

Kavaler-Adler, S. (2014). Erotic transference: A journey to passion and symbolization. *MindConsiliums*, 14(1), 19-43.

Erotic Transference: A Journey to Passion and Symbolization

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ABSTRACT

This article offers an understanding of the developmental evolution of psychoanalytic work with the erotic transference. Having for so long been seen as a resistance, rather than as the manifestation of the primal unconscious longings, the erotic transference needs to be understood both in object relations terms as a transitional object relationship, and in object relations terms as a psychic fantasy evolution. This evolution is generated by a multi-dimensional mourning process, which is both intrapsychically and developmentally motivated. This paper offers the theory and related clinical examples that integrate our conceptualization of erotic transference as a journey from protosymbolic enactment to symbolic passion and poetic self-expression. This paper also distinguishes the patient with protosymbolic visceral and behavioral enactments from the neurotic patient with oedipal love symbolization and oedipal level conflicts. Both heterosexual and homosexual aspects of erotic transference are addressed, with the homoerotic in the heterosexual person being given attention as well. Countertransference perceptions and sensation are also seen in the light of the patient's developmental evolution.

Key Words: transitional object, transference, countertransference, mourning, developmental mourning, erotic transference, homosexual, lesbian, heterosexual, protosymbolic, enactment, intrapsychic.

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I have always worked with erotic transference. Such work came to me naturally, perhaps because I always believed, as Freud did, that the erotic transference could be the primary vehicle for having the deepest conflicts in the psyche to emerge. Freud, however, often saw erotic transference as a resistance, whereas I most frequently see it as a transitional object relationship.

Fairbairn (1952) spoke of letting go of the bad object. I speak of letting go of the erotically desired oedipal object through symbolizing desire and tolerating the affects of loss and grief that the inevitable disillusionment of desire demands. Symbolization – which I define as connecting words to affective engagement, particularly with longing and loss – culminates in the capacity for new external object relations. Relationships are external in the sense that they exist beyond the internal world where the cherished objects prevail. The oedipal object then – like the preoedipal object that precedes it – is not simply renounced, but relinquished with a transformational flourish, leading to renewed and evolving object relations engagement with the external world. This process does not simply involve saying good-bye to an incestuous object and hello to a non incestuous object, for such an exchange would not transform initial psychic structure. Rather, it consists of relinquishing internal world ties while transferring affective links from internal objects onto external objects through symbolized psychic fantasies. With the new external objects, true intimacy can be achieved—intimacy at an adult level, colored and enhanced by the richness of childhood oedipal wishes.

Although traditionally the erotic transference has been viewed as a defense against remembering, I believe that from an object relations perspective, the erotic transference provides a transitional object experience for the analysand. As such, it offers an avenue to consciousness for the deepest desires and conflicts of the internal world. In addition, erotic transference helps access memory as long as it is felt and not enacted. The most intense erotic desires always originate from early infant experience, as well as from every level of preoedipal, oedipal, and post oedipal experience. Whether the erotic transference is a defense against, or an avenue to, the unconscious depends on its reaching the symbolic level of felt and then spoken psychic fantasy. This symbolic level is based on affect links that often stem back to primal experience, sometimes to preoedipal abandonment trauma, and in more neurotic cases back to primal loss at later levels of development.

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“When I speak of the protosymbolic expression of erotic transference, I mean sensory and visceral experiences, with powerful pressures for behavioral enactment, but with little representational form in the patient’s internal world... By symbolic expression I refer to vivid verbal descriptions of psychic fantasy constructed from differentiated whole object characters.... The individual’s vivid verbal descriptions gradually separate out from impulsive, visceral, and somatic reactions. Such verbal descriptions become an adequate container for transference longings in treatment sessions, without enactments by phone, concrete gifts, or undefined visceral impulses outside the perimeter of the analytic sessions” (Kavaler-Adler, 2003b, p. 159).

The attitude of the psychoanalyst is extremely important in promoting the clinical and developmental use of the erotic transference, as opposed to becoming mired in the erotic transference as a resistance, which can also promote countertransference resistances. The analyst’s attitude must be an open attitude in which she demonstrates a receptive and welcoming holding environment, where all levels of erotic sensation and erotic desire can be expressed through words. If there is any attitude of resistance on the analyst’s part, the patient will sense it. Then the patient’s yielding to the natural flow of erotic desire will be impinged on. Sometimes, the words that go with erotic transference are filled with the sensation of the libidinal urges in a physical way, which could convert them into hysterical body symptoms or psychosomatic problems, if inhibited rather than encouraged by the analyst’s attitude. Especially with those not so secure at the oedipal level, the urge to express deep erotic urges and desires will be felt much more on a full sensory level, and erotic impulses can be seen as mere eroticization of primal needs for a loving connection.

