

Painful Loves: Of Love and the Body in Transference

Kate Briggs

Life itself can be a painful love, particularly with ageing, as we know it is passing. A transference to life, to value whatever it brings, is to accept that this attachment to the body will one day be given up. Freud spoke eloquently of this in his letters to Romain Rolland and Lou Andreas Salome, people to whom he attributed different forms of knowing. Lacan said “the site of the symbolic is not the mind, as some believed, but the body. From that moment, a process of reworking was initiated.”¹ We hear this in those letters where Freud’s transference love is spoken.

In the correspondence with Rolland Freud addresses the oceanic feeling of feminine jouissance. Rolland was writing biographies of Hindu mystics and described feeling energy running like water under the bark of his skin. Freud’s response to him is emphatic: wonder, awe, devotion and denial. It is not something he feels yet his admiration for Rolland is unbounded, his deference has tones of exaltation.²

Perhaps “in as much as the end of analysis supposes the advent of an absence, it depends on breaking through the fantasy and on the separation of the object.”³ Freud describes an aspect of this in his memory on the acropolis, a piece he addressed to Rolland as a gift.⁴ Is it that here he leaves to his interlocutor “all the old objects of love”,⁵ while registering that no sexual rapport can be written and that “transference is nothing else - the transference into what has no name in the place of the Other”?⁶

For those of us, all of us, who have experienced a real incursion of the other’s jouissance, there is the *trou-matism* of registering what it is to place oneself as the object of that jouissance and the lightness of being that comes when letting oneself as that object drop; there is a dislocation from the other’s jouissance which then evaporates, leaving less anxiety and a “bodily peace” previously unknown.⁷

Where on the other hand a transference to life is difficult, we may help to find a punctuation, to name and localise the symptom, to accompany someone in the construction of a liveable world. Lacan noticed how an instance of prohibition of libidinal jouissance might throw “the subject back into something where she no longer finds anything in which to signify herself”

¹ Laurent, E., “The Unconscious and the Body Event”, *The Lacanian Review* 1, 2016, p. 179.

² Freud, S., cited by William B. Parsons, *The Enigma of the Oceanic Feeling. Revisioning the Psychoanalytic Theory of Mysticism*, New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

³ Miller, J.-A., “Another Lacan”, *The Symptom 10*. Presented at the first *Rencontre Internationale du Champ freudien*, Caracas, Venezuela, 1980. Available at: <https://www.lacan.com/symptom10a/another-lacan.html>

⁴ Freud, S., “A disturbance of memory on the Acropolis”, *The Pelican Freud Library, Volume XI*, UK: Penguin Books, 1984.

⁵ Rollier, F., Love, knowledge and truth (transference and cure), *Freudian and Lacanian studies*, citing Miller J.-A., in « Le transfert négatif », Navarin, Paris, 2005, p.92.

⁶ Lacan, J., *Televisión, A challenge to the Psychoanalytic Establishment*, trans. D. Hollier, R. Krauss, A. Michelson and J. Mehlman. New York: Norton & Co., 1990, p. 95.

⁷ Millot, C., *Life with Lacan*, trans. A. Brown, Cambridge: Polity, 2018, p.118.

and melancholy arises as the painful state in which the ego finds itself rejected by the ego ideal. A rejection of the subject “insofar as on the part of the ego ideal the subject in her living reality can find herself in this position of exclusion.”⁸ Where Freud on occasion foundered with young women, Dora and the young female homosexual, where he did not recognise her desire, he could nonetheless register a question. The functional support of registering desire is something noted about Lacan: his truly generous support of the least statement of desire.⁹

⁸ Lacan, J. *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book V. Formations of the Unconscious*, trans. R. Grigg, UK: Polity, 2017, p.283.

⁹ Catherine Millot, *Op. cit.*