Anna Turczyn, *Lacan: A Reading Project*

**Summary**

In this dissertation, the author poses the basic question about the possibility of using inspirations derived from Jacques Lacan’s psychoanalytic theory and practice in the field of literary studies. In a narrower sense, this would entail a model of psychoanalytic interpretation, which has been applied in what is known as psychoanalytic literary criticism. This reception model was based on Sigmund Freud’s theory, using the hermeneutic perspective. The author thus postulates the need to create an analogous “critical” model derived from Lacan’s theory, taking into account the difference between these two concepts. The basic aim of the dissertation is to demonstrate that the Freudian psychoanalytic interpretation cannot constitute a general interpretive category comprising the Lacanian model, since this means inscribing Lacan’s theory into the hermeneutic horizon. Given the differences between Freud and Lacan – as listed and analyzed by the author – the Lacanian interpretation calls for another approach, another systematisation. Changing the perspective could enable new realisations of the theoretical potential of Lacan’s psychoanalysis in the area of humanistic reflection, and, in the strict sense, of reflection on the possibility of interpretation, which could serve as foundations for a new model of interpretation understood as a “reading practice”.

The author’s point of departure is to establish a relationship between literary studies and psychoanalysis by indicating a suitable way of articulating Lacan’s text. Psychoanalytic theory must be subject to reading in order to become useful to the literary scholar. In this way, the initial question of “how to read” delineates the project and projected idea of the proposed reading.

The first part of the dissertation offers an overview of various ways of creating “psychoanalytic literary criticism”. It is based mainly on theoretical works which propose ideas for using the instruments of Freudian psychoanalysis in the interpretation and analysis of poetry or prose. Among many examples, one should emphasize here Maria Janion’s considerations, Adam Lipszyc’s analysis of Freud’s descriptions as a case of “speculative novel”, and the polemic between the deconstructionist (Derrida) and psychoanalytic (Pasternac) approaches.

In the second part, the author goes through the most important intellectual trends of the second half of the twentieth century, or, to put it more precisely, “drags” Lacan’s text through the filters of crucial worldview discourses. Hermeneutics, structuralism, intertextuality, post-structuralism – discussing particular authors and interpretations, the author investigates which aspects of Lacan’s text have been articulated and endowed with what meaning, and, consequently, what has been omitted, rejected or under-read. As a kind of exception in this part of the dissertation, she discusses the book *Le Titre de la lettre* by Jean-Luc Nancy and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe. This philosophical experiment is approached as an example of “textual reading”. The French authors prove that Lacan’s psychoanalytic theory does not constitute a distinct, ready-to-apply approach; first, it must be mediated, i.e. articulated in or through another language. As such, it means nothing. In the context of the proposed reading, this turns out to be crucial for defining the Lacanian “interpretative method” and for suggesting how it may be used in literary studies.

The third part makes an attempt at interpretation using the Lacanian method. Guided by the seminar reading practice adopted by Lacan himself, the author examines how Lacan’s text is articulated, that is meaningfully differentiated, in the discourses under discussion. By isolating and analysing certain psychoanalytic concepts and terms, it is possible to demonstrate that they have been understood in a different way from that which could be inferred from the text which introduced them. This method also shows that Lacan’s terms were not fully articulated by himself, and that the process of their understanding or articulation is passed onto the interpreter of the Lacanian text.

In the conclusion, the poststructuralist understanding of the subject as a “discursive effect” is evoked. The author juxtaposes this definition with psychoanalysis and indicates a relation emphasising its complementarity with the humanistic approach. Taking writing (*écriture*) as a certain method of losing or diminishing the subject in favour of investigating the general “conditions of any text” (Foucault), the author suggests that the subject can be articulated in the Lacanian way in the opposite situation, when the text “does not cease not to write itself” (“symptomatic perspective”). If the poststructuralist *writing* constitutes a kind of humanistic norm, then the psychoanalytic *reading* could be an equivalent of the action taken when this norm fails.