

# POSTMODERN TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS II: THE DEVELOPMENT, STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION OF SELFHOOD

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## ABSTRACT

This paper, the second paper in a series of four papers on postmodern transactional analysis (TA), reviews the development, structure and function of selfhood.

**Keywords:** *enigmatic signifier, trauma, afterwardsness, unconscious, pre-conscious, conscious, selfhood*

## INTRODUCTION

In my previous paper, I proposed a postmodern definition of identity, and elaborated a number of ways in which aspects of TA philosophy and theory could be fruitfully developed to begin to engage with and articulate the plethora of identity formations and their function in our twenty-first century worlds. At the same time, I concluded that TA lacks a coherent and comprehensive theory of selfhood, not least since Berne failed to account for the Freudian unconscious and attendant transference dynamics within TA philosophy, theory and practice; an omission that betrays his declared assumption of Freudian orthodoxy, and one that has been compounded throughout the development of TA since. Let us, then, begin our account of the function, development and structure of selfhood by picking up this latter thread.

## A DIRE QUEST

As we saw in my previous paper, Berne (1961) explicitly based his ego state models on Freud's (1923) second topography, the ego, superego and id; a model that Berne acknowledged as crucial to TA's identity, and something that I have proposed as being useful in conceptualising the notion of identity in general. Through this appeal to the second topography, Berne explicitly reiterates Freud's eventually-abandoned belief that the *mastery* of ego over id – as well as mastery over superego – sets the necessary, if not sufficient conditions for psychic health. This optimistic motto continues to motivate TA philosophy, theory and practice today; after all, does it not underpin the philosophy of autonomy that is the drive and goal of TA's equation of change; is it not evident in the theory of treatment as exemplified in Berne's (1961) stages of cure (such as that of social *control*); and is it not reiterated in TA technique, such as is evident in

the directive to ensure the executive dominance of the Adult, manifest in decontamination, or the therapeutic deployment of the crossed transaction (see Kellett, 2004)?

This faith in mastery is rooted in the European Enlightenment Project's valorisation of reason over belief, reflection over dogma, and while this project has led to all manner of improvements in our lot, postmodernism also acknowledges the costs that have attended such progress (see Kellett, 2006). Freud knew only too well about this deal, from the sacrifice of castration to the vicissitudes of civilisation, and it seems to me that we hear an echo of this melancholic acknowledgement in Berne's conceptualisation of intimacy (Kellett van Leer, 2009) and in his reported final admission to his analyst. Such are the trajectories that arise from the myth of mastery; a seduction born, as we have previously seen, from the desire to foreclose the existential sense of lack that has its roots in infancy, and one that leads to an idealisation of a 'core self' that casts a shadow by which we measure ourselves as falling short, performing a tormenting Petrushka-like mockery in the face of our civilised and civilising pretensions, portrayed most keenly, perhaps, by the figure of the puritanical authoritarian who denounces others' fun and then is caught with her or his pants down.

We can also witness the havoc wreaked by this 'dire quest for mastery', to cite François Roustang's (1976/82) infamous phrase, within the development of analysis itself. For example, in 1912 Freud saw the analyst less as a scientist and more as a soldier battling the patient on the field of transference. And if he is deserving of his pips, this soldier wins his battle; ensuring the triumph of memory over forgetfulness, working through over repetition, rationality over irrationality. Where has this crusade led psychoanalysis? Well, for one thing, like recent Western campaigns waged on alien soil, the equipment used in this conflict has been found to be vulnerable. The main weapon in the valiant analyst-as-soldier's armoury – that of interpretation – is easily rusted by a corrosive *suggestibility*, the seductive manoeuvre of the hypnotist that gives the lie to Freud's idolisation of an historically-verifiable logic. This ghost of suggestion has haunted analysis from the very start; we can see it, after all, in Freud's attempts to persuade a scandalised conservative establishment that his budding new discipline can lay claim not only to being a fully-fledged scientific paradigm, but that it represents no less than the monarch of all sciences.

This crusade has also left a lingering stench that belies the fact that Freud's clinical battlefields are strewn with the still-twitching corpses of several bloody failures; failures such as Dora, who thwarted Freud hands down in a pyrrhic victory that wounded the Freudian project just as it failed to (ad)dress Dora's wounds. We should hardly be surprised, then, when Freud (1937) finally hoists the white flag, his ambitious Project of 1895 having foundered on more than just the rock of castration. Ultimately, the dire quest for mastery infiltrates analysis at every level, from the meta-psychological to that of technique; a contamination that has been compounded by the humanistic turns in analysis – and, even more so, by the cognitive/behavioural twists – twists and turns that hark back to those earlier European psychiatric practices that Foucault has so devastatingly critiqued, practices based on a philosophy that attempts to substitute a more keenly sharpened superego for the surgeon's knife.

