

# TRANSFERENCE AND INTERPRETATION IN LACAN'S LAST TEACHING

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## JEAN LUC MONNIER

The LC EXPRESS delivers the Lacanian Compass in a new format. Its aim is to deliver relevant texts in a dynamic timeframe for use in the clinic and in advance of study days and conference meetings. The LC EXPRESS publishes works of theory and clinical practice and emphasizes both longstanding concepts of the Lacanian tradition as well as new cutting edge formulations.

# PRÉCIS

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Jean Luc Monnier's presentation is divided in two parts. In the first, he takes us first through Freud's conception of the transference as a "false connection, and, at the same time, a true love". Then he moves to Lacan's Proposition of 1967, emphasizing what is symbolic of transference. On top of the algorithm there is the signifier of transference, "the ordinary signifier, a signifier that integrates as meaning in the series of unconscious signifiers of the analysand," while on the bottom is "a pending knowledge on the side of the subject." Finally, guided by Jacques-Alain Miller, Monnier draws our attention to Lacan's very last teaching, where the signifier of transference and the signifier of delusion are equivalent. Here the transference and the Subject Supposed to Know are "a fact of language but with a use value, that is to say which has a hold on jouissance."

The second part shifts focus to interpretation, and how the changing conceptions of transference necessitate changes for interpretation. He points first to the changing position of the "one-blunder," *une-bevue*. Whereas at one point in Lacan's teaching, the one-blunder emerges as a sign of the unconscious (in slips, lapses, etc.), at a much later point, quoting Miller, the analyst's task is "to put the blunder back before the unconscious." How? Monnier gives one more indication from Lacan's teaching, namely, the suggestion effect of the signifier: "the suggestion of the signifier serves the making-true that focuses on the relationship of the *parlêtre* with its *jouissance*."

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# Transference and Interpretation in Lacan's Last Teaching

by Jean Luc Monnier

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What happens to transference and interpretation, when, as Lacan proposes in his very last teaching, we ultimately speak only to ourselves, we speak all alone, each one in his own world?

## Transference

The different conceptions of transference are coherent with the different periods of Lacan's teaching. The emphasis placed by him on the imaginary, then on the symbolic and finally on the real, each time carries a new approach to transference which in return, to say it briefly, underlines the progress of Lacan's emphasis on the real and the One -all-alone.

So, I will try to shed light on how the «nature» of transference is transformed, responds and renews itself throughout Lacan's teaching until it becomes almost an aporia in his TDE (Very Last Teaching). And then I will address the status of interpretation in this last period. Indeed, if the Other does not exist, if it is no longer barred but broken, as Éric Laurent recalls, that is to say no longer incomplete but inconsistent, what becomes of transference, which we learned requires an Other whose presence appears mandatory at its inception? We will see how Lacan sketches a solution to conceive the reality of transference, specifying the texture while the Other is no longer, essentially, at the rendez-vous of the parlêtre.

I will resume the history of transference quickly so that we can grasp the evolution of this eminently clinical concept which is coextensive to the insertion of psychoanalysis in society. For Freud, transference is first of all, in «*Studies On Hysteria*», a false connection, and, at the same time, a true love, *eine Echte Liebe*, and not an *Erzatz*. This is the starting point, which each analysand

has to deal with, whatever their structure, if we want to speak in these terms.

It is a repetition of childhood loves that is updated in the analytical experience, which is to say that Freud favors the libidinal approach of transference and its aspect of repetition which, as we know, Lacan will ultimately come to discard in Seminar XI. He will indeed show that the transference is not only repetition but also creation, that is to say that, with Lacan, we will pass from necessity to contingency. Lacan will even go so far as to say that transference has nothing to do with repetition, that repetition is of the order of the drive and the real while transference is rather of the order of the imaginary and the symbolic.

Breuer perfectly illustrates the thesis of Freud's true love. This love is true to the extent that it led to Breuer's hasty flight when he understood that Anna O's «nervous» pregnancy was directly related to him – a hasty flight, in fact, to Venice with Madame Breuer.

Incidentally, if the transference is a false connection, a mistake on the person, and a true love, then it follows that love itself is a false connection – which the clinic shows us every day. What analysand does not realize, at a certain moment, that their partner has some features of their father, brother or mother?