Erotic transference is best worked with on the couch, where the analyst can have the best attitude for receiving the affective expression of the patient, and for integrating thoughts about their experiences. When early erotic cravings are mixed in with preoedipal hungers, the analyst can use the freedom behind the couch to process intense sensory experiences. Also, on the couch, the patient can express him or herself most freely, diminishing shame, or allowing shame to be spoken about. In some cases, however, erotic transference can be worked with sitting up.

Sometimes the mourning of loss relates back to preoedipal hungers as well as to oedipal desires. After sadomasochistic expressions of eroticism from a disrupted pre-oedipal connection, psychoanalytic treatment can allow for a transformation from eroticized submission or domination into emotional surrender to the mourning of early object loss. This, in turn, allows

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for the creation of new “good-enough object internalization,” and consequently increases the patient’s capacities for mutuality and intimacy.

Clinical Examples

With a neurotic man who I will call Leonard, I listened to him admit that he was trying not to think of me when he was having sex with his wife, because he didn’t want to have to talk about his fantasies with me. He referred to wishes to be loved by me as being associated with his loving, but somewhat seductive mother. He would openly speak about feeling attracted to me, but tried to avoid full consciousness of his fantasies. He openly acknowledged the transference link back to his mother as he spoke of his attraction to me. Leonard also spoke of his experience of closeness to his mother in childhood, which naturally made the loss of his mother, when she died, extremely painful. He spoke of missing his mother every day of his life, and surrendered to the profound depth of his grief in my office. This carried over to intense grief for two siblings who had died, and to grief for losing the connection to his entire family as he married, had children, and grew increasingly successful in his career, which transformed his whole belief system into one in conflict with his family’s views. As he separated from his family through developing his own beliefs and his own achievements in the world, Leonard felt the painful anguish of losing a feeling of intimacy with his family. In treatment with me he would sit and grieve both the literal and metaphoric separation from his family, and he would feel the anguish of those actually lost to him through death. One day, in the middle of all this, Leonard said:

“I’m distracted by your boots.” He smiled. He said he was always trying not to be distracted by my sexuality, and he admitted he was cutting off thoughts about me when having sex with his wife. But he said he couldn’t stop looking at my tall black boots, with their pattern leather design over leather. Leonard then declared that he could see me as a dominatrix, and he could imagine himself kissing my boots and submitting to me, to be in the embrace of my power, to be loved by the “goddess.” Through his willingness to share these fantasies we could finally get to his wish to return to a position with his mother where he would feel safe and powerful through her, rather than having to put himself out in the world and risk sharing his own original beliefs with others. This would keep him safely in the “cult” of his family where he could ward off feelings of loss. The other side of this was his wanting to individuate more, and he was

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presenting at professional conferences for the first time. Through all this, Leonard began to acknowledge that he was blocking a natural process from happening when he cut off his thoughts about me during sex. He said he would now try to be open to those thoughts and risk sharing them with me so that we could understand more about his desires and fears.

This led to Leonard telling me that the sadomasochistic fantasy of submission to me as a dominatrix was actually a cover fantasy defending him against a more basic desire to kiss me and make love to me with great pleasure. He said he had let himself have this fantasy when making love to his wife. However, in being in the room with me and telling it to me, he felt his fear of falling deeply in love with me and of then feeling intense frustration even more than he felt then, because he knew we couldn't really make love. My role as a transitional object can be seen as this statement then led Leonard to loving memories of his mother and her warmth, which opened Leonard to another phase of mourning the loss of his mother, to whom he knew he had been very special. He could then work more with his intense conflict of wanting to be a little boy again with his mother, and wishing to act that out with me.

Leonard knew that his wish to act out being a loved little boy with me was his attempt to deny his mother's death. He knew such wishes were in conflict with wanting to be a fully grown man with me and with his wife. However, being fully a man meant experiencing the frustrations of his wife's lack of warmth. It meant conscious suffering of his wife's frequent emotional unavailability, which contrasted with his more emotionally related mother. With me, his female analyst, Leonard could feel a warm communication, and also appreciate the boundaries that would protect him from being overwhelmed by frustration and from being unfaithful to his wife. As Leonard spoke of his desire for me, he increasingly surrendered to mourning the loss of his mother. He experienced anger as well as sadness in mourning his mother. She had been both seductive and stimulating towards his sexuality, as well as being angry and disapproving towards his developing sexuality.

I felt more affect overall with Leonard and other oedipal level men than I did when I first treated a man I will refer to as Lewis. Even when Lewis was having fantasies of me showing up at his house to become his lover--and even when he spoke of fantasies of us becoming intimate

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lovers who would be familiar with each other's body oddities and idiosyncrasies--I felt his tenderness without feeling the level of love and loss I was now feeling with Leonard.

