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## Sygne and Transference Love \*

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Even the slightest clue to what I'm most interested in cannot escape Sygne's notice: in my office, her sovereign gaze uncovers the gold nugget and the glittering of the geode's hidden crystals; in my writings, she unerringly unties the phantasmatic web; and from the mess on my table, she tries to decipher my worries and projects. I have never had a more attentive or penetrating analyst. What is at work in her vocation of "researcher" [chercheuse] is obvious in this "thirty year-old woman" (1) whose familiarity with numbers led her very early to Science's discreet honors. With the signifying clues about me that she collects like precious honey through her secret computer, she tries to shore up and sustain the wild flow of her representations and satisfy her thirst for love. Through what she identifies, rightly or wrongly, as the representatives of my phantasies, she tries (...) to open up a gap in the space of a sigh, a rest, a haven. Her head, where words are constantly marching by like numbers, is full of the teaming work of a life in gestation; to better express her demand, she imagines resting her forehead on my marble mantelpiece or wooden table, just as she would like to let it sink into my hands, just long enough to be silent while I would take charge of the exhausting round of words.

Although she manages only with the greatest effort to support herself, (2) indeed even to stand up. Sygne is forever backing up her family, holding the little ones with her voice and gestures in a way no one seems to know anymore, attentive to her brothers for whom she can find the single word that can clear up an impasse, present at death's door as only someone who is trying to be born, can be. It seems that between us, there is something like words, or better, password-like names, those of newborn children or dead relatives. As close as a relative, she knows my family's birthdays and wonders about my descent, since she can't wonder about her own. Aren't Freud, Boole and Einstein our common ancestors? She would have liked to know me in my "oedipal" age. Looking at the picture she has constructed of my four year-old self, I cannot resist. Letting the last remnants of my doctoral respectability turn to dust, I rediscover, without concealing my smile, the seriousness of that age when one knows what it's like both to desire passionately and to suffer. Through that smile, whether it lights up the eyes or the voice, another ear opens, to which the pain of being nothing and of being born of nothing [n' être (rien), naître (de rien)], can at last be told without pathos, in the voice of truth. Between two strokes, between two words, what remains silent (the infans rather than adorable cherub,) gives room at last to what could not be said. It is there that transference takes shape. Sygne puts it in figurative terms: your smile in your face, my pain on your face, your pain on my face, my smile on my face.

I don't believe in the neutralizing illusion of the impassive mask, and in this instance find no need to defend myself against what could be construed as seduction. Analytical listening implies bringing into play the spot of silence which is the place of transference.. What is given there is the space for an act of real intelligence in terms of the logic of exclusion, a passage beyond the web of representatives, a way of passing through the

mirror. The analyst's presence, kindness, neutrality and silence are merely inadequate or approximate ways of marking this point of no resistance to which his own analysis must at least have brought him, with no turning back. Whether we call this, paradoxically, conscious awareness or describe it as the advent of the subject or the recognition of castration, what we can absolutely demand of an analyst is a knowledge of what speaking means, what decisive shadows words can hide, and how they can show the subject crossing their web. To have experienced it is to discover, in repeated phantasies, their forever new grains of origin. It is to set free what is locked up in our knowledge; in dealing with our analysands, to recognize without holding back what cuts to the quick; in short, nothing less than to take account of the unaccountable, to perpetrate the death of the word-image, and to undermine the all-powerful unconscious representative. These are necessary operations through which the (re)birth of the subject can be realized. Words are prey to the universal work of repression in which every family unit, group or social "order" takes part, and they never stop reverting to being mute. Only by giving the most vigilant attention to questioning the unconscious representative, not above all by calling into question the tyrannical primary narcissistic representative, can speaking be kept alive.

