

THE CAPACITY TO RESPOND TO THE OUTSIDE: TRANSITIONAL MULTI-MODE NOTATION IN SECONDARY AND TERTIARY ART EDUCATION

LA CAPACIDAD DE RESPONDER AL EXTERIOR: NOTACIÓN MULTI-MODO
TRANSITORIA EN LA ENSEÑANZA DE ARTE SECUNDARIA Y TERCARIA

Derek Pigrum^a

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Abstract: In this paper the author calls for a recognition of creativity as a response to the outside, to the ‘charge’ of an incipient object that generates what the author terms ‘transitional multi-mode notation’, that itself constitutes an ‘irreducible outside’. Of the three meta -modes of transitional practices (Pigrum, 2009) the primary focus of the present paper is the meta-mode of the sign and where the response to the exteriority of inscription on a material surface is related to what Winnicott (1972) termed ‘potential space, a space where inner and outer reality encounter one another in a passage of provisional states or transitions. The paper argues that Winnicott’s object -relations theory is more applicable to teaching and learning creative capacities than Clarke’s emphasis on the Lacanian void (Clarke, 2016). In addition to Winnicott’s psychoanalytic theory, the capacity to respond to the outside by means of transitional notation is related to Heidegger’s notion of *Entwurf*, Derrida on ‘erasure’ and the distinction Kristeva makes between the symbolic and the semiotic. The author argues that the way we respond to the outside, the conceptual uncertainty of the ‘charge’ of the object, the indeterminacy of transitional notion and its inherent cognitive insecurity, render creative capacities incompatible with the rationality of discourse advocated by Filimowicz and Tzankova (2014) in their implementation of the author’s theory of transitional practices. Teaching

^a Semiotics and Education Forum (United Kingdom).

Correspondencia: University of Bath, Claverton Down, Bath, BA2 7AY, United Kingdom.

E-mail: derekpigrum@gmail.com



and learning the creative capacity of responding to the outside by means of the exteriority set up by transitional notation is one of deictic orientations. The most difficult capacity to acquire in the educational context is Lyotard's notion that desire can only be fulfilled if the 'space of oscillations' between inside and outside is kept open that in transitional notation is furthered by multi-mode sign use on dispensable surfaces of inscription.

Keywords: creativity, transitional multi-mode notation, teaching and learning.

Resumen: En este artículo, el autor pide un reconocimiento de la creatividad como una respuesta al exterior, a la "carga" de un objeto incipiente que genera lo que el autor denomina "notación multimodo de transición", que constituye en sí misma un "exterior irreductible". De los tres meta-modos de prácticas de transición (Pigrum, 2009), el foco principal del presente trabajo es el meta-modo del signo y donde la respuesta a la exterioridad de la inscripción en una superficie material está relacionada con lo que Winnicott (1972) ha llamado espacio potencial, un espacio donde la realidad interna y la externa se encuentran en un pasaje de estados o transiciones provisionales. El artículo argumenta que la teoría de las relaciones de objeto de Winnicott es más aplicable a la enseñanza y al aprendizaje de capacidades creativas que el énfasis de Clarke en el vacío lacaniano (Clarke, 2016). Además de la teoría psicoanalítica de Winnicott, la capacidad de responder al exterior por medio de la notación transitoria está relacionada con la noción de *Entwurf* de Heidegger, Derrida sobre el "borrado" y la distinción que hace Kristeva entre lo simbólico y lo semiótico. El autor sostiene que la forma en que respondemos al exterior, la incertidumbre conceptual de la "carga" del objeto, la indeterminación de la noción transitoria y su inherente inseguridad cognitiva, hacen que las capacidades creativas sean incompatibles con la racionalidad del discurso defendida por Filimowicz y Tzankova (2014) en su aplicación de la teoría del autor sobre prácticas transicionales. Enseñar y aprender la capacidad creativa de responder al exterior por medio de la exterioridad establecida por la notación transitoria es una de las orientaciones deícticas. La capacidad más difícil de adquirir en el contexto educativo es la noción de Lyotard de que el deseo sólo puede cumplirse si se mantiene abierto el "espacio de oscilaciones" entre el interior y el exterior que en la notación transitoria se avanza mediante el uso del signo multimodal en superficies prescindibles de inscripción.

Palabras clave: creatividad, notación multimodo de transición, enseñanza y aprendizaje.