Homoerotic Transference in the Heterosexual Woman

With the homoerotic desires of the heterosexual woman that are expressed in relation to a female analyst, it is interesting that these can emerge in an analysis as a negative oedipal dynamic prior to the full heterosexual transference emerging with men and father figures in the world outside the treatment room. The later phases of the homoerotic transference also generally emerge during the preoedipal developmental mourning process, in which primal separation from the early mother ensues (see Kavaler-Adler, 2003a) and serves certain transitional stage and transitional object functions.

With June, a heterosexual woman with an important transitional stage period of homoerotic treatment, there was an initial phase of sadomasochistic fantasies related to a demon lover figure that captured the hardness and domination of her actual father. Images of this demon lover father figure were mixed in with June's erotic desires, including desires to be whipped that came out through watching pornography. Following this very contrived fantasizing, June shared her more natural erotic desires, which evolved through a homoerotic transference on the way to heterosexual transferences, often called a negative oedipal period. At first this involved her attraction to me, her female analyst, her wishes to be intensely close to me, and then her wish to be a man making love to me. First June spoke of her attraction to me and to all female bodies through me: "There's something Latin about you. You're really out there with your sexuality. You're not like other therapists who seem so drab and dull. The way you dress is so colorful and you really show your legs!" There is a merger with me in this sexual attraction, a somewhat undifferentiated state of experiencing her sexuality through me. Dream: "I'm not sure if it was you or me, but someone had their dress up over their head." This dream expressed June's wish and fear that sex could get out of control.

June went from revulsion with the female body—stemming back to memories of her father's sexually assaulting comments to her mother when he was drunk—to great attraction for the female body. She began to intensely desire me. For a while June found herself looking at female bodies and found them more attractive than the male body. This would change. She said

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she didn't want to offend me so she didn't tell me that she knew when she looked at female bodies she was thinking of me. June imagined me encouraging her sexuality in the world, in contrast to her mother's and father's repetitive assaults on her sexuality. She pictured me saying, "Get out there and go dancing!"

June said she imagined making love to women in magazines, or possessing women she might see on the street. She knew these were displacements from me, but in her words, she didn't want to "disrespect me." But then June admitted her erotic desires for me directly to me, saying, "The erotic transference may be the best part of analysis. I always resisted it." June and I analyzed a sleepiness she began to feel on the couch in sessions as her wish to make love to me as a woman, and also as her wish to be a man with an erection making love to me.

Even after June moved towards heterosexual fantasies, she still had an intense homoerotic desire to be close to me, with sex merely as a vehicle to the closeness and tenderness. She said, "Wouldn't it be great if we were two gay women? Then we could have a special love together that would be even more special than the love between a man and a woman. I like to fantasize that my love for you could be made even more special if we could be together as two gay women." In the third year of treatment June felt deeply touched by me. She cried and said she experienced such joy that she felt like she had an endless flow of love going through her. I asked if it was sexual, and she said "Oh yes, sexual, very sexual! I feel my whole body open up and tingle when I hear you speak."

The body excitement of June operated at a protosymbolic level until she put it into words following the analyst's question about sexual feelings. A big part of the psychoanalyst's job when working with erotic transference is to bring the protosymbolic body experience to the symbolic level through the transference. It is the "developmental mourning process" that I have written about in all my books and articles that allows this transition to take place. June had undergone progressive cycles of this developmental mourning, so that sensory and visceral experience could be brought to the symbolic level of articulated psychic fantasy, and the affects of sadness, anger, rage, love, and tenderness became differentiated object related experience along the path of "developmental mourning." I showed this in many of my cases, including that of the male patient, Mr. L., in "Mourning and Erotic Transference," (see Kavaler-Adler, 1992).

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Mourning and Erotic Transference in the Male Oedipal Patient

Another male patient who illustrated the interaction of erotic transference and mourning (Kavaler-Adler, 2003a), I call Phillip. Phillip imagined coming to his sessions as dates with me, musing before each session at that time about what underwear to wear, as if I would be seeing it during sex on a date. From the couch he said to me, “If you would just give me what I want I wouldn’t have to get so involved with all these women who drive me crazy.” Phillip’s wish to have a date and sex with me immediately led back to memories of sexual interest in his mother as a little boy. Phillip remembered his eight year old curiosity about his mother’s body as his mother spread her legs while wearing a bathing suit at a swimming pool. This led back to the transference with me, where he imagined seeing my legs spread open, first as a little boy, and then becoming a man who could make love to me as he fantasized approaching me. Phillip, like Leonard, who was also dealing with oedipal level wishes and conflicts, quickly moved from erotic transference desires with me back to memories of their mothers, and vice versa. For these neurotic men, the mother remains the original erotic object, and associations to the erotic transference with me have always led right back to the mother. By contrast, with the man at a preoedipal level I, as the analyst, need to be more primarily a transitional erotic object through which the patient can first develop to a level of mutuality in truly erotic relatedness over a sustained period of time.

