



## **IN A STATE OF TRANSFERENCE** Wild, Political, Psychoanalytic

**The Argument**  
By Lilia Mahjoub



## ***In a State of Transference***

*Wild, political, psychoanalytic*

The title of the next Congress puts transference *in a state*, and specifies, with its subtitle, a few of these states. The order of these terms – wild, political and psychoanalytic – does not imply a progression. For these states differ, articulate and separate in equal measure, and can sometimes coexist, intersect or even collide.

So, let us begin with the last, *psychoanalytic transference*, which requires us to mention the first two as states which exist but which may occasionally be subverted by the one pertaining specifically to psychoanalysis.

The word “transference”, which does not belong specifically to psychoanalytic terminology, acquired, first of all as a notion, a very broad definition in the field of psychoanalysis, corresponding to a set of phenomena relating to relations between the patient and the analyst. Consequently, this led to each analyst having their own conceptions and observations on the subject, hence the muddle that ensued in the attempt to grasp its true meaning.

### **An Obstacle**

Freud introduced the term “transference” (*Übertragung*) as early as 1895 in his *Studies on Hysteria*, noting the existence of resistance to treatment – at the time when it was a question of either laying on hands or hypnosis – and reflecting upon several kinds of obstacles. A major one he mentions, which he qualifies not as “inherent in the material”<sup>[1]</sup> – a term he reserves for resistances properly speaking – but as “external”,<sup>[2]</sup> concerns what happens “when the patient’s relation to the physician is disturbed”.<sup>[3]</sup> He then distinguishes three kinds of disturbance, all

revolving around the person of the doctor. The first concerns a personal reproach aimed at the doctor or the influence of what has been heard about him or his method; the second, the fear of becoming too attached; and the third the fear of transferring [*reporter*] onto him representations that concern the content of the analysis, in other words sexual desires. In this way, Freud goes on to define transference as a phenomenon that disturbs the treatment and not as what essentially supports it, namely the patient's connection to the analyst.

After this, other articles by Freud reveal a change of perspective. For example, in 1904, at Clark University in the United States, he affirmed that “[i]n every psychoanalytic treatment of a neurotic patient the strange phenomenon that is known as ‘transference’ makes its appearance”.<sup>[4]</sup> It is thus no longer a question of a disturbed relationship, but rather of something integral to the treatment.

For Freud, it is clear that “[p]sycho-analytic treatment does not *create* transferences, it merely brings them to light, like so many other hidden psychological factors”,<sup>[5]</sup> because unlike other therapies, in psychoanalytic treatment, “all the patient's tendencies, including hostile ones, are aroused [...]”.<sup>[6]</sup> In this way, “[t]ransference, which seems ordained to be the greatest obstacle to psychoanalysis, becomes its most powerful ally”,<sup>[7]</sup> provided, however, that it is identified and interpreted. We can already see that treating transference in positive or negative terms, or in terms of love and hate, does not make things move forward any quicker, and we can thus understand why this “initial infatuation” [*énamoration primaire*]<sup>[8]</sup> – which can be observed at the beginning of the treatment and which is none other than Freud's *Verliebtheit* playing “a pivotal role in the transference”,<sup>[9]</sup> and this at the level of the imaginary – is then designated by Lacan with a new word, “*hainamoration*”.<sup>[10]</sup>

Let us note again how Freud concluded his 1905 text on the Dora case, a treatment whose duration of three months was nonetheless rich in teaching, especially given Lacan's masterful commentary of it in 1951.

Freud goes on to write that he “did not succeed in mastering the transference”<sup>[11]</sup> and he admitted that Dora's eagerness to provide him with material made him forget to be attentive to “the first signs of transference, which was being prepared in connection with another part of the same material”.<sup>[12]</sup> He then spells out what he should have seen and interpreted, but these are just suppositions.

Dora, in fact, “*acted out* an essential part of her recollections and phantasies instead of reproducing it in the treatment”<sup>[13]</sup> and the factor of transference, through which Freud reminded Dora of Herr K, remained definitively unrecognized by him.

