

Variations on a Theme: Handling Transference from Freud to Laplanche

Paul Kellett van Leer

Introduction

The notion of transference is a peculiarly psychoanalytic one; a notion that is quintessential to psychoanalytic theory, and one that demands, one way or another, an ‘accounting for’. Yet, at the same time, the notion of transference—particularly as it is exemplified by the transference neurosis that is manufactured in and by analysis—itself transfers an everyday phenomenon into the rarefied atmosphere of the consulting room; a process that *peculiarises* the everyday, refocussing it via the lens of psychoanalytic theorising. For is not transference constitutive of what is evoked, what is called up within us in relation to any given encounter whether it be accidental or routine, surprising or commonplace; an encounter such as an ineffably careless gesture (so poignantly portrayed by Kundera, 1984, for example), or the most sublime artistic expression such as, say, a work of music? And while transference may not be the whole truth of what is evoked in these moments, it is surely nothing but the truth that such everyday evocations are ‘the product of the meeting and interpenetration of images, people, events, or things with which I have identified, wanted to identify, or could not help myself from being identified with ... all the landmarks in my life, whether I am aware of them or not ... all the characteristics which have blended into a new me’ (Roustang, 1984:163). If such is the stuff of human life, then transference represents a fundamental dimension of relating, one that we would not be without, and it can be of little surprise that it has been accorded a privileged place in the psychoanalytic gaze.

Like other such concepts that have become central to psychoanalytic theorising, transference is one born of Freud’s clinical experience; an emergent phenomenon that required conceptualisation in order to inform a more or less comprehensive model of the ‘apparatus of the soul’. In its surprising nature, transference represents a phenomenon akin to

the uncanny of the unconscious—a notion to which it is intimately connected—with its unexpected, decentring manifestation of the return of something forgotten yet familiarly strange. Freud was certainly surprised by the emergence of transference dynamics in the consulting room, since his early analytic model had not accounted for such a strange haunting, and though analysts since Freud have been forearmed with various theories developed to account for the transference, nonetheless we continue to be taken by surprise when, like a jack-in-the-box it springs forth. How, then, are we to prepare for the unexpected; how are we to *handle* such an inevitable strangeness?

Theory and practice

The issue of handling transference generates questions of both a theoretical and practical nature regarding the conceptualisation of, and intervention in the transference respectively. How might we begin to consider such questions? The multiplicity of psychoanalytic models and far-reaching impact of contemporary philosophical critique precludes the establishment of an over-arching blueprint for a comprehensive theory and strategy in this regard. To coin a post-modernist paradox, any attempt at a meta-narrative – privileging one account over others – is doomed to become entangled in authoritative claims to illusory knowledge and power (Fairfield, *et al.*, 2002) within the multi-dimensional collision of a plurality of paradigms that offer contrasting – if not incompatible – perspectives (Lyotard, 1979). If Freud's theories offer but one particular lensing of human nature (one, that is, with its own flaws and resulting interferences) then later developments and models are like sets of variations, each elaborating this theme in such a way as to produce a distinct if related piece. There are, then, many variations on the theme of transference, each with their own harmonies and rhythms.

The notion of language games (Wittgenstein, 1953) offers one way in which we can think about this complex polyphony in order to trace the differing developmental melodies within. From the vantage point of this perspective, the nature of theorising within psychoanalysis can

itself be viewed as an *emergent* aspect of practice; a culturally-embedded activity that forms a living and lived aspect of the identity and practise of a psychoanalyst. Freud's account of transference thus represents a narrative situated within a particular socio-historical culture – with all its attendant meanings and values – as do the varying developments of the notion of transference since Freud. From the very start of Freud's project, of course, the notion of language itself was accorded the status of an important theme. As the vicissitudes of translation have revealed time and again, the transference of terms across languages, between tongues, itself results in variations that fundamentally transform the words and concepts at play, the variation infusing the theme with a flavour that may sweeten or sour, spice or cool depending on one's taste. In this regard, one such variation on the Germanic theme of transference is that which Sechaud (2008) has identified as 'French'. Sechaud does not suggest that such a category comprises a unified approach to theory and practice – for, indeed, none do – but rather illustrates how one way to think about French psychoanalytic traditions can be characterised as 'thinking *with* Freud' (2008:1011, italics added). Certainly, this was the claim of France's most notorious psychoanalyst, Jacques Lacan, and the technique of making a close reading of Freudian texts and subjecting these to logical and philosophical critique in the light of contemporary knowledge and experience is a hallmark of other French psychoanalysts.

