Signifying Chain, Split Subject & on-transcendental Truth: Similarities between the Thoughts of Derrida & Lacan

Tang, Li
Southwest University for Nationalities, China

The controversy toward whether Jacques Lacan belongs to the camp of structuralism or post-structuralism never stops. He is widely considered to be a psychoanalyst in structuralism camp, yet he is also regarded as one of the four representatives of post-structuralists, together with Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes and Michael Foucault. In my view, he is a thinker who owns the spirit of post-structuralism. Although he applies the analysis method of structuralism into psychoanalytic field, his thought undermines or dismantles the notions of structuralism. The structural system of the notion of structuralism is coherent and integrated; the structural system of the notion of Lanoan theory, however, is paradoxical and divisive. Like Derrida, he undertakes to decenter or undermine traditional claims for the existence of self-evident foundations that guarantee the validity of knowledge and truth. They both claim that the workings of language inescapably undermine meanings in the very process of making such meanings
possible, thus both of them deny the existence of metaphysical presence. As Derrida holds a sharp critique of the coherent identity or subject, Lacan gives us the idea of a split identity. They disavow the metaphysics of presence, the static view linked with it about being as a presence in the now-moment, the dualistic notion of the subject as a spiritual entity and the substantial illusion about meaning as a prepredicative idea existing in consciousness. Lacan’s notions of the signifier without signified, the endless chain of displacements in the quest of meaning, trace, difference, the transitory truth, the split subject, the Other and the other, and so on, make him a prominent reference in poststructural theorists.

I. The Notion of Signifier & Meaning

Both Derrida and Lacan focus on just “signifier” and neglect “signified”. The notions of “signifying chain” and “slippage of signifier” are important in their thoughts. They two both employ the notion “trace”; emphasize its function in the constitution of “meaning”. Furthermore, their notions about “meaning” also have the resemblance: meaning lies in the difference between one signifier to another, and only appears transitorily. The nature of signifier and meaning are undecidable. Accordingly, their notion of “signifier” points to absence (the absence of “transcendental signified”), which dismantles the metaphysical presence.

Lacan defines the notion signifier as “represents a subject for another signifier” (SII 207). One of the key notions of Lacan is that the unconscious is structured like a language, and governed by the order of the signifier. Saussure holds the view that in a sign system, both the signifier and the signified owe their seeming identities, not to their own positive or inherent features, but to their differences from other speech. Although influenced by this idea, Lacan reverses Saussure’s formulation of signified above of signifier, therefore the signifier has primacy over the signified. He asserts the existence of an order of pure signifiers (signifier without the signified), where signifiers exist prior to signifieds. (see Evans 186)

According to Lacan, there lies a bar, symbolizing repression caused by language, between the signifier and signified, which keeps the signified never to be reached. Therefore, there is nothing that a signifier ultimately refers to. There is a signifier of the signifier, but it signifies only the impossibility of completely signifying it, since a signifier cannot signify itself. The signifier is made up of traces: “the effect of the signifier, namely, in the last resort, of the trace” (SXXIV: 15/2/67, see Lewis, 234). Lacan also understands the constitution of the signifier in its positivity to involve an
effacement of the trace. “The signifier is attained by the forgetting of the mark that constitutes difference, in favor of things which are different: ‘the signifier originates from the effacing of the trace’ (SxIII:20/4/66). Traces are not signifiers, but the signifier is nothing besides trace.” (Lewis 204)

“Every real signifier is, as such, a signifier that signifies nothing. The more the signifier signifies nothing, the more indestructible it is.” (SIII 185) Consequently, the elements in the unconscious—wishes, desires, images—all form signifiers, become “floating” and “slippage”, these signifiers form a signifying chain. “A signifying chain can never be complete, since it is always possible to add another signifier to it, […] The chain is also metonymic in the production of meaning; signification is not present at any one point in the chain, but rather meaning ‘insists’ in the movement from one signifier to another (see E, 153).” (Evans 190) One signifier has meaning only because it is not some other signifier, or more exactly, meaning just occurs transitorily at the very moment when it is substituted by another signifier. Even when a signified is produced, it constantly slips underneath the signifier; “the only things that detain this movement temporarily, pinning the signifier to the signified for a brief moment and creating the illusion of a stable meaning, are the POINTS DE CAPITON.” (Evans 188) It is this differential nature of the signifier which means that it can never have a fixed meaning; on the contrary, “its meaning varies according to the position which it occupies in the structure”. (Evans 190) Therefore, there always remains space for new and unexpected possibilities of meaning.

