

Book Review

Review of *La Psychanalyse, Otage de ses Organisations?: Du Contre-Transfert au Désir D'Analyste*. By Robert Samacher. Paris, France: MJW, 2018, 299 pages, ISBN: 979-1090590625.

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“It’s none the less around this lack, this initial empty space, that all the splits and misunderstanding in the psychoanalytic movement take place” Solange Faladé, *Autour de la Chose* (Around the question of the Thing) (2012)

This well written research by Robert Samacher has several important functions: It shows how and why so many well-meaning post-Freudians strayed away from Freud and fell for simplification. This turning away from Freud (ego-psychology) explains Lacan’s return to Freud. *La Psychanalyse, Otage de ses Organisations?: Du Contre-Transfert au Désir D'Analyste* is organized as follows: Part 1—The transmission of psychoanalysis in analytic institutions from Freud to today—includes four chapters. Chapter 1 is entitled *The Birth of the Freudian Movement*. Chapter 2 is called *Psychoanalytic organizations and institutions in France after 1945* and it includes a detailed study of the École Freudienne founded by Solange Faladé. Chapter 3 focuses on *Training analysis and the Pass*, and Chapter 4 *Cartels* deals with the problem of identification in institutions, the question of the Plus ONE and Solange Faladé’s place in the wake of Lacan.

Part 2 deals with the historical origins of counter-transference, the end of analysis for Freud and Lacan, and closes with a clear study of Anglo-American analysts. It is divided into three chapters as follows: Chapter 1 deals with transference, the discovery of counter-transference and closes with the quest for the lost object. Freud and Ferenczi are shown to be worlds apart as Ferenczi believed in the object that protects from lack, he thought therapy might somehow repair people by making them complete whereas Freud theorized castration and the acceptance of loss, which means that the object is lost forever. Notably, Ferenczi had a lasting influence on psychoanalysis in North America. Chapter 2 opens with the end of Freud’s analysis and closes with the question of Lacan’s understanding of the end of an analysis. Chapter 3 examines British and American post-Freudians and underlines the fact that Freud was not treated well by those who sought to transform and simplify Freud’s work by, for example, concentrating on defense mechanisms or working on the basis of “ego to ego”, Samacher insists, quite rightly in my experience, on the idea there can be absolutely no symmetry whatsoever in the relationship between the analysand and the analyst. The relationship can only exist on the basis of asymmetry, any other construct may be called advice, counselling, therapy and what have you but not analysis.

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Part 3 opens with Lacan's comments on counter-transference, identification to signifiers, acting-out, and the complex question of interpretation. The key to any understanding of Samacher's position lies in the role of key signifiers and their relationship to the unconscious logic of the analysant. This will be discussed in the final paragraphs below. Part 4 moves from Lucia Tower's work to the question of the analyst's desire.

The recent history of psychoanalysis in France can be understood only if two key factors are considered. The first is WWII: Some Jewish analysts fled to the UK or the USA, others were sent to concentration camps. Research was halted for obvious reasons. This leads Robert Samacher to the idea that "God died at Auschwitz" (p. 26). Even in hell, he argues, the desire to live is still to be found: The movement towards life is presented at several levels. First, we learn that the author's father survived, came back alive from a concentration camp—an extreme illustration of the idea that the desire for life sometimes triumphs over death (p. 22). This brings us to the question of the analyst's desire, why indeed do we wait for patients who are late or "forget" their session or worry about the person who cuts her body with a sharp knife when she feels unloved. Part, not all, of the answer resides within the drive towards life and the casting away of repetition, the point at which patients stop "always crashing the same car". This theme runs parallel to the long-standing controversy regarding counter-transference which is dealt with in more detail below.

The second key factor is Lacan's exclusion from the International Psychoanalytic Association which led to a rift that became a split. The split later led to other rifts and divisions: if one considers the main Lacanian groups in a rough and ready way the land lies as follows—The ALI (Association Lacanienne Internationale), the ECF, run by Lacan's son in law, the Forum of the Freudian field, which is mainly a breakaway group from the ECF, the Ecole Lacanienne headed by Jean Allouch and last but not least the Ecole Freudienne established in 1983 by Solange Faladé. The author, analyst, hospital psychologist and lecturer replaced Dr Faladé (+) as director of l'École Freudienne. His aims in this remarkable study can be listed as follows: It is a history of this analytic group which underlines the theoretical importance of the void which is the centre of the Thing (das Ding). This question, a central part of Solange Faladé's teaching, raises the question of what analysis is and what analytic institutions are and should be. Indeed Robert Samacher "puts his feet in the main dish" as the French say and raises the question of the opposition between the discourse of the Master and the discourse of the Analyst. When we read between the lines we understand that analytic organizations favour the discourse of the Master and in fact work against the discourse of the Analyst! This also means the I of imaginary triumphs over the S of the symbolic, narcissism leads analysts away from what they know.