Aggression in Erotic Transference

Then there’s the aggression in the erotic transference. Ellen said several times to me: “I want to throw you against the wall and fuck you!” She conjured up images of me being beaten by my husband on a vacation, within her fantasies of me reaching ecstatic sexual orgasms. For Ellen, her anger was often filled with eroticization during the course of the intensity of her homoerotic transference.

Countertransference Work within Erotic Transference Work

Also in the case of Ellen that I will describe more fully later, conscious levels of countertransference became guides in the treatment. For example, I felt, intuitively, the visceral awareness that it was helpful to Ellen when I opened my breathing while she was trying to

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express highly vulnerable feelings while on the couch during the earlier phases of her treatment. This helped me become an adequate psychic container for Ellen when she was in a state of acute vulnerability on the couch, needing to express her deep hunger for me and her desire for me, both mixed up in longings that she attempted to put into words as they pulsed through her heart and emerged as visceral throbbing in her vagina. As I opened my own breathing, Ellen found enough psychic space to contain the body pulsation of her desires as she wished to transform such body desires into words of love and tenderness. Through the expanding of my breathing, Ellen found enough psychic space to articulate her body sensations and visceral level affects as words of yearning, even though in her first dream she had pictured me stabbing her in her vagina with the rejection of unrequited love.

Also in relation to countertransference, I found that I had an effusion of overall body warmth with Ellen in her earlier phases of a preoedipal eroticized transference, which transformed into differentiated clitoral sensations as she psychologically advanced in treatment to a differentiated oedipal stage with the erotic transference proper, through her developmental mourning process. Despite these body sensations, I was interested to find out that I never had homosexual psychic fantasies. My fantasies continued throughout Ellen's analysis to pertain to men--even when stimulated by Ellen's passions. This did not, however, interfere with my engaging with Ellen at whatever level of hunger or desire she evolved to.

Loss in Erotic Transference

Lewis converted his past hurt and rage into love and forgiveness for his internal parents. Then he could find good internal objects in his dreams. In one dream he found warm friends who allow him to relinquish his masochistic attachment to his internal cold mother, that part of his childhood mother who appears like a petrified tree in his dream, someone so walled off that he can never reach her. He was able to both find and let go of his friends. This enabled Lewis to keep his friends within his psyche as symbolic internalizations. In the letting go, Lewis found his phallic power. Then his erotic transference emerged in the internal world through dreams, as well as emerging in the external world through his treatment. Lewis said that at the point when he let his friends go, feeling the contact with them and keeping their warmth within him, he felt his penis "strengthen." From an object relations perspective, this made a lot of sense. Lewis

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demonstrated that as external object relations are internalized and sustained through connecting to the symbolic connections in dreams, phallic and self potency are both enhanced. Lewis related this strengthening of himself within his penis to an overall strengthening of his sense of self, but also particularly to his sexual self (see Kavaler-Adler, 1992).

Lewis's earlier erections were only supported by cold resentments towards women. It occurred after incidents in life with women in which he felt that his penis could only stay hard if he was filled with cold rage, but this body part potency did not enhance his potency as a person. If Lewis had felt affectionate he had felt impotent (see Kavaler-Adler, 1992; Kavaler-Adler, 2006b, p. 110).

This all changed with a progressive mourning process in treatment that allowed Lewis to develop into a man. One memory of a painful separation from a female friend at latency appeared to be both a screen memory of early yearnings towards the pre-oedipal mother, as well as being a poignant object attachment and object loss in its own right. Mr. L. remembered lying in a dug-out hole in the dirt of the wilderness at the time when he lived in Nebraska. He and his friend, Richard, would fantasize together that the remains of a building they found in their private wilderness was the foot of a giant castle. This was their land of enchantment.

Within his analysis Lewis mourned the loss of his childhood friend, and the loss of the kind of quiet contentment that he had so treasured during those few precious moments, those few and precious days. Mourning his friend, who galvanized psychic yearnings for a good preoedipal object, was just the beginning of Lewis's mourning in treatment. It was this mourning, and the need for the analyst which it opened up, that helped Lewis to reveal repressed memories of childhood shame. Lewis mourned for parts of himself, child parts of him that had been injured and left behind. He remembered shame-ridden experiences of paternal castration. One memory of being punished and spanked particularly stood out. There was another memory of his father going into a rage and slapping him across the face. Both memories brought back to him his sense of despair about ever being understood. His father was not interested in hearing what he had to say. All Lewis could do was make peace with his father, by understanding his father's pain and grieving now for both of them. His rage at his father spent, his feelings of

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shame and humiliation beginning to heal with the expression of his inner wounds and the expressions of his shit-flawed self-image, he could now make amends.