INTRODUCTION

Two hours before sitting down to write this paper, the author visited an exhibition of woodblock prints by the contemporary German artist Anselm Kiefer in the Albertina in Vienna. In the main entrance to the exhibition is an enlarged photograph of Kiefer bent over one of his woodblocks with the finger-nail of his right index finger prizing up a tiny area of the surface, a gesture that perfectly illustrates the theme of this paper, a quote from Elkins (1999), in which he states ‘substances occupy the mind profoundly, tethering moods to thoughts, tangling stray feelings with the movements of the body, *engaging the full capacity of response...*’ (Elkins 1999 p.193, emphasis mine); a ‘capacity of response’ as the power or ability to both receive and take hold but also, as Nietzsche states, the capacity to know ‘how to go ahead, how to move in another way and in another direction’ (in Calasso (2012), p.281). A ‘taking hold’ and knowing how to move that takes the form of transitional multi-mode notation (hereafter referred to as transitional notation).

Kiefer’s response to the object is what Peirce would term a ‘*representamen*’ or ‘something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or *capacity*’ (Peirce in Skagestad, 2004: 244, emphasis is mine), where ‘capacity’ is a response to something that addresses us in a way that creates in the mind of the person ‘an equivalent sign’ in a tentative, provisional and open way. Thus, whatever it is on the surface of the woodblock that Kiefer has found absorbing, is what Peirce would term an ‘*interpretant*’ which is not an interpretation but some ‘material quality the sign (it) possesses which enables it to represent its object in a particular way’ (Skagestad, 2004: 245). Skagestad goes on to state that ‘the potentiality to induce certain states of mind...depends on specific physical characteristics of said external objects’ but is also ‘facilitated or impeded by the *physical features of our notation*’ (ibid: 146 emphasis is mine). The present paper focuses on the ‘meta mode’ of the sign in transitional notation and is the first of three papers based on research subsequent to 2009 intended to address the creative capacities of the meta- modes.

This paper is concerned with the creative capacity of the art student in secondary and tertiary education to respond to the outside through a notation that itself is an exteriority. Notation as a space not overburdened with intentionality and the drive towards closure, or the age-old call to inwardness as the source of creative inspiration, but instead ‘Lyotard’s conception of desire that ‘allows us to generate a space where we can be affected by what the world donates’ (Pigrum, 2012). A space that, in the psychoanalytic object relations theory of Donald W. Winnicott, is termed ‘potential space’ (Winnicott, 1972).



In the recent paper 'Discursivity and Creativity: Implementing Pigrum's Multi-Mode Transitional Practices in Upper Division Creative Production Courses'(2014), Filimowicz and Tzankova discuss the implementation of the author's book: Teaching Creativity: Multi-mode Transitional Practices (Pigrum, 2009) pointing to the foundational psycho-analytic theories of Winnicott, who elaborated the classical theories of the 'transitional object' and its role in creating a 'potential space' that 'forms a bridge between inner subjective space and external reality' (Filimowicz and Tzankova, 2014).

The connection between psychoanalytic theory and education was the theme of a recent paper presented at the PESGB transitional pragmatism seminar at the Institute of Education UCL 'Education in the Void: Taking the Unconscious Seriously', 2016, by Matthew Clarke (York St John University). Clarke's paper concerns 'Lacan's positing of a void at the core of being...undoing any comforting connections between the subject, knowledge and progress' and 'what the consequences of taking the unconscious seriously might be for how we think about education' (Clarke, 2016, abstract). The author has made reference to Lacan's 'void' as follows:

'The Lacanian 'void oscillates between the 'pointing' or showing of *deixis* and the thing...Lacan uses the example of the potter's making of a vessel to indicate the signifier's introduction into the world as emanating from the void, just as the void of the potter's vessel is not the signifier of a particular signified but the 'there is not' of the void, of emptiness that, at the same time, is the 'there is' of the vessel. In the *deixis* of the potters hollowing out, and opening wide of the vessel, lies the unbridgeable void, the abyss of representation, the separation between the thing and the sign' (Pigrum, 2012).

While finding Lacan's theories of great interest, Winnicott's notion of 'transitional objects' and 'potential space' is, in terms of creative capacities, better linked to the '*in potentia*, or 'all the things that wait to exist' (Elkins, 1999:84); a notion inseparable from the capacity of the student to find a way into the work based on a response to the outside, that in turn generates 'transitional notation', that itself involves the capacity to respond to the exteriority of the notation, its surface of inscription, its 'marks, traces and traits' (Elkins, 1995).