Ultimately, the idolised fantasy of rational control all too frequently contaminates both Freudian and transactional analysis, not least because it turns a blind eye to the ghost in the machine, or apparatus of selfhood.

## THE GHOST IN THE MACHINE

As we saw previously, while Berne *explicitly* referred to Freud's second topography, he only *assumed* a belief in the first topography (Freud, 1900) – the conscious, pre-conscious and unconscious system – in his assertion that the efficacy of script analysis is founded upon an understanding of Freudian orthodoxy, and indeed we find much less evidence of the influence of the first topography when compared to the second within TA philosophy, theory and practice.

For example, when we consider those TA constructs we have not aligned with the notion of identity and the second topography, it is not at all clear how we might position these with regard to the notion of selfhood and the first topography. The Script is, perhaps, foremost amongst these outstanding concepts, a notion that, as I have argued elsewhere (Kellett van Leer, 2009) is premised upon the Freudian concept of repetition compulsion (Freud, 1920) and, as such, spans all domains mapped out in the first topography. Given this, it is not clear where, if at all, Berne intended to locate differing aspects of the Script in this regard. For example, the Protocol (Berne, 1972) is frequently positioned on the side of the sys. unconscious. This notion harks back to Freud's modernist belief that psychoanalysis represented an archaeological paradigm, whereby ancient and buried facts-as-truth were to be excavated and, upon their (conscious) recognition and representation, the patient would be relieved of their illusions and symptoms. Freud himself was eventually disillusioned with such a paradigm, returning to his original formulation that the unconscious represents less a library of faithful if forgotten recordings of *events*, but rather a domain of proto-representations that find no accommodation within a *coherent sense* of selfhood. Furthermore, these proto-representations symbolise *part-translations of events*, not the events themselves. The child may have been beaten (Freud, 1919) but what is repressed is far in excess of such a mere historical artefact, and has as tenuous a relation to lived experience as has a dream to reality.

And what then of the Script Proper (*ibid.*)? Like the Protocol, we often speak of the Script as if it operates from the side-lines, 'out of awareness', and yet if the Script is subject to language – how else can it be 'written'? – recruiting some (already) known and *articulable* discourse, then in what sense can it be a property of the sys. unconscious? The unconscious may be structured *like* a language, as Lacan has shown (Kellett, 2006) but this aphorism refers to its *grammar-like structure*; it does not follow that the unconscious *is* a language, at least in Lacanian epistemology. And if we interpret Berne's imperative to 'unfold' the Script to mean that what was unconscious be made conscious, well; while this is certainly in line with the prized notion of Jeder blowing his own tune on his own instrument, such an interpretation discounts Freud's (1937) final words on the rocky fate of such grandiose ambition.

No; it is not at all clear in what ways the Script could be considered a property of the sys. unconscious, much less the sys. conscious. And if, on the other hand, we place the Script on the side of the sys. preconscious (Kellett van Leer, 2011) while some of these problems are evolved, if not solved, we are nonetheless obliged to elaborate the nature of the preconscious in ways that circuitously refer us back to the question of the development, function and structure of the first topography. And so, let us take our leave of this Escher-like conundrum and return to the question of selfhood from the perspective that crystallised at the conclusion of my previous paper; that is, that TA has, as yet, offered no account of such a notion.

## TRAUMA

As I concluded in my previous paper, if we are to construct an account of the kind of selfhood-as-elsewhere that emerged from our unfolding of Mr. G's words, the loom we will need to weave such threads as we left hanging there is one that can account for the development, function and structure not only of "such stuff as dreams are made on" (Shakespeare, 1610-11, Act 4, scene 1, lines 156-7), but also the stuff from which *nightmares* are fashioned.