Lewis was freed by his capacity to feel the chain of affects, from his anger to the narcissistic hurt within his shame, to the loss within his sense of loneliness as he separated from his internal bad part-object parents. Grief followed anger and hurt. He could then feel his parents' pain with his own pain, without the threat of losing his own separate perspective. He would never get to communicate to them what he had felt, and his grief was partly for that. There would always be a rift between them.

Dreams, as well as memories, revealed Lewis's need to reconnect with good objects within him that had blocked out of awareness by fears of feeling their loss, and by relations with dead and depriving internal objects that had been held on to when his good objects had been repressed.

Lewis allowed good internalizations to form within him by reuniting with warm friends from the past in his dreams. Lewis no longer excluded himself from his friends' sense of warmth and love, as he had in the past by repressing his friends' introjects out of consciousness and defending against warmth. Through this Lewis progressed to psychic integration. He no longer split off from others in order to preserve a regressive attachment to a petrified tree person who would reject him, having always before recreated the "bad object" nature of his mother within his internal world. Formerly, Lewis had run after distant women who were like his mother. After mourning, he was drawn towards a warm, lovely, sexual young woman who he fully engaged with and eventually married. The sadness in letting go of his friends had helped him get past anger to love.

Early in treatment Lewis had strengthened his sense of self by restoring his childhood friend Richard to his consciousness, facing the never before faced grief of saying "good-bye." This made Lewis more capable of containing his feelings. He then opened up to his feelings of shame and of anger, resolving anger towards both his parents. Lewis became more masculine through forgiving his father, which allowed him to sustain an internal loving tie with his father as a male figure in his psyche. Along with resolving anger and the related shame, Lewis' ability to say "good-bye" to his internal college friends allowed him to open psychic space and to thus

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contain erotic feelings. Through mourning the loss in separating from his internal object friends, Lewis opened to an erotic transference that had formerly been latent. The girl he discovered in a bed in a dream became associated with the female analyst.

Specific Differentiated Heterosexual Erotic Transference in Lewis

Up until the time of the mourning process described, Lewis's erotic desires were fixated in sadomasochistic fantasies of being tied down by a woman, and of being made to submit to all kinds of sexually arousing tortures. His fantasies echoed Lewis' passive submission to women in his life and to his female analyst. These fantasies were used for masturbation, which became a ritual of re-enacting an enslaved position that Lewis inhabited in relation to his mother. He could never say "no" to getting his mother her ice cream each night, and later he became passive aggressive and controlled others through masochistic submission in his fantasies.

The mother's use of Lewis for her own sexual arousal was in a dream. His mother got enraged in the dream when someone gave Lewis a blanket to put over his naked body when he was exposed at the dinner table.

We can see the interplay between mourning and resistance in Lewis's erotic transference. Lewis' view of himself as a sexual victim pressed for re-enactment. This could have become a resistance to opening up to contact with me, his analyst, and resistance to his unconscious oedipal erotic desires emerging. However, with significant mourning, Lewis felt he was strong enough to tolerate his sexual passions as they emerged in dreams that symbolized his erotic transference. Lewis began to reveal his fantasies to me, rather than persisting in covert forms of acting out where he would control others by being controlled, as in his sexual fantasies.

Originally, Lewis had to be his mother's slave and try to pleasure her. He couldn't say "no." He would try instead to be stimulated by his enslavement and submission to his mother. In the beginning dreams of analysis, Lewis was a small figure with a tiny penis, who was with huge women. Then, as Lewis mourned, his body grew more proportionate to the woman in his dreams and fantasies, who he began to identify as me within his transference view of me..

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When Lewis's passion opened up, there was a dream of a tidal wave of emotion coming towards both of us from the ocean. Lewis' erotic passion threatened him and me in his transference dream. In the dream he was afraid his ocean of erotic passion for me (in the transference) would overwhelm both of us. "His emotional longings had to be experienced full force, just like his phallic eruptions, in order for the two to come together" (p. 112, Kavaler-Adler, 2006a, Kavaler-Adler 1992).

"As the tidal wave of passion came out into the open, leaving the ocean of the unconscious and coming out into the light of day, Lewis wooed me fiercely" (p. 112, Kavaler-Adler, 2006a, also Kavaler-Adler 1992). He thought of "lines" to say to me. His sense of humor awakened, and he integrated it into his painting. If I would wear a red dress he imagined I wore it especially for him. He found everything I wore exciting!"

Lewis' sexual attraction to me in the transference revealed all the oedipal erotic desires that seem to have been rebuffed during his childhood by his mother. In his dream of a petrified tree we see the symbolic mother who is cold, hard, and immured against receiving warmth and love. This petrified tree can be seen to represent the coldness in his childhood mother, and in all the women he had dated as an adult who had rejected him, at the time prior to mourning in treatment, when he himself had felt cold, blocked, and thus impotent.

