

I

The Refusal of Love

Love in the Social

It's not too much to claim that the entire project of psychoanalysis was set in motion by Freud's remarkable discovery at the outset of his investigations that the patient never fails to fall in love during treatment. Baptizing this phenomenon transference love, Freud argues that such a love cannot *not* occur in analysis; that the rules of the game—patient lying on the couch, analyst seated behind, law of free association imposed—guarantee that it will occur without fail. The event of love revealed in the transference is the underlying condition of possibility of psychoanalysis. My initial aim in this chapter will be to show that, despite some terminological confusion and symptomatic ambivalences, two distinct ideas of love can be discerned in the pioneering Freudian texts. There is first the enigmatic power of resistance of the transference love that initiates Freud's analytic desire to solve the riddle of his patients' symptoms. But there is another kind of love as well, and the transference concept as Lacan formalizes it in his teaching is in my view the key to distinguishing between the two.

There is a love "beyond" the transference, that is to say, but it emerges only on condition that we come to terms with a paradox. Though, as Freud consistently maintains, the transference functions objectively as a form of resistance against unconscious desire, perpetuating thereby the symptom's nagging neurotic agency, its manifestation remains an efficient condition of the cure. In other words, the transference reliably points the way toward its own elusive beyond. The occurrence and proper interpretation of the transference are therefore necessary prerequisites for the setting in motion of our inherent capacity to love in the ethical, and therefore political, way that this book sets out to explore in some detail.

I will argue moreover that these statements hold true as firmly outside the specific concrete “situation” of analysis as they do within it. The scare quotes signal how the idea of the analytic scene differs from the phenomenological, existentialist, and sociological understandings of the term developed by Jean-Paul Sartre and Pierre Bourdieu, for example. We can distinguish the psychoanalytic understanding from its rivals by pointing to its acknowledgment of an unconscious psychical agency—desire—that cannot be charted onto the terrain of a situation through reference to either the phenomenon in any of its aspects or its determination by “concrete” or “material”—socioeconomic, most often—factors. This is not to say that the socioeconomic has no role to play in the psychoanalytic theory of love. Indeed, I will argue in this chapter that it leaves its mark on Freud’s thought, though in a resolutely psychical guise. For this reason, as I will aim to show, the very category of the socioeconomic must be viewed as always and necessarily inflected by unconscious desire as it is made manifest in the transference.

Historically, the discipline of psychoanalysis writ large, perhaps especially in the Anglo-American region, has had tremendous difficulty relating its apparently subjective or person-based concepts to the collective, the social, and the political. By cutting down to size the formidable discursive wall that for many separates the intimacy of the clinic from the vagaries of its outside, I mean to suggest that no legitimate line of demarcation in theory or in practice can be drawn between our relation to the analyst as determined in the transference and our relation to the wider social world—to the Other, as I will prefer to say after Lacan. The latter relation is equally and identically determined by this very same transferential dynamic. Indeed, the only basic difference between what occurs inside and outside the analytic chamber with regard to the event of transference is that the analytic commitment to “neutrality”¹ has the benefit of making tangible the inauthentic, indeed illusory, foundations of the demand that lies at its root. As Freud clearly knew, the fact that the patient should address a strong passion to someone about whom he knows essentially nothing has the illuminating effect of isolating the psychical sphere, thereby making it amenable to intervention. What is all too rarely acknowledged, however, is that this clinical event uncovers how the transference necessarily mediates our relation to the social world as such, how in fact it has a crucial role to play in the structuring of the social relation in its various forms.

One of this book's underlying premises is therefore that the ambiguities and contradictions that mark Freud's usage of our term of concern have far-reaching consequences for a wide range of fields of inquiry that, with precious few exceptions, have been perfectly happy not to take account of the unconscious; that are even sometimes invoked, especially on the political left, as ways of compensating for the allegedly individualistic or subjectivist shortcomings of Freudian psychoanalysis both as theory and practice. Indeed, the transference concept holds crucial implications for any field of study that sets itself the task of tackling—or reframing through alternative concepts—the thorny, age-old question of the relation between the subject and society, or between the psychic and the social, to use Judith Butler's formulation.² Foremost among these consequences is the fact that only muddled abstractions can result from any method of analysis that fails to acknowledge that the social acquires its properly human dimension through its inflection by the subject's desire—that of not just any old subject, mind you, but specifically that of the unconscious subject as Freud defines it.

I will take the risk of hazarding some reckless generalizations to illuminate this contested social-theoretical terrain in preparation for my intervention. As I present this brief theoretical survey I will attempt the perhaps impossible task of doing so at once in the technical terms familiar to specialists as well as in an ordinary idiom which I hope the general reader will find more accessible. Despite the considerable pressure exercised by a variety of self-styled postmodernist and poststructuralist discourses throughout the latter half of the twentieth century, numerous qualitative and quantitative social-scientific methodologies continue to approach the question of the social as if it were a self-sufficient entity requiring no consideration of its means of presentation or representation, regardless of whether or not such means are viewed as informed or determined by something of the order of the subject, be this either the psychological subject of sense perception or consciousness or the epistemological subject of knowledge. Through their precritical empiricism, these approaches fall short of acknowledging the problematic of the transference by simply approaching the social as if it were already there, ready-made and fully transparent to thought, untouched by the faculty of desire. Though these methodologies persist unquestioned in the less theorized enclaves of the social sciences in all their vastness, they are clearly not the ones that have gained ascendancy in cultural and literary studies over the last three or four decades.

Contrary to received wisdom, however, the more current and avowedly sophisticated discourse theories that strongly posit the constructed nature of the social fail to alter the approach considerably. Though they are explicitly recognized as contingent in their status as representations or vectors of desire, power, or force, social arrangements in these discourses are imagined as fabrications, however multiform and heterogeneously conceived, which remain ultimately consistent—accessibly positive (even in their radical difference), fully knowable or closed—in their inconsistency. More simply, not only does the construction of the social leave nothing unconstructed by discourse, nothing unproduced by power, but this construction is all-pervasive, leaving no empty pockets of negativity or non-knowledge. Remaining unexamined in such approaches is our collective libidinal investment in this construct of seamlessly consistent heterogeneity; in other words, how “the social” is propped up and totalized by both our narcissistic demand for personalized meaning and our submissive fascination with power. The result is that, on the rare occasion when these discourses try to account for (the possibility of) transformational or thoroughgoing change, they must resort to tortuously convoluted formulations and disorienting conceptual gymnastics. There is no space for the act, for the event: happenings that are not already immanent with respect to existing significations, logics, or relations of force. This remains the case even when these happenings are explicitly qualified as oppositional—deterritorializing or micropolitical, for example.

Alain Badiou’s more consequential work does not lie vulnerable to these accusations. To my mind, the refreshing conceptual break that his system forces with respect to today’s dominant cultural-theoretical orthodoxies is what accounts for the highly welcome, though no doubt improbable, ascendancy of Badiou’s work in Anglophone theory circles during the past decade or so. His avowedly Platonist outline of a social world of appearances amenable to logical formalization and subordinated to a mathematical ontology of pure inconsistent multiplicity not only recognizes the objective possibility of unforeseeable and undetermined events, but also attributes to these events the hallowed but unfashionable status of truths, positing moreover that thought is capable of tracing the consequences of these truths in specific contexts through acts of militant fidelity. In other words, in contrast to the theories of discourse production and biopower, Badiou’s framework privileges what does *not* appear in discourse. Put in more positive terms, Badiou aims to

think the evanescent event that is all too easy to ignore or to dismiss as never having taken place.

However, Badiou's recent and laudable effort to define specific world-situations through logical formalization, amounting to a kind of non- or antisubjectivist phenomenology, rests on what I consider an aseptic transcendental conditionality that is troublingly severed from its link with human libidinal investment. Put in less philosophical terms, Badiou's project proceeds as if particular social arrangements existed independently of the subjects to whom they appear. Now, these subjects, psychoanalysis teaches us, are always shot through with particular libidinal interests and specific unconscious desires. Yet "the laws of appearance are intrinsic," Badiou argues, "and they suppose no subject."³ Badiou's reading of Kant, for example, is emblematic of his desire to rid phenomenology, the study of appearances, of any trace of subjectivity as it has generally been defined through categories designating either a priori psychological forms of consciousness or the experiential contents of sense perception.

The gesture by which Badiou moves to isolate his "worlds" from subjectivity is certainly a politically strategic one in that he wants to tie his own concept of the subject not to the world of appearances, to the status quo of specific situations, but rather to a causatively prior ontological register of pure inconsistent multiplicity. In this way the category of the subject becomes inseparable for Badiou from his notion of truth. For this reason it remains by definition militantly at odds with the state of things as they appear to be. Because it emerges from the void of a given situation, a "place" defined by its minimal degree of phenomenological existence, Badiou's subject remains unmarked by the far-reaching discursive determinations that limit its agency in the representationalist (deconstructionist) and postrepresentationalist (Foucauldian and Deleuzian) versions of poststructuralism. Badiou's event, and the subject who remains faithful to it, are therefore beyond the realm of discourse and power as contemporary theory understands these terms.

Unlike hegemonic theory's variously configured post-subjects, then, Badiou's subject is a subject of radical innovation, one who always emerges in opposition to "the social" as it is defined in any given world-situation. Badiou offers, to my mind, an invigorating alternative to the attacks on the concept of the subject of the last few decades because his construal of this subject is posthumanist: nonintentional, antipsychological, transpersonal; but also unfashionably *autonomous* in

relation to the status quo—capable, that is, of bearing witness to occurrences that fail to appear as phenomena in predefined political, artistic, scientific, and amorous situations. In this light, Badiou's notion of the subject as subject-to-truth is comparable to the Freudian subject as Lacan refined its concept, for the psychoanalytic subject of unconscious desire is also defined by its nonappearance in language and the social. Indeed, the Freudian subject is strictly correlative to a *violation* of social law.

There are further, less commonly acknowledged points of comparison between Badiou's formalization of what he calls pure multiplicity's transcendental indexation—the configuration of being-as-being (*être-en-tant-qu'être*) within the existential logic of a specific world—and Lacan's concept of the Other, his term for the fragile and contingent signifying structure that mediates the social relation. As is well known to readers of his later work, Lacan's account of what he terms the logic of the signifier became increasingly dependent on the formal languages of mathematics and logic. By severing transcendental indexation from the psychoanalytic account of a subject split by its insertion into language, however, Badiou's framework cannot properly take account of our libidinal investment in the social as appearance, in other words, why so many of us fail to bear witness to the fragile truths his philosophy aims to think. This means that Badiou's system cannot adequately acknowledge the unconscious resistance that dissuades inquiry into the multiples that fail to appear in a given world. For psychoanalysis, in contrast, the subject always has a *symptom*: the sign of its failure to accommodate itself, in Badiou's terms, to being as pure indifferent multiplicity; being, that is, “before” its appearance has been shaped by normative logics of existence or value—discourses, if you prefer.

Further, Lacan's idea that the subject is marked by a fundamental *manque-à-être* (lack-in-being) reminds us that the world of appearances cannot decisively be extricated from the defenses that the ego insistently puts up. For Lacan, we come to be as subjects of the unconscious in consequence of a resistance to being: a piece of being-jouissance is cast off into the unconscious to be replaced by desire's empty, virtual essence—a quantity, that is to say, of *nonbeing*. Transference is the concept through which psychoanalysis sets itself the task of explaining our resistance as subjects to the truths that Badiou so justifiably wants to valorize and bring to the power of thought. In its admirable intention to cast off the fearful and self-pitying modesty of so much contemporary discourse, Badiou's framework simply grants too much

to the subject when it assumes a clean break with a status quo whose seductive powers are therefore counterstrategically underestimated. As subjects of the unconscious, we never cease definitively to resist. Our capacity to become Badiouian subjects-to-truth depends absolutely on our acknowledgment of this difficult fact.

Having said this, however, I want to stress that I do not wish my argument to participate in a skeptical reaction to what must be considered in today's philosophical and political climates Badiou's heroic reclaiming of the category of truth for thought. Indeed, Badiou's thesis concerning the identity of what he calls being-as-being with the history of mathematical formalization is in intimate dialogue with the later Lacan. It is not for nothing that Badiou calls Lacan one of his masters, though to my mind Badiou overstates his debt to the great psychoanalyst. The truth of psychoanalysis forces us to recognize that there is no once-and-for-all exit from the transference, no unproblematic or post-ambivalent access to being. Neither can there be any absolute reduction of the psyche, definitive overcoming of resistance, or realized, successful encounter with desire's traumatic real.

For Lacan, our capacity to function as social beings, even and especially in radical opposition to dominant traditions of thought, rests on the precarious illusion of the Other's consistency. We must believe (or act as if we believe: same thing, for the Pascalian Lacan) in the coherence and binding purchase of the logics that legislate collective life in the particular social world in which we live. The consequence of this for Badiou's project is that mathematical formalization can only be, as it was for Lacan, an *ideal*. Yes, desire is an illusion premised on misrecognition; an empty, baseless surplus over being. And yes, as Badiou maintains, the real—being—is no doubt best conceived in thought as a pure, inaccessibly and inconsistently infinite multiplicity from which nothing is missing, in which nothing lacks. Yet for all the evidence of its duplicity and unreliability, the greatest illusion of all is the one that upholds the possibility of the psyche's absolute dissipation. Though psychoanalysis certainly does not deny the possibility of the *experience* of being, for the speaking subject being in language, in consciousness, is always barred, unattainable, unsatisfying, elsewhere. *Les non-dupes errent*, says Lacan, riffing on his name-of-the-father idea: those who are not duped (by the Other) err.⁴

Though Lacan in his later teaching fully embraces the project of formalizing psychoanalytic theory via the languages of mathematics

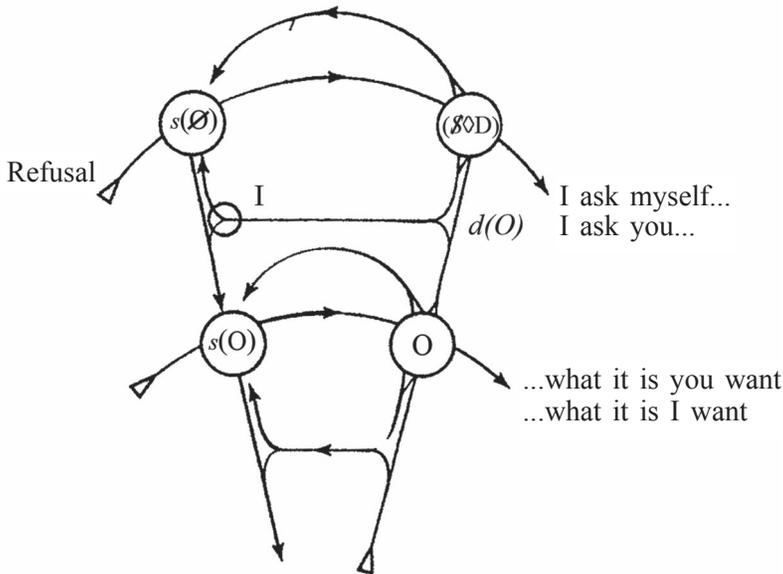
and logic, his stance vis-à-vis the historical disciplines was identical to his position on the philosophical tradition. “The mathematical field is characterized by a hopeless effort to have the field of the Other as such hold together,” he claimed, adding that this is “the best way to demonstrate that it doesn’t, that it isn’t consistent.”⁵ Mathematical formalization may be the only available means of transmitting knowledge outside the transferential dynamic, as Lacan believed, but the discipline itself is haunted by the same irreducible demand for consistency that defines what Freud calls transference love.

Even mathematicians are required to (attempt to) communicate with one another and the world in so-called ordinary language. For Lacan, this is sufficient proof that their formalized articulations will necessarily betray signs of the same unconscious demand for consistency to which their everyday utterances bear witness. Even when we grant that mathematics, at least since Cantor and Gödel, has learned to live with inconsistency as an inescapable feature of the multiple, it remains the case that no subject will ever be capable of living entirely within the mathematical world without risking a radical psychotic break that would effectively exile that subject from human sociality. For psychoanalysis, the final word is simply that there is no possible escape from the social relation and its necessary traversal by language, by the Other.

The irreducibility of our unconscious libidinal investment in the Other—the ineradicable nature of the symptom, in other words—is precisely what Lacan indicates with the symbol for signification $s(O)$ that occupies the bottom lefthand corner of his mature graph of desire (Fig. 1.1). Though the next section of this chapter turns to Freud’s engagement with the problem of transference in his technical writings, it will be helpful here to frame this engagement through an anticipatory reading of Lacan. This framing will aim not only to unearth the foundation of Lacanian formalization in the Freudian texts, but also to contextualize the reproaches I will later make against the ambivalences that detract from the cogency of Freud’s formulation of his transference idea.

Confronted by the Other’s inconsistency, by its inability to decipher what the Other wants $d(O)$, the subject issues in the transference its demand for identity, for meaning $S\text{D}$ (as opposed to unconscious signification; see below), which the subject experiences as a demand *from the Other* with which it might potentially comply. Our humanity for Lacan is defined by a radical uncertainty about what society expects from us, what role it wants us to play, what identity it expects us to assume. We respond unconsciously to this uncertainty with a demand

for a path to follow, an ideal to uphold. This is the “convergent” side of the graph, the one representing the subject’s wish that the Other hold together in such a way that its desire might be properly interpreted or read. Inevitably, however, the Other has to respond with a failure/refusal (Freud’s *Versagung*) $S(\Theta)$, simply because its inherent inconsistency prevents it from doing otherwise. The social resists all our demands that it provide an unambiguous and just law to which our desire might unconditionally submit. We are never fully satisfied that we have succeeded in conforming to society’s opaque expectations, that we have met the elusive criteria for the Other’s love. The Freudian thematic of castration describes the unconscious event corresponding to the Other’s nonresponse. In Lacanian terms, there is a fundamental and insurmountable disjunction between what the subject in the transference expresses as demand and what the Other in response is capable of signifying.



Convergent and divergent vectorization

Figure 1.1. Graph of desire; translated and adapted from Jacques Lacan, *Le séminaire, livre XVI. D'un autre à l'autre*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller (Paris: Seuil, 2006), 87.

From this results the “divergence” of vectors on the lefthand side of the graph. Here the subject suffers the effect of desire’s separation from what can be gleaned on the level of meaning from the social world. This in turn causes the subject to repress a representation of the trauma that this separation occasions. Because we fail to deal straightforwardly with the ambiguous contingency of the world, the psyche compensates by *constructing* a fragile consistency by excluding a representation that thwarts its establishment. If the world fails to tell me what I’m supposed to do with my life, well that’s fine; I’ll conjure a fantasy that makes up for the absence of meaning. This signification $s(O)$ is excluded from consciousness and comes to define the subject in its status as subject of the unconscious. This is precisely the signification that, by threatening to reemerge into consciousness, becomes the somatic symptom, otherwise known as the irrational, meaningless stuff of enjoyment or *jouissance* that can never be reconciled with our conception of ourselves. Though Lacan, like Freud, came to reject the notion that the symptom, like the transference, can ever be decisively dissolved, the unmasking of the enjoyment that it dissimulates precipitates the cure, opening up to the subject unforeseen possibilities for thought and action. In Freudian terms, this is the “terminable” aspect of analysis, the gateway to love in what I call its second, non- or post-transferential aspect.

Though he was not beyond manufacturing the odd topological representation, Freud, of course, did not display the same propensity for formalization as did Lacan, or at least the kind of logical formalization for which Lacan developed a predilection. Yet Lacan did not pull the algebra for his unconscious subject from out of thin air. For this reason it will prove highly instructive to take a detailed look at Freud’s technical writings on the transference as a means of extracting from them what I will argue is their latent coherence. Though they do indeed betray on occasion signs of his own transferential symptoms, these writings in characteristic fashion furnish the tools required to rescue their author from his own ill-advised rationalizations. My wager is that we can discern through the haze of the ambiguities and contradictions statements which, when properly articulated, rectify the weaknesses of Freud’s theorization of what Lacan with greater rigor would later designate with his concept of the analyst’s desire.

In influential readings of the Dora case history, for example, feminist and other critics have justifiably decried Freud’s need to play in analysis

the role of the proper bourgeois father who succeeds in securing for his daughter-hysterics a respectable sexual future within the confines of conventional heterosexual marriage.⁶ This unfortunate but (in historical context) hardly unusual bias is quite conspicuously on view in the technical writings I will shortly set myself the task of analyzing. The familiar complaint against Freud's shortcomings, though hardly inaccurate, nonetheless fails to tell the whole story, for it is clearly the case that the very availability of this critical reading is made possible by the wider theoretical and case-historical contexts that Freud himself so problematically but ethically lays out in his writing. Rather than dwell on these weaknesses that ensuing social change has made thoroughly patent, my aim in the next section will be to bring some conceptual clarity to Freud's fuzzy distinction between, first, what he calls the state of being in love, a passive aim which he associates with the narcissistic ambitions of the ego and, second, the satisfaction delivered by what he calls normal love, which he defines with reference to the libido's active targeting of what Freud calls reality. I will be especially concerned with exploring the role the transference plays in the transition from the former to the latter.

The Technique of Love

Written in the immediate prewar period between 1911 and 1914, the set of Freud's writings known as the papers on technique offers a wealth of material bearing witness to the underlying ambiguities that have muddled the formulation of the transference concept in psychoanalytic theory ever since their original publication. Indeed, this ambiguity gave birth to Freudianism's American bastard child—ego psychology, that is—the deeply ideological and liberalist tradition that so justifiably drew Lacan's ire in his early teaching. In this section I will explore how the transference informs Freud's evolving technical theory as well as the role this evolution plays in the radicalization of the Freudian project beyond its original liberal and humanist premises. Freud wavers between two incompatible views of the analyst's role in the transference. Should she aim to interpret away the hostile feelings of negative transference with the aim of maximizing her therapeutic powers of suggestion? Or should he rather base his interpretation on the assumption that the transference in all its manifestations is a form of resistance, which makes

of his therapeutic task one of tracing this resistance back to its origins in the unconscious?

The second formulation is the correct one, to be sure. And Lacan makes exactly the right move when he abandons the misleading distinction between positive and negative transferences, together with the dangerous technique of suggestion that it enables. Regardless of its positive or negative content, the transference remains always and necessarily a form of resistance against unconscious desire, no matter whether it is viewed to emerge from the depths of either the analyst's or the patient's psyche. For these reasons Lacan was also correct to dismiss the legitimacy of the neo-Freudian notion of countertransference. The analyst's transference is no different in nature from the patient's; its interference in clinical work can only ever be an error for which the analyst must be held to account.⁷ Despite the evident faults of his development of the concept, however, the core definition of transference as resistance against unconscious desire remains Freud's own. The originality and centrality of Freud's pioneering formulation of the concept are therefore not to be underestimated.

"The Dynamics of Transference" (1912), the second in his series of prewar technical papers, sees Freud explore the roots of resistance, the force that works to protect us from desires that threaten to bring our self-concept to ruin. Freud posits that it is in the nature of the transference to impose select criteria on those persons and social structures with whom and with which we become entangled, criteria that always eventually fail to be met. This is the same dynamic that Lacan would later discuss under the rubric of demand. As Freud puts it, early childhood "influences" set down for us what he calls "preconditions for falling in love."⁸ Coining a typographical metaphor, he asserts that these conditions collectively make up a "stereotype plate" which is "constantly reprinted afresh in the course of a person's life" (100). Early childhood for Freud is first and foremost a time of amorous disappointment: faced with their incompatibility with what Freud calls reality, the incestuous desires of infancy succumb to repression, and representations of these desires' objects go on to form the templates to which all future loves of this variety are obliged to conform.

The "impulses" that give expression to the libido are divided in this way into two separate quantities occupying different regions of psychological space: one portion belongs to the "conscious personality," while the other is relegated to the unconscious (100). The consequence

of this libidinal splitting is that the social interactions of adulthood are cast under the imposing shadow of “anticipatory libidinal ideas” (99): expectations, both conscious and unconscious, as to the dividend in pleasure that interaction with a given party will yield. Freud phrases his formulations conditionally, stating that only those subjects whom reality has failed to satisfy will fall victim to the insistent and irrational powers of love.

Yet Freud’s statement at the very outset of the essay that his goal is “to explain how it is that transference is necessarily brought about during a psychoanalytic treatment” clearly implies that no subject escapes from childhood unscathed by frustrated love (99). This means that everyone suffers in everyday life from the effects of the stringent conditions they unknowingly lay down as prerequisites for engagement with a social world that, as a result, becomes prone to yielding mainly disappointment and frustration. Unconsciously, we abdicate the power to recognize and legitimize our being to certain others—individuals, certainly, but also institutions, brands, associations, identities—which then begin to act as magnets for libidinal investment. Freud’s startling contention here is that infancy’s inevitable emotional frustrations program us in our maturity to seek out particular social agencies blessed with the traits necessary to qualify as worthy alter egos cast off into the space of the Other.

On my reading, the most consequential aspect of Freud’s description of these prerequisites for love is his qualification of the amorous passivity to which they give rise—the state of being in love, as he puts it—as *abnormal*. For Freud, our insistence that the world live up to select standards embedded in the unconscious is unambiguously pathogenetic. This thesis, I want to argue, is integral to the psychoanalytic argument: no effort to normalize love as it is here understood or to redeem it from neurosis is compatible with the Freudian ethos. The demand for love that fuels the fires of transference is a function of our desire not to desire—desire and the desire not to desire are, Lacan says somewhere, the same thing—and therefore steers us away from the “reality” with which we must grapple if we are to become normal: love-free, that is, as Freud understands the term in this context.

Moreover, this desirably normative aspect of Freud’s technical papers is especially crucial for my purposes because it is intimately tied to the social Freud for which I want to argue, the one who deconstructs the binary, so to speak, between the private clinical practice of analysis and

its public outside. Indeed, Freud squarely asserts that love's abnormality holds as firmly outside the analytic chamber as it does inside, where the derivative, surrogate quality of amorous passion helpfully makes itself plain. "If [being in love] seems so lacking in normality [in analysis]," Freud writes in a later technical essay, then "this is sufficiently explained by the fact that being in love in ordinary life is also more similar to abnormal than to normal mental phenomena."⁹ No poststructuralist paranoia about normative regimes of discursive power should persuade us to discard this fundamental psychoanalytic truth. As I will explore in a variety of ways throughout this book, it is precisely this normative element of Freud's theory, its insistence on affirming the possibility of living a life beyond the limitations of neurosis, that signals how we can wrest ourselves, if not once and for all, from our dependence on the dictates of social norms.

In addition to being abnormal, the desire to be loved animating amorous passion is always a regressive function for Freud, since "there is no such state [of being in love] which does not reproduce infantile prototypes" (168). Two fundamental assumptions here inform Freud's understanding of transference love. First, love's demand sinks me into a quagmire of determinism: I can derive the fleeting satisfaction of self-regard that love can deliver only via select others who conform to my "prototype"; further, the agency through which my unconscious continually reissues its requirements can be neither cognized nor escaped. This means that the exercise of will remains in constant tension with the unconscious desire to identify appropriate social others to whom it can be abandoned. But second, precisely because Freud brands it a neurotic abnormality, this insistent determinism, instead of condemning us absolutely to a life of idiotic automatism, becomes rather a *propensity*, a tendency of the libido that may well be universal and ineradicable, but whose effects of determination are not utterly beyond our conscious control. For Freud, simply put, there has to be an alternative, more normal way to love.

Not without reason, decades of poststructuralist hyper-skepticism have programmed us to see only ominously coercive tentacles of power in dichotomies of normality and pathology. This overwhelmingly influential tendency can be traced back at least as far as Georges Canguilhem, whose book *The Normal and the Pathological* had a tremendous impact on the work of Michel Foucault. Yet I must insist that in this instance Freud's commitment to the normal has radically different implications.

The distinction between the normal and the abnormal, between a neurotic and a non-neurotic expression of the libido, is what enables us to think our capacity to moderate the tyranny of the unconscious. Freudian normality, understood as the relative rather than absolute beyond of transference neurosis, allows us to achieve a degree of autonomy with respect to infantile patterns that would otherwise condemn us to the blind, unthinking repetitions that deprive us of our capacity to love genuinely—motivated, that is to say, by something other than unknowing compulsion.

Thus far I have tried to show how a basic understanding of the transference inheres in Freud's technical writings, where it designates the mechanism through which an unconscious demand to be loved is made available to analytic thought in the clinical context. But how exactly does the transference emerge there? Freud argues that in analysis we cannot help but address our "anticipatory libidinal ideas" to the analyst, who gets added to the "series" of investments that form the history of our ego identifications, what Freud calls our "infantile imagos" ("Dynamics" 102). But Freud also makes clear that the analyst's addition to our history of love attachments helps keep the imago series beneath the threshold of consciousness, thereby prolonging a psychological status quo characterized for Freud by the libido's inwardly turned avoidance of reality. As long as the patient's unconscious is able to use the figure of the analyst as a means of propping up its infantile object attachments, in other words, it will succeed in keeping the libido on its introverted course, on the well-worn path of its secret archaic fantasies.

In its more technical usage in Freud's prewar papers, the term *transference* refers to the linguistic material produced through free association—the "transference idea," as Freud more precisely calls it (103)—that allows evidence of repressed desires to escape into consciousness in disguised form when the unconscious finds an opportunity to attach this evidence to the analyst's person. Not coincidentally, this phenomenon tends to occur at the precise moment when the patient's associations threaten to expose him to dangerous "complexive material," in Strachey's awkward rendering. The transference offers a distraction, a line of flight, an alibi: "No," it effectively persuades us, "you don't need to bring in from outside all those traumatically arousing fantasies since it's the analyst who is both the source of your libidinal conundrum and a prospective means of redress." Whenever a trace of one of these fantasies threatens to emerge into consciousness,

an occurrence which Freud tells us happens “on countless occasions in the course of an analysis,” a fragment of its representation amenable to recontextualization in the analytic here-and-how rises up to defend the ego from the more substantial part. By this time, Freud concludes, “the transference-idea has penetrated into consciousness in front of any other possible associations *because* it satisfies the resistance” (103–104).

This background material helps to explain the transference’s paradoxical nature from the point of view of technique. Though Freud assures us that the transference is indeed the “most powerful resistance to the treatment” (101), its manifestation is a signal that the unconscious is on the brink of disclosing itself, indeed that it already has in its peculiarly dissimulated way. If the Lacan of *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis* defines the transference as a closing of the unconscious, then it is a closing that has the merit of revealing where the door can be found. More precisely, Lacan describes the transference as a positive sign that reliably indicates an absence, a presence that signals that something has been closed off. It is “both an obstacle to remembering,” he says, “and a making present of the closure of the unconscious.”¹⁰

Now, Freud’s exposition of his transference idea in the technical papers is especially significant in the context of his work as a whole because it marks a significant shift away from a humanist view of the treatment as a reconstruction of psychical experience through acts of remembering. In these papers Freud begins to move toward a very different antihumanist way of thinking, which rests on the idea that an unbridgeable gap separates the unconscious complex from its possible means of representation in consciousness. This development is made increasingly tangible as Freud’s concern for analytic recollection is supplanted by a stronger emphasis on repetition as the manifestation of memory’s inevitable failure.

In “Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through” (1914), the second of his three “Further Recommendations on the Technique of Psycho-Analysis,” Freud reminds his reader that this technique had already in its short history undergone two important modifications. A brief examination of these will develop my view of the nature and importance of the shift in Freud’s thought. First, what had begun as an attempt to retrieve through hypnosis what the subject experienced at the moment of symptom formation is transformed into a more general project to reconstitute through free association the memorial represen-

tation of childhood from its defensive distortion by the unconscious. While it retains this new technique of free association, the second shift redirects its aim from a concern for memory and chronology to an examination of the mechanism of resistance properly speaking. With this crucial second shift, Freud abandons the hope that past experience can ever be integrally recovered; correctly rearticulated, that is, through narrative reconstruction. Freud's mature view of analytic technique no longer holds that the unconscious repetition indexed by transference mounts an obstacle that prevents a full reconstitution of experience in speech, be this experience construed as "merely" psychical or concretely lived. Though some ambiguity concerning this distinction remains consistent throughout his work, Freud more or less consistently shifts away from the more optimistic view. Indeed, Freud becomes increasingly convinced that the content of what is repeated in the transference provides the clue that indicates precisely to the analyst what the patient cannot remember; or *cognize*, we should rather say, since the true nature of the relation between the stuff of infantile fantasy and actual lived experience can never reliably be plumbed through analysis or indeed any other means.

A precise formulation of the link between transference and repetition is crucial for my purposes because it provides further evidence that for Freud the implications of his theory extend well beyond the confines of the clinic. Later in this chapter I will explore in further detail Freud's ambivalence with respect to these implications. For the time being, however, I wish to establish how integral to Freud's transference theory the reference to this social outside really is. In the "Remembering" essay, Freud defines the transference as a particular species of repetition, one that occurs in the specific context of analysis. "The transference is itself only a piece of repetition," he writes, and "repetition is the transference of the forgotten past not only on to the doctor but also on to all the other aspects of the current situation."¹¹ Freud's statement is curious because in logical terms it contradicts itself: transference cannot at once be a subset of repetition (first clause) and the set that includes it (the second). This point would remain marginal were it not for the fact that the sentence is emblematic of Freud's undisciplined and befuddling management of his key term. Nevertheless, a generous reading suggests that the word is used in the sentence in two different ways. In the first clause, transference specifically refers to the clinical context, whereas in the second it generically designates the shifting of

infantile prototypes onto situations in the patient's life outside analysis.

The point I wish to make here is that Freud links the more general of the two concepts—repetition—to “every other activity and relationship which may occupy [the patient's] life at the time.” In illustration he gives some hypothetical examples: “if, for instance, he falls in love or undertakes a task or starts an enterprise during the treatment” (151). Clearly, whatever boundary might exist for Freud between the cozy confines of the analyst's office and the wilds of the outside world is eminently permeable; the patient's unconscious demand as expressed in the transference does not magically cease upon exiting the session. Though Freud overtly states that the repetition compulsion uncovered by analysis will persist in the patient's daily life, he does not, however, make clear that someone who is not undergoing analysis will also betray the effects of transference's “failure to remember.” One possible skeptical-Foucaultian critique takes shape: there is nothing in Freud's technical papers that refutes the contention that repetition is merely a creation of analysis; that the patient only suffers its effects outside the clinic because the clinic has already, by some insidious black magic, installed it at the heart of the patient's psyche.