## **A Dialectic**

We can already note how the fact that a patient may begin to speak and associate freely from the first interviews does not in itself give any indication of the state of

the transference. The signifying articulation, reduced to its simplest expression, the writing S1-S2, is not sufficient to speak of psychoanalytic transference. Thus linearity provides no clear evidence of transference but, as Lacan will go on to develop, transference is to be defined in terms of pure dialectics and even dialectical reversals.[\[14\]](#) Thus, Lacan gives a direction for the treatment, which “begins with rectification of the subject’s relations with reality [réel], and proceeds to development of the transference, and then to interpretation”.[\[15\]](#) In the 1950s, this interpretation of transference is defined by Lacan as “[n]othing but to fill the emptiness of this standstill with a lure. But [...] this lure serves a purpose by setting the whole process in motion anew”.[\[16\]](#) For, at moments of stagnation in the dialectic of analysis, transference is “the appearance [...] of the permanent modes according to which [the subject] constitutes her objects”.[\[17\]](#) And this is why interpretation cannot be reduced to an explanation that would consist in telling the patient that she is mistaken.

We already have here what Lacan – constantly interrogating the concept of transference – will underline in 1964, namely that transference is to be considered as that which “directs the way in which patients are treated”.[\[18\]](#) Here we can note that it is not the patient who is directed. Lacan goes on to add that, “conversely, the way in which they are treated governs the concept”.[\[19\]](#) This is why transference is the compass that indicates not only the waywardness of the analyst, but also his orientation.

From then on, Lacan not only conceives transference in terms of dialectics, but as that which is linked to the temporal pulsation of the unconscious. More precisely, it is that which does not open to the unconscious, but is rather its closing. We therefore agree with Freud’s contention that transference constitutes an obstacle and, as he noted in 1912, that the halting of associations indicates that the patient is under the influence of an idea relating to the analyst, and that if the analyst points it out to the patient, “the situation is changed from one in which the associations fail into one in which they are being kept back”.[\[20\]](#) However, Lacan overcomes the Freudian obstacle and will show how the position of the analyst is decisive in this regard.

### **A Knot: Closure and Interpretation**

With this new step, Lacan effectively treats transference as a knot, because it presents itself as a paradox: on the one hand, its development is necessary to open the way to interpretation, and on the other, it cuts off the way to the unconscious. Hence the strategy required of the analyst in handling this knot. This strategy, where the analyst has less freedom than he does in his tactics (his interventions), and which is one of the analyst’s three modes of action, the third being his politics,[\[21\]](#) does not amount to “appeal[ing] to some healthy part of the subject thought to be there in the real”[\[22\]](#) in the way that many analysts, confusing the subject with the ego, came to lose their way. For to do so would be “to misunderstand that it is precisely this part that is concerned in the transference, [...] this part that closes the door”;[\[23\]](#) and

this is why it is at this point that the strategy of the analyst and his interpretation come into play, which aim to reopen the door. However, do not simplify the topology of this opening-closing, because the unconscious is not beyond the closure, hidden, like an inside, it is *outside*,[\[24\]](#) and it is this that, through the analyst's open-sesame of interpretation, calls for the reopening of the shutter. It is clear that the handling of the transference to which the analyst must pay attention is from this moment on crucial, as regards the status of the unconscious and its opening in the treatment.

### **A Conceptual Crisis**

Psychoanalytic transference, if it is love, even an authentic love, is however not just any love, and it is for this reason that Lacan devotes a whole seminar to it in 1960-61. It must be emphasized that in his preceding seminar of 1959-60, he had already examined the question of love from the angle of courtly love, in order to distinguish it from Christian love. For Lacan, what was at stake was to establish what place love has – this new love – within the analytic discourse, and this on the basis of transference. Moreover, if Lacan spends so long developing the theme of love in his teaching, especially with regards to transference, it is also to show how desire, which had been dislodged by Christian love and its commandment to “Love thy neighbor as thyself” – which evacuates sexuality – must be returned to its place through psychoanalysis and transference.

For Lacan, the question of knowing what transference is was far from being resolved, and quite a number of diverging views on the subject had been expressed at different stages in the history of psychoanalysis. Lacan even referred to it as the site of a “permanent conceptual crisis [...] in analysis”,[\[25\]](#) a crisis that is necessary for the very existence of psychoanalysis. Thus, the question of the analyst's involvement within transference cannot be swept away into the catch-all category of countertransference, which is what had indeed occurred, preventing any possibility of questioning.

