

## **NWRPA Newsletter September 2020**

### **What is Transference**

**Friday 11 September 2020**

**Dr. Mark Fisher**

#### **Summary by Frank Kelley**

It was a pleasure to see everybody again for our inaugural online meeting after a six month absence because of the coronavirus pandemic.

The North West Regional Psychotherapy Association has an unusually long life for a therapists' interest group. This is because at critical times our members had the creativity to see ways of reaching out to a new audience. So thank you to my colleague Paul Melia for organising and being the host of our first Zoom meeting.

Most importantly can I thank Dr. Mark Fisher for conceiving this online study group. This is a series of four discussions on transference which will conclude in December 2020. Each discussion is followed by a networking event. This event is an online version of the informal discussions we had following the end of our monthly seminars. In this first network event there was discussion of transference followed by a wide ranging conversation on how coronavirus has affected our working and personal lives.

Mark's introduction to psychoanalysis took place during the 1970s while a research fellow at Oxford University. Following an individual analysis there was group analysis and then a Lacanian analysis. For many years he worked within the NHS. He now runs a clinical and supervisory practice in Liverpool and online. You can read Mark's notes for the evening on his blog at: <https://simonmfisher.blogspot.com/2020/08/transference-and-love.html>

Mark began with the classic myth of Orpheus and Eurydice. Apollo gave his son Orpheus a lyre and taught him how to play. Nothing could resist Orpheus's beautiful melodies, neither enemies nor beasts. Orpheus fell in love with Eurydice, a woman of beauty and grace.

She was bitten by a snake and died instantly. Therefore, Orpheus sung his grief with his lyre and moved everything, living or not. Both humans and gods learnt about his sorrow and grief. He descended to Hades to see his wife, passing ghosts and souls of people unknown. Hades is a land of shadows rather than a version of hell. He also managed to attract Cerberus, the three-headed dog, with a liking for his music. He came before Hades the god of the Greek underworld who told Orpheus that he could take Eurydice with him but under one condition: she would have to follow him while walking out to the light from the caves of the underworld. He should not look at her before coming out to the light or else he might lose her forever.

Thinking it a simple task for a patient man like himself Orpheus thanked the gods and left to ascend back into the world. Unable to hear Eurydice's footsteps, however, he began fearing the gods had fooled him. Eurydice might have been behind him, but as a shade, having to come back into the light to become a full woman again. Only a few feet away from the exit, Orpheus lost his faith and turns to see Eurydice behind him, but her shade was whisked back among the dead, now trapped with Hades forever.

This myth is a metaphor for love and transference. It contains three aspects of transference.

1. Comedy and farce.
2. Death, separation, narcissism and tragedy.
3. Sleaze and seduction.

Following Freud we can think of transference as an unconscious reliving in the present and in analysis of a significant early relationship. These can be rendered into consciousness as analysis progresses.

It is later that Freud talks of transference in terms of relationships. His early writing gave a wider picture. Mark spoke of transferences in the plural and noted this classic type of transference emerges in therapy less often than we would think. Intriguingly he thought that this classic view of transference could be a therapist's fantasy.

Transferences, plural, are new editions, facsimiles or transcriptions, of impulses and phantasies. For example the analysand's desire for a superhuman analyst comes from a phantasy rather than a reliving of an early relationship.

He offered four questions about transference.

1. Do transferences occur elsewhere than in analysis?
2. Are there multiple transferences?
3. Are transferences fully formed or evanescent?
4. Are transferences ever dangerous?

**Mark then talked about Anna O.** She was the patient of Josef Breuer, who published her case study in his book *Studies on Hysteria*, written in collaboration with Freud. She was an Austrian-Jewish feminist and treated by Breuer for severe cough, paralysis of the extremities on the right side of her body, and disturbances of vision, hearing, and speech, as well as hallucination and loss of consciousness. She was diagnosed with hysteria. Freud implies that her illness was a result of the resentment felt over her father's real and physical illness that later led to his death.<sup>[1]</sup>

Her treatment is regarded as marking the beginning of [psychoanalysis](#). [Free association](#) came into being after Anna decided, with Breuer's input, to end her hypnosis sessions and merely talk to Breuer, saying anything that came into her mind. She later recovered over time and led a productive life.

For Freud Anna O had transference to Breuer which was sexual and for the production of babies and which frightened Breuer. However as Mark is beginning to establish all transferences are not like this classic transference from the foundation of psychoanalysis.

With humour he said that transference is giving something you don't have to someone who does not want it.

**Thank you to Dr. Mark Fisher.** He conveyed a depth, richness and lived experience of psychoanalysis. He brought clarity to a complex topic and a fresh insight into a familiar psychoanalytic concept.