

Broadcast: Transference

Psychoanalysts often understand transference as the transposition of the patient's impressions from the past onto the immediate clinical scene—a temporal displacement, a paradoxical reliving for the first time. Broadcast media, by contrast, is dissemination, extending across distance, a signal to be received by anyone equipped with the appropriate instrument. The voices, images, gestures, and figures of broadcast media serve as phantasmatic nodes, lightning rods for transference, gathering and intensifying libidinal cathexis, seeking to accrue a critical mass and accelerate into the status of influencer—an implosion of presence into omnipresence. What is broadcast but an invitation to transfer?

Broadcast media makes good on the schizophrenic world of pure cause—the realization of a true Schreberian metaverse where divine rays act upon the nerves of men, and the nerves of men, especially in states of heightened excitement, pull back upon the nerves of God. The broadcast machine does precisely what the psychotic describes of their “influencing machine” —it implants thoughts and images by means of waves and rays, orchestrating our bodies' sensations and arousals from a distance.

It would be easy to conceive of both transference and broadcast media as one-way transmissions, distinctly sender to receiver. If we approach transference as a matrix rather than a vector we see no separable transference and countertransference, no discrete subjectivity, no possibility of total defusion. Viewer and screen are not a relay of meaning but rather a Möbius circuit where the scene generates the viewer's desire the viewer's desire generates the scene. No vantage point exists outside of transference, no single hand pulls the levers or turns the cranks and dials. From cybernetics to quantum physics, we've embraced the idea that to watch is to influence, and to desire is to be inscribed. Many fantasies of origins but no original fantasy.

One wonders, then, if the transference can ever fall under such conditions. Is there only the fascination with spectacle, the stimulation of our nerves, the boomerang of our objects returning to us before we can even long for them? Or is there still a remaining possibility for a wedge, a detour, a zone in which the nonresponse lingers, where something refuses influence?

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