Here another side of the killing-the-child phantasy is revealed: by naming the child "infans", the discourse of repression underlines the fact that he doesn't use words to make of him, unfairly, the one who does not speak. It's true that it would be convenient for princes, parents and teachers of all sorts if each "subject" were only to repeat faithfully what he is told, and if the child did not disturb the order of repression by speaking the truth. "Be quiet, you don't know what you're saying," is what the so-called analyst repeating in his own way when he orders magisterially: "Speak, I know what you are saying!" And yet, well before a child can put words together, he speaks and lays bare what speaking means, in an orgy of jubilation and rage, smiles and cries. The little interloper must be made to behave, to look, precisely, like the picture of good behavior [sage comme une image]: a first killing perpetrated well-meaningly and in good conscience, and whose result (the very image of a non-speaking infans or repeating parrot,) will constantly have to be killed in order to retrieve what it represents through its fascinating image, in renewed power and engendering force.

My psychoanalytic *raison d'être* can be formulated at this point as an interest in the "origin" of speaking (castration, primal scene, death instinct.) It is an interest that can admit of no distance, so truly taken am I by it, with no question of being able to discard it or choose another object of inquiry. Engaged in the analytical experience, I rediscover, as alive as ever, an insatiable, childlike "curiosity" about origins. I have other means of satisfying it, but I am not sure I know any better than a child how to sustain the urgency of the question: from recovered memories to relieved traumas, from realizations to scientific progress, from Oedipal configurations to Lacanian algorithms, I never stop answering it, even at the risk of bringing it to a close. And yet, I remain an analyst only to the extent that I listen to the analysand from this gap through which speaking and desiring are constantly reborn. Only in that space can the subject's syncopated voice be heard, and the singularity of the analysand's "primal scene" be told: his "origin", this is to say the particular mode of his hold in the order of words, the singular ordering of his connection with the silences of the first objects. To be an analyst is to remain in the gap and keep it open; in fact to keep alive, like a desire, the interest that made us "enter analysis": how does the unconscious speak? How does it desire? For me, for him, for her, for each of us?

The history of psychoanalysis and the Freudian epic must be seen above all as stemming from this dauntless "curiosity", an "adventurous road that had scarcely ever been trodden before," (3) leading inexorably to the edges of the forbidden lands where desire is born. "It will be a fitting punishment for me," says Freud, depressed, "that none of the unexplored regions of the mind in which I have been the first mortal to set foot will ever bear my name or submit to my laws. When breath threatened to fail me in the struggle I prayed the angel to desist, and that is what he has done since then." (4) The adventure cannot take place by proxy, but only with one's guts and soul exposed. When about to finish the Interpretation of Dreams, Freud says it and then dreams about it: "None of my works has been so completely my own; it is my own dung-heap, my own seedling and a nova species mihi." (5) "The task which was imposed on me in the dream of carrying out a dissection of my own body (the reference is to its lower part, pelvis and legs) was thus my self-analysis

which was linked up with my giving an account of my dreams” (6): the secret of dream interpretation and desire.

But nothing can insure the analyst against the risk of filling in his listening gap—neither the analytical institutions whose fate is rather, in the process of defending Freud’s discovery, to insure the extinction of any curiosity; nor theoretical formulations as written guarantee of the spoken word. This necessary inscription (grammaticalization, mathematization) cannot insure access to the other “inscriptions” in the form of unconscious representatives, but could, on the contrary, be a substitute for them. Nor can the analyst’s analysis, even on-going, be any insurance against the sealing effect of an insidious phantasy of mastery or “end,” which can, for example, take the familiar form of deciding to sit in the analyst’s chair.

I am quite willing to recognize that my way of inscribing and describing the analytical process carries with it, as does my practice, the stamp of my own phantasmatic perspective, and that traces can be found in it of a few determining signifiers in my destiny; but what matters to me is that between my words, through the organization of my discourse, in my interventions or silences, space for the navel of dreams remain free, and gates open onto the night. In that space, Justin [another of my patients] says that his father wants to clear (7) the land, and that in passing through this fundamental phantasy, his own passion for deciphering rock takes root. There, he can also discover the silence of his mother’s desire. In that space, Sygne says that roaming signs and the impossibility of rest undermine her, burdened as she is by the weight of having to guarantee words and their defects all alone, without phantasmatic parents. In the silence of my listening, she quiets down. In what she can grasp of my desire’s representatives, she takes root.