Lacan’s notion of “phallus” explains his view on signifier and the transcendental signified. The “transcendental signified”, is a term proposed by Derrida, which means the content or the internal meaning of the subject existing in pure consciousness. (see Enwald 130) It refers to “meanings” existing on the prepredicative level of experience. (see Enwald 131) Lacan is frequently blamed for his notion of phallus; an array of critics considers it to bear the essence of “transcendental signified”. In The Purveyor of Truth, Derrida criticized Lacan’s notion of phallus with this nature. Yet for Lacan, the concept “phallus” is, in fact, not a signified but a signifier to loss and absence. “I designate Φ as the phallus insofar as I indicate that it is the signifier that has no signified” (SX 81) “So the phallus signifies not a lack of signifier, it signifies nothing, it signifies an absence of signified.” (Lewis 69) Lacan does not submit the signifier to a transcendental signified, but rather posits the dependence of the signified upon the signifier.
Derrida evolves his radical claim: “There is a point in the system where the signifier can no longer be replaced by its signified, so that in consequence no signifier can be so replaced, purely and simply.” (Of Grammatology 266) The same, the present signifier, is nothing besides the absence of all the other signifiers that might be used in its place. Therefore, signifier can never point to an ultimate signified, but to the signifier itself. Thus the language system becomes the signifying chain, which is similar to Lacan’s notion. Thus the signified meaning of words can never present to us in their own positive identity, since both these features and their significations are nothing other than a network of differences. He considers meaning as “the play of différance”: to be different, and to defer. Meaning is formed in the network of differences and at the same time it is formed uniquely at each moment, which appears transitarily. “The fundamental signified, the meaning of the being represented, even less the thing itself, will never be given to us in person, outside the sign or outside play.” (Of Grammatology 266) Hence, différance has a doubled character: “at once the condition of possibility and the condition of the impossibility of truth”. (Dissemination 168)

As meaning is endlessly deferred and dispersed, all we get is the “self-effacing” trace, “[t]hat the signified is originarily and essentially [...] trace, that it is always already in the position of the signifier”. (Of Grammatology 73) What can be caught is not constant meaning, but only the trace of the slipping signifiers. “Without [...] a trace retaining the other in the same, no difference would do its work and no meaning would appear.” (Of Grammatology 62) “Difference cannot be thought without the trace.” (Of Grammatology, 57) Trace does not simply render present what is absent, but renders it present in its absence. The trace is “the nonpresence of the other inscribed within the sense of the present” (Of Grammatology 71). That is to say, trace is “the presence of absence, which is at the same time the absence of (full) presence” (Lewis 99). Hence, meaning seems to be in a continuous state of change therefore an absolute meaning completely unobtainable. The very purpose of the signifier, the differential, becomes to efface itself before the signified, to subordinate and erase itself before the presence which now appears to have made it possible. As Derrida claims, “the sign is from its origin and to the core of its sense [sens] marked by this will to derivation or effacement” (Speech and Phenomena 51).

Difference stands at the origin of any transcendental signified. According to Derrida, “the transcendental signified is linked to the notion that the signifier is
expression (expressivity) only" (Enwald 133). “Every signifier acquires its meaning not from a transcendental signified but from its differential position with respect to the other words around it, its interpretive context.” (Lewis 109) To deconstruct the transcendental signified is to free language from the “teleology of meaning”, to demonstrate that syntax should not be understood to be subservient to the semantic. (see Lewis 107-108) Deconstruction confines itself to show that “[...] a system in which the central signified, the original or transcendental signified, is never absolutely present outside a system of differences. The absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the play of signification infinitely” (Writing and Difference 354).