Why nightmares? Well, as we saw, the role of *trauma* offers a key by which we might unlock our account of selfhood, something that the other approaches within TA we reviewed readily acknowledge, since the concept pops up here and there like a leitmotif. Let us not forget that Freud developed his first topography in order to map the apparatus of the 'seele' so as to chart the course of the consequences when things went *wrong*. This is hardly surprising, of course; the *raison d'être* for psychoanalysis was the development of a treatment for illnesses that appeared to have no organic origin – such as, (in)famously, hysteria – and Freud pursued this project with a modernist doctor's zeal. Let us also not forget that, like Freud, Berne started his own analytic project with the aim of (ad)dressing those walking wounded who soldiered on under the burden of their precariously compensated stack of pennies, a metaphor that illuminates the *effect* of trauma, but does not account for its *genesis*.

Now, there are many ways of thinking about what might go wrong, though there are many things 'wrong' with such a concept from a postmodernist perspective, since the notion ushers in the kind of normative master discourses I critiqued in my previous paper. Nonetheless, the concept of trauma offers a lynchpin by which many Freudian and humanistic perspectives are held together in this regard, and as such, we may have to make do with this shifting and shifty concept for now, and rely simply on the ancient Greek origin, *τραῦμα*, which refers us to the notion of a wound or wounding. As such, it seems to me that we are now in a position to say that *the notion of personality is akin to what I have previously portrayed as a scab or a scar* (Kellett van Leer, 2015b); the *sign* of an attempt at healing that belies an earlier wounding, an attempt in which we can detect the incorporation of identifications deployed as band-aids – sutures or stiches – designed to hold things together, make-up designed to cover what threatens to (re)open. A scar as a mark of defence, that is; the product of a mechanism designed to address and redress the wounded body.

**If we view identity as a psychological scar, then, as something visible on the skin, then selfhood represents the *phenomenological body*, something *under* the skin, and it is the wounding of this body, this *internal domain* that comprises the function, development, and structure of selfhood.**

### *The Enigmatic Signifier*

As is well known, Freud came a cropper from the start of his project with his thesis of primary seduction; that his patients had been sexually abused as infants or young children. And his lot didn't get any better when, responding to the outrage his assertion provoked, he proposed rather that it was a childhood phantasy regarding the enigma of sex that traumatized, a change of heart that set in motion the momentum for Freud's tortuously slow abandonment of analysis-as-archeology for analysis of phantasy. What is not so well understood is that Freud did not regard this traumatizing phantasy as a straight forward consequence of an eventful phantasy, as I outlined earlier, but rather as *a dawning that erupts*

*after the sexual awakening of puberty, in a moment where something of an earlier enigma is reiterated.* It is at *this* moment that we see the sign of the scar, the scab of identity, a moment of ‘nachträglichkeit’ (Freud, 1895) – a concept that Jean Laplanche (1999) has translated as ‘afterwardsness’ – capturing something of the *retroactive* direction and strangeness of the nature of trauma.

Laplanche asserted that Freud went astray in his attempt to account for these signs in his patients, a diversion that skewed the trajectory of the development of psychoanalytic theory, resulting in our own bent stack of analytic philosophy, theory and practice, with its many conundrums, compensations and props, some of which I outlined in my previous paper. In his project of ‘refounding’ psychoanalysis – of straightening the stack, so to speak – Laplanche subjects Freudian theory itself to a psychoanalysis, and offers an account of the development, structure and function of selfhood that (re)addresses Freud’s first topography and refounds Freud’s *foundational placing of sexuality* in the formations of selfhood.

Principally, Laplanche asserts that Freud’s revolutionary project went astray at the point at which he shied away from pursuing a crucial logical implication that arose from his theory of seduction (and, I would suggest, the same can be said of Berne’s transactional analysis; that his own revolutionary project went astray at the point where he failed to pursue his assumption of Freudian orthodoxy, specifically the implications of the first topography). Freud’s theory of seduction asserts that *the infant’s everyday asymmetrical encounter with an adult sounds an inherently enigmatic note for the infant, and that this fundamentally masochistic situation is transposed in a traumatising key.* Let’s take each of these points in turn in order to open our exploration of the notion of selfhood.

