” which, of course, implies a definitive end-point – whilst simultaneously assuming the potential futurity of being “in the process of becoming” (p. 247). This, we could say, is Lacan’s application of Heidegger’s notion of being-towards-death to the psychoanalytic clinic. This is not

merely an intellectual borrowing (as we will see as we continue). It highlights not just the factor of the future to come but – as in the prisoner’s dilemma in Lacan’s *Logical Time* paper – but stresses also the necessity of taking action, of taking on a role, and the risks involved in assuming one’s desire.³

One of Lacan’s contributions to the Freudian project of psychoanalysis was to stress the importance of Freud’s ideas in respect of psychical temporality, while also, as we have seen, adding several of his own concepts in this respect. It helps thus, by way of foregrounding the future-reaching orientation of Lacan’s approach, to briefly differentiate his approach to the future anterior tense (i.e. the dimension of what I *will have been*) from Freud’s notion of *nachträglichkeit* to which he remains indebted:

what has been deferred in the future anterior is not the realization of meaning, as Freud’s *nachträglichkeit* implies, but the very closure of meaning since the subject leaps into an unknown future when the moment of symbolic determination has become the past. While *nachträglichkeit* offers a temporal loop that contains the future in the past, Lacan’s future

³ I owe this point of emphasis to Mitchell Wilson.

anterior aims at an openness of being in the unpredictable future (Wang 2019, p. 209).

One minimal addition to this topic can be found in Forrester's (1990) remark, in a text on the temporality of a psychoanalytic treatment, that "The aim of psychoanalysis ... is to *unwrite* the future, which the neurotic lives as already written, structured" (p. 95). The transformative dimension implied here, especially in the sense of a subject-enacted or precipitative act, is crucial, although it begs the question: how might Lacan's ideas on precipitative temporality and clinical importance of the future anterior tense inform clinical technique?

From full speech to free association

If certain of Lacan's technical innovations can be said to extend and expand upon the fundamental rule (as suggested above), we should be clear as to what the most prominent of these techniques – punctuation and scansion – involve. Fink (2007) offers an instructive series of examples of punctuation (which, incidentally, help draw attention to the materiality of the signifier as described above): repeating verbatim a piece of the analysand's speech such that they might hear it, attend to

it, differently; stressing different words or phrases to those emphasized by the speaker (highlighting thus signifiers that were understated or unclear, mumbled or half-spoken by the analysand); emphasizing an idiomatic phrase such that its literal meaning might become apparent, and, conversely, echoing a literal expression such that its figurative meaning might become apparent. Two additional examples: isolating a signal phrase from within a larger grammatical construction (“up yours,” from the phrase, “I’ll take the groceries up yours,” for example); reiterating a repeated sound fragment that might be suggestive regards emerging content; offering a conjunction – “but,” “because” – in cases where an analysand trails off in a description, as a way of eliciting what otherwise would remain unsaid.

Many of these interpretative gestures follow the underlying strategies specified by Freud in respect of dream interpretation: pulling out suggestive words or phrases from the description of a dream so as to imply that they pertain to a different context (undoing the operation of displacement, putting a rebus into words); underlining unusual contractions and neologisms (such as one analysand’s libidinally-infused references to “gratification” and feeling “ravageous”) and unusual contractions (“greaseboat” as a kind of amalgamation of “dreamboat” and “greaseball”) (examples of undoing condensations). A similarly relevant technique: reciting a phrase without its foregoing negation, disclaimer or qualification. What

is perhaps apparent is that these instances of punctuation aim to support and extend the speech – and potentially, elicit the full speech – of analysands. The advantage of such "editorial" interventions is that they stay with the analysand's words (the level of signifiers) rather than over-writing them with the meaning (signifieds) of *what the analyst thinks they are saying*. This involves less of a transformation of the material – less of an ego-led associative leap – than is the case when the analyst turns the analysand's signifiers into signifieds, that is, assumed meanings.⁴

It helps to stay with the idea of analyst as editor of the analysand's text if we are to appreciate how scansion – that is, the interruption, suspension or cutting of an analysand's analytical productions – is itself a form of punctuation, even if, admittedly, a more dramatic sort. If the aim of punctuation is to highlight a piece of speech – typically of an ambiguous or overdetermined sort, one whose potential associations or implications have not yet been grasped – this makes sense. To suspend speech at that point – the analyst offering, perhaps, an emphatic "Aha!", ushering the analysand back into the waiting-room, or simply bringing the session to a close – serves to dramatically underline the point at hand. Here, interestingly,