It is Plato's Banquet that will serve Lacan as a point of support for the study of the logical modalities of appearance of this transference love. Demand and desire become the elements that underlie love and preside at its unfolding. So, we can see Alcibiades, magnetized by the «special» desire of Socrates, postulate that he, Socrates, holds in himself the agalma, this term

that Lacan will highlight and which means *that which is precious*.

It should be noted that there is already a correlation between love and knowledge.

Indeed, Socrates does not respond to Alcibiades' request for love, which is situated on an axis of reciprocity, that is, an imaginary axis, the narcissistic axis, the a-a' axis. Socrates answers on a symbolic axis and presents himself to him, Alcibiades, as the holder of knowledge.

Lacan will say it very precisely in his «Introduction to the German edition of the *Écrits*, page 558 of the *Autres Écrits*: «transference is love addressing knowledge».

The algorithm of the Subject Supposed to Know will come in 1967 to resume and move what Lacan had developed in his Seminar, *Transference*. Indeed, this algorithm will emphasize the side of the signifier, that is, the symbolic side of the transference. The algorithm reduces, at first sight, the libidinal question that was put forward by Freud and in Lacan's first teaching, which referred to the imaginary side, narcissism and love (imago).

The algorithm of transference brings together, in a formula, the concept of transference in its relation to the signifier, to knowledge, (S1 - S2).

I will remind you of this algorithm:

$$\begin{array}{c} S \text{ -----} \rightarrow S_q \\ \hline s(S1, S2, \dots, S_n) \end{array}$$

We have on the left, what Lacan calls «the signifier of transference».

What is the meaning of the signifier of transference? « This is 'something about the meaning makes you wonder' », says Jacques-Alain Miller in his Course of April 27, 1994. "It is a singular signifier which creates enigma and which, I quote, promptly sends you running to an analyst". End of quote.

And an analyst, in this case, who is he, who is she? He or she is a signifier from which you hope to obtain the meaning of the first (signifier): this is the ordinary signifier, a signifier that integrates as meaning in the series of unconscious signifiers of the analysand. It is in this form that it occurs in dreams, those dreams that are called transference dreams. A patient said to me, "I thought you didn't want to continue the analysis with me because what I was saying was 'crap'". In short, as a patient who had a poor idea of men pointed out to me, telling me her dream: «You are in it». (In French it means "you screwed up"). The first claims to be zero, a depreciated version of femininity, while the second expresses without realizing it a small hint of negative transference.

But Jacques-Alain Miller gave an even simpler definition of the meaning of the signifier of transference. It is, he says, «the signifier under which the subject is announcing himself to the analyst». That is why the first words of the person we welcome are so important.

One patient will tell us, "I always doubt and I ask myself many questions." Another will say, "I am lost." Another will say, "I have been referred to you by so and so..." A fourth will say, "I'm addicted to sex." These are S1 under which the subject is presenting himself to the Other, they are valuable indications, which will serve as markers in the experience and gives the colour of the first interviews. It is not a word, at least that's how I understand it, but it may be a phrase, an expression under which the subject represents himself.

Below the bar we read s(S1, S2, Sn). They are the signifiers of a text awaiting meaning, of a text that is unconscious and supposed, and as such, illegible by the person who comes to consult us. It is a pending knowledge, a pending knowledge on the side of the subject. And it is from this point of view that we can say that the Subject Supposed to Know is the subject themselves, it is the subject who comes to see an analyst.

But, as Lacan specifies in the Proposition of 1967, this lower line also reintroduces the libidinal dimension.

It reintroduces the libidinal dimension, not in imaginary terms such as Lacan first argued, in the seminar on *Transference* for example, but in terms of object, in terms of real, we would now say in terms of semblance of real, but, in every way, in terms of jouissance, of jous-

sance, in the form of the referent, which is nothing more nor less than the object a. The Sn indeed is what can be described as an aporia... So there is no Sn in an analysis, except to postulate a metonymic conception of the experience, which is obviously a dead end. At the time when Lacan elaborated this formula in 1964, the object a had already found its cruising speed, it is the referent that causes the discourse of the analyst and which at a time will be extracted as impossible.

The precious, marvelous object, which Alcibiades talks about in the *Symposium*, which he supposes to be hidden by Socrates in his body; this hidden object, beyond the image, not a signifier, is not without link with this object a. That is to say, to examine the lower line of the Proposition of 1967, it is, from the point of view of logic, to cross, as a last resort, *der Sinn*, the meaning, to reach the ultimate signification, (the *Bedeutung*), to what limits knowledge and its real buffer, which is the drive.