There are many ways in which the infant-adult relational matrix is asymmetrical, but Laplanche points to three fearful asymmetries (to paraphrase William Blake, 1794) that are formative with regard to the structure of selfhood: that of i) *language* as both the vehicle for meaning-making and communication, that of ii) *sexuality*, and that of iii) the *sys. unconscious*. While the adult ‘knows’ all, the infant ‘possess’ none; *in-fans* means ‘without speech’ and, as Freud elucidated, sexuality demands both physical and psychical maturation, or evolution, as entry fee for the perks and sacrifices of its membership. Similarly, the infant is *without* an unconscious – the field of the unconscious is *outside* the infant, is not on the infant’s side, as it were; as we shall see, the unconscious takes time to form *within*, since without repression there is no dynamic unconscious – though the infant is situated *within* the unconscious realm of the adult. Now, on many levels these asymmetries remain in the background, though nonetheless exerting a profound gravity on the orbit of the infant’s development-as-subject if only for one crucial reason; the infant is compelled to retain the (m)other in order to survive. Attachment theory has something to say about this, of course, and in TA we have our own way of understanding something of what happens when such an imperative fails (remember the incredible ‘shrivelling spinal cord’?). The point is that a crucial part of this survival strategy requires the infant to make sense of this (m)other and his/her desire, this (m)other upon whose desire all hangs in the balance.

How is the infant to make sense of the desire of this (m)other? Or, to put it another way; as the domain of primary love evolves (Kellett, 2006) what is the infant to make of a (m)other that appears herself to lack, to *want*, and at times to appear to want something of the infant? Without any social codes at its disposal the infant has nothing to go on by which to begin to make sense, without language it cannot yet

communicate other than via its ubiquitous cry, a cry that this (m)other must interpret more or less in resonance with the infant's need, yet whose interpretation can in turn only be communicated through actions that themselves must be interpreted, returning the infant to the same impotent position. These proto-questions – 'proto' since the infant cannot yet language them as such, just as the concept of a 'question' is as yet meaning-less – represent imperatives with which the infant is increasingly compelled to engage as part of its embodied drive for survival. As such it is this drive that powers the will to speak (as Bion, 1967/2007 has so rigorously documented) and thus the enculturation of selfhood (Kellett, 2007a) that restructures the phenomenology of the infant in the image of its own afterwardsness.

Such is the existential hinterland of the infant's life, with its everyday ebb and flow; sometimes stormy, sometime calm, sometimes sunny, sometimes clouded; a swelling background that, like a heartbeat, establishes a rhythm that can be excited or resting, broken or passionate. And from within the depths of the ebb and flow of this rhythmic background tidal pulse artefacts are unpredictably washed up here and there, now and then; flotsam and jetsam that stand out as figure on the emerging shore of selfhood, moments that demand a figuring out. Take the scene of the infant's feeding, for example; that archetypal beginning moment in both the Winnicottian notion of maternal preoccupation as well as the domain of primary love. Laplanche (1999) asserts that *this intimate act of suckling cathects the (m)other's more-or-less ambivalent attitude towards her own erotic arousal*. And to such moments, the infant is compelled to attend.

What do we mean by the (m)other's ambivalent attitude towards her own erotic arousal? In Freudian theory, the (m)other is subject to an unconscious, a dynamic domain of selfhood that comprises the repression of desires that wish to be forgotten in the face of the demands of civilisation, a dynamic which is autonomously – or, rather, *automaton-ously* – *only* manifest in transferential matrices, and one which the (m)other is therefore barred from articulating. In this sense, the (m)other's sexuality is always/already compromised in that a significant part is repressed, and it is this significant part about which the (m)other is, at the very least, ambivalent.

We will see how this unconscious system forms as we progress in our account of the infant's development of selfhood. For now, the point I wish to stress is that Laplanche argues that it is inconceivable that the infant could fail to notice some trace of the (m)other's entanglement with her own repressed unconscious, a trace that seems bound, in the retrospection of afterwardsness, to generate proto-questions such as "what does this teat want of me?" and "why does it want?" (see my account of the development of the domain of primary love in Kellett, 2006). This is a compelling enigma that the infant cannot symbolise, and that the (m)other cannot address.

And so, the infant's most powerfully intimate and primary relational experiences are punctuated by those moments when it notices yet cannot 'digest' a trace of a movement of the unconscious in the (m)other, an enigma that commands attention. How does the infant engage with the impossibility of this necessity? Here we must unfold the issue of masochism. Laplanche asserts that the *fundamental anthropological situation* into which the infant is thrown – to refer to Heidegger's *Geworfenheit* (1967) – is marked by an equally fundamental masochism since the infant's position is one of *existential passivity*, something that is not determined by gender or sexuality (though it becomes part and parcel of the development of both)

but rather something that is premised on *the inevitably helpless position of the infant* due to the prematurity of human birth. Of course, the infant is more or less active, influencing the adult's interactions, but this activity is delimited, as we have seen, within an asymmetrical relational field, one that circumscribes its reach and determination.