In the first section the author provides a brief overview of Winnicott's theory of the 'transitional object' and 'potential space', followed by a section on the 'meta mode' of the sign in 'transitional notation' as related to Figal (2014) on Heidegger's notion of '*Entwurf*', Derrida's sign 'under erasure' (Derrida, 2011) and Kriteva's distinction between the semiotic and the symbolic (in Beardsworth 2004). This section closes with reservations concerning Filimowicz's and Tzankova's notion of creativity as discourse. The final section looks at the acquisition of the capacity to use transitional notation in education from the perspective of 'deictic orientations' (Elam, 1994) and the complex role of de-



sire in creative capacities (Lyotard 2011; Pigrum 2014). The conclusion summarizes the main points and suggests future research directions.

‘TRANSITIONAL OBJECT USE’ AND ‘POTENTIAL SPACE’

In Pigrum 2015 the author describes Donald W. Winnicott’s (1971) development of a notion of ‘transitional object use’ as follows:

Donald W. Winnicott (1971) developed a notion of ‘transitional object use’ as mediating between internal and external reality in our early experience... and the acquisition of the symbolic function. In Winnicott’s view all artistic creativity is closely related to the kind of absorption we experience in play that avoids a static relationship between ideas and things, physical movement and thought, inner and outer, presence and absence. Hence my use of the term ‘transitional’ as applied to notation...’ (Pigrum in Czolbe and Magnus, 2015:104).

Thus, the transitional object generates a ‘potential space’ that opens up a relation between inner and outer reality that, following Winnicott, is the source of all subsequent creativity. In the words of Jelmstedt ‘... the individual, in his spontaneous movements and inclinations, encounters something, or pursues something *in the external world* and both transforms and lets himself be transformed by it’ (Jelmstedt, 2000, emphasis is mine). Thus, what the author terms ‘charged’ or incipient objects ‘flare into being’ in the present moment and our capacity to respond to them in the form of transitional notation, ‘opens the world to possibilities of doing’ (Figal, 2014:21 Translation is mine).

THE META MODE OF THE SIGN

Filimowicz and Tzanova open their introduction to their paper on the implementation of the author’s theory of multi mode transitional practices paper with the following words:

‘Teaching creativity is a challenging task. On numerous occasions, we have heard students majoring in Interactive Arts and Technology complain: “Everybody tells us to be creative, but nobody teaches us how to be creative.” Instructional staff members at the School of Interactive Arts and Technology (SIAT) at Simon Fraser University (SFU) find themselves under increasing pressure to find more ‘practical’ parameters of teaching and encouraging creativity. To date, Derek Pigrum’s *Teaching Creativity: Multi-mode Transitional Practices* (2009) is the most consistent, book-length theorization on the philosophical and practical aspects of teaching creativity.’

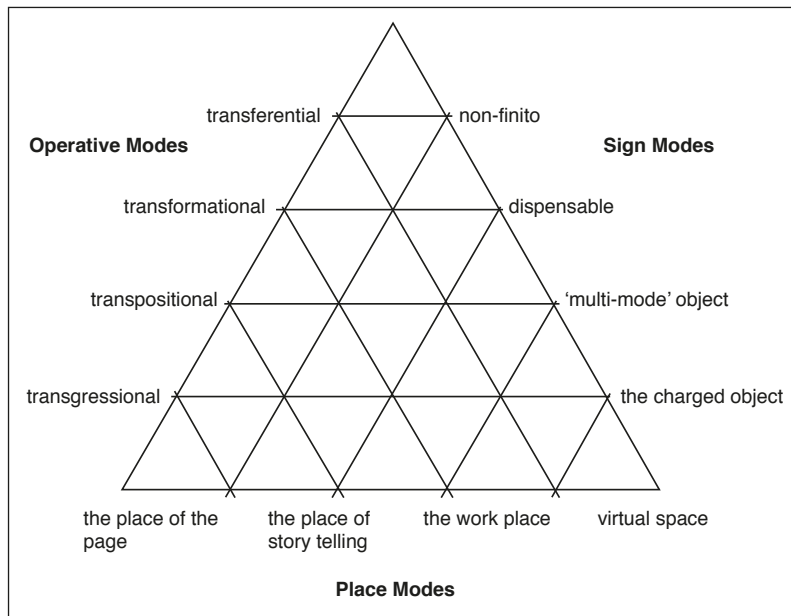


They go on to state that the author's theory 'distinguishes between three foundational 'meta-modes' of teaching and learning practices, which are then subdivided into lower-level patterns of interacting and overlapping practices. The three foundational 'meta-modes' are: (1) Sign modes; (2) Operative modes; and (3) Place modes' (see Pigrum, 2009 and Filimowicz and Tzankova, 2014).