⁴ It is worth noting a related shift of emphasis in clinical practice. Rather than the analyst focusing on "how the patient's mind works" and relaying this information to the patient – perhaps via reference to how their defenses manifest in the transference – there is instead a less didactic move, the reiteration of certain signifiers offered to the analysand as an invitation for them take up the interpretative work themselves.

scansion can be a very supportive gesture, signaling not only that something polyvalent or as of yet unfinished has been enunciated, but that something of real significance has just occurred, that a potential (if enigmatic) "breakthrough" moment has just transpired.

Any yet, there are limits to the idea that scansion is a form of punctuation, surely? To halt the analysand is also, obviously enough, to stop their speech, to bring the production of signifiers – one of the aims of punctuation – to an abrupt end, no? It is also, presumably, means to introduce a minimal degree of anxiety into the frame, to shake things up, in ways which are not always clinically optimal or indicated? By way of answering these questions, let us first note that one of the inspirations for Lacan's technical innovation was the Zeigarnick effect. Lacan glosses this as the "psychological effect produced by an unfinished task when it leaves a gestalt in abeyance – for instance, that of the generally felt need to resolve a musical phrase" (2006, p. 184, n1), as is the case – we might add – in resolving the dominant chord in a musical phrase to the root chord that structures a song. To hear such a phrase is to want to complete it, to take on the task oneself, to go ahead and do just that. In this sense, scansion, if effectively utilized, is far more akin to a technique of continuation than one of cessation; rather than drawing a line under the analytic work, tacitly signaling that it is over until the next session (that

it need not be thought about), such a cut aims at engaging the curiosity and the desire of the analysand. Moreover, it emphasizes their role in the process – it puts them in the position of interpreter rather than allowing them to delegate this role to the analyst – leaving them to continue the creative work of analysis not only during, but between sessions. Hence the Lacanian terminology of "analysand" as opposed to the more passive connotations of "patient": the task of the analysand is not simply to be treated, but to take up the active role of the one who analyzes.

To pause the analysis at a suggestive or pregnant moment is thus the equivalent of an editorial act of placing an emphatic question-mark – or an ellipsis or exclamation-point (Fink 2007) – on the "manuscript" of the analysand's speech. Of course, the implication here being that the analyst is, in effect, asking the analysand to revisit or revise this manuscript, to do a little more work on it, and return with it – along, ideally, with new material generated in the process. An act of scansion is implicitly always a means of querying what was just said, be it an egoic assertion, an angry contention, a contradiction, or simply a highly polyvalent signifier (a potential switch-word). Stressing that a question is invariably invoked in an act of scansion is thus crucial; it highlights how such an intervention is a kind of opening move, how scansion is, in effect, "dialogical," at least insofar it begs a response.

So, rather than shutting-down free association, halting the work of the analysand's interpretations, or "closing" the unconscious, such an act aims at the very opposite: to engage unconscious processes, to draw the analysand's attention to their own speech, to fuel transference to the stuff of the analytic work. To keep the analysand continually questioning, curious, wondering why *this* of all moments proved to be so significant, is to open a different horizon of intelligibility or interpretation in respect of a given phrase or period of analytical work.

In these ways, scansion runs counter to the effects of empty speech. It disrupts and prevents forms of wholeness and closure as they pertain both to meaning and to the ego as such. Indeed, scansion suspends that to which the ego so eagerly gravitates: the apparent stability of the meanings it produces; the (mis)recognition of what it already (thinks it) knows; the defensive security connoted by the ideal of understanding and (imaginary) identity. Parallels with Freud's fundamental rule start to become evident. Free association disrupts the regularity of conscious ego narratives, seeking out unexpected connections, aiming to elicit expressions of the unconscious. Scansion, by means of the unpredictability and the minimal anxiety it introduces, likewise aims to bypass the defenses of the ego and thereby facilitate unconscious material.

One of Lacan's former analysands, Stuart Schneiderman, remarks that the unpredictability of scansion "greatly enhances one's tendencies to free associate," because when things "come to mind they are spoken almost immediately, with spontaneity, for there is no time to mull them over, to find the nicest formulation" (1983, pp. 133-134). What free association does to ego-controlled narrative, we might say then, scansion aims to do to the ego-controlled temporality.