The algorithm of transference is very successful, insofar as it takes the Freudian conception of transference by logifying it and directing it to the real via the symbolic. It is always a valuable guide for the implementation of an analysis and its direction. But the algorithm of transference brings us something else that is not in the foreground. And it is this other thing that Jacques-Alain Miller underlines in his course, that the signifier of transference is, in a certain way, a trans-structural signifier.

Indeed, some beginnings of analysis, he says, on April 27, 1994 in his course entitled *Donc*, are comparable to real triggerings. And he adds that he doesn't mind saying that the analysis starts as psychosis. The signifier of the transference is of the same nature as the signifier distinguished in the triggering of a psychosis. The subject is both certain that it is a signifier, that it has a meaning and that this certainty, both in neurosis and in psychosis, can occasionally make the subject consult an analyst.

What Jacques-Alain Miller says is that, between the signifier of transference and the signifier of delusion in psychosis, there is a logical kinship.

I quote Jacques-Alain Miller in the same lesson:

"Here we find the role of the distinguished signifier. In the onset of psychosis, and precisely in what was classically called intuitive phenomena, when the subject encounters a particular event of the world, such a fact which appears to him, and he is absolutely certain that it means something without knowing exactly what - resulting in perplexity which follows." End of the quotation.

The reference he makes to psychosis concerning this signifier interests us today, because it shows that taking the transference on its symbolic side, on its logical side, on its significant side, already allows us to glimpse why Jacques Lacan concludes, in 1978, that «everyone is mad, that is to say delusional».

It's basically a generalization of psychosis. Of course, this statement has a provocative aspect: What does Lacan mean when he puts this forward? It means that we are all dealing with a world of semblances, that our subjective appropriation of the signifier finds a singular reality for each of us, not exempt from certainty, and lies regarding the real.

"Everyone is delusional," said Jacques-Alain Miller at a conference in Nîmes, "[means] that everyone comments upon and interprets, to a point of saturation, things that there are not, which are semblances, and everyone is taken by their semblances."

It also means by extension that we speak alone, that each One speaks alone, whatever one's structure. Except, says Lacan in Seminar XXIV, *L'insu que sait de l'Une-bévue s'aile à mourre*, if one opens oneself to dialogue with a psychoanalyst.

Here is what he says (I quote): "*Y'a d'l'Un'*, but there is nothing else. The One, as I said, the One dialogues alone, since it receives its own message in an inverted form. He is the one who knows, not the subject supposed to know." He receives his own message in an inverted form, certainly from the Other, it is a fact, but an Other in his own hand that he builds to give him the answer. This leads Lacan to ask himself whether psychoanalysis is not an autism between two.

Of course, saying things this way raises the question, again, at the cost of the transference, the Subject Supposed to Know, the place of the analyst and the interpretation, both in psychosis of course, but also in neurosis.

What is, in this case, what Lacan and ourselves call the Subject Supposed to Know, which makes the basis of the transference? It is in a certain way a fiction as spoken so well by Jérémy Bentham, that is to say a fact of language but with a use value, that is to say which has a hold on *jouissance*. I quote: "Of what is real, no clear explanation can be given except through something fictitious." We understand why Lacan was interested in Bentham and his utilitarianism.

In this regard, for those who read French, I recommend an excellent little book by Christian Laval entitled *Le pouvoir des fictions*. It is a fiction that comes, if we want, to veil this fact that the *parlêtre*, according to the law of communication, receives its own message in its inverted form. Placing the analyst as a Subject Supposed to Know is a construction of the analysand. It is a particular fiction coextensive with the neurosis and its particular treatment of *jouissance*, which supposes the projection in the Other of the object *a*. It is moreover what particularizes the neurosis: neurotic people project a piece of *jouissance*, detached from the *jouissance* of the body in the form of the object *a* to include it in the Other.

This means that at the time of the Other which does not exist, the transference is always connected to the montage which places the analyst as Subject Supposed to Know, but this montage covers another one. It covers a more fundamental montage that gives the analyst the place of who follows. I quote Lacan in the Seminar *l'insu*: "The one who knows is, in the analysis, the analysand: what he unfolds, what he develops, it is what he knows, except that it is an Other... but is there an Other?... that it is an Other who *follows* what he has to say, namely what he knows." You will note that this applies to all clinical structures!