In Pigrum 2009 the author's multi-modes of teaching and learning is represented in the form of figure 1 below.

FIGURE 1

Pigrum's suggested multi-modes of teaching and learning. Adapted from. Pigrum (2009)



As Filimowicz and Tzankova (2014) state, the diagram above represents 'a generalizable field of twelve conceptual themes and practical parameters to explore' where 'it is not difficult to find potential mappings and modifications to assignments that enrich the creative output of students'.

Filimowicz and Tzankova summarize the 'meta mode' of the sign as follows:

'Pigrum identifies four sub-levels of this mode: *non-finito* sign use, "ready-to-hand" dispensable surface of inscription, the "multi-mode" object, and the "charged" object.



The *non-finito* sign use includes practices such as: approaching ideas and definition with an open mind; modification of creative and progressive practices; leaving space for doing, undoing, and redoing; allowing for the inventive power of indeterminacy; and, implementing sketches as a draft of a thought. The “ready-to-hand” dispensable surface of inscription focuses on the pragmatic logistics of learning and advocates for: working on whatever happens to be there; allowing for things displayed by both “us” and “others”; and, a free play of or between absence and presence. The “multi-mode” object focuses on blurred modes of expression that transgress linguistic or visual representations. These may include: shifts between different modes of representation, such as writing, diagramming, and drawing; and, the inclusion of draft-like entities that involve the use of more than one sign mode...’

In Pigrum 2009 the author conceived of transitional notation in terms of at Heidegger’s notion of the ‘ready-to hand’. While this is still a valid perspective the focus subsequent to 2009 has been Heidegger’s notion of *Entwurf*, Derrida on *erasure*, and Kristeva’s distinction between the symbolic and the semiotic have become as well as Lyotard on desire.

According to Figal the word *Entwurf*, of which the equivalent in English would be drafting processes or sketching out that hinges upon an abrogation of hard and fast intention, and on the capacity to react to the graphic mark-making of drawing that Hildebrandt (2014) states is a ‘space of possibilities’ (*Möglichkeitsraum*) where the graphic mark possess an immediate gestural quality that generates the ‘space of possibility’ as ‘thrownness’ that is central to Heidegger’s notion of *Entwurf*. According to Figal the very notion of the throw (*werfen*) combines intention and directedness with an element of the indeterminate and unpredictable. In other words, something thrown does not always arrive where we expect it or intend it to. Figal insists that this does not mean that *Entwurf* is ‘a game of chance’ but what sets processes of *Entwurf* in motion is the possibility of an unforeseen form of closure (Figal, 2014, Translation mine).

Transitional notation is where the sign is provisional, continually subject to what Derrida termed ‘erasure’, where what is deleted remains legible (Derrida, 2011). Spivak, in his translators notes to Derrida talks about ‘graphic notation on tangible material’ where Derrida emphasizes ‘spacing’ as ‘the index of an *irreducible outside...*’, (Spivak: xciv emphasis is mine). The capacity to place the sign ‘outside the self’ involves an activity where both the signifier and the surface of inscription are used like a ‘bricoleurs or tinkers tool’, a ‘positive lever’ (ibid: xcvi), ‘the prising lever of undecidability’ (ibid: xcix). Elsewhere the author has discussed this in terms of the use by expert practitioners of ‘dispensable surfaces of inscription’ that echo Winnicott’s notion of the transitional object as allowing the ‘reactive destruction in the making of reality in order to place the object outside the self ... of finding externality itself depends on the objects capacity



to survive' (Winnicott, 1991: 91). In the context of education the student is encouraged both verbally, and by example, to use 'ready-to-hand' and dispensable surfaces of inscription (see Pigrum, 2011); a capacity that is aligned to Kristeva's notion of the difference and intertwining of the semiotic and the symbolic.

According to Beardsworth, Kristeva's severance of the semiotic and symbolic is designed to provide an adequate connection between them. Following Beardsworth (2004), Kristeva's notion of the symbolic would be 'everything to do with communicative discourse' (Beardsworth, 2004: 25), especially, though not exclusively, language. The semiotic, on the other hand, is non-discursive...embracing the role of tone, gesture and rhythm... and *the innovative capacities of subjects*' (ibid) (emphasis is mine) that enable us to open and effect a passage towards that which 'waits to exist'. In Kristeva's view, modern institutions, including schools, fail 'to provide everyday social and symbolic sites of practices for the adequate connection of the symbolic and the semiotic' (Beardsworth, 2004: 15). It is precisely the capacity to employ transitional notation as a response to the outside that achieves this connection.

According to Kristeva, the semiotic continually transgresses and re-models the signifier in the infinity of process. An infinity of process that the author terms '*Das Gegenwerk*', or the work towards the work that avoids definitive closure (see Pigrum, 2009, and 2015) and driven by that which 'our desire eternally seeks' (Kristeva in Bowie 1991, p.169) and finds in 'a recognition of the things that break in upon us, of something 'coming to the agent from the world outside, and from his own value system insofar as it *links him to the outside*' (Nussbaum, 1986, p.46, emphasis is mine). Nussbaum, states '*we must always be on the lookout for what is there before us in the world*' (and) *make room for the cognitive insecurity*' (ibid, emphasis mine) this involves; an insecurity, 'the trials and risks' that is implicit in transitional notation and that for Whitehead 'every educational process implies' (Stengers, 2011: 4).

This cognitive insecurity is one that repeats the anxiety that Winnicott identifies when the sense of continuity is threatened. An anxiety or insecurity that through the use of the transitional object is turned into a pleasurable activity and 'highly charged activity' that in childhood and in creative activity in later life is sought after, not as the Lacanian 'lost object', but by the participation in childhood of chosen transitional objects and in later life objects that break in upon us, found objects. The word found here is important in terms of creative capacities when we consider that in German *finden* is related to the word *erfinden* or invention. We do not cast around for the 'charged' object but 'find' it. A finding where the 'charge' of the object 'breaches the classification of (an) object falling under a concept' (Bearn, 2013: 201). The capacity to respond to the 'charge' of an object on the outside means that it conceals a hidden 'content' and as such is incompatible with the rationality of discourse.



Lacan concerning discourse states ‘there is something that disappears in the interval, or more exactly does not lend itself to a return, to restoring, the starting point’ (Lacan, 1970: 48-9) but ‘gives primacy to everything at the beginning and at the end and neglects everything in between’ (ibid: 80). The all important space ‘in-between’, the *Zwischenraum*, the middle, is ‘potential space’, a space of play that we inhabit where we are released from the constraints of ordered discourse and can say ‘Yes, to whatever moves thought’, to whatever moves our notation forward in whatever mode; a notation ‘interested in motion not stasis...’ (Bearn, 2013: 59 and Pigrum, 2012). Lyotard calls this ‘oscillating space’, one that allows for an ‘unhampered mobility’ between inner and outer, between the sign modes absence and presence, (see Pigrum 2014 on the fort/da of transitional notation) and between working and ‘the trace of working over’ that Lyotard states ‘fulfills desire’ (Lyotard, 2011: 141). But for notation to be unhampered by the orderings of discourse and its emphasis on beginning and finishing, for it to be no longer ‘intent upon destination’, we must draw out some of the implications of teaching and learning the capacity to respond to the outside with transitional notation of the interwoven notions of *deixis* and desire.

ACQUIRING THE CAPACITY TO USE TRANSITIONAL NOTATION.

How do we as teachers orient our students towards the acquisition of the capacity to respond to the outside? Elam (1980), in his book on the semiotics of theatre and drama, mentions something he calls ‘deictic orientations’ that operate along the axes of the semiotic, pragmatic, rhetorical and semantic. In the author’s reading of Elam, the first of these orientations is the *object deixes*, where there is an orientation towards an external ‘charged object’ that has inspired the student in some way, and which involves the capacity to ‘take hold’ by means of ‘transitional notation’. This capacity is acquired in the orientation of the *person deixis*, where the teacher and student both focus attention on what is being said and drawn in dialogue concerning the ‘charged object’; a dialogue that transmits the student’s capacity to employ transitional notation as a response to the outside and to the use of sign modes at the moment of their inscription. That is to say not as a rehearsal, but possessing the immediacy of processes of *Entwurf*, of the deictic ‘shifters’ of talking and multi-sign use by both teacher and student as a tool that ‘addresses our modes of action, modifying the relation...relative to those who act and to that on which they act’ (Stengers, 2011: 24), on the surface of inscription of transitional notation. Once this has been internalized then the *proximal deictic-* comes into its own where there is an orientation towards, for example previous notebook entries, completed work or current work or activity (see Elam, 1980: 185-186). In other



words where we are not ‘defined by the past’ but able to ‘inherit from it in another way’ (Stengers, 2011: 14).

In addition to these deictic orientations is the capacity to oscillate between what Benjamin termed, ‘*tun und lassen*’ (Benjamin, 1983: 175) that translated means to do and to leave off or desist from doing, to let be, wait, abide with or linger over, postpone or defer such that ‘what comes from inside and what comes from outside is kept suspended’, but at the same time ‘touch each other’ (ibid Translation mine). A former student of the author, in an unpublished paper states, ‘moving away from the task at hand...is an inevitable part of ...existing in the middle where meanings beckon us to follow traces’ (Lee, 2015). Lee goes on, following Britzman, to state, a break ‘away from the work leads to something more that could be done’ a deferral or *lassen* that becomes a durable capacity of mind and action (see Britzman, 1998).

Sometimes this deferral is an abandonment of expectation but, as Lyotard states, this can lead to ‘the detection and capture of meaning (that) reveals itself only in opposition to significations’ (Lyotard, 2011: 383). In the author’s experience, this abandonment often happens when the primary response to the ‘charge’ of the object ‘refuses to be boxed in, or to be repressed by secondary level binding (linguistic and realistic)’ (ibid) by the rationality of discursive thought. To keep this space open is the most difficult capacity for the student to acquire, requiring as it does ‘the strength to want to stare at the deep figure of desire, to accommodate its space of play...’ (ibid: 385) without seeking premature closure. This ‘deep figure of desire’ is what Spivak points to as ‘our *response to the outside* setting ‘in motion a desire that is itself a deconstructive...structure that forever differs from and defers the text of our selves’ (Spivak, 1980, p.ci emphasis mine). This is what Whitehead termed ‘the adventure of change’ that turns us into prospectors in the territory of that which ‘waits to exist’, the territory of ‘potential space’, of the charge of the ‘found’, incipient object, of the encounter between the outside and the inside, the territory of the unexpected.

CONCLUSION

In terms of education, the response to the ‘charge’ of the object on the outside generates transitional notation as a way of taking hold, an area of play between the pointing, or *deixis* of the pictorial mark and the word and desire, between the outside and the inside. While the author is indebted to Filimowicz and Tzankova for their paper on the implementation of the theory of transitional practices, and their findings in terms of improved course performance, in the present paper we have expressed reservations concerning a view of creativity as subject to the rationality of discourse.



To come closer to an understanding of the role of the ‘meta mode’ of the sign, we should conceive of the pyramid in Fig.1 above into a spiral, where the ‘meta mode’ of the sign operates in the same way Bruno Latour describes the relation between temporality and the elements, as operating ‘along a spiral rather than a line’ (Latour, 1993: 75). In terms of the sign the straight lines of the diagram are transformed into loops in the spiral where that operate both upwards and downwards on a multiplicity of circulating levels and possible variations. The meta-mode of the sign expands in all directions, permeates all the modes, revisiting the past, repeating with variations, combining and re-combining, opening and reopening, digressing and deferring. The creative capacities this sign use involves is one of continuous movement but indefinite and indeterminate directions because of the diverse abundance of the outside and the unpredictable way it breaks in upon us but also because of the physical materiality of the surface of notation, of its exteriority and the provisional nature of its inscriptions, continuously open to erasure. The meta-mode of the sign so conceived is not merely transitional but transversal.

Clarke, in the paper mentioned in the introduction states:

‘Specifically, the subject can only come to ‘be’ through imaginary and symbolic identifications with an external other, by means of which it moves from being part of an undifferentiated continuum of experience to a state of differentiation and separation. As a result, the post-symbolic subject finds itself wanting, in the dual sense of lacking and desiring, condemned to perpetually seek after the (purported) lost object...’ (Clarke, 2016).

While the first section of this quote as it reflects Winnicott’s view of object relations a further research direction, of signal importance, would be to compare and contrast the notion of desire Clarke presents above and throughout his paper, and that of Lyotard, that has been briefly touched upon in the present paper, and more pointedly that of Deleuze who departs more profoundly from the conventional view of desire as based on a sense of lack and the perpetual search for the lost object to one that is closer to that presented above.

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