II. The Dismantlement of the Transcendental Truth

They two possess the existence of truth, although on different levels. Likewise, they both assert the possibility of gaining truth for subject, although through different methods. Their notions of truth share similarities: undecidable, non-general and non-transcendental.

Truth is one of the most central and complex term in Lacan’s discourse. For him truth is a meaningful concept in the context of language: “It is with the appearance of language that the dimension of truth emerges.” (Écrits 172) What Lacan said is that, truth is not something inherent in the sign, but something created by speech. The only method to reveal the truth about desire is speech. “Truth hollows its way into the real thanks to the dimension of speech. There is neither true nor false prior to speech.” (SI, 228) While speech opens the dimension of truth, it also opens the dimension of deception. Truth is intimately entangled with deception, since it can often reveal the truth about desire more eloquently than honest statements. Deception and error are inscribed in the text of truth. Hence only in the contradiction and certain temporality can truth break with error, revealing deception and manifesting itself. Lacan describes these contradictory and entangled relationships as “the structuration of speech in search of truth” as “error taking flight in deception and recaptured by mistake” (SI 273). Yet the truth from speech is not a transcendental and solid one, but an unstable one with the uncertain stigma. “Just as it is from Speech that Truth receives the mark that establishes it in a fictional structure.” (Écrits, 305)

Lacanian truth is “bound to emerge in some contingent detail” and “there is no truth in general, but always the truth of some situation” (Žižek, 359). His concept of
truth usually concerns with desire, and then connects with subjectivity and Other. Truth is “borne out by guarding against going as far as avowal, which would be the worst, the truth that becomes guarded starting right with the cause of desire” (SXX 93). The statement of truth comes from the unconscious subject, which is entangled with writing.\(^1\) “What is it, to tell [...] the truth about truth? It is to do that which I have effectively done—to follow the trace of the real, the real which only consists [with (con) the other rings, imaginary and symbolic] and ex-sists in the knot.” (SXXIII 66, see Evans 217-8) Simultaneously, “the knots are a writing, and the knot is a letter” (SXXIII 236, see Evans 217-8). To tell the truth about the truth, to tell the truth about the unconscious subject of enunciation is to “embody that subject, to describe the real with one’s written—and explicitly written—words. Writing allows the trace structure of the unconscious, the real density of the unconscious subject, to come to the fore” (Lewis, 212).

Lacan’s notion of truth reverses itself just as his notion of Other, especially in its relationship with the Real. It is impossible to articulate the whole truth; truth is both present and absent according to Lacan. “Every act of speaking refers to an Other that is deemed a guarantee for its truth, but the speech act must thereby recognize that at the same time, it can never coincide with this Other.” (Haute 77) His notion of truth obvious denies the metaphysical truth, which owns the transparent, transcendental and permanent qualities.

Derrida is usually considered to deny the existence of truth; yet what he really denies is any static and present truth, or transcendental truth. He does not fully reject the correspondence view of truth, but sees that truth is based on a metaphorical process. There is no objective fixed point of truth against which the truth of statements could be evaluated. His deconstructive viewpoint only questions the objectivity outside language, the grounds of truth, and the view that human conceptual knowledge can completely present the meaning of an object. Derrida’s notion of truth “is tied up with the non or pre-propositional, but they share the sense that truth is not simply a technical expression that can be given an isolated theoretical treatment” (Medina 161). “No more than can castration, dissemination [...] can never become an originary, central, or ultimate signified, the place proper to truth.” (Dissemination 268)

According to him, “[t]ruth is a matter of the relation between the linguistic conceptual constructions and the otherness beyond language” (Enwald 237). Truth is a kind of normative ideal that guides the use of our language, but which we can
never fully have, own or even understand as present. The experience of truth is thus
the experience of the impossible; it cannot be present here and now but only in the
way of difference, as the referring of the present to something else, to the absent.
One of his best known and most oft-quoted claims is “[t]here is nothing outside of
the text” (Of Grammatology 158). This does not mean that there would be nothing
outside the text, but rather that there is nothing that would completely avoid the
effects of general textuality and différence.