The analyst *follows*, he *follows* the construction of the fantasy in the neurotic, the delusion in the delusional psychotic or the link to the social, corporal and subjective dimension in the ordinary psychotic subject, according to the notation of Jacques-Alain Miller in his policy paper on ordinary psychosis<sup>1</sup>.

But what really links, beyond the imaginary and the symbolic, the couple analysand-analyst? Lacan gives an answer or at least a draft answer still in Seminar XXIV.

The One does not prevent feeling and to say this he based himself on hatred: there is no need for an Other to experience the feeling of hatred. Unlike love which aims at knowledge, hatred aims at *jouissance*. It is a common experience. Jacques-Alain Miller emphasizes this with a single sentence in the volume « the negative transference » by saying: "the sole fact that the analyst presents himself as being, justifies hatred." End of quote.

The feeling is beyond the Other, and it is on this more or less fierce and intractable model that the patient is bound to his partner-analyst who is then in his essence a partner of *jouissance*.

## The interpretation

What consequences for interpretation?

Lacan uses the term "stumbling block" that he had already used in Seminar XI. At that time, he had associated this term with the «stumbling», «cracking», «limping», by which the unconscious manifests itself. At the time of Seminar XI, the unconscious was recognized by the fact of its stumbles, lapses, witticisms, even symptoms, on their significant (that is to say, interpretable) side; in short, by what suggested the cause: I quote Lacan in Seminar XI: "There is no cause except for what is wrong. Between the cause and what it affects, there is always something which doesn't work (*une clocherie*.)"

Taking up what Jacques-Alain Miller says in his course *Le tout dernier Lacan*, lesson of March 14, 2007, in his article "Disruption of *Jouissance* in the Madnesses Under Transference" [which you can find in TLR 6], Éric Laurent takes into account Lacan's translation of Freud's *Unbewusst by une-bevue*. I will quote a short passage, which begins by quoting directly from Jacques-Alain Miller. First, Miller, "But in seminar XXIV, it means something else. There, the stumbling or the 'slipping from word to word' is situated as a phenomenon in a time anterior to that in which the unconscious can appear. The unconscious only appears in the *une-bevue*, the one-blunder, to the extent that one adds a signifying finality." To which Laurent adds: "And it's here that a new version of positive transference slips in. It is a transformation by the addition of feeling, a transformation by the addition of some signification which

<sup>1</sup> Miller J.-A., « Effet retour sur la psychose ordinaire », *Quarto* n° 94-95.

allows a new use of the jouissance partner in order to overcome the stumblings of the subject's one-blunder, *une bevue*, when confronted by *lalangue* and its instability, its permanent slippages." (End of quote) [TLR 6, p. 176-177]

The unconscious comes after the stumbling and not before, the stumbling is no longer the sign of the unconscious, the latter comes after, when one adds a meaning resulting from the articulation between S1 and S2: S1-S2 --- which implies meaning.

The psychoanalyst is the one who follows, as we have seen, and Lacan adds a little further still in his Seminar XXIV "Psychoanalysis, that is what makes things true". Jacques-Alain Miller, commenting on it in his course of March 14, 2007, said: "it must be understood that it is located, there, in the succession of the *sinthome* or the blunder to the unconscious (*it goes from the sinthome, from the blunder towards the unconscious*): we add meaning. We add, [Lacan] says, a stroke of meaning. But it remains a semblance and he decomposes it even in a *sens-blanc* – *blank-sense blank of sense*–, which emphasizes, in essence, the arbitrariness of meaning. And it's when you add meaning, when you add intention, unconscious, then, indeed, the blunder becomes the effect of the unconscious." I continue the quote: "That is to say, we reverse the normal succession and put the blunder, if I may say, after the unconscious. Lacan's forcing, the torsion he imposes here on the analyst, in his practice, is to put the blunder back before the unconscious. It does not abolish the unconscious, it does not abolish the Other, it shifts the Other into the One and so it brings out this layer ( *nappe de semblants*, –the icing– of semblances that envelops the practice of analysis."

The analyst «*accompanies*» the *parlêtre* with the difficulties, with the instability of *lalangue*, with its permanent shifts. It is a support. The analyst, says Éric Laurent, is the one who makes the stumble true. It makes true the stumble prior to the unconscious.

But he is not the recipient of anything, because there is basically neither recipient nor *destiny*, just *chance*, repeats Jacques-Alain Miller in the same course.