From this passive position, the infant's enigmatic encounter with the adult results in the phenomenological intromission of a psychical 'message', a penetration that, to the infant, Laplanche (1999, p. 65) characterises as feeling like "an alien inside ... put inside me by an alien." It is here that the issue of the structuration of the infant's fledgling sense of selfhood arises, here at the moment when we consider the infant's response to this encounter, since it is the infant's subsequent attempts to accommodate this invasion, to *translate* the intromitted message, this *enigmatic signifier* that drives the structural development of selfhood, a development that is born not of the (m)other's pathology, as those TA theories of selfhood I critiqued in my previous paper assert – for how can the sys. unconscious be regarded as pathological? – but rather a development born of the fundamental anthropological situation, an existential given for any wannabe human subject.

## DOMAINS OF SELFHOOD

I have previously offered a description of the Laplanchian structure of selfhood that arises from the infant's encounter with the adult's enigmatic message as we have traced this above (Kellett van Leer, 2011). There I characterised the differing structures as *aspects* of selfhood, in part to highlight the notion that these represent various ways by which we can *view* selfhood, just as varying aspects offering differing perspectives upon any given landscape. However, I consider it more pertinent to view these differing structures in terms of *domains* of selfhood, following Freud and thus Laplanche's use of topology (see Figure 1).

As we saw, these domains arise as a consequence of the infant's attempt to make meaning of, to interpret, to *translate* the invading enigmatic message of the (m)other, and it is worth offering an account that traces this process at this point, since the formation of selfhood depends, in large part, on the degree to which translation *fails* and the signifiers and representations consequently generated.

We have seen how the source of the unconscious communication that makes the demand for translation of the infant is the domain of repressed desire of the (adult) other, and that this source cyphers the adult's every communication. The infant notices a trace of the (m)other's ambivalence in the face of her repressed desire, as the lensing of light betrays a distant galaxy, a trace that the infant cannot fathom. Why should this bother the infant? Well, as I mentioned, making meaning of this (m)other on whom life itself depends is something for which the infant must have a keen eye, but what is also crucial is that *the impossibility of making sense of this trace itself excites the infant*. Here I mean 'excite' in the Freudian sense; that is, the sense Freud used from the outset as set out in his Project. Excitation is fundamentally unpleasurable in the sense that it disturbs a homeostasis that the infant takes pains to rebalance. Only later does the distinction between pleasurable and unpleasurable excitation develop, not least since, like

language, this is a meaning that is determined by the social and cultural matrix into which the infant is thrown, though it also takes time for the infant's physiology to develop in such a way that some aspects of unpleasure can be tolerated and potentially become pleasurable (a royal road that finds its origin in the infant's encounter with the (m)other's body, winds through the infant's bodily experiences of the oral, anal and phallic developments, through to orgasm and the climax of death). The impossibility inherent in the compulsion to translate the intromitted message, therefore, gives rise to a degree of excitation that has the potential to be *both* pleasurable and unpleasurable to degrees that depend upon the chaotic whim of the infant's embodied phenomenology at any given moment; a quantum-level capriciousness, like Schrödinger's famous cat (Schrödinger, 1935). It is within the context of this state that the infant's task of primary handling is situated.

This handling of the intromitted message and its consequent arousal takes place in what Laplanche has designated the sub-conscious enclave (see Fig. 1); a domain of selfhood that functions as a kind of stomach that attempts to digest the encounter, resulting in a *proto-theorising*, a process forged to fend off the maddening threat that the insistence of the alien penetration can (increasingly) pose. To the extent that a meaningful-enough translation of the message is effected – a proto-theory along the lines of, let us say “this teat's desire is exciting” – then a coherent-enough *sense* of selfhood is consolidated in the guise of the pre-conscious, leaving over a sediment of that which escapes, which *exceeds* translation; a remainder that coalesces to form the matrix of the unconscious representing a bounded alien site within selfhood. Such is the limit of the infant's translation; translation always fails a bit, and there is always an *excess* that undergoes repression since this excess finds no place within a coherent sense of selfhood. This process lays the foundation for a good-enough sense of selfhood (in Lacanian taxonomy, one of the neurotic class of structures) and the metaphor of an unconscious sediment offers one way of thinking about the formation and fate of the enigmatic signifier within this structure; that is, the enigmatic signifier forms from the untranslatable excess of the intromission of the desire of the (m)other and becomes an organising principle of the unconscious.