We should note a few caveats here. Scansion, like other psychoanalytic techniques, can be misused – as in situations where it might be said to inhibit rather than encourage speech and free association, where it fails to provide adequate room for exploratory speech to occur.⁵ While many Lacanians would take this as obvious, it perhaps helps to reiterate that scansion and variable sessions need be utilized in a considered manner, sensitively, strategically, as is required in view

⁵ Whereas the technical devices of scansion and the variable session are mainstays of Lacanian clinical practice, there is, in my experience, discussion and debate as to how they are effectively used and in what capacity. Take for example the following remarks by Slavoj Žižek – most certainly a loyal Lacanian – in respect of the prospective limitations of a short session:

Lacan noticed that, in the standard 50-minute psychoanalytic session, the patient just goes over and over things, and that it is only in the last few minutes, when the shadow of the end, of being cut off by the analyst, is close, that he or she gets into a panic and produces some valuable material. So the idea came to him: why not timely skip the long period of lost time and limit the session to the last few minutes when, under time pressure, something really happens? The problem here is: can we really get only the productive final part without the preceding 45 minutes of lost time which functions as the time of gestation for the content that explodes in the last five minutes? (Žižek 2014, pp. 201-202).

of a given case, and as befits considerations of diagnostic structure, rather than as a matter of principle. I would argue that the abrupt ending of sessions, certainly when performed in its more dramatic, provocative or "castrating" forms, is contraindicated in certain cases where it would engender excess forms of anxiety and questioning and thereby undermine the work.

What then of the anxiety induced by means of this technique? Here we must concede: a minimal degree of anxiety is an unavoidable aspect of the technique. Then again, this anxiety – in analysands robust enough to work with it – not only proves clinically useful, but efficacious. How so? It helps here to return to Lacan's discussion of temporality and the future anterior. We noted above that scansion prompts a reaction in the analysand, begs a response (a reply, a return). By the same token, it also pushes the analysand into the future (rather than halting the analytical work, confining it only to the session, to the past).

Scansion works thus within the temporality of that which is precipitative, pre-emptive. It engages the dimension of a backward-reaching future – a prospective understanding of what made the analyst halt the work when they did – and does so as a means of calling the present into question, recontextualizing it with reference to what is still to come. It thus challenges the stasis of the present (of the current psychoanalytic work), demonstrating how it is part of an unfolding

futurity that is yet to come and that is not as such pre-set or already determined. Scansion is thus a means of “unwriting the future.” In this sense, scansion is the technical enactment of the future anterior tense that Lacan highlighted as such a crucial temporal dimension for clinical work.

The twofold movement of the symbolic

Back, though, to the topic of full speech. A question remains: how are we to understand the enacted reflexivity – and the historical reflexivity – that, in full speech, the analysand demonstrates toward their own subjective historical truth? A first step to grasping this aspect of speech is to highlight the force of *speech acts* (Austin 1962). Speech, in other words, does more than merely describe the world; speech is capable – if uttered by the appropriate person, in the appropriate context – of accomplishing an act, of bringing about a concrete change in the world. When, for example, public oaths are made, when someone states a fact “for the record,” or makes a verbal contract before a series of onlookers (“I swear to tell the truth and nothing but the truth”), we have more than descriptive instances of language, but declarations, the making of binding legal promises which change the status of the speaker. We can see how the status of the recipients of a speech act are

changed in what is perhaps the most famous example of a declarative speech-act: “I proclaim you man and wife.” Lacan, however, as we will see, is concerned with how the speaker themselves is affected by this performative dimension (i.e., *the doing*) of speech.

Lacan invokes the performative dimension of speech in a more oblique way, however, referring to the dramas of antiquity in which “the original myths of the City State are produced before its assembly of citizens” (2006, p. 212). Such spoken reenactments of the past open up a degree of distance from what is being represented, even as the presence of an Other (the audience) and the form of dramatic portrayal allow for a different hearing of what may have otherwise seemed obvious or unnecessary to render in speech. Once again, we are not dealing with mere descriptions but with a public instance of speech possessed of declarative power to secure, to underwrite a version of history. Just as, in such instances “a nation learn[ed] to read the symbols of [its] destiny,” (p. 212), so in the process of a psychoanalytic treatment, a new relationship to history can be made possible.

