

Truths of a *Case*

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Jacques-Alain Miller reads the Wolf Man case as a “reinterpretation”.¹ This act of reinterpretation emerges not only from the case’s analytic resonance but also from its very composition: each chapter transforms what came before, urging a return to the beginning and a renewed reading. Reinterpretation appears as a repetitive practice carried out by Freud, Lacan, and Miller. What, then, does this movement of reinterpretation teach about truth?

Freud met Pankejeff when he was 23 and wrote of his childhood neurosis. The central truth of castration that Freud draws from the case is also framed as a riddle: “In the end there were to be found in him two contrary currents side by side, of which one abominated the idea of castration, while the other was prepared to accept it and console itself with femininity as a compensation. But beyond any doubt there is a third current, the oldest and deepest, which did not as yet even raise the question of the reality of castration.”²

For Freud, the truth of the unconscious is inseparable from the analyst’s act — the decision to end analysis, the link between dream and primal scene — an *après-coup* touching both history and the very foundation of psychoanalysis.

Lacan rereads castration in the light of foreclosure. The hallucinated severed finger at age five is grasped as a detached element within the chain: “Whatever is refused in the symbolic order, in the sense of *verwerfung*, reappears in the real.”³ Lacan articulated the truth of castration here unequivocally: “excision”⁴ - a symbolic annulment by which castration itself is amputated, leaving the subject caught in anal enjoyment.

Miller separated the equivalence between phallic meaning and the Name-of-the-Father. Phallic meaning allows the Wolf Man to function with his relation to an imaginary phallus, without recourse to paternal metaphor. Miller situates the “veil of life”⁵ as a solution to the deadly gap of the mirror stage.

Each reading exceeds established knowledge. In this sense, the reinterpretation of Freud’s cases functions as a *point à l’infini* for theory — a thesis that is incessantly verified — one that must be placed on the side where the not-all (*pas-tout*) opens up.⁶

¹ Miller, J.-A., “The Wolf Man I,” *Lacanian Ink* 35, 2009, p.7.

² Freud, S., “From the History of an Infantile Neurosis” (1918), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Volume 17, London: Hogarth Press, 1961, p. 85.

³ Lacan, J., *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book III: The Psychoses*, ed. J.-A. Miller, trans. R. Grigg, New York: Norton, 1993. P. 13.

⁴ Lacan, J., “Response to Jean Heappolite’s Commentary on Freud’s ‘Verneinung’” *Écrits*, trans. B. Fink, New York: Norton, 2005, p. 322.

⁵ Miller, J.-A., “The Wolf Man I,” *Lacanian Ink* 35, 2009, p. 40.

⁶ Miller, J.-A., “Algorithmes de la psychanalyse”, *Ornicar?* 16, 1978.

Yet this multiplicity of readings raises questions about the status of truth derived from a case, as well as the question of whether the absolute difference, formulated at the end of analysis, is bound up with the Other of the epoch.