The analyst’s wager in the curing game consists in putting on the line his questions about the origin of speaking. It involves progression, invention and mobility, as opposed to the apparent immobility of the analyst’s chair. In counterpoint to the welcoming effect of silent listening, uninterrupted spoken words break away, bypass their object, and respond to the incessant question of their origin. A sharp ear makes possible this commitment to hurling oneself headlong into words and the intervals between them, into interdiction proper. This is a necessary and expected condition outside of which analysis runs the risk of merely being a conceptual elaboration as foreign to instinctual reality as picture-words are foreign to truly speaking: it is a necessary and expected condition outside of which transference would not be this irreplaceable place of truth, and would be no more than the occasion for a powerfully suggestive hold.

What every analysand commits to analysis is his hope, however ambiguous, of even partially getting out of the discourse of repression in other ways than with symptoms. If we ignore our wager’s demand for truth, which opens up the space of transference, we cannot legitimately sustain our refusal to respond to the analysand’s demand and truly keep listening to desire.

Already we must go beyond what in primary narcissism and the death drive is tied to the primal phantasy of “a child is being killed.” As the kingpin of analysis, transference raises the question of the secret phantasy that makes the analyst become a demon hunter attempting, in the hic et nunc of the session, to awaken the unconscious representatives and their prestigious fruitfulness. Light can be shed on this strange destiny only by questioning the “birth of psychoanalysis,” in other words the profound passion that drives the discoverer of enigmas, and the explorer of origins in the extraordinary Freudian adventure. That passion is manifest at once in the intensity of transference. It took all of Freud’s determination in the face of Emmy von R.’s demand for love, to bring about the birth of analysis. The fact that analysis was born of Freud’s impassivity in front of women’s desires in no way allows us to reduce his perplexity to blindness; it merely forces us to take up what is unaccounted for, and upon which all discoveries originate. The silence of the enigma “what does a woman want?” remains for psychoanalysis as it did for Freud, the price paid for the Oedipal discovery.

And yet, as we never stop going back to the origin with certain of our female analysands, unless we take refuge in deafness, we male analysts can only experience that “we have no right to dispute that the state of being in love which makes its appearance in the course of analytic treatment has the character of a ‘genuine’

love.” (8) Furthermore, nothing allows us to pretend that it has nothing to do with us, that to take a woman in analysis has nothing to do with any kind of seduction or, especially, that the interdiction we set up along with the analytic relationship shields us in any way from the risk of loving (rather, the opposite.) But it has to be recognized that apart from referring to it under the cague heading of “counter-transference,” analysts keep very quiet about their “temptations”, as well as their guilty love affairs. Let us at least grant to Breuer, Freud’s companion at the start of the adventure, the merit of having perceived the problem clearly: in the face of “temptation”, he left for Italy with his wife... but did not discover the Oedipus complex.

Must we conclude—as does Eugenie, an analysand questioning herself about her position as an analyst—that to become an analyst today suggests some profound powerlessness? She declares abruptly that it is always so as not to have to screw. She is not merely giving vent to a so-called vexation, as one could easily “interpret” it. The familiarity with castration that the analyst’s “job” demands, is too often used as an alibi for a false mastery. What we can easily discern through the inconsistency of pretentious shadows which many supposed analysts have taken for a religion, is the pure and simple avoidance of castration or, surreptitiously, the acting out of its denial. According to Eugenie, psychoanalysis has a paradoxical tendency to be the place where fears of sexual difference and of woman conspire most firmly to maintain their hold. And yet, if one had to conceive of a place where a woman’s words could be heard, I don’t think one could make it more transparent and faithful than the place of transference. What a woman wants is first of all to be recognized in her sexual identity. Love, be it courtly or flirtatious, romantic or “free”, is not always enough; to be taken by a man, even very lovingly, does not necessarily guarantee the loosening of the repressive discourse’s grip (socialist as well as bourgeois!) marking a woman at her birth and in the course of her history. We have seen that the discourse of repression, endowed with a universal calling and masculine par excellence, is built on failing to account for “half the sky”, so that no woman could possibly recognize herself in it. However loving a man may be, since he is implicitly responsible for the forfeiting of jouissance, it takes great courage for him to halt the effects of his mischievous complicity in the universal enterprise of repression.