In contrast, on those occasions where there is a massive failure of translation, where what has been intromitted remains overwhelmingly incomprehensible and insistent, too much, then the infant's handling is reduced to a holding. Perhaps here we might think of a proto-translation along the lines of, “this teat wants something unthinkable”. Such a holding forges another aspect of the enigmatic signifier, one which is sequestered within the sub-conscious enclave, akin to a splinter that gets under the envelope of the skin (Laplanche 1992, p. 209) and representing another more acutely insistent site of alien-ness when compared to that of the unconscious. Such a quarantining is on the side of the defence of foreclosure (following the vexed Freudian concept of *verleugnung*, translated and developed as *verwerfung* by Lacan) laying the foundation for an incoherent sense of selfhood (or psychotic class of structures, in the Lacanian sense) one that creates the sense of having been *colonised* by the enigmatic signifier.

Dominique Scarfone (2015) has characterised this latter formation and holding of the enigmatic signifier as an *entombing*. A kind of ‘resolve’ is made by the infant to *bury* the enigmatic signifier, and after a hole has been dug and the coffin containing this vampire's corpse has been lowered in, the shallow grave is

*filled-in* with the child's proto-theories, theories that form the barren soil in which the vampire is entombed; theories which, later on, the analysand will not lightly relinquish for fear of the monster's vengeful return. Now, this metaphor may sound rather colourful, but doesn't it refer us to Bion's visceral portrayal of the primitive fantasies of the paranoid-schizoid world? It's worth noting, too, that popular cultural myths such as that of the vampire invariably reflect something of the internal world of a civilisation, and I'm sure you've all encountered those who, in the consulting room, regularly describe their pilgrimages to the graveyard of past disasters, graveyards populated by headstones engraved with the mottos by which the analysand has sworn to live. It is also no coincidence that vampires are notably portrayed in popular contemporary Western culture as rebellious, desiring and sexy, an unconscious nod to the repressed sexual origin of the enigmatic message.

**From the perspective of this account, then, the infant's relational encounters necessarily lead to the formation of enigmatic signifiers that drive a structure of selfhood that comprises *both* neurotic and psychotic mechanisms in all subjectivities.**

## TRANSFERENCE

The emergence – or rather the *submergence* and subsequent (*e*)*ruption* – of the enigmatic signifier forms a boundary beyond which sense falters, an event horizon behind which lies *abjection*, to refer to Julia Kristeva's (1982) evocative portrayal. Here, at this limit, we encounter one source of resistance in analysis, one that is not conscious, and therefore not subject to articulation within language and, thus, the techniques of contracting and decontamination as they have been developed to date within transactional analysis. Rather, like any other aspect of the transference, resistance is a *sign*; one that lights the way for the direction of the analysis; a sign, at the point of the limit of the known world, upon which is inscribed – as it reads on one of the first European globes of the world, the 1510 Hunt-Lenox Globe – *Hic sunt dracones*; “here be dragons.”

I have previously described how differing domains of selfhood give rise to differing aspects of the transference, representing the various functions of these domains, and requiring differing modes of analytic handling (Kellett van Leer, 2011). Here, I related these differing aspects of the transference to those types adopted by relational TA (Hargaden and Sills, 2002) from the work of Moiso (1985) and some of the American self- and ego-psychologists. Since that time, I have abandoned these classifications, not least since they have proved of such limited efficacy in my clinical work. It is true that there is a seductive aroma to Hargaden and Sills description of the ‘transformational transference’, a form of unconscious communication derived from Ogden's (1982/92) concept of projective identification, in turn a derivative of Kleinian theory. For Hargaden and Sills, this particular category of transference promises a key to the true nature of the analysand's unconscious, should the analyst succeed in her or his decoding of this wordless communication through reflection upon her or his feelings. However, as I have shown in the previous paper of this series, such a notion of transference is based upon the erroneous mapping of transference upon ego states, as well as the assumption of an unconscious that has no grounding in

theory. It has also become apparent to me through my teaching and supervising of analysts' work that the analyst's feelings offer no reliable code by which the analysand's subjectivity can be deciphered.