Lewis' dreams chartered his erotic transference evolution for Lewis. Formerly his dreams had him in bed with a strange woman, reflecting his earlier transference with me, his female analyst. As Lewis mourns and opens his heart to me as a transitional other (mother), his dreams begin to express love and closeness.

Lewis desired the erotic intimacy he imagined in the transference. "This period brought fantasies of my lying beside him in bed, or of me suddenly appearing at his doorstep and coming inside his home to make love to him. He wanted to feel the pressure of my body, our tenderness, our caressing. He imagined us sharing our secret flaws together, bonding through the sharing of our shame, revealing (from shame to pride) the awkward areas of our bodies evolving in exquisite attunement to each other's entire body surface" (Kavaler-Adler, 1992; 2006a).

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The erotic feelings came up directly in our sessions. Lewis exclaimed that he had felt a full feeling coming up from his “gut and through his penis,” while being with me in a session, on the couch. When I suggested four, rather than three, sessions a week for his analysis, Lewis went into a sexual ecstasy. He interpreted my clinical suggestion as though I was a lover revealing how much I wanted him.

Since I had become so vividly painted as Lewis’ oedipal love, only disillusionment through mourning could bring his transition into finding a true love who could be his own. A critical time of growth arrived during my summer vacation, leading to his last year of treatment, his seventh year. Lewis reported to me that after my departure he had woken up in the mornings with the weight of grief that he had never known before. He felt a heavy sadness and wept. His sadness brought the full impact of his realization that I was never going to come to his home, to his bed. I would never be his.

Surrendering to this truth, Lewis emerged from his cocoon in a radical new way. He felt a newfound sense of determination, a willingness to take risks. He joined a dating service, made a video of himself, and within three dates he had met the woman who would become his bride....As he began to date her and to know her, Lewis’ painting showed his erotic joy, and the mournful coldness of his past brightened. His romantic fantasies were replaced by romantic realities that were better than any fantasies he could have predicted. His courtship with his fiancé was filled with surprises, gifts, and tender concern and caring (see Kavaler-Adler, 1992, and Kavaler-Adler 2006a).

On Valentine’s Day, Lewis cancelled one of his analytic sessions (for which he paid) to take his fiancé to a well-known elegant restaurant. In his words, he was determined to give her the royal treatment. It became clear that I had served as a transitional love object, who could be relinquished as I was internalized within him. When Lewis left treatment, he said, “You will be deep inside of me for the rest of my life!” However, he also said, “you’re no longer the focus of my erotic longings.”

Because Lewis had been able to use his analyst as a transitional object, he could choose a wife who was warm, loving, caring, and related in a way that his former girlfriends had never been. As he mourned childhood friends, let go of negative internal parents, and grieved for the

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parents who had hurt him, he could take in more good internalizations of the analyst. Then, in time, he became able to grieve for the loss of his fantasy wishes towards the analyst. This allowed him to open up to a new relationship with a woman that could truly fulfill his needs as an adult man.

Lesbian Homoerotic Transference

Ellen could only relinquish acting out of the erotic transference in her outside life, with all its self sabotaging devastation, when she surrendered to her repeated cycles of developmental mourning. Through her organic affect experience in mourning, Ellen released old internal object ties and then her analyst became a transitional object, allowing her to gain new psychological internalizations that could be invested in her current outside relationships. I was her muse demon in the transference, but I also was a stable other to whom she could express all her feelings, so that she could finally have someone to express all her levels of love and sexuality to. In expressing her love to me she spoke of “an ocean of longing.” However, the other side of the ocean of longing was the dark, Grand Canyon abyss, or the feared ocean of black swirling fluids emanating from her emotional vortex within the psychic area lacking loving internalizations. In the transference, Ellen could allow consciousness of the agony of all her life’s experiences of unrequited love, but then she feared endless unfulfilled desire. Ellen feared that she would again suffer the agony of intense abandonment, accompanied by terrors of self annihilation. These terrors were all integral components of Ellen’s psychic state in relation to unrequited love, since her unrequited love for her mother stemmed from the earliest stages of development.

Ellen had come into treatment with a script of an anticipated romance based on sexualization of both preoedipal and oedipal levels of her childhood. She knew I had written well known books about women artists and writers, so she put me in the category of being like her mother, who was an artist. This was part of what made her crave me and yearn for me. She came into treatment fearing I would stab her in her vagina, and in her heart. She had never recovered from the emotional stabbing of her mother’s rejection when she was 14, and was reported to be having crushes on women at camp by the camp director. Her mother took her out of camp and froze her out, sitting like a “medusa” mother, in cold stony silence at dinner..