Historically, this is where psychoanalysis steps in, but these days it seems to be having some trouble living up to its calling. Indeed, above and beyond her supposed vexation, Eugenie is denouncing the following major paradox: whereas at its origin analysis’ destiny was to ruin the constantly renewed effects of repression, it is now slowly but surely getting caught up in the dazzling blindness that presided over its birth. Under the guise of an *Aufhebung*, it is also laboriously reconstructing a system to recover the other “half of the sky.”

But for now, let us limit ourselves, along with Freud, to not denying that the state of love appearing in the course of analysis has the character of “true” love. This fact is more than enough in itself to keep us busy, since it confronts the analyst not so much with the impossibility of the undertaking as with how extraordinary it is. Let us go directly to the essential facts, at least in the case of some female analysands: not denying the nature of true love is only a careful way of stating that one recognizes love, and this of course, is the least one can expect of an analyst. This is not the time to yield to philosophical or aesthetic temptations and think of love as a winged Cupid or a concept. What we need to recognize—so long as we also refuse to deny it in similar cases to those who presided over the birth of analysis—is the love of a woman.

What do we mean by this, if not that our answer will depend, eminently so, on this inescapable recognition? But how?

Regardless of the secret of the analyst’s phantasies, I will leave in the shadows of conventional discretion cases in which the practitioner, although an analyst, is still no less a man and, without more ado, seals his recognition with a “carnal act.” The analytical adventure usually leads us further. Recognizing transference love as real means first of all that we somehow wished for it. Seducers in our own way, we have invoked the infernal powers and conjured up *hic et nunc* the demons of love. Invited to speak her peace, sooner or later, a woman will inevitably express what speaking means for her, namely that there is jouissance. As I have written, “For the woman, not only do words, above and beyond their signifying functions, keep their value as unconscious representatives, which will constitute her woman’s word. In this immediacy of rapport with

castration she also finds support for a process of properly sexual identification that first specifies her as woman before any secondary identification to a trait or figure as belonging to womanhood.” What she expects from analysis is what a man of today, for whom identification with ideology’s representations takes the place of a sexual position, seems most often unable to give her by the mere homage of his power: the recognition of the essential truth of her words as a woman. What a woman wants is first of all a man’s recognition of her woman’s words, since its durability is not originally guaranteed by any repression. Essentially, her words retain their position of unconscious representative (signifier), and only incidentally enter the system of meanings. They are the stars and glorious bodies of the phallic system and can speak of nothing more than the shadowy place of any body’s objects. She expects man’s discourse to pin to a screen of repression the signifier of her glory in the flesh and have it be his hope of seeing a piece of the sky.

Just as she does using numbers in her work, in analysis Sygne uses words to speak of love. The breathless round of signifiers she sets in motion speaks of nothing but her pain, or rather, her jouissance in suffering. She is not fooled by it. Her wish to rest her head in my hand and lean her body against mine is not—at least she says as much without further denial—to appease her desire; rather, it is to find bodily consistency and anchor for the words haunting her, a shaded, cool spot for the fire of truth consuming her. When catching hold of the signifiers she imagines (most often rightly) to be those of my desiring phantasies, she is not merely asking me not to disown them, but also to be faithful to them. It is as if the constellation of my unconscious representatives, set like jewels on the screen of all my repressions, could give her support by recognizing her as Sygne.

I have no doubt that some doctors in psychoanalysis would tell me that I should have received her in an office more bare, that I should not have released my writings as I have done. They might also advise me to further analyze my phantasies so as more carefully to avoid such counter-transference implications. They will no doubt think that my paying more attention to the analyst’s legendary discretion would have spared Sygne her entanglement in a transference rapport that I will have a very hard time “terminating”. Besides loathing this term, I refuse to believe an experience of truth can ever be erased: transference is such an experience, and so is transference love. It is not just my supposed indulgence that allows Sygne to grasp the signifiers of my desire. My accepting her into analysis is an invitation to speak, and she is going without detour to the end of what she has to say: her jouissance in suffering. In so doing, she loves the person who invited her to speak and lets her speak. Everybody knows that the most definite symptom of love is the acuity enabling the lover to go to the heart of the loved one’s signifiers, however strong the resistance. Now let us suppose that, following Breuer’s example, I indulged a reaction of withdrawal in front of a woman’s love, and labored to convince her of its illusory or pathological nature. My interventions, even if pertinent and sober, could only be taken for what they would in fact be: a blunt refusal, a way of telling her that, even in analysis, a woman’s words of jouissance have no place.

Nothing seems more essential to me, in the practice of analysis, than to refuse to take part in this sort of betrayal. Of course, I don’t fail to ask Sygne about her former loves, especially her childhood ones, and to remark on the inconspicuousness of phantasies of her parents, to the point of summing up the Oedipal situation to myself as a sort of deficiency of phantasmatic parents. I could never take advantage of my analytical function, however, to tell her anything that could be construed as denying recognition to her love, her woman’s word. Now I would be in bad faith if I pretended that Sygne (to speak here only of her) leaves me cold. In this love story, my whole life resonates harmonically: not only my loves, women’s words (or silences) inscribed in my body, children, but also my interest in analysis, my questioning the origin of speaking, my work on the discourse of repression, my quest for half the sky. Does this mean then that I love her? No, that is to say, not “really”, but it could have been, outside analysis.

If Freud had not been busy with Martha, his fiancée, he would have discovered the anesthetizing properties of cocaine, and one can suppose that his so profoundly masculine passion to be a discoverer of enigmas would have been appeased for some time. He might, however, not have discovered the unconscious. What is extraordinary about the analytical adventure is revealed in this meeting between the discovered and his true object: love, which is to say a woman’s word. A strange and familiar woman’s voice! We will see in

“Vienna” what, over and above the phantasy of the killing of a child, is revealed in the secret body of birth places. We may also guess at what it is in the most secret of the analyst's phantasies that incites him, like Freud, to attempt the impossible unveiling and reinvent psychoanalysis. Analysts, and Freud first among them, are as suspicious (or clear-sighted) as Zeus, and fear their sons will kill them. Wishing to give birth himself, power hungry Zeus swallowed his first wife Metis, pregnant with his child, when time came for delivery; and so it was that from Zeus himself, from his head split in two with an ax, intelligent and powerful Athena was born, full armed.

So Freud discovered the secret of dream interpretation, gave the unconscious its status, and formulated a first law of desire in Oedipal terms; but he held onto another, still questioning She-Sphinx: “what does a woman want?” There can be no more “innocent” discoveries, but here we are, analysts confronted with a demand more acute than in any other endeavor, to re/invent out practice very time, word by word. Analysis can exist only when a meeting of two nascent voices occurs, indeed, as in love, but with naked words and benumbed bodies.

By the way, what is the sex of analysts? Do they have one? The question is worth submitting to the next council. Today, the prevailing opinion is that indeed they do, but that it doesn't matter as long as they have ears. The answer might as well be no! I can't resign myself to this. To maintain that an analyst's sex has no immediate bearing on his or her practice would be tantamount to turning the analytic function into a sort of priesthood placing the analyst beyond the plurality of the spoken word, especially the duality of masculine and feminine voices. I know that the phantasy of a universal discourse is indestructible. This is because it upholds what is most derisive in man's claim to “virility”. But I think I have shown sufficiently how the temptation of a universal discourse is part and parcel of the work of repression, and that it is never anything but an attempt to subsume all the modes of repression. Let us recall just how much this enterprise turns out to be masculine, since for lack of an immediate connection with castration (which for a woman essentially determines her identification as sexual) a man will find sexual identification by breaking with the process of repression which he inevitably leans on for support. The superfluous and pitiful “I am a man!” is always marked by some spectacular violence against the order to which he is a secret accomplice. Just as there is no metalanguage, there is no esperanto of sex, in other words, no pseudo-analytic discourse capable of going beyond difference. Quite the contrary, what we call analytic discourse promotes another logic (from the unconscious). It is defined by taking castration (connection to the phallus) into account, and castration is what determines sexual identity in speaking beings. Analytic discourse leaves to each and every one, starting with the analyst, the task of knowing from whence he speaks.

At least four figures are essential to account for the diversity of transference situations and analytic adventures. A woman's words offered to the ears of a discoverer of enigmas cannot be kept as the only implied model, for this lone reference could lend credence to the image of analysis as a man's business. For example, a young woman came to see me after long years of analysis and serious studies at the Ecole. There was every reason to expect her to practice analytic listening with a great deal of talent. But even though she had been trained as an insider, she felt she was a woman nonetheless and was downright terrified by the “analytic abjection” that tends to hold sway among the newly ordained. She said she felt like the Talmudic scholar overwhelmed with knowledge, who sent among the people crying: “quick, quick! Ask me questions, for I know the answers.”

Perhaps, along with other women, she will be able to show us two new figures of transference with its traps and privileges: the male discoverer of enigmas displaying his talents on a woman's couch, and women together, so wondrously strange and familiar a sight for a man.

And then there is the man who “wants out”—meaning of repression—and comes to be as to a brother. Here I am at last confirmed in my status of doctor of the unconscious, interpreter of dreams, destroyer of repression, and discoverer of forgotten memories; vigilance is required here, so as not to fall into a parody of analysis. It's easier to imagine a game of love between a woman on a couch and man in the armchair than between a “psychiatrist in training” and a “training analyst.” But what is at stake in analytic theory or its

institution, in a phantasmatic woman or a question of power, implicates men no less in a love story. Whether the lures of these stakes are recognized or denied (or both), transference is under way as soon as we meet the request of an analysand with a decision to engage in analytic work. By elaborating on the analysand's connection of castration, we have to put our own on the line and shed light on the lack of the phallus beyond homosexual phantasies. This is a matter of jouissance if ever there was one. But that's when the cunning little god bristling with learned arrows will not fail to corner us in subtle impasses where passions put on their shows. The burden will be on us, Hermes or Aphrodite, to sort out what speaking means.

To each figure its own traps, but to each its own promise of truth: as alive as at the time when analysis was first invented, the hope for a voice to be born is always there. Its engendering is more hazardous than giving birth to a child, and can only be conceived of in an encounter with another nascent voice, which analytic textbooks label "interpretation in transference." But no marked or plotted path can ever tell, before or after, of the clearing brought about by the meeting of a voice open to innocence, with the unveling of its origin's syncope.

The analyst's attention, floating like a spirit above the waters, is first of all an openness to the transparency of words, their shadowy roots as well as their fruits of light. The follow-up on that story will tell us what price analysts are paying today for the sacrilegious obstinacy driving them to take the place of the Holy Ghost, and if, away from the armchair, they will still know how to experience love with naked bodies and veiled words. Not that among themselves they will invent "some new way to make love." But one can hope that, sustaining the excess of their unreasonable passion to the end, they will at last know the time to love. Perhaps that passion, recognizing on the Tree of knowledge the fruit that makes her a woman, will be able to nourish a man with her light, like a new Eve taking shape from words rather than from his ribs. Perhaps that man, gazing away from the clock that measures his listening, will realize at last that he can only love and give the dawn back to each day if, like Cronos, he devours his children.

*Translated from the French by Marie-Claude Hays*

## **Notes:**

- (1) *La femme de trente ans*: title of a novel by Balzac.
- (2) "se supporter": "to put up with herself."
- (3) Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) (New York: Avon Books, 1965), p. 491.
- (4) Freud, *The Origins of Psycho-Analysis* (New York: Basic Books, 1950), letter 134.
- (5) *Ib.*, letter 107.
- (6) Freud
- (7) Clear
- (8) Freud?