The question of the analyst's place in transference is one that analysts must fix their attention upon, because if transference exists as a concept, it cannot be a dead concept.

The analytic relation starts with a misunderstanding, an error concerning who he is [*erreur sur la personne*], with the fantasies that the analysand makes the analyst support and that the analyst accepts to bear. This bears no relation to what he will become at the end of the treatment, due to the analysis of the transference. Nonetheless, for the analyst, knowing what is involved in an analysis, having done one himself, is not enough. To be able to respond appropriately to the analysand, he must consider his “true position”[\[26\]](#) within the transference.

Yet, Lacan also poses this question at the very level of the organization of the psychoanalytic society, the first fruits of which will be implemented soon after with

the founding of his School and the procedure of the Pass, and this in order to question what an analyst *is*.

So, transference has nothing to do with evidence, but rather, as we have already underlined, with the analyst's strategy, not to mention his politics, in which he is even less free than in his strategy and tactics.[\[27\]](#) Therefore, transference raises the question of the analyst's place, but also of his being, and is an essential cog in both the treatment and the analytic group [*masse*].

### **An Algorithm**

In 1967, Lacan puts the transference at the heart of his "Proposition... on the Psychoanalyst of the School" in the form of an algorithm, introducing that which gives it its pivotal function: the subject supposed to know.[\[28\]](#) This is so as to extract it from the intersubjectivity that sticks to the skin of the relationship between analyst and analysand and, as Lacan puts it so well, to "wipe away the subjective from this subject".[\[29\]](#) This analytic relation is not reduced to two partners, but implies a third: the subject supposed to know, which is neither the analysand nor the analyst. If there are two desires involved in a treatment, that of the subject and that of the analyst, and which are not equivalent, there is nevertheless only one subject at stake.

What can we say about *wild transference* and *political transference* after these developments on psychoanalytic transference?

### **A Wild Interpretation**

The word "wild" appears in the title of one of Freud's articles from 1910, "Wild Psychoanalysis".[\[30\]](#) If you read it, you will notice that, in fact, this so-called wild analysis is offered at the level of suggestion, as advice, and does not concern itself with the nature of the transference and the place that, in this case, the physician occupies within it. A patient comes to hold Freud to account because a fellow doctor, in making a wild interpretation about her, had justified himself by attributing it to Freud and his new way of seeing things. This is, to say the least, something of the order of a wild transference. What Freud notes is that within the various recommendations that the previously consulted physician had provided, no place had been left for psychoanalysis. Thus, wild transference is here what steps in to support an interpretation before the transference has been allowed to develop, in a way that would have made it possible for the analyst to identify what place he occupies within it. It is thus a transference without analysis, in other words without interpretation. And that's what we see flourishing in therapies that work under suggestion. Freud will even highlight the therapeutic success that such methods can achieve, for once the patient "has abused the physician enough and feels far enough away from his influence, his symptoms give way...".[\[31\]](#) It is therefore not so much the patient that is harmed by this way of conducting things, but the physician himself and the psychoanalytic cause. Indeed, in the same text, Freud goes on to speak about

the foundation of an international psychoanalytic association in which the members renounce all responsibility for the conduct of those who are not part of it.

### **Outside Analysis**

These wild transferences can also occur as an offshoot to a treatment if they are not spotted in time by the analyst or because the analysand keeps quiet about them and as a result they cannot be interpreted. They produce a return to the ego, that is to say, a closure of the unconscious. This is why any lateral transference could be deemed to be wild. This can happen with the person of a spouse, with a colleague, with any other who becomes on occasion a counselor, a confidant, a therapist, a master of thought, or everything that proceeds from the discourse of the master and that makes use of the power that one has over someone, as opposed to the analyst who deprives himself of the power of suggestion in order to allow the transference to develop. This consequently supposes that a place be made for interpretation, but also that the analyst should know from what place the interpretation is made.

### **An Acting Out**

An interpretation can prove to be false when the analyst answers from the place of his ego, in other words when his prejudices lead him astray, thus drawing his analysand into the same topographical regression. The interpretation can also be inaccurate, opening the way to the *acting out*. We have a number of examples of this in psychoanalytic literature, such as the Dora case, the case of the young female homosexual, or Ernst Kris's fresh brains man. In the framework of the treatment, *acting out* is a call to interpretation, a sign made to the analyst, if the latter is paying attention to it.