There is, in such speech situations, not just the revisiting of past events, but an opening up of contingency, a reshuffling of historical elements that neither takes them for granted nor assumes a given sequence or meaning. It is in this sense that

“conjectures about the past” have the capacity to “make promises about the future oscillate” (p. 213). This, for Lacan, is what constitutes the underlying basis of Freud’s method of psychoanalysis: “[the] assumption by the subject of ... [their] history, insofar as it constituted by speech addressed to another” (p. 213).

What should not be neglected here is how declarative instances of full speech impact the speaker. Full speech enacts a bond of sorts, a bond between the speaker and their declarative position. Žižek (2006) helpfully explicates this bond by reference to the "twofold movement" of the symbolic. What is in question here, in other words, is not only the performative dimension of full speech as spoken before the transferential Other, but how this speech act is itself reintegrated declarative instances of the subject. There is, we can say, a subjective after-effect to the act of full speech, the prospect of a subjective "truth change" being affected by virtue of something being uttered. It is not just an issue of what I *do* by means of saying something, but of what is *done to me* by my saying.

If we were to approach this issue from speech act theory, we could say that the perlocutionary effect of a speech act contains also a significant reflexive impact, so much so that what I enact in saying provides the basis for a different order of subjective truth. Let us imagine that I am attending the trial of a man who is about to be found guilty of a crime that I in fact am responsible for. If, at an appropriate

moment, I stand up, declare my guilt, and provide telling evidence, such a declaration not only affects a change in proceedings and a re-ordering of the symbolic (the accused now assumes a different role, the record of events will be re-written). It affects also my own subjective position: by saying what I have said I perform an acknowledgement of what I have done. Such a symbolic act is preemptive: my speaking itself becomes a condition of possibility for a series of subsequent subjective dispositions: a broader acknowledgement of my crime; a sense, perhaps, of remorse; a readiness to accept the consequences of my actions, etc. The symbolic gesture of an apology often works in the same way. Even in circumstances where I feel a degree of lingering resentment, where I feel in some ways that I might still be the aggrieved party, to make an apology and have it received and reciprocated by the person with whom I am in conflict can clear the air and change my attitude towards them.

Here then is the twofold movement of the symbolic which entails the possibility of subjective communicative change:

One does something, one counts oneself as (declares oneself) the one who did it, and on the base of this declaration, one does something new – the proper moment of subjective transformation occurs at the [initial] moment of the declaration, not at the [subsequent] moment of the act. This reflexive

moment of declaration means that every utterance not only transmits some content, but simultaneously, *conveys the way the subject relates to this content* (Žižek 2006, p. 16).

It is this facet of full speech – the enacted reflexivity that the analysand assumes toward their own position of enunciation – that helps us understand how speaking before the Other might enable change. For the Lacan, this performative and impactful dimension of full speech – a speech which has the potential to alter the analysand’s position on their own history and future – is crucial to the hope of a psychoanalytic cure.

The outside within

At a late point in his essay Lacan introduces an unexpected twist, claiming that he can demonstrate “the profound relationship uniting the notion of the death instinct to the problems of speech” (2006, p. 260). While it is not immediately clear how Lacan is defining this concept – although he does insist it should not be understood in biological terms – his use of the term does become more theoretically grounded once he refers to Heidegger’s notion of *being-towards-death*: “the death instinct essentially expresses the limit of the subject’s historical function” (2006, p. 261).

The factor of death here is understood as a final limit, and not just this, but as a *condition of possibility* for language, symbolic expression, and speech.

If this initially seems difficult to grasp, it helps to bear in mind that, for Lacan, the subject of psychoanalysis is the subject of language, of history, of a story, and that such a story is made possible only by its finite condition, by the fact that it ends. To give a rudimentary linguistic example: a sentence only attains a semblance of meaning, retrospectively, after its completion (or, perhaps more accurately, in view of its anticipated ending). Each of the above dimensions of the subject (i.e., language, history, a story) entails not only an end-point, and thus a limit, but also a kind of final reference-point (such as, to cite one of Lacan's examples, the idea of the Last Judgement).