The analyst follows, makes true, in a single objective which is to bring the Other back to the One, that is to say to a point of turning back from where the *parlêtre* can consider the «*layer of semblances*» which envelops

the practice of psychoanalysis, and also his story which is only *hystory* since there are only semblances.

But first, what does *lalangue* instability mean? This means that *lalangue* is unstable, because it is not structured as language is. *Lalangue* consists of out-of-direction, equivocal elements, in direct contact with jouissance. It holds onto the body, the One-body, the body of jouissance.

This is why, and here I quote Lacan in the Seminar *L'insu que sait...* «*it is, lalangue, a common affair* ».

From the register of phonetics, of material, open to all ambiguities<sup>2</sup>, it allows (*lalangue*, therefore), to agree together, which does not mean that we understand each other!<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, it is because of this «*common affair* » which is *lalangue* that psychoanalysis is not «*one autism between two*», as Lacan was led, at one point, to make this hypothesis. And this is also what allows the effectiveness of the interpretation.

Obviously, the instability of *lalangue* does not have the same aspect in neurosis and delusional psychosis. In neurosis, *lalangue* is «*covered*» by language and these elements emerge sporadically during the experience. In delirium, *lalangue* is, so to speak, openly presented, in ordinary psychosis, the emergence of *lalangue* can occasionally present itself as a threat, a sign of shaking the edifice of imaginary defenses.

Interpretation, then, consists in making true the coextensive stumbling blocks of *lalangue* so that the Other is reduced to the One. That is to say that we start from the Other, family stories to say it briefly to «*go back*» to the *sinthome*, or at least to this point of turning back that arises in the contingency of the end of the experience as its echo made real. To take an image, it is as if the analyst was holding a rope and that he went along this rope with his patient until the latter "come across" the resonance of the first encounter of the signifier and the body : the first strike, the first impact of the signifier on the living substance.

How? still in Seminar XXIV, Lacan says one something which is at first sight surprising, I quote: "Does psychoanalysis operate... since from time to time it operates:

Does it operate by what is called a suggestion effect? For the effect of suggestion to hold,- it presupposes that language - here I repeat myself - that language works on what we call a human being." end of the quote.

2 Miller J.-A., Cours n°8, «*Le Tout Dernier Lacan* », p. 4, inédit.

3 Je fais référence à ce que dit Lacan dans le Séminaire XXIV, p. 116, inédit «*C'est justement que lalangue est une affaire commune et que c'est justement là où je suis, c'est-à-dire, capable de me faire entendre de tout le monde ici.* »

What Lacan says is enormous, he says that it is suggestion that makes psychoanalysis work and that basically interpretation is of the order of the register of suggestion. It goes against everything he has said so far. Indeed, he always spoke out against suggestion that he always reserved with a certain contempt for psychotherapy.

Psychoanalysis operates because precisely the signifier has in itself an effect of suggestion, Lacan says in another form: «Every discourse has an effect of suggestion. It is hypnotic.»

But regarding suggestion, Lacan promotes a use of it that contrasts greatly with the use that is made of it by psychotherapy. Where in psychotherapeutic treatment, suggestion is intended to normalize the relationship of the subject to the Other, in psychoanalysis the suggestion of the signifier serves the *making-true* that focuses on the relationship of the parlêtre with its jouissance.

That is to say that the meaning, this *blank of sense* (sens blanc) that is added, has one and only one objective: it is to bring the Other back to the One by reaching the place where it stumbles, by reaching the place where the blunder is emerging, letting itself being grasped, it is the path of an travelling of the unconscious to the sinthome: until the point of turning back, and there I quote Éric Laurent in the same paper : «where the suggestion is brought back to its first foundation of the impact of the signifier on the body». Lacan evokes poetry and the resonant effect of the signifier. Poetry, which, he says, makes sense but also makes a void. For example, for those who read French, read Mallarmé's *Après midi d'un faune...*, "The Afternoon of a Faun" ... you will see how poetry can make sense and can make a void.

For some parlêtres whose RSI knotting is less assured, less solid, more labile, poorly buttoned, the effect of suggestion of the signifier is also usable and we all experience it in our practice, to make the stumbling blocks true when they arise just as much, but here not to bring the Other back to the One, but rather to staple the jouissance of the One to the Other of the signifier. Interpretation and its effect of suggestion serves to consolidate the clasp of the signifier and jouissance, even to repair it, let us not shrink away from using this word.

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