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The Threat of Male to Female Erotic Transference: When Murder is a Possibility

This paper explores multiple factors in the development of male to female erotic transference over time. Vignettes from an ongoing psychoanalysis with a patient, Michael, are presented to illustrate the various dimensions of a male to female erotic transference at different phases of the treatment. Multiple levels of Michael's erotic transference are examined in relation to power, the experience and expression of aggression, and how these may be organized by gender. The pivotal phase of treatment, revolving around a fantasy of murdering the analyst, will be a special focus. The female analyst's countertransference is discussed as potentially fostering or inhibitory in the development of an erotic transference. It is suggested that the maternal containing transference can be unconsciously fostered by both analyst and analysand to defensively avoid expression of the aggressivized erotic transference in its full intensity. The function of several 'thirds' including consultants and the outside professional community is discussed in relation to the insularity of the treatment dyad as a way to contextualize and restabilize the treatment process.

Several dynamic factors may mute or inhibit erotic transference in female analysts with male analysands. These include the difficulty a male patient has in identifying with his female analyst, fear of the patient's aggression (by either analyst or analysand), primitive anxieties stirred by the fantasy of the overwhelming preoedipal mother and/or fear of regressive symbiosis. This paper will also discuss the ways in which power, embedded in the treatment structure, may facilitate or exacerbate subjective feelings of frustration and disempowerment that in turn influence the development of various forms of erotic transference.

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