Lacan seems intrigued here by the *functional properties* of a limit, indeed, with what might be enabled – brought into question, foregrounded, reconsidered – when a type of cessation is made immanent. For example: in existential terms, the inevitability of death provides perhaps the most salient perspective from which one might consider what was most meaningful in a life. In the practice of psychoanalysis, reference to an end – such as the ending of the treatment itself –

poses, perhaps inevitably, the prospect of subjective change. We could here cite Freud's intervention in the case of the Wolf-Man.⁶

We might now take a further step here and consider how exactly such an idea might be part of everyday psychoanalytic practice. Or, differently put: how might an encounter with a limit perform a subjectivizing role, within a treatment, how might it position the analysand in a different way in respect of their past and future? The prospect of an imposed end of course returns us to Lacan's technique of scansion, which involves not only a limiting but also a "retrospectivizing" function, one which, ideally at least, allows the analysand to take up a standpoint on their history, their story, and their prospective future. We could say that scansion represents a kind of existential opening in the life of the analysand⁷, or,

⁶ At a certain point in his treatment, the Wolf-Man, in Freud's (1914) view, had become "entrenched behind an attitude of obliging apathy" and had given up "working in order to avoid any further changes ... and in order to remain in the situation which had been thus established" (1914, p. 11). Freud resolved that there was only one way to overcome this impasse, by determining "that the treatment must be brought to an end at a particular fixed date, no matter how far it had advanced" (p. 11). In Freud's own words, which cannot but anticipate Lacan's own technical use of scansion and the idea of a future point reaching back so as to alter the present:

Under the inexorable pressure of this fixed limit his resistance and his fixation to the illness gave away, and now in a disproportionately short time the analysis produced all the material which made it possible to clear up his inhibitions and remove his symptoms (Freud` 1914, p. 11).

⁷ Given Lacan's rejection of existentialism – or, more specifically, existentialism's perceived preoccupation with (imaginary, ego-supporting) meaningfulness and existentialism's not

put in more Lacanian terms: the act of scansion makes "the realization of the subject" possible. Scansion might thus be operative in activating a type of historical reflexivity, one which foregrounds the agency of the subject to "unwrite the future." Scansion, in this sense, has an actively subjectivizing dimension, or, perhaps, a *re-subjectivizing* dimension. This perhaps helps us understand what Lacan is aiming at when, with both Heidegger's being-toward-death and Freud's death drive in mind, he asserts that it is death – and the limits, the sense of finitude, accompanying the notion of death – that brings everything to the level of the symbolic. More prosaically: it is only when there is an end, a limit, when a story, a history, or an instance of speech, starts to effectively function, to position a subject, to produce effects of truth.

Lacan now puts forward two questions, which, at this point in his argument have become unavoidable: "what was before ... speech in the subject[?]" and "what was prior to the birth of symbols[?]" (2006, p. 263). These questions are somewhat unexpected, at least insofar as everything in the text thus far has stressed the imperative of prioritizing speech and language and dissuaded us from attempts to reach behind language for an ostensibly more fundamental organic or