Rather, I have found Laplanche's delineation of the transference to be far more soundly rooted in theory, and his concept of the evolution of the transference to be far more potent in clinical work. 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, or what Laplanche calls a 'filling in' of the transference; an attempt to effect a digestion, to de-alienate the intrusion from without, by sequestering it within a proto-theory. If a first filling-in occurs as a result of an experience of originary transference – representing a purposeful activity aiming at psychological containment – a second filling-in occurs at the moment transference is evoked in the analytic relationship, a situation that 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.

## EVOLVING THE TRANSFERENCE

*"If we interpret a transference 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).*

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, 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-as-interlocutor 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.

Since 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 alterior other (internally and externally) with a less rigid insistence on 'knowing', on theorising along repetitive, familiar lines. Does not this notion of a radically alterior 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.

## A CURIOUS REMAINDER

From a postmodern perspective, there are endless ways of looking at notions such as that of selfhood, just as, from a postmodern analytic perspective, there are endless ways of framing human subjectivity and experience. My intention here is to present one such framing, and though space limits the opportunity to consider various critiques of this particular frame, it is worth acknowledging that, like my previous article, this account leaves over a number of loose ends of its own, as all such accounts must. Significantly, for example, it seems to me that the concept of a non-repressed unconscious - as originally developed from Freudian theory in the Kleinian object relations school, and further developed by such as the Boston Change Process Group - does not obviously find accommodation in the Laplanchean interpretation of the Freudian model of selfhood I have elaborated here. While this may not be of too much concern to the Bernian project of accounting for Freudian orthodoxy, what counts for orthodoxy today is not what it was in Berne’s day, and even if it were so, we need not content ourselves with discounting recent research and related propositions.

In this regard, Summers (2011) for example, has offered an account of the development, structure and function of a ‘nonconscious’ that draws upon these various sources, a notion that elaborates an implicit domain of selfhood that, while comprising formations that remain unrepresented, is nonetheless the product of processes other than defensive mechanisms such as those of repression and foreclosure that we identified as the genesis of the unconscious and subconscious enclave respectively. This account relies on interpretations of the results of contemporary research into the brain, interpretations that are framed by the paradigm of experimental psychology and, as such, lay claim to an ‘evidence-based’ rigour that all too frequently disguises a speculative narrative masquerading as a superior iterative logic. Nonetheless, the notion of a nonconscious may represent a ‘curious remainder’ within the account of selfhood I have offered here (Summers, personal communication, 2016).

I would argue that such a curious remainder is part and parcel of a postmodern notion of selfhood, serving to act as a foil to a meta-narrative that would otherwise be at risk of the kind of reification, deification and ossification that modernist TA paradigms, such as that of the relational approach, are subject to. As such a function, this curious remainder is akin to Kristeva’s domain of the semiotic; an echo of the earliest embodied relational intimacies experienced by the infant as situated within the domain of primary love. Such an intimacy itself will evoke the (m)other’s own semiotic echoes, traces which will be evident to the infant, and while these traces have not been repressed or foreclosed by the (m)other, they cannot be articulated since they were never symbolised. It seems to me that this formulation offers one way by which we can think of the Winnicottian notion of ‘maternal preoccupation’, and it has obvious consequences for the formation of the infant’s attachment pattern, as well as offering a route by which we might rethink the TA notion of the ‘hot potato’ (English, 1969).

The domain of the semiotic thus represents a curious remainder in the sense that it remains over from a time before the formation of selfhood as we have described it, is thus not the product of the failure of translation, and is not intromitted in the same way as the (m)other's unconscious message (since its origin is not the (m)other's unconscious but, rather, elsewhere) and thereby will not result in the formation of an enigmatic signifier. Rather, the semiotic functions as the source of a different kind of creativity, one that invites representation of a differing order.

Along with a further development of the three differing functions of the analyst as outlined above, I further elaborate this latter point in the final paper in this series; "Postmodern Transactional Analysis III: Deconfusion and the Enigmatic Interpretation".