Lacan's 'return to Freud' reconceptualises fundamental Freudian concepts in such a way as to redefine notions of the unconscious, the drives, fantasy and subjectivity, the position of the analyst, his or her desire, and the dynamics of relating; all of which have significant implications for the conceptualisation of transference. This paradigm in turn represents a dominant theme within French psychoanalysis, scaffolding the theory and practice of other variations, such as the line of development associated with Laplanche. This latter variation offers similarities as well as differences with respect to the more dominant Lacanian theme, acting then as a counterpoint both to Lacanian and Freudian psychoanalytic narratives. And so, out of the many possible trajectories along which the notion of transference has travelled since Freud, I have chosen to trace

a Laplanchean path. Why? Because I find its melodies, harmonies and rhythms evocative, because I find its flavours enjoyable.

In order to draw out the development of the theme of transference from Freud to Laplanche I first outline some points of interest in Freud's construction of the notion of transference, drawing largely on his most comprehensive account as this is propounded in his 1912 paper 'The Dynamics of Transference'. These points are organised according to issues regarding the causes of transference, its manifestation in analysis and its handling with regard to interpretation and cure; issues which, in turn, form the focus of a Laplanchean deconstruction; one that, as we shall see, reformulates the notion of transference and traces the consequences of this reformulation for analytic practice.

Freud's Battling

[The] struggle between the doctor and the patient, between intellect and instinctual life, between understanding and seeking to act, is played out almost exclusively in the phenomena of transference. It is on that field that the victory must be won – the victory whose expression is the permanent cure of the neurosis (Freud, 1912:108).

Speaking here of the transference neurosis that he believed neurotics alone generate in psychoanalytic treatment, Freud's confident assertion conjures up a vivid metaphor; transference as field of battle on which the cure as victory is at stake. Not only is it significant that Freud absolves the analyst – and, indeed, the analytic method – from any causal implication with regard to the transference, but note that he also polarises the positions of the reasonable (intellectual) analyst, and the unreasonable (instinctual) analysand. Freud thus grounds transference in line with his Enlightenment-rooted project as the site where the rational analyst battles an irrational analysand. In this battle, however, Freud found he could not be confident of victory, acknowledging that it represents the analyst's greatest challenge, and potentially the nemesis of analysis. In this, Freud

is drawing on his own clinical victories and defeats – most notably, with regard to the latter, that of the case of Dora (Freud, 1905/1901) – for he flourishes his epic metaphor as a hard won theoretical position that had incurred its own sacrifices. Characterising transference in this way is thus bound up in Freud's apology for a potential – and experienced – failure of treatment, and it cements a metaphor that, as with all such similes, precludes other ways of conceptualising, thus carving out a way of thinking that dominated his development of the notion of transference. Henceforth, then, transference is the battle ground on which the success of the analytic project is to be won or lost.

Indeed, from the very start of his psychoanalytic project, Freud (1895) had regarded the manifestation of transference as an obstacle to the analysis of neurotics; a manoeuvre by the patient stubbornly resolved to repeat rather than remember, a frustrating act of sabotage by the analysand turned foe. And though he consolidates this view in 1912, he also acknowledges two further issues that represent a significant variation on this original theme. First, in what was to join the first of a number of attempts to exorcise psychoanalysis of the ghost of hypnosis, he calls upon the notion of transference in order to construct an analytic account of the problem of suggestion. Distinguishing between positive and negative types of transference, Freud asserts that only negative transference, in which hostile feelings are directed towards the analyst, as well as that involving repressed erotic feelings similarly directed, are amenable to recruitment by the resistance. The positive transference that springs from the well of a love cleansed of erotic desire, however, is now positioned by Freud as a pre-requisite for a successful analysis. This positive transference, this variation is at the analyst's disposal, a much-needed weapon in the service of the all-decisive battle.

Second, after Ferenczi's (1909) revelations regarding the implications of the Oedipus complex for the positioning of the analyst by the neurotic patient, Freud now acknowledges that the transference ushers into the here and now of the consulting room imagoes of the patient's prototypical familial relational dynamics, and resulting unresolved unconscious Oedipal conflicts, comprising what Freud (1930) would

come to see as erotic desires repressed in the face of the limits imposed by civilisation. Thus, while Freud claims victory in his assertion that negative aspects of the transference are seized upon and deployed by the analysand as a resistance to cure, he now concedes that this very repetition performs a potentially transformative function, offering a tantalising new route to victory. Thus, in his battle with the patient, the analyst is now equipped with an extended armoury and a cunning new plan.

It is worth noting that Freud's coming around to the possibilities implicit in this development is not without a degree of resistance on his part. For, in this 1912 exposition – and, indeed, henceforth – he cannot bring himself to relinquish his long held belief that transference deployed in the service of resistance can and must be removed. While this concept of removal is destined to evolve into the more elusive, and potentially productive, *lösung*, a crucial aspect of Freud's clinical philosophy nonetheless remains intact; only *once* the negative transference has been removed can the remaining positive transference fulfil its potential as 'the vehicle of success in psychoanalysis' (Freud, 1912:105). Thus, Freud refuses to surrender his imperative to do battle on a field that remains populated by familiar opponents.

If the assertion of the need to remove the negative transference has left psychoanalysis with a pragmatic headache – not least, for example, the myth that analysis cannot proceed, cannot do its work, until the negative transference has been vanquished – Freud's hope that the concept of positive transference would see off the demon of suggestion has also given rise to a persistent hangover. For now a question arose regarding the role of the positive transference as vehicle of analytic success, establishing a problematic in which psychoanalysis remains entangled; that is, the conflating of interpretation and hypnotic suggestion (Borch-Jacobsen, 1991/1993). By 1912, Freud is still prepared to 'readily admit that the results of psycho-analysis rest upon suggestion ... the influencing of a person by means of the transference phenomena' (*ibid.* pp.105 – 106). However, he does not seem daunted by the implications of this admission; that the susceptibility of the patient to cure by reason(ing) relies upon hypnotic suggestion, thus nullifying the rational, scientific basis of the

psychoanalytic method and contradicting his clean-cut positioning of analyst and patient.

Why this preoccupation with the removal of the negative transference; how – and to what – is this variation on the transference used as a resistance? Again, Freud could not disentangle himself from the snare of suggestion, for he saw the negative transference as an obstacle to the treatment due to its immunising the patient against the hypnotic analytic demand for work; from the first rule of psycho-analysis – that the patient should freely associate – up to the acts of interpretation and construction. For Freud, the patient desires such inoculation due to the principle motivation of resistance; he or she does not *want* to remember, does not *want* to know, does not *want* to submit his or her repressed unconscious desires to rational scrutiny, but rather wishes to continue to enjoy – and, indeed, wring even more enjoyment from – the illusory fantasies that lean against his or her hidden passions, where reality can impose no limitation to – or consequences of – desire. Here, then, is born the theme of an unconscious that strives to remain hidden, just as the effects of the transference announce themselves with full fanfare, while the transference itself slips out of the grasp of interpretation.

In this sense, then, resistance flourishes due to a kind of loophole; insight cannot simply be handed over by the analyst, cannot be *transferred* at the point of interpretation, but rather, must be taken over – taken up – by the analysand, if the experience of representation-as-realisation is to have some effect upon the unconscious source of the symptom. That is, '[t]he patient's *subjective appropriation* of the analyst's interpretation enables the analysand to free himself from repetition in the transference' (Sechaud, 2008:1017, italics added). Such appropriation alludes to an interpretation forged by the analysand, a *translation* of the analyst's interpretation, opening the analysis up to the potential for reflection and revelation. To the extent that interpretation evokes a translation in the analysand, then, one that represents a re-authoring (after Barthes, 1967) of the analyst's speech act (Austin 1962) rather than a capitulation in hypnotic deference to the authority of the analyst, we can view an interpretation as a *catalyst*, one that fires a process of internal transformation in the analysand.

Certainly, Freud had such a process and goal in mind, yet found no way to vanquish the conflation of interpretation-as-seduction; thus, the transformative effects of interpretation-as-catalyst remained entangled with the dynamics of suggestion. And this is so because this crucial 'taking up' by the analysand, a taking up upon which all hangs, is one that must be performed unconsciously, returning us to the problematic domain of hypnosis.

Nonetheless, Freud's assertion quoted at the start of this section rallies the analyst as if this project of cure-by-interpretation can bypass, if not defeat the unconscious; the analyst must take up arms against negative transference, the foot soldier of the patient's desire to regress to the pleasure principle in defiance of the reality principle. In this battle, 'the doctor tries to compel ... [the patient] ... to fit ... [their] ... emotional impulses into the nexus of the treatment and of his life-history, to submit them to intellectual consideration and to understand them in the light of their psychological value' (*ibid.* p.108). Only through such *conscious* insight will the patient be cured, though if the battle is to be won, the doctor relies upon the patient's positive transference in order to ensure their amenability to the removal of the negative transference by suggestion, a suggestion that masquerades as rational reflection and understanding.

Transference, then, is a Trojan Horse; both a gift and an ambush. It reveals how the neurotic offers, despite themselves, a coded communication that belies their originary template and the resulting dynamics of the repressed – thus placing within reach the prize of an unconscious structure that is amenable to a *knowing* that promises permanent relief – yet, at the same time, through this very offering the patient interpolates the analyst into the role of *the* representative of significant others in this originary drama. Both parties are thus ensnared in a transferential knot in which neither is who they assume themselves to be – either for themselves or for each other – and words function on a level that slips from the control of the one who speaks.

Laplanche's Refounding

In his project of formulating new foundations in psychoanalysis, Laplanche (1989) privileges the Freudian perspective as the founding theory of psychoanalysis. His approach entails a 'calling into question' of the principle themes – such as transference – of Freudian psychoanalysis, with the purpose of constructing new theoretical foundations, grounded – like Freud – in clinical experience, but also informed by decades of philosophical and psychoanalytical critique. In this regard, Laplanche subjects Freudian theory to a scrutiny that characterises something of a postmodern sensibility, by which the tensions and inconsistencies of classical theory are drawn out to destabilise the theory as a master discourse, and open up a space for new conceptual possibilities (Leary, 1994).

Laplanche characterises Freud's reasoning as having 'gone astray' at the point where he abandoned his theory of seduction. Principally, he argues that Freud was himself seduced by the essentialist promise of a centring – or, rather a re-centring – of the subject. Thus the victory of battle is meant to produce a *restored* subject who has recovered and re-assimilated 'something in me which I've split off from, denied' (Laplanche, 1999:67); that is, a subject who has mastered the irrational unconscious and has become (again) master in and of his or her own house. For Laplanche, this taming of the unconscious betrays a radical consequence of Freud's discovery; that hysterics do not suffer from a forgetting, but rather – highlighted in Freud's use of the term 'reminiscences' – from the return of something as if from elsewhere, something that always was and is fundamentally other, enigmatically alien; something, that is, that will not be domesticated.

Taking each of the points of the previous section in turn, let us see how Laplanche's attempt to address some of the critiques outlined are transformed in this Laplanchean reformulation of the notion and handling of transference.

Psychoanalysis as Cause

Contemporaneous to Laplanche's considerations – and in what represents a starting point for his elaboration of the dynamics of transference – Macalpine (1950) critiques Freud's assertion that the neurotic is the cause of the transference, describing how the analytic situation itself – with the analyst's abstinence and rule of free association – provokes a heightened regression in the patient. Might we not say, in other words, that the patient's regression is an adaptive response to the demand for work that the analytic situation poses? As Laplanche (1999:226) puts it, 'it is the offer of analysis, the offer of the analyst, which creates ... what? Not analysis, but its essential dimension, transference. Not, perhaps, the whole of the transference, but its basis, the driving force at its heart, in other words, the re-opening of a relation, the originary relation, in which the other is primary for the subject.' If the transference, then, transfers an originary template into the analytic situation, it does so as a response to the already-seductive suggestion of analysis; the analyst actively evokes – even provokes – a transference dynamic by inviting a *temporal* – that is, regressive – transfer in the phenomenology of the patient.

Freud acknowledges that transference is common in everyday life, and so we can see how understanding transference as a response to the analytic situation may reveal something about the analysand's everyday situation. That is, if transference occurs spontaneously in the everyday, might it not be because something has been experienced that evokes a regression? In this way, we are interpellated (Althusser, 1970), *hailed back by and into the past as we (re)call something of the past*. Again, if there is something unique regarding the analytic situation, it is that it transfers something of the everyday and makes it particular, peculiar, in order to work through the repetition of neurotic misery.

Transference as manifestation of the Enigmatic Signifier

In his revision of how the analysand's navigation through the Oedipal crisis shapes the nature of transference dynamics, Laplanche asserts

that Freud's revolutionary project went astray at the point where Freud shied away from pursuing a crucial logical implication with regard to the issue of seduction; that the infant's everyday encounter with the adult is inherently and profoundly enigmatic, and that this situation is potentially traumatising, that these encounters can wound. How is this so?

Laplanche portrays the infant as without sexual(ised) desire, language or cultural codes and meanings and, therefore, without an unconscious. From this position, addresses by the (m)other – a sexual(ised) adult subject to language, located within a situated cultural matrix and possessing an unconscious – appear enigmatic to the infant, since these addresses are always/already ciphered by unconscious dynamics, belying an incomprehensible yet compelling 'something' beyond the infant's reach. Such is the situation of primal seduction; one in which an adult addresses an infant through non-verbal (behavioural), verbal and linguistic signs that are pregnant with unconscious sexual effects. Laplanche (1989:126) offers an archetype for this situation in the act of breast feeding, an act that inevitably cathects the mother's ambivalent attitude towards her own erotic arousal. He asserts that it is inconceivable that the infant does not notice a trace of the mother's experience, and thus generates a 'question', which we may conceptualise as involving a 'what' (does the breast want of me?) and 'why' (does it want?) In this moment, Laplanche is clear that there can be no unpicking of the unconscious thread stitched within the address. While he distinguishes within the address a level of conscious communication and an unconscious message (Laplanche, 2007), the two are entangled or knotted together in the (m)other's lived compromise-formation (Freud, 1896/1959). Since the nature of this compromise-formation is also beyond the (m)other's conscious grasp, the infant cannot appeal to the (m)other for mediation in the task of disentangling such an encounter, leaving the infant alone in his or her survival-level need to make meaning.

The infant's encounter with such an address instigates two moments of originary transference. First, due to the imperative to make sense, the infant is tasked with 'digesting' the address. As suggested, the thread of the unconscious message is not palatable, it raises questions that insist, and it

is an insistence that the infant experiences as an alien penetration. That is, in structural terms, the (m)other's unconscious message is intromitted within the internal world of the infant, embedding itself like a splinter within the envelope of the infant's proto-psyche. The wounded infant now faces a demand to handle, to make sense of something that was outside but which is now inside; something that was 'other' and which is now 'me', something which insists.

Laplanche characterises this demand as one of *translation*, a process that drives the structural development of selfhood, and one that he uses to posit an elaboration of Freud's structural model of the soul. To this end, Laplanche (2007) describes a sub-conscious enclave that functions as a kind of working register, a mode of being by which the intromitted unconscious message is actively engaged in an attempt at assimilation. To the extent that a meaningful translation is effected, a coherent-enough sense of selfhood – to paraphrase Winnicott – is consolidated in the guise of the ego proper, leaving over, conversely, a remainder or sediment of that which escapes or exceeds translation; a sediment that coalesces to form the matrix for the structure of the unconscious. In other words, indigestible bits of the message are repressed, forming the basis of the structure of neurosis, resulting in an enigmatic signifier that represents a persistent aspect of the alien-ness described above. It is here, in this moment of translation with its attendant repression and generation of the enigmatic signifier that Laplanche locates the second moment of transference.

Where there is too great a failure of translation of the first moment of transference, where what has been intromitted remains overwhelmingly incomprehensible and insistent, beyond translation and therefore (partial) representation, the infant's handling is reduced to a holding. The resulting enigmatic signifier, that is, is sequestered within the sub-conscious enclave—like a foreign word or phrase within a language—representing a second and more disturbing site of an alien-ness within the structure of selfhood in the developing child; an alien-ness that is, in its origins, fundamentally other, 'an alien inside ... put inside me by an alien' (Laplanche, 1999:65). Such a sequestering of an incomprehensible and

threatening enigmatic signifier is on the side of the defence of foreclosure, and forms the basis for a psychotic structure of selfhood.

Here then we see an elaboration of Freud's notion of an originary imago of an individual's familial relational dynamics. The scene of primal seduction in Laplanche's model does not encode a *concrete* situation, to be remembered more or less accurately—a remembering against which Freud asserts the neurotic fights—but rather it is one that represents an encounter with an existentially unfathomable aspect of the human condition, always/already situated in relation to repressed sexual desire. It is on this latter basis that the encounter with the analyst evokes the analysand's relation to the originary other, provoking the alienating effects of the failure of translation; the dynamics of the unconscious proper and the still-encysted aspects of the sub-conscious enclave; the regression to neurotic repression and psychotic foreclosure respectively.

Filled-in Transference

The emergence of an enigmatic signifier at the point where translation fails forms a boundary beyond which sense falters, an event horizon behind which lies the threat of annihilation. Might it not be at this limit that we encounter the source of resistance in analysis? If the resistant patient, after all, is one who refuses to be hypnotised, all well and good. If he braves the regression that analysis brings on, and the unconscious follows in its transferenceal mysterious way, then surely any appearance of resistance marks an emergence of the spectre of the enigmatic signifier in all its forbidding guises. In this sense, like any other aspect of the transference, resistance is a sign; one that points the way for the direction of the analysis.

For example, what Laplanche has termed filled-in transference functions, in part, as a resistance. To return to our developmental story; as we have seen, from the first moment of originary transference – that is the intromission of the (m)other's message – the infant is compelled to make sense of something threateningly alien. This sense-making can be seen as a kind of proto-theorising; an attempt to effect a digestion, to

de-alienate the intrusion from without. If a first filling-in occurs, then, as a result of an experience of originary transference—representing a purposeful activity aiming at psychical containment—a second filling-in occurs at the moment transference is evoked in the analytic relationship. As we have seen, the analytic situation provokes the transference since the analysand encounters a radical alterity in the position of the analyst. In this way, filled-in transference itself transfers into the analytic setting the analysand's primary theorising in the face of their failure to translate the encounter with the unconscious message of the (m)other in the originary situation.

In the notion of filled-in transference, then, we find an evolution of Freud's tripartite structure and function of transference; filled-in transference, evoked by the regressive analytic situation, belies the analysand's strategy with regard to bearing their originary encounter with the alien(ating) nature of the enigmatic signifier as sign of the repressed sexuality of the other.

Transcending Transference: Hollowing-Out

If we interpret a transferential movement, it is not to attack it as a defence, nor to resolve it; it is in the end to make it evolve, to help in its evolution (Laplanche, 1999:217).

In the light of Laplanche's refounding, the evoked reaction of reflection within the analysand in response to the analytic situation can be seen as a de-translation returning the analysand to an engagement with the enigmatic signifier, and affording an opportunity to work over the constructions made in the face of the failure of translation. Laplanche translates Freud's term, *lösung*, as 'loosening'—referring to Freud's frequent use of the terms *ablösen* and *auflösen*, 'to loosen', and in contrast with Strachey's notion of 'resolution' and Freud's insistence on 'removal'—in order to propose a counterpoint to the notion of filled-in transference. Here, interpretation functions as a *hollowing-out*, a process facilitated by three dimensions of the analyst; 'the analyst as the guarantor of constancy; the

analyst as the director of the method and the companion of the primary process; the analyst as the one who guards the enigma and provokes the transference' (Laplanche, 1999:227). The first two dimensions as characteristics of the analyst's position provide the necessary setting for analysis as a method to gain access to the unconscious; a containment in which an analysis can be productively engaged, one that is on the side of the death drive as a function of dissolution, of a de-translation of the reaction-formations, the theories constructed as a result of the analysand's originary translation. A bound site, that is, in which an unbinding can unfold. The third dimension refers to the analyst as representative of a benevolent 'zero point'—a translation of Freud's notion of neutrality—a position that aims to facilitate the analysand's free association and free speech addressed to an analyst who does not assume a *knowing* of either the analysand or of themselves. That is, the analyst needs to assume the position of another who engages with the alterity they find in themselves, as well as that of the analysand, from a hollowed-out position, one that declines theorising as a filling-in of that which is enigmatic.

Laplanche characterises this situation as the offer of a 'tub', or hollow (in)to which the analysand can pour their filled-in transference in order that, with an analyst who declines the promise of a more successful filling-in, both are confronted again with the enigmatic signifier. From this (re)encounter the analysand may engage in an emptying out, a de-translation that unbinds the originary theorising. Thus there is a demand on the analyst to maintain the dimension of an interior alterity within themselves, a task to which the analyst's own analysis is oriented. In doing so, the analysis—analysand and analyst—are interpellated by the enigmatic signifiers at play.

From this perspective, interpretation represents a speech act by the analyst – though, in time, one performed by the analysand – addressed to the analysand's speaking, an intervention that seeks to loosen, to open up the analysand's associations—the productions of fantasy, memory, dreaming, joking—in such a way as to bring into question the originary theorising that effected a binding, a closing up in the face of the disturbing insistence of the enigmatic signifier. That is, rather than seeking to solve

the riddle of the enigmatic signifier—a vainglorious enterprise that was, after all, instrumental in Oedipus' downfall—interpretation seeks to elicit a questioning that (re)engages the drive to translate, a productive process of signification of the dynamics of the unconscious and the disturbing threat of what is encysted within the sub-conscious enclave (Stanton, 1997).

Since, as we have seen, transference is an everyday phenomenon – the medium by which communication is propelled, the stuff of human nature—it is nonsensical to seek its termination in analysis. Rather, where transference dynamics have been loosened there is room for an engagement with a more anterior other (internally and externally) with a less rigid insistence on 'knowing', on theorising along repetitive, familiar lines. Does not this notion of a radically anterior other have profound implications regarding the notion of an enigma? For does not this unknown/unknowable other take on the status of a new enigma, rather than the hollowed-out originary enigma; one that may not be traumatising, but rather generative? What I am proposing is an otherness—again, within and without—that functions as the source of a (relatively) unencumbered drive, as well as the object of a desire that does not seek to disavow lack, but rather acts as the creative spur of an expression that acknowledges an always/already lack-in-being. In short, a variation on the originary enigma.

Allied with the notion of a hollowing-out, then, is the metaphor of an opening up, a (re)opening of what was closed as a result of the originary theorising in the face of the failure of translation. Such an opening up represents not the removal or resolution of transference but a liberation, a (re)activation of the enigma, a loosening of the repetitive, cyclical dynamics of filled-in transference, one that affords a more productive elaboration, a more creative theorising that unfolds the alterity of self and other. In such a potential position – that is, a position pregnant with potential—the possibility of sublimation emerges; the creative work of a personal signification of one's all-too-human condition.

Concluding Remarks: Variations on a Theme

[S]peech in the transference reveals the unconscious, but is also the bearer of new meaning (Laplanche, 1999:218).

To the extent that this paper has sketched an account of one evolution of the Freudian concept of transference – one, that is, with a particular French accent – this paper itself represents a process of transference, one that highlights the mutative potential of such a process; the potential to ‘bear new meaning’. To employ a musical metaphor; in his Goldberg Variations J. S. Bach wanders away from a theme over the course of thirty variations, arriving at a point—one which can hardly be seen as a goal since it could not have been anticipated from the outset—whose complex associative relation to the theme is only illuminated upon the return of the latter; an origin that we have all but forgotten. It seems to me that this is an evocative metaphor – though very different from the metaphor of Freud’s with which we began this particular set of variations—for the notion of transference itself, as well as the developments in the conception of transference as traced out in this paper.

To take the former first; in transference, as we have seen, something returns – or we return to something – something enigmatic, something of the other that is compelling in its utter alien-ness. In this moment, are we not again surprised to find that we hardly recognise how we arrived back at the same place, given where we thought we had arrived in the light of our theorising, our filling-in? With regard to the latter; the Freudian themes as summarised here find echoes in Laplanche’s variations. And, indeed, how could it be otherwise? A refounding upon already-laid foundations encodes something of what was originally laid; it is made in its image, so to speak. There can be no vanquishing of the origin, even if the refounding leads to very different (counter)points.

Finally, is it not the varying itself, the working through, that loosens; and if it is the grip of the repetition that is part and parcel of what is loosened, does this not, in a sense, free the drive? After all, one of the gains Count Kaiserling enjoyed in the endless repetition of his

insomnia may well have been a marvelling at Bach's genius to do just that; to work through, to creatively vary a theme in order to roam wide and far. This, for me, is the Laplanchian transcendence of Freud's foundation; transference cannot be vanquished—nor should we desire such a pyrrhic victory—rather it awaits a variation, an evolution, that leads us back to a zero point where what was always/already familiar can be encountered again as unknown, providing a starting point for a less predictable, yet potentially more productive encounter.

References

- Althusser, L. (1970). *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)*. In *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. Brewster, B. (Trans.) Monthly Review Press, 1971
- Austin, J. (1962). *How to Do Things With Words*. Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press
- Barthes, R. (1977[1967]). The Death of the Author. In Heath, S. (Trans.) *Image/Music/Text*. New York: Noonday
- Borch-Jacobsen, M. (1991). *The Emotional Tie: Psychoanalysis, Mimesis and Affect*. Brick, D. et al. (Trans.) 1993. California: Stanford Press
- Fairfield, S., Layton, L. and Stack, C. (2002). Introduction: Culture and Couch. In Fairfield, S., Layton, L. and Stack, C. (Eds.) *Bringing the Plague: Toward a Postmodern Psychoanalysis* (1–32). New York: Other Press
- Ferenczi, S. (1909). Introjection and Transference. In, *First Contributions*, 35–93
- Freud, S. (1959[1896]). Further remarks on the defense neuro-psychoses. In Jones, E. (Ed.) & Riviere, J. (Trans.) *Collected papers*, Vol. 1:155–182. New York: Basic Books
- (1893–1895). *Studies on Hysteria*. SE II
- (1905[1901]). *Fragments of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria*. SE VII: 1–122
- (1912). The Dynamics of Transference. SE XII: 97–108

- (1930[1929]). *Civilisation and its Discontents*. SE XXI: 64–145
- Kundera, M. (1984). *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*. New York: Harper & Row Inc.
- Lacan, J. (1949/2006). Le Stade du Miroir comme Formateur de la Fonction du Je (The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I) *Revue Française de Psychanalyse*, 4: 449–455. In Fink, B. (Trans.) *Ecrits*. New York & London: Norton
- Laplanche, J. (1989). *New Foundations for Psychoanalysis*. Macey, d. (Trans.) Oxford & Cambridge (Mass.): Basil Blackwell Ltd. Originally published 1987, Presses Universitaires de France
- (1999). *Essays on Otherness*. Oxon. & New York, NY: Routledge
- (2007). Three meanings of the word ‘unconscious’ in the framework of the General Theory of Seduction. In: Calich, J. and Hinz, H. (Eds.) *The Unconscious: Further Reflections* (31–46). London: International Psychoanalytic Association
- Leary, K. (1994) Psychoanalytic ‘problems’ and postmodern ‘solutions’. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 63: 433–465
- Liotard, J. (1984[1979]). *The Postmodern Condition*. Bennington, G. & Massumi, B. (Trans.) Manchester: Manchester University Press
- Macalpine, I. (1950). *The Development of the Transference*. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 19: 501–539
- Roustang, F. (1984). Nobody—Anybody—Somebody. *Psychoanalytic Inquiry*, 4: 163–170
- (1989). Transference: Terminable, Interminable. *Psychoanalytic Review*, 76: 139–147
- Sechaud, E. (2008). The handling of the transference in French psychoanalysis. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 89:1011–1028
- Stanton, M. (1997). *Out of Order: Clinical work & unconscious process*. London: Rebus Press
- Wittgenstein, L. (1953). *Philosophical Investigations*. Anscombe, G. (Trans.) New York: The Macmillan Company