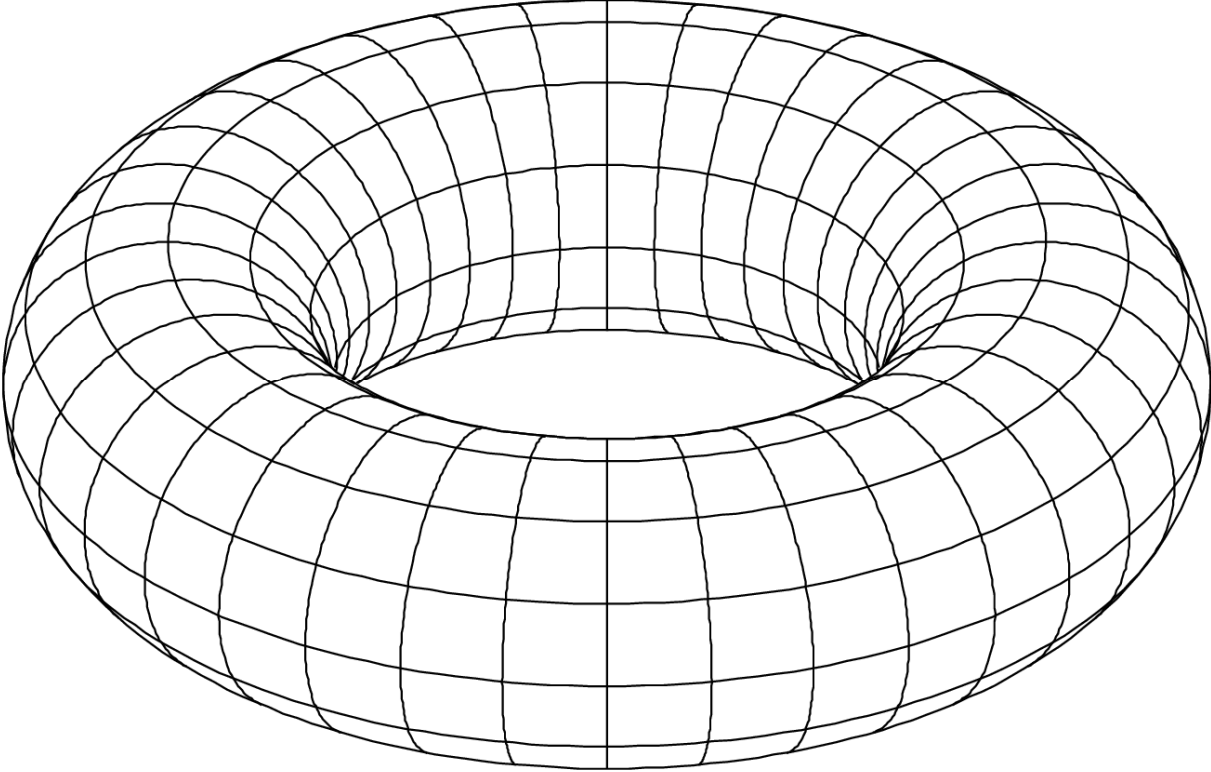
infrequent rejection of the Freudian notion of the unconscious – we should be cautious in offering any existential characterizations of Lacanian concepts.

psychological form (a biological/neurophysiological substrate, the primacy of the preverbal, of affect, of primal object relations, etc.). And yet, as we have seen, these questions have emerged as Lacan discourses on variations on the theme of death (death-drive, being-toward-death), and they are thus approached with reference to philosophical/theological notions of finitude and mortality rather than in the register of positivist psychology. At the risk of repetition, it helps to reiterate that Lacan is using death – always a rich and allusive concept in his work – as the exemplar of an unsurpassable limit.

As if there were not enough challenging theoretical postulates at play, Lacan, undeterred, plunges on, arguing that death – which presumably always in some way exceeds the grasp of language – is also that “from which ... existence derives all the meaning it has” (2006, p. 262). At the very moment that we find an apparent outside of language – some reality which language can never fully domesticate or adequately symbolize or express – we also stumble upon a point of symbolic density, a type of generative impossibility from which a variety of attempts at signification proliferate. And so, what seems to be definitively outside of language is also importantly *within* language – is even inherent to it – in the sense that it is death (the ultimate limit) that more than anything prompts attempts at symbolization and confers effects of meaning. Here a condition of impossibility

(death as a limit beyond which language cannot reach) is simultaneously also a condition of possibility (a limit-point against which all meaning might be measured and ascertained). Here we must stay close to Lacan's wording. Not only does he assert that "mortal meaning reveals in speech a center that is outside of language," he stresses also that this "manifests a structure" (p. 263). The structure in question – the topological figure of the torus (in non-mathematical terms: a donut-shaped form) - "differs from the spatialization of the circumference or sphere" (2006, p. 263) because it defies the binary opposition of a mutually-exclusive inside/outside categorization. After all, the "peripheral exteriority and central exteriority" of the torus "constitute but one single region" (p. 264). So, what had seemed definitely outside of the structure, i.e., the space in the middle of the torus (or, the externality to language as represented by death, or, the logical presumption of a state prior to symbols and/or speech) remains an essential part, an "inside of," that selfsame structure. Differently put: death or the presumptive existence of pre-symbolic/pre-speech states are instances of externality which are nonetheless ultimate reference-points, anchors of non-meaning, which constantly drive the productions of language. More simply yet: the outside of speech remains – if the paradox might be forgiven – within speech.

Figure 1: Topological formation of the torus



How does this become clinically useful? Well, it helpfully nuances the presumption that Lacanian practice is only about attending to the signifiers of the analysand's speech. As we have seen, Lacanian practice *is* very much about the signifiers that are being produced, but it is also about facilitating and directing speech to the very areas that are deemed inarticulable, inexpressible, impossible to put into words. When speech reaches its limits, when it seems to run aground, when – to risk a paradox – it expresses inexpressibility – these apparent failings are often of great clinical significance. A personal anecdote here might suffice. Toward the beginning of my own analysis, I recounted an episode from adolescence in which I found an issue of the magazine, *Penthouse*. I was particularly drawn to one specific photograph, as opposed to the many other images of nudity within its pages. “What was it about her?” my analyst asked (the “it” in this question is, incidentally, the Lacanian *object a*, that is, the underlying, excessive, “piece of the real”, the elusive, shifting, object-cause of desire which temporarily imbues an object with an aura of fascination). Initially, I couldn't answer. This was not the type of thing people typically asked about; it was not something that could readily be put into words. Or, rather, *I could*, I could start to say something about why this image, about what it was about the woman depicted there; it was just that it hadn't been explicitly formulated in any conscious detail to myself. It had certainly not been stated out

loud, shared with someone else, or, indeed, articulated within speech before the Other. While this example is more about fantasy than other limit-points confronted by symbolization and speech, it nonetheless provides a nice example of what Bruce Fink, himself drawing on a formulation in later Lacan, referred to as the clinical utility of "hitting the real,"⁸ that is, of verbalizing something hitherto unformulated or seemingly inexpressible. By the same token, it provides an example of the Lacanian notion of truth, as specified above ("truth in psychoanalysis has to do with the experience of symbolizing what has never before been put into words (Fink 2007, p. 76)). There will, of course, be multiple "reals" in any given treatment, areas of experience that have not yet been conveyed in speech to a transferential Other, or that remain difficult to formulate, to render intelligible, to communicate. Yet, once guided towards speech, such "reals" might come to be spoken in a way which affords a highly articulate inexpressibility.

⁸ Fink (1997) puts it this way: "The real ... is what has not yet been put into words or formulated... This real, according to Lacan, has to be symbolized through analysis: it has to be spoken, put into signifiers...analysis involves the progressive "draining away" of the real into the symbolic" (p. 49).

Conclusion: *There where it once was...*

What surprises us most amongst the contents of the time capsule that is Lacan's *Function & Field*? Well, there is, for a start, the extraordinary degree to which Lacan is willing to foreground speech, and to explore its various dimensions and potentialities, rather than treating it as a secondary phenomenon, as merely the medium through which something else ostensibly more substantial (affects, fantasies, transference relations, neuropsychological operations) might be reached or made manifest. Striking also is how frequently Lacan's ambitious theorizations – speech as itself a mode of intersubjectivity, symbolic as opposed to imaginary transference, preemptive modes of temporality, etc. – lead to concrete technical suggestions (in respect of the positioning of the analyst, punctuation, scansion, etc.) and, moreover, the extent to which these techniques, despite their controversial nature, might be said to augment or even extend Freud's fundamental rule.

Impressive throughout is Lacan's willingness to experiment, not just in terms of technical innovation (as in the suggested techniques of scansion and punctuation), but in respect of the range of philosophical, linguistic and even mathematical concepts he draws on (debts to Heidegger, Benveniste, topology,

etc.) in order to reinvigorate Freudian concepts and practices. Likewise significant is what we could refer to as the futurity of the clinic that Lacan's Heideggerian borrowings and his rethinking of psychical temporality make possible. Noteworthy too is Lacan's distinctive understanding of the subject *as opposed to the ego*, and the idea of truth as enunciative, as most formidably realized – at least from a psychoanalytic standpoint – in acts of speech. To this we must add his conceptualization of the declarative capacity of the analysand's speech, which uttered under the conditions of transference can affect change in the speaker. Less well appreciated, but no less significant, is Lacan's conceptualization of the functional properties of limit-points, of endings, of scansion, as involving a retroactivizing capacity, a means of highlighting the reflexivity of the subject, and thereby a properly subjectivizing potential. In such moments, something of what is still to come – a projected understanding, the possibility of difference – reaches back into the present of the subject in a way that allows, ideally at least, for an unwriting of the future.

One wonders, in respect of all of the above whether the refrain that seems to underlie so much of Lacan's landmark essay – Freud's "*Wo Es war, soll Ich werden*" – might be said to apply to psychoanalytic practice as well, such that: *there, where it once was, grounded in Freud's prioritization of language and speech,*

there it may again come to be. One might be forgiven for thinking that an instance of deferred action is at work here: that aspects for a possible future of psychoanalysis had already been committed to paper in 1953.

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