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All Ellen's wishes were captured in her early dreams, as well as her fears. In her first dream, I was a female goddess icon, the unconscious muse demon, who floated down from above in an opera house. I came from high above her and then descended in her bed. I had long flowing hair and wore a colorful silk gown. Significantly, in terms of her own bisexual wishes, I also had an erect penis. I was mother-father-lover combined, as the muse demon figure of preoedipal developmental arrest always is, like Melanie Klein's mother-father psychic fantasy that precedes any experience of a differentiated mother and father. For Melanie Klein, the father is inside the mother in infancy, and thus Ellen's dream emerged with the father's penis in her goddess muse mother's body, who was me, the analyst, in the transference..

In another dream at the beginning of treatment, Ellen unzipped her chest. She handed me her heart with a sense of dread—fearing that her heart will be stabbed by me as she had felt with her mother and with many other women in her adolescent and young adult years who she had fell in love with. She feared being lost in a Grand Canyon of emptiness after giving up all her love and desire to me.

In the first year of treatment, Ellen's language was somewhat contrived, and her fantasies were like elegantly crafted unconscious scripts. Ellen spoke of "spreading my legs" and of "taking my pearl," and she didn't neglect to speak of the wish to "drown in my come" after she penetrates me and gives me an orgasm. The language was explicit. I felt some overall sexual body feeling, which later became more body specific as she reached the oedipal phase. The countertransference in my body showed the difference in the developmental level. In the beginning, Ellen's erotic longings disguised her split off infant longings for nurturance, which she unconsciously displaced onto me through projection in her fantasies. She imagined herself wrapping me in a blanket after sex with me. She spoke of holding me as if she was speaking of holding her own child self. It can be seen here to what degree Ellen's adult erotic desires were overlaid with infant longings for nurturance and mothering, as I, as her love object, came to represent her split off infant self.

I also represented Ellen's latent feminine wishes, and if I as the analyst were not open

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to hearing these explicitly eroticized desires, I would be blocking the unconscious flow of her developmental longings. I would be blocking the emergence of her split off and repressed infant self that needs to grow up and become a receptive feminine self in adult form.

Ellen's erotic transference was also accompanied by dreams of oedipal competitions with my husband or of other triadic relations where she would join me in being penetrated by my husband. Other times she would be an extension of my husband, joining him in penetrating me. She could be versatile and playful in her fantasies, before she had to face the loss of not actually being both genders at once. She spoke of an open skirmish with my husband, while my husband "jealously defended his territory." In other fantasies, she would be an audience in the background while I had sex with my husband, and she would be cheering me on to an orgasm.

Then, in the third year of treatment, I became the phallic woman, as in Ellen's early dream and I would be felt to penetrate her. This is when she was beginning to accept her more receptive and feminine side, after much grief and mourning, as she recalled the narcissistic injuries and rejections of her mother and of other women. In the fourth year, she had fantasies of being penetrated by me and a male persona, so she could experience both her desires for her oedipal mother and oedipal father, and also for experiencing a new gender identification as a woman. Symbolic level associations evolved as she went from sending me long stem roses to telling me her feelings. Her fantasies also went from sadomasochistic scenes with a group of men ravishing her to a mutually interactive sex. Simultaneously in transference fantasies with me in her fifth year, after a vacation, she imagined re-joining me by speaking of my body opening to her "with my vulva opening to her as a radiant, glowing, flower." She was beginning to imagine true surrender rather than dominance and submission. She, through the mourning process, had become a woman, and was no longer secretly an infant in a woman's body.

As Ellen expressed her feelings and fantasies directly to me in the moment, our transitional object relations analytic bond provided a critical avenue of converting the defensive function of erotic transference into the curative function of integrating with an external object relationship. Gradually, over time, Ellen saw how the sharing of her fantasies allowed her to get to the raw body sensations and emotional feelings behind the fantasies. Such sharing helped Ellen come out of a sealed off state in her mind, where her fantasies have been masturbatory,

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often distancing her from being present in her life and with the woman she loves. As she shared her fantasies of me with me, and as she opened her heart and vagina in a concert of object desires, Ellen gained access to an external object relationship with me. Consequently she could become increasingly present with others, and most particularly with her female lover with whom she has a deep and abiding marriage, filled with both friendship and love for seventeen years.

Working with the erotic transference also means working with aggression as well as negative transference. Sometimes the aggression is eroticized as when Ellen would scream in her sessions “I want to throw you against the wall and fuck you!” when she was angry at me. To interpret this I had to “strike when the iron is cold,” not when it is hot (Fred Pine, 1985), because at the moment of intensity Ellen had regressed and was not hearing my words at a symbolic level. Later she could hear about the feeling of disappointment or rejection that was behind her rage, and she could have linking associations back to memories of how hurt and rejected she had felt by her mother and other women.

The best time to interpret with Ellen was when she felt loss, relinquishing with heavy grief the aspired-to loves of her past. At times of grief, tolerating loss, and contacting her potential renewal of love, through the tolerance of loss, Ellen could hear me speak about her motives and her experiences because she was in touch with her internal self and was not defensively stuck in her focus on me as an object of her projections and projective-identification. In Melanie Klein’s terms she was in a more depressive position state of mind, rather than a paranoid schizoid state of mind (Klein, 1940).