The book is well written with a natural flow that suggests years of research and clinical work. I will conclude with an overview of the question of counter-transference because this question might help those who cannot read French come to terms with some of the clinical points that my colleagues over here insist on, for example counter-transference exists as something that gets in the way of analysis and should be dealt with through supervision, as opposed to say telling a patient what you think of them. The open-minded nature of this research that allows the author to promote Lucia Tower as a kind of referee in the counter-transference debate. This

because she accepts her feelings about her job, deals with them and keeps her place as analyst realizing that counter-transference gets in the way if it is not seen for what it is!

Samacher concludes as follows:

“As history shows analytic organizations can themselves fade and disappear because of theoretical and practical dissent, narcissistic conflicts, inertia or ethical failings that bring people to prolong institutions so as to keep power and the perks that go with it. To prevent psychoanalysis becoming a hostage taken over by administrative forces it must avoid any quest for ideals: It must not be mesmerized by a fixed block of knowledge and surely it must not believe in a Superman who will solve all problems. Psychoanalysis must consider as a given—and repeat as often as possible—the fact that its very basis is the recognition of an original primordial empty space, a want-to-be situated in the very heart of the subject. The recognition of the lost object is the very condition on which Freud’s discovery can be kept alive. It allows analysts to remain faithful to him in a historical period defined by a tendency to stuff up cracks and lacks, deny frustration, a tendency which in the clinical field leads to “quick-fix” therapy. In the social field this trend manifests itself in barbaric practices, destruction, the death of both o (a) and O (A), this in the name of a political or religious ideal.” (p. 289)

In conclusion, language and psychoanalysis, what is a session? What is the analysant looking for? If the function of analysis is to allow unconscious material to become conscious then we must ask the question “how is this to be done?”. Should we work with the idea that a session works like a parking meter? When so much time has gone by the session “expires”. Many colleagues would argue that this is counter-productive—but why? Because obsessional persons would go round and round the roundabouts of doubt whilst waiting for the bell to toll. Psychotic patients more feel that there is too much of the Other and feel persecuted. Hysterical persons might fill the time with endless complaints about being unloved, hard done by and so on.

Samacher and thousands of colleagues feel that a session is not to be defined by parking meter logic! “What logic should be used?” you say. The answer is the logic of the signifier, the signifier that relates the subject to her or his own unconscious truth. I

will try and conclude with some clinical examples taken from some thirty years of praxis.

An artist of some 50 years of age complains intensely about the success of Others and thus explains what he sees as his own failings. In a dream he sees artists more famous than he is and a CD. I asked who Dee was—one of his first loves was the reply. This shows that in dream work the sound is sometimes more important than the formal nature of the signified. Part of the dream contradicts his conscious idea of life as a valley of failures. The equivocation and its interpretation closes the session, the patient carries the work away with him, it continues between sessions.

Sally is a competent teacher and mother of three children she raised alone. She dreamt of a vast house with people coming and going looking for a room to rent. There arises a question about which of the tenants should clean the house. The analysant is supposed to be in charge of cleaning. She washes the stove plates with the wrong product. The boss is called, he says the job requires CIF—a popular French cleaning product—he adds that the job should be done by those who have the know-how. “Tell me everything about CIF”, I said “Contrat Individuel de Formation” came the answer, this French acronym refers to a system of professional training available to adults who already have some years of work experience, the dream underlines the fact that Sally was able to save her family from ruin by training for another job in difficult circumstances. The equivocation, between cleaning agent and salvation, brings the session towards a natural end. The logic of the signifier is not really compatible with parking meter logic as the reader can see.

Rosemary is now nearly thirty years old, a single mother with a daughter nearly twelve years old. Her parents divorced when she was eight years old, her mother committed suicide ten years later. She has attempted to commit suicide three times and has been hospitalized twice in psychiatric wards. On one occasion I threatened to kidnap her and imprison her because she wished to take her own life. I have chosen some elements from recent sessions so as to illustrate the debate between parking meter logic and the logic of the signifier. Rosemary sees her father, and men in general, as unreliable and unwilling to commit to a relationship. For years her psychotherapy focused on the dead mother and the lively daughter, some months ago she opted for analysis and expressed a wish to consider her relationship with men. She hates free-association and sometimes accuses me of wanting things for her. Despite or because of her anger with the analytic setting she was able to “remember” much forgotten material: When she was five or six years old her father had left a pornographic cassette in the video player—this shocked her because of the noises and the violence of penetration.

She also remembered a feeling of disgust upon seeing her father in his underpants with an erection around the same time. During a holiday abroad with her father she remembered thinking that the cabin crew must think that she was her father’s mistress. This was the natural place to end the session, this was an idea she had been fighting for years. This oedipal fantasy was confirmed by the following daydream: “Sometimes I ask myself if I would sleep with my father to save my daughter”.

The last example concerns a man in his forties who began drinking very heavily after the death of his wife. Sometimes he drank spirits before breakfast, sometimes he

drank from the afternoon onwards. At one point he stated that he'd begun to drink Perrier. "Le Père y est" came the reply. Phonetically Perrier, in French, sounds like 'The Father is ...'

If the cutting edge of psychoanalysis is equivocation, quibble and witz then the logic of the signifier is clearly the compass of those who seek to allow the subject to arise where the id once was.