For Lacan, "acting out is an inroad into transference. It's wild transference."[\[32\]](#) It can happen for someone who is not in analysis, as a false solution to his desire, but also in analysis, and in this case, it is calling for a more accurate interpretation with respect to the place of desire.

This leaves *political transference*, which would be situated between wild transference and psychoanalytic transference. Could we say that it is the other side of the one pertaining to psychoanalysis?

### **A Sphere**

In 1969-1970, Lacan held a seminar which he originally entitled *La psychanalyse à l'envers*,[\[33\]](#) at a time when politics took to the streets and where he did not hesitate to go looking for a new discourse of the master – that of the University, thrown into question by students in revolt against it as well as against other institutions that were also under the sway of the master's discourse.

It was furthermore an important political moment for psychoanalysis: a moment when Lacan had created his School and was formalizing his four fundamental discourses.

What is at the heart of these discourses is the question of the desire to know, in so far as the master does not wish to know anything and the University only prolongs this ignorance by stamping knowledge with the mark of an *all* that governs the production of units of value. This totalization of knowledge is, according to Lacan, “immanent in politics as such”.<sup>[34]</sup> It is part of “the imaginary idea of the whole that is given by the body, as drawing on the good form of satisfaction, on what, ultimately, forms a sphere, [and that] has always been used in politics by the party of political preaching”.<sup>[35]</sup> Note that this has never been so striking and amplified as today, with body images, especially those of politicians, filling our screens.

In analytic treatment, if bodies are present, the image of the body must be so as little as possible, and this is why, from the moment the transference develops, Freud “no longer addressed the person [...] in his proximity, which is why he refused to work fact to face with him”.<sup>[36]</sup> While, in the discourse of the master, the body is produced as a surplus-enjoyment, in the discourse of the analyst it is reduced to being a semblant of the object, namely to the silence, voice or gaze that the analysand lends to the analyst for the time it takes for the latter to grasp what really causes his desire.

### **A Truth-knowledge**

In the discourse of the analyst, knowledge, S2, is on his side: “He acquires this knowledge through listening to his analysand”<sup>[37]</sup> – it is indeed a knowledge transference – “which at a certain level can be limited to analytical know-how”.<sup>[38]</sup> Thus, via this transference, the analyst will approach this knowledge as truth, that is to say as something that is *not a whole* and can only be half-said. This knowledge as truth, as a half-saying, is the very structure of the interpretation expected from an analyst. This is supposed to lead to a knowledge to which the analyst makes himself “hostage”, “a knowledge of which he is prepared, in advance, to be the product of the psychoanalysand’s cogitations [...] insofar as, as this product, he is in the end destined to become a loss, to be eliminated from the process”.<sup>[39]</sup> Here we find, ten years on, the extension of the articulation of the *subject supposed to know* as a ternary element in the algorithm of transference, with this additional step of the analyst as a semblant of the object and as the waste produced by the analytical process.

The knowledge at stake in the treatment, reduced to a hole, that of the subject’s unconscious, must therefore be situated as the other side of politics, as politics is taken up in the discourse of the Master or in that of the University?

### **A Social Bond**

Lacan emphasizes that he did not say “politics is the unconscious, but quite simply the unconscious is politics”.[\[40\]](#) He formulates this with regard to the logic of the fantasy, clarifying that what he means by this aphorism is that what binds men together and what opposes them is precisely part of what he is trying to articulate with this logic. Lacan then asks why it is better to be accepted rather than rejected, which is what well-meaning morality might say. Without this logic proper to fantasy, “slippages can occur, which entail that before noticing that to be rejected is an essential dimension for the neurotic, it is in any case necessary that he offer himself [*s’offre*]”.[\[41\]](#) So, for the neurotic, as for the analyst himself, though of course not from the same place, this consists with the offer to try to do something with demand. This is true for transference in analysis, but also in society, where the psychoanalyst, with the discourse he offers, can create a demand. It is not the same kind of demand as that of the Other of politics “under aspects of democracy and the market”.[\[42\]](#) And it is in this sense that one can say, with Lacan, that “being a psychoanalyst means having a place in society”.[\[43\]](#) In fact, this demand can be called transference and stand out from the effects of suggestion, not to mention hypnosis, and also from the generalized identifications produced by other discourses.

Paris, October 30, 2017

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*Translated by Philip Dravers*

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[\[1\]](#) Freud, S., Breuer J., *Studies in Hysteria*, SE II, p. 301.

[\[2\]](#) *Ibid.*

[\[3\]](#) *Ibid.*

[\[4\]](#) Freud, S., “Fifth Lecture”, *Five Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, SE XI, p. 51.

[\[5\]](#) Freud, S., “A Fragment of a Case of Hysteria”, SE VII, p. 117.

[\[6\]](#) *Ibid.*

[\[7\]](#) *Ibid.*

[\[8\]](#) Lacan, J., “The Direction of the Treatment and the Principles of Its Power”, *Écrits*, trans. B. Fink, London & New York, Norton, 2006, p. 503.

[\[9\]](#) Lacan, J., *The Seminar, Book I: Freud’s Papers on Technique*, trans. J. Forrester, London & New York, Norton, 1988, p. 282.

[\[10\]](#) Lacan, J., *Seminar XX: Encore*, trans. B. Fink, London & New York, Norton, 1998, p. 98.

[\[11\]](#) Freud, S., “A Fragment of a Case of Hysteria”, *op. cit.* p. 118.

[\[12\]](#) *Ibid.*

[\[13\]](#) *Ibid.*, 119.

[\[14\]](#) Lacan, J., “Presentation on Transference”, *Écrits, op. cit.*, p. 178.

[\[15\]](#) Lacan, J., “The Direction of the Treatment and the Principles of Its Power”, *ibid.*, p. 500.

[\[16\]](#) Lacan, J., “Presentation on Transference”, *ibid.*, p. 184.

[\[17\]](#) *Ibid.*, pp. 183-4.

[\[18\]](#) Lacan, J., *Seminar XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, trans. A. Sheridan, London, Penguin, 1977, p. 124.

- [19] *Ibid.*
- [20] Freud, S., “The Dynamics of Transference”, SE XII, p. 101.
- [21] Cf. Lacan, J., “The Direction of the Treatment and the Principles of Its Power”, *Écrits*, *op. cit.*, p. 493.
- [22] Lacan, J., *Seminar XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, *op. cit.*, p. 131.
- [23] *Ibid.*
- [24] *Ibid.*
- [25] *Ibid.*
- [26] Lacan, J., *Seminar VIII: Transference*, trans. B. Fink, Cambridge, Polity, 2015, p. 329.
- [27] Cf. Lacan, J., “The Direction of the Treatment and the Principles of Its Power”, *Écrits*, *op. cit.*, p. 493.
- [28] Lacan, J., “Proposition of the 9<sup>th</sup> October 1967 on the Psychoanalyst of the School”, *Analysis* 6, 1995.
- [29] *Ibid.*
- [30] Freud, S., “Wild Analysis”, SE XI, pp. 219-27.
- [31] *Ibid.*, p. 227.
- [32] Lacan, J., *Seminar X: Anxiety*, trans. A. Price, Cambridge, Polity, 2014, p. 125.
- [33] [TN: which could be translated either as *Psychoanalysis Inside Out, Upside Down, Backwards* or the *Wrong Way Around*.]
- [34] Lacan, J., *Seminar XVII: The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, trans. R. Grigg, London, Norton, 2007, p. 31.
- [35] *Ibid.*
- [36] Lacan, J., “The Direction of the Treatment and the Principles of Its Power”, *Écrits*, *op. cit.*, p. 499.
- [37] Lacan, J., *Seminar XVII: The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, *op. cit.*, p. 35.
- [38] *Ibid.*
- [39] *Ibid.*, p. 38.
- [40] Lacan, J., *Seminar XIV: The Logic of Fantasy*, session of 10 May 1967, unpublished.
- [41] *Ibid.*
- [42] Miller, J.-A., from his course, *Orientation lacanienne*, III, 4, 15 May 2002, unpublished.
- [43] Lacan, J., “The Place, Origin and End of My Teaching”, trans. D. Macey, *My Teaching*, London, Verso, 2008, p. 49.