As Ellen worked through mourning her memories from the past, she could hear transference interpretations. Then it was time to move from being a container for her deepest psychophysical expressions of love, hunger, and vaginal desire, and to begin to interpret how her feelings towards me extended back to her mother, as they were part of an erotic mother transference. When I first began interpreting this, Ellen did experience it with shock and with a feeling of rejection. She expressed much rage towards me, such as when I told her that her wanting to hug me was a wish for a mother’s hug. Even though she did reveal her more vulnerable child self to me when on the couch, wishing to be in my lap and have me stroke her hair, she responded with shock and rage when I first began to interpret her mother transference.

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She wanted me as a muse and lover, which had to be addressed as a major defense, although it had earlier developmental transference implications. Ellen's aggression could be contained in the treatment. Then her grief could be felt and processed so that she could move on in her life by bringing her more conscious loving self fully into her relationship with her external life lover, her lesbian lover. Her oedipal longings then also emerged towards men as father figures, which was later interpreted.

During the first years of treatment, Ellen had "great difficulty" coping with the highly visceral body experiences that accompanied her report of her sexual fantasies. She would become dizzy or suffocated, choking on highly vulnerable emotions of love and tenderness. Sometimes she had to sit up when lying on the couch, just to breathe, because too much intense emotion was coming up at once.

As Ellen opened to her breathing, I would also breathe in, intuitively sensing that this would allow Ellen potential psychic space to spontaneously say the words of love after experiencing the anguish of her three year old separation trauma. As she could feel and simultaneously express her feelings in words, her somatic discomfort lessened. Then she could have her desires increasingly contained in differentiated words.

Ellen said later, during her fourth and fifth years of analysis, that when she sent me flowers she was regressing to an early psychic place, a child place where words never adequately expressed feelings. Only an image or symbolic gift could.

Ellen had to bring her erotic fantasy level into conjunction with her sensory arousal on the couch when she described her love for me. She enacted the love by sending me long stem roses from a flower shop, and within this enactment was a seduction meant to ward off her feared retaliatory mother's aggression. Her mother had always been offended by her feelings, and had turned cold as Medusa towards her when she found out about Ellen's homosexual leanings during her teen years. As Ellen proceeded through her developmental mourning process in treatment, I was able to interpret the symbolic messages in the earlier enactment of sending me long stem roses from the flower shop. She agreed enthusiastically when I said that she could be both a man in being the agent of courting me with flowers and a woman in her identification with the flowers as representing the feminine vaginal core opening. She totally agreed with my

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interpretation at a time when she had advanced to being aware of her own interpretations and motives, being able to verbally express her one to one intimate desire for me as love object, without the former oedipal transference triangles she had in her sexual fantasies.

Through mourning a lifetime of losses with me as a psychic container for her sitting behind the psychoanalytic couch, Ellen's own psychic fantasies became better containers for her feelings that had formerly been repressed with the pain of unrequited love. In the mourning process, Ellen opened to her primal longings for the first time and offers them to me verbally.

On the couch Ellen would express deep sensory hunger and desire: "I want you so much right now." "I'm feeling this feeling in my vagina, wanting you." It would be very much in the moment, not hidden behind a defensive screen of sexualized fantasies in which the hunger and yearnings would be hidden by her actions as if in a movie script. Now, especially by the third year, she was truly present. As I opened my breath, Ellen risked more vulnerability. Only when she could express these feelings directly could she describe her erotic transference fantasies without splitting them off into compulsive activities and obsessive thinking outside the sessions.

Early on, when she was still in the idealizing erotic transference, with me as her idealized muse mother, Ellen needed me to receive her instinctual cravings and her affect yearnings. I was a Wilfred Bionian psychic container, not yet interpreting, but processing what I felt so I could interpret later. It was important for me to receive these expressions of Ellen's feelings without interpreting at the time. She needed to feel that both her love and her aggression could be accepted by me. In D. W. Winnicott's sense (Winnicott, 1971), she needed to know I survived her impulses and passions, just as Lewis needed to know that I could help him survive his passions as they emerged from his unconscious as an "ocean," similar to Ellen's "ocean of longing."

I contained and survived Ellen's passions, but her negative transference emerged in interaction with her erotic transference because, as her analyst, I had to inevitably disappoint her as I was not responding to her expressions of love as a lover (p. 165). Consequently, she experienced me as rejecting her oedipal wishes, which had in part served as a defense against preoedipal rejection. Such disappointments expressed at tolerable levels in treatment, led Ellen to tolerate loss by tolerating painful grief affect, as she evolved into an overall mourning process.

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Through feeling the pain of loss and traumatic rejection, Ellen could also articulate fