



Beyond Lacan (SUNY series in Psychoanalysis and Culture)

James M. Mellard

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Traces the development of Lacanian theory, and its possible future.

In *Beyond Lacan*, James M. Mellard traces psychoanalytic literary theory and practice from Freud to Lacan to Žižek. While Freud effectively presupposes an unconscious that is textual, it is Lacan whose theory all but articulates a textual unconscious as he offers the epoch a cutting-edge psychoanalytic ideology. Mellard considers this and then asks, “Which Lacan? Is there one or many? Early or late?” As Žižek counters the notion of a single, unitary Lacan, Lacanians are asked to choose. Through Lacanian readings of various texts, from novels like Ellison’s *Invisible Man* and O’Connor’s *Wise Blood* to short stories by Glaspell and Fitzgerald, Mellard shows that in critical practice Lacanians produce a middle Lacan, between early and late.

Mellard concludes by examining why Žižek has perhaps transcended Lacan. More than any other, it is Žižek who has constructed early and late Lacan, making possible that middle Lacan of praxis, but in the process he has also claimed an independent authority. Ultimately, Mellard explains how Žižek offers a *post-Lacanian* critique—one built on a pervasive philosophy of paradox—that opens new avenues of analysis of contested cultural and literary issues such as subjectivity, political economy, multiculturalism, and religious belief.

“Mellard is courageous in applying French and Freudian concepts to a literature that openly disavows the psychoanalytical, making his approach the kind of eye-opening exercise that makes teaching criticism so important and worthwhile. As Mellard integrates advances in criticism with specific readings of the texts he treats, we must recognize that this is no small task, and others have found it more than daunting and done it less thoroughly.” — Juliet Flower MacCannell, author of *Figuring Lacan: Criticism and the Cultural Unconscious*

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