At this juncture, the more faithful Freud reader can take advantage of his useful distinction between repetition (generic) and transference (specific) to make a helpful suggestion, central to my claim concerning Freud's transference theory. Though transference in its precise technical sense is indeed a creation of analysis (since a reference to the analyst inheres in its very concept), repetition for its part most certainly is not. In other words, transference is simply *the kind of repetition that takes place in analysis*. Its occurrence there happily renders it more accessible to interpretation than are the generic repetitions that wreak havoc on ordinary life. This clarification of Freud's argument—it is already there, I am saying, as an unformulated, half-acknowledged assumption—is what allows me to assert that no distinction of significance can be drawn between the dynamic that regulates our relation to the analyst in the transference and the one that overdetermines the general orientation of our desire with respect to the social world. The psychological agency of the unconscious pays no heed to the frontier that our cherished liberalism interposes between the scene of analysis and its social or political “outside.”

In Lacanian terms we can say that there can be no legitimate differentiation between a psychological and a social “real,” since the real is precisely the register—structural in its status, neither “subjective”

nor “objective”—that prevents us from drawing the distinction in the first place. The corollary of this is that the concept of the subject in psychoanalysis is neither “individual” nor “collective” in the familiar liberal-political senses of these terms. It is not individual because it is not defined psychologically: linked with notions of selfhood, character, or personality. But neither is it collective, since, resistant to language, it cannot be communicated or shared, cannot become the stuff of an articulated, socially symbolized group identity. For these reasons the psychoanalytic hypothesis of the subject—though we cannot know the subject in its content we know with certainty that there has to be one—flies in the face of, first, empiricist and cognitivist psychologisms, which want to isolate, however relatively, the matter of consciousness from its unconscious and sociosymbolic determinations; and second, sociological reductionisms, which evacuate the social of both its distortion by desire’s real—jouissance—as well as the possibility of the reshaping of the social through the exercise of a nonintentional will: through genuine amorous, scientific, artistic, and political acts, for example, to refer to the four conditions of Badiou’s philosophy.

Resisting the Transference

In the next section I will draw on these last points to argue for the tremendous theoretical significance of a marginal comment that Freud makes about his own early-twentieth-century Viennese social environment. The comment betrays the extent of Freud’s long-recognized investment in his bourgeois class status and helps bring forward, between the lines as it were, the properly political ramifications of the transference idea. It will first be necessary, however, to accomplish the more workaday but still engaging task of exploring the ambivalences of Freud’s technical theory. These ambivalences agglutinate around both the specious distinction between positive and negative transferences and the set of contradictory comments on the role of suggestion in analytic technique.

In “The Dynamics of Transference” (1912), Freud introduces his infelicitous distinction in response to the difficulty he encounters as he tries to explain the transference’s complicity with resistance, the most common clinical manifestation of which is a sudden stoppage in the patient’s associations. Freud describes the transference in this

context as “a relation of affectionate and devoted dependence” on the analyst which has the effect of facilitating the flow of the analysand’s discourse. He points out that it is not at all obvious why such sentiments should fail to inhibit the patient’s sense of shame, since shame, Freud here assumes, tends to emerge automatically alongside the disclosure of censored thoughts. For Freud, this conundrum forces the analyst to separate out “the transference of affectionate feelings from negative ones, and to treat the two sorts of transference to the doctor separately” (“Dynamics” 105).

Freud’s next move in the paper is to subdivide the category of positive transferences according to whether their emotional contents are “admissible to consciousness” or rather “prolongations of [these] feelings into the unconscious” (105). This gesture allows Freud to do two things. First, he can assert categorically that the underlying essence of human affect is erotic. The virtuous appearance of the seemingly unsensual emotions—“sympathy, friendship, trust, and the like” (105)—dissimulates their origin in patently sexual interests. The roots of every laudable feeling on the surface of consciousness, in other words, penetrate deeply into the censored libidinal soil of the unconscious. Second and more importantly, however, Freud can also safeguard the conscious, “unobjectionable” part of positive transference as “the vehicle of success in psychoanalysis” (105), a function that it also had, he claims, in the other techniques for curing neurosis in practice at the time. “We readily admit,” Freud is now able to conclude, “that the results of psychoanalysis rest upon suggestion,” bearing in mind, he adds, that we are to understand this last term in his colleague Sandor Ferenczi’s sense, that is to say as “the influencing of a person by means of the transference phenomena which are possible in his case” (106).

Now, the idea of suggestion that Freud here advances presupposes that it is both possible and desirable for the analyst to know what is best for her patient. Embedded in the very notion of analytic influence, more specifically, is an idea of the end to which such influence is exercised. Freud’s assertion claims for the analyst determinate ethical knowledge, which it is his duty to communicate to the patient during treatment. It also betrays the workings of an analytic ideal, or more precisely an ideal of the analyst, which imbues the analyst with moral authority of the kind that brings to mind such “oriental” figures as the guru or the sage. Through his claim that for the analyst any notion of the patient’s good can only function as a deceptive and clinically