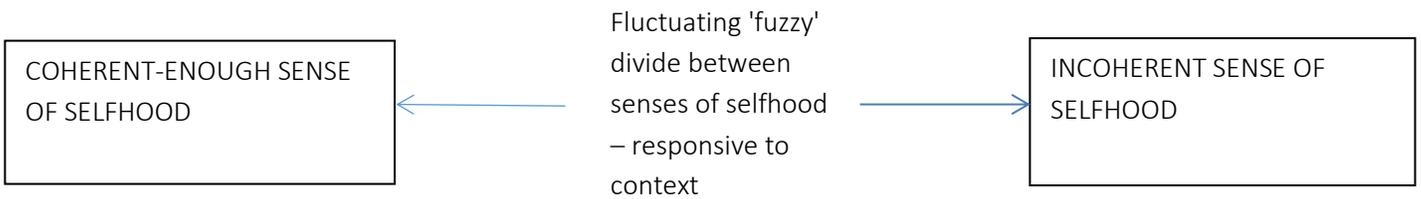
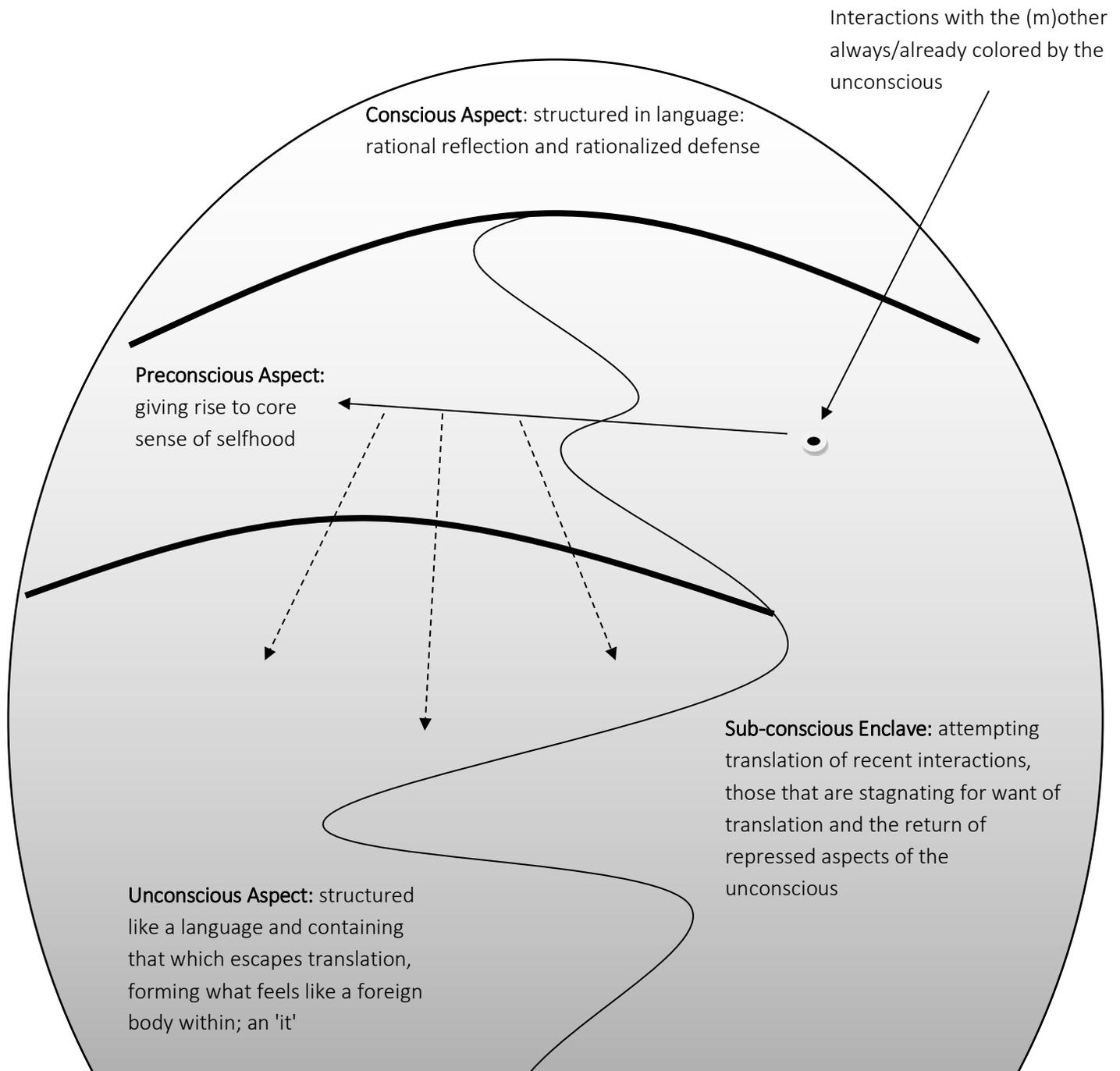


Figure 1. A Structural Model of Selfhood (Kellett van Leer, 2011: 70)

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