In the delineation of différence everything is strategic and adventurous. Strategic because
no transcendent truth present outside the field of writing can govern theologically the
totality of the field [...]. By means of this solely strategic justification, I wish to underline
that the efficacy of the thematic of différence may very well, indeed must, one day be
superseded, lending itself if not to its own replacement, at least to enmeshing itself in a
chain that in truth it never will have governed. (Margins of Philosophy, 7)

He claims that “[t]here is then no unconscious truth to be rediscovered by virtue
of having written in elsewhere” (Writing and Difference 211). That means the
unconscious truth can never be fully presentable, but can only appear through a
detour, which is similar to Lacan’s notion.

III. The Notion of Subject and Its Relationship with the Other

They both claim the existence of subject, the subject in their thought, however, is
not an integrated unity but a subversive one, which is contrary to the notion of the
Western traditional philosophy. They emphasize the importance of the Other (for
Lacan is the “Other” and the “other”) in forming the subject. Also, the subject must
get the self-reflection through the Other.

Lacan presents a radically new theory of subjectivity; he finds the concept of
subjectivity indispensable and explored what it means to be a subject, how one
comes to be a subject, the conditions responsible for the failure to become a subject.
(see Fink xi) His use of the term “subject” goes against the traditional understanding of the subject, proclaiming a subversion of the subject. During the
process of the development of his thoughts, the notion of subject varies a lot. His
“subject” has several levels, namely, the subject of statement, the subject of
enunciation (or speaking subject), the subject of the unconscious, the split subject,
the subject as a defense, and the subject as metaphor, and so on. (see Fink xv)
Among those complicate level, what entangle with Derrida’s notion of subject most
are the subject of the unconscious, the subject of enunciation, and an irreducibly split one. He asserts that the subject "can never be anything other than divided, split, alienated from himself" (Evans 195).

In analyzing the "signifier", Lacan reaches a conclusion that although alienation pervades every aspect of human life and every dimension of human beings, it is language that may alienate the human subject most profoundly and completely. He asserts that "the subject is an effect of language" (Écrits 835). "The subject is split by the very fact that he is a speaking being" (Écrits 269), since speech divides the subject of the enunciation from the subject of the statement. "Because the subject is essentially a speaking being (parlêtre), he is inescapably divided, castrated, SPLIT." (Evans 198) Lacan reveals the idiocy of subject as "the subject, who is naturally an idiot [un idiot]" (SXIV 10/5/67, see Lewis 197), which cannot be encompassed by the general order of language.

Using the linguistic meaning of the word "subject" to play with its logic meaning, he asserts that "subject" concerns those aspects of the human being that cannot be objectified, nor be studied in an "objective" way. "What do we call a subject? Quite precisely, what in the development of objectivation, is outside of the object" (SI, 194). Lacan claims that "one signifier (called the master signifier, and written S1) represents the subject for all other signifiers (written S2). However, no signifier can signify the subject" (see Evans 189). "The unconscious is not expressed, except by deformation" (SI, 48-9). The unconscious subject can become an object for consciousness only in the form of "symptoms". Meanwhile the symptom "is a trace, it is the presence of the absence of the unconscious, the mark left in presence of something which simply cannot be present" (Lewis, 22). Hence, the coherent and integrated subjectivity can never be present.

Lacan’s mirror stage can be understood as a metaphor for subjectivity. In the mirror stage, the fragmented infant identifies with and desires to be like an image of wholeness (the image in the mirror, the I or subject position that implies a coherent, unified, subjectivity). Yet while images of wholeness give us an image of ourselves as distinct from the world, they never align with us perfectly. When we get the image of ourselves at the first time, what we get is nothing but an alienating "other". There is an inevitable gap between the truth of fragmentation and images of self-identity and wholeness. Subject is not an integrated one which centers with consciousness, but an alienated and split one under the invasion of "other". He considers unconsciousness as the discourse of the "other". This (S) is the symbol
that Lacan uses to figure the subject in its division: "the 'barred subject', thus illustrating the fact that the subject is essentially divided" (Evans 198). We are what we are on the basis of something that we experience to be missing from us—our understanding of the "other"—that is the other side of the split out of which our unconscious must emerge. Therefore, subject is sure to be decentered. Thus this self-recognition involves a series of losses, an absence or lack inscribed in the heart of subjectivity. "[T]he subject is constituted by subtracting himself from it [the circular movement] and by decompleting it essentially in order [...] to have to count itself in on it, and to function in it only as a lack". (Écrits, 232) Due to the split and hollow essence of the subject, it needs the "other" and "Other" to get continued identification.

Both "other" and "Other" are inseparable with the notion of subject in Lacan’s discourse, which are the most complex notions in Lacanian theory. The little other is the other who is not really other, but a reflection and projection of the ego. The big Other designates radical alterity, an otherness which transcends the illusory otherness of the imaginary because it cannot be assimilated through identification. (see Evans 135) They two are tightly entangled with "signifier". Lacan defines subject as "the subject is a subject only by virtue of his subjection to the field of the Other" (SII 188). According to him, the subject is constituted in and through the encounter with an Other. "The subject remains, essentially indeterminable, in the Other, outside of which it cannot exist". (Haute, 74)

For what is omitted in the platitude of modern information theory is the fact that one can speak of code only if it is already the code of Other, and that is something quite different from what is in question in the message, since it is from this code that the subject is constituted, which means that it is from the Other that the subject receives even the message that he emits. (Écrits, 337)

The big Other is the symbolic insofar as it is particularized for each subject, it is "thus both another subject, in his radical alterity and unassimilable uniqueness, and also the symbolic order which mediates the relationship with that other subject" (Evans, 136). Therefore, the Other concerns about the incompleteness of the subject and inter-subjectivity.

Lacan proclaims that "there is no Other of the Other [...] no signifier exists which might guarantee the concrete consequence of any manifestation of the signifier" (Écrits 170).
Let us set out from the conception of the Other as the locus of the signifier. Any statement of authority has no other guarantee than its very enunciation, and it is pointless for it to seek it in another signifier, which could not appear outside this locus in any way. Which is what I mean when I say that no metalanguage can be spoken, or, more aphoristically, that there is no Other of the Other. (Écrits 287)

Lacan’s “subject” will eventually be indicted as the hitherto anonymous Other who thought, felt, and acted in ways that the social/historical individual repudiates for him/herself. (Malone 363) For Lacan, Other is not complete; it is inscribed with a “lack”, with its own limitedness and incompleteness. Consequently, the subject presents itself in a position of lack.

In Lacanian concept, meaningless indestructible signifiers determine the subject; the effects of the signifier on the subject constitute the unconscious. (Evans 189) The field of the signifier is the field of the Other, which Lacan calls “the battery of signifiers” (Evans 189). Just like the subject, the signifier is barred too. The subject is what the signifier finds impossible; it is the reflexive self, the moment of self-relation which the signifier rules out. “There is a signifier of the signifier, but it is impossible, it is the subject or his redundant presence within the signifier, which opens it onto the outside, the real.” (Lewis, 163) Simultaneously, the “other” functions a lot in the form of subjectivity simultaneously.

Just as we have defined the paternal signifier as the signifier which, in the locus of the Other, poses and authorizes the game of the signifiers, so there is another privileged signifier which has as an effect the constitution in the Other of what follows, [namely something] which changes its nature—this is why the symbol of the Other is here barred: [the Other] is not purely and simply the locus of speech but, like the subject, it is also implicated in a dialectic situated on the phenomenal plane of the reflection in relation to the little other. (Chiesa 117)

Likewise, Derrida’s notion of subject cannot be self-identical and self-present. He asserts that “[t]here has never been The Subject for anyone […] The Subject is a fable” (“Eating Well” 102). He points out that any post-deconstructive re-conception of the subject would have to be “a non-coincidence with self” and “the finite experience of non-identity to self”. (see Lumsden 15) His notion of subject connects itself tightly with différence. He remarks that “[t]here is no subject
who is agent subject and master of difference [...] subjectivity like objectivity is an effect of différance, an effect inscribed in a system of différance” (Positions 28). “The subject is not present nor above all to itself before différance, [...] the subject is constituted only in being divided from itself.” (Positions, 29) He does not deny the existence of the subject, which has been occasionally misunderstood by other critics, but he questions how it has been described in the Western philosophical tradition. Just as what he said, “I have never said that the subject should be dispensed with. Only that it should be deconstructed. To deconstruct the subject does not mean to deny its existence. There are subjects, ‘operation’ or ‘effects’ of subjectivity. This is an incontrovertible fact. To acknowledge this does not mean, however, that the subject is what is says it is.” (“Deconstruction and the Other” 125)

Derrida’s deconstruction of the subject has an effect on at least five different conceptions of it: the meta-linguistic subject, the substantial subject, the present subject, the conscious subject and the internal subject. (see Enwald 232) His deconstruction of the meta-linguistic subject concerns the process of becoming a subject beyond language, and does not merely criticize the delusion that linguistic description are seen as real descriptions about the subject. His deconstruction of the substantial subject and identity aims to question the view that the subject is a spiritual substance with a particular identity, autonomy and essence. (see Enwald 238) According to him, the subject created in auto-affection is essentially a trace. The subject created in auto-affection refers to the past, which can never be present of self-reflection. (see Enwald 239) His deconstruction of the substantial subject raises the question of whether auto-affection really produces the subject, or whether even this kind of view requires the existence of a “presubject” at some level. (see Enwald 243) The subject does not include an immediate self relation with the self, but rather the subject withdraws according to the principle of différance in every auto-affection. Self-reflection does not reach the subject, but the subject manifests itself as an abyss. (see Enwald 244) The deconstruction of the subject concerns above all the deconstruction of the presence of the subject. In his viewpoint, the presence of the subject is formed in auto-affection, in the process of différance. “The subject, and first of all conscious and speaking subject, depends upon the system of differences and the movement of différance, that the subject is not present, nor above all present to itself before différance, that the subject is constituted only in being divided from itself, in becoming space, in temporizing, in deferral [...].” (Positions 29) The presence of the subject in différance, obviously, is not constant.
but split. From the claims above, we might say that to Derrida, the present subjectivity is produced in the process of differance is one possible way of perceiving what constitutes the possible presence of the split subject.

The meaning of the deconstruction of the presence of the subject as proposed by Derrida lies in the fact that he questions the presence of consciousness. (see Enwald 248) Due to differance, or the indeterminateness of the play of differences, the subject is to a great extent unconscious. This is rather similar to Lacan's notion of the subject of unconscious. "Derrida's idea that the presence of consciousness is born from auto-affection can easily create the image of a fragmented and splintered subject, that is, a self born in auto-affection formed of separate identities." (Enwald 251)

Certainly in the subject becomes a speaking subject only in its commerce with the system of linguistic differences; or yet, the subject becomes a signifying (signifying in general, by means of speech or any other sign) subject only by inscribing itself in the system of differences. Certainly in this sense the speaking or signifying subject could not be present to itself, as speaking or signifying, without the play of linguistic or semiological differance. (Margins of Philosophy 16)

The deconstruction of the subject does not mean rejecting the concept of the subject or some sort of adaptation of the subject, but rather it concerns the deconstruction of certain Western philosophical notions of the subject. The deconstruction of the subject is aimed above all at the view that the subject would be a spiritual entity manifested as a present consciousness. Instead, Derrida presents the view that the subject is formed in self-reflection, which is as manifested form of differance. The subject is not present until it separates form itself (from being in itself) in order to look at itself as an object. Before self-reflection the subject is actually neither present nor absent.

The subject is constituted as divided in the answer to the call of the Other. (see Enwald 255) "The singularity of the 'who' is not the individuality of a thing that would be identical to itself; it is not an atom. It is a singularity that dislocates or divides itself in gathering itself together to answer to the Other, whose call somehow precedes its own identification with itself, for to this call I can only answer, have already answered, even if I think I am answering 'no'." ("Eating well" 100-1) The function of Other, to some extent, is similar to Lacan's notion of Other. "For Derrida, the subject does not have an identity before the auto-affective
movement which also erases itself and cannot be thought under the category of presence.” (Enwald 257) He denies the transparency of subjectivity. “The presence of subjectivity is marked by the other and constituted in relation to this otherness. Thus the subject is primarily a trace.” (Enwald 259)

Derrida criticizes the view of the subject as a meta-linguistic substance, as an identity outside language, as well as the notion of the subject as a pure self-present cogito. What we understand by the subject is, according to him, based on a linguistic description, which shares similarity with Lacan’s the subject of enunciation. “The subject is not some meta-linguistic substance or identity, some pure cogito of self-presence; it is always inscribed in language.” (“Deconstruction and the Other” 125) In other words, descriptions of consciousness and the subject always occur via language, and throughout the history of language the subject has usually been described as a meta-linguistic substance or identity, a cogito existing in itself. (Enwald 137) He aims at finding something which surpass language. “The critique of logocentrism is above all else the search for the ‘other’ and the ‘other of language’.” (“Deconstruction and the Other” 123) His notions such as “writing”, “différence”, “text”, “trace”, refer not only to language, but also describe the otherness beyond language, which also affect the use of language. Deconstruction concerns “the absolute outside of the opposition, […] that absolute otherness which was marked—once again—in the exposé of différence” (Dissemination 25). As Derrida says, “Différence is the displacement of this oppositional logic.” (“Force of Law” 235) It is always deeply concerned with the “other” of language. By transforming and generalizing the notion of what counts as a “text”, by rendering this system of language infinite, Derrida will attempt to show that the phrase “there is nothing outside the text” does not mean that we are imprisoned in the infinity of text. Rather, this infinity will lead to “otherness”.

To allege that there is no absolute outside of the text is not to postulate some ideal immanence [...]. The text affirms the outside, marks the limits of this speculative operation [...]. If there is nothing outside the text, this implies, with the transformation of the concept of text in general, that the text is no longer the snug airtight inside of an interiority or an identity to-itself […], but rather a different placement of the effects of opening and closing. (Dissemination 35-6)

**IV. Conclusion**

Derrida once claimed that in deconstruction Lacan was to some extent more
avant-garde than him, meanwhile, Lacan maintained that Derrida got inspiration from his discourse. In “For the Love of Lacan”, Derrida wrote, “Lacan left me the greatest freedom of interpretation”. (“For the Love of Lacan” 51) Lacan is said to be both the most deconstructible figure Derrida has engaged with and the one closest to him, the most deconstructive. (see Lewis 245) Derrida suggests that he is not closed to the possibility that his own work might be closer to Lacan’s than to any other: “[W]hether or not this work [deconstruction] should encounter Lacan’s, and Lacan’s—I do not at all reject the idea—more than any other today.” (Positions 111) Lacan was “a discourse whose critical effects seemed to me, despite what I have just recalled, necessary within an entire field” (Positions 111). To Derrida, Lacan is both the most deconstructible and the most deconstructive. This is perhaps why deconstruction Lacan as an object. (see Lewis 256) “It seems that Derrida sensed that Lacan, and Lacan alone, represented a genuine alternative to deconstruction, irreconcilable with it” (Lewis 7). Being regarded as a “structuralist” by certain people and a “poststructuralist” by others, Lacan employs the analytic method of structuralism to dismantle it, and thus forms an alternative discourse of deconstruction, which similarly is contrary to the traditional metaphysics. The similarities between Lacan’s psychoanalytical discourse and Lacan’s deconstruction view, make the two be prominent in the camp of post-structuralism, also build a bridge between psychoanalysis and deconstruction.

Note:
[1] The function of writing to Lacan is, to some extent, approximate to Derrida’s arche-writing.

Works Cited:

Chiesa, Lorenzo. Subjectivity and Otherness: A Philosophical Reading of Lacan. Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2007.

Derrida, Jacques. Speech and Phenomena and Other Essays on Husserl’s Theory of Signs. Trans. David B. Allison. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973.

---. Dissemination. Trans. Barbara Johnson. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.

---. Margins of Philosophy. Trans. Alan Bass. New York, London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1982.

---. “‘Deconstruction and the other’, An Interview with Richard Kearney”. Dialogues with Contemporary Continental Thinkers, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1982: 105-126.

---. “‘Eating well’, or the Calculation of the Subject: An Interview with Jacques Derrida".
Trans. Peter Connor and Avital Ronell in Eduardo Cadava. Eds. Peter Connor, and Jean-Luc Nancy Who Comes After the Subject? London and New York: Routledge, 1991.

---. "Force of Law: The 'Mystical Foundation of Authority"’. Trans. Mary Quaintance. Acts of Religion. Ed. Gil Anidjar London: Routledge, 1992.

---. Of Grammatology. trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997.

---."For the Love of Lacan", Resistances of Psychoanalysis. Trans. Peggy Kamuf. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1998: 39-69.

---. Writing and Difference. Trans. Alan Bass. London and New York: Routledge, 2001.

---. Positions. Trans. Alan Bass. London and New York: Continuum, 2002.

Enwald, Marika. Displacements of Deconstruction: The Deconstruction of Metaphysics of Presence, Meaning, Subject and Method. Diss. University of Tampere, Department of Mathematics, Statistics and Philosophy, Finland. Tampere: Tamperen Yliopistopaino Oy Juvenes Print, 2004.

Evans, Dylan. An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis. London and New York: Routledge, 2006.

Fink, Bruce. The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995.

Haute Van, Philippe. Against Adaptation: Lacan's "Subversion of the Subject" (The Lacanian Clinical Field). New York: Other Press, 2001.

Lacan, Jacques. The Seminar Book I. Freud's Papers on Technique, 1953-4. Trans. John Forrester, with notes by John Forrester. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

---. The Seminar. Book II. The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis, 1954-55. Trans. Sylvana Tomaselli, with notes by John Forrester. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

---. The Seminar. Book III. The Psychoses, 1955-56. Trans. Russell Grigg, with notes by Russell Grigg. London: Routledge, 1993.

---. Seminar Book XX: Encore, 1972-1973. Trans. Bruce Fink. New York and London: W. W. Norton, 1999.

---. Ecrits: A Selection. Trans. Alan Sheridan, London: Routledge Classics, 2001.

---. Le Séminaire. Livre XX. Encore, 1962-63. Ed. Jacques-Alain Miller. Paris: Seuil, 1975. See Lewis, Michael. Derrida and Lacan: Another Writing. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008.

---. "Le Séminaire livre XIII. L'Objet du psychanalyse, 1965-1966". Unpublished manuscript. See Lewis, Michael. Derrida and Lacan: Another Writing. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008.

---. "Le Séminaire livre XIV. Logique du fantasme, 1966-1967". Unpublished manuscript. See Lewis, Michael. Derrida and Lacan: Another Writing. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008.

---. Le Séminaire. Livre XXIII. Le sinthome, 1975-76, published in Ornicar, nos 6-11,1976-7. See Lewis, Michael. Derrida and Lacan: Another Writing. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008.
Lewis, Michael. *Derrida and Lacan: Another Writing*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008.

Lumsden, Simon. “Hegel, Derrida and the Subject”, *Cosmos and History: The Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy*, vol. 3., 2007.

Malone, Kareen Ror & Friedlander, Stephen R. ed.. *The Subject of Lacan: A Lacanian Reader for Psychologists*. New York: State University of New York Press, 2000.

Žižek, Slavoj. “For They Know Not What They Do”. Eds. José Medina and David Wood. *Truth Engagements Across Philosophical Traditions*. MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2005.

---

Tang Li, lecturer at the School of Foreign Languages, Southwest University for Nationalities. She is currently a Ph.D. candidate in the Program of Western Literary Theory and Literature at College of Foreign Languages and Cultures, Sichuan University. Her academic interest covers literary theory and criticism, English and American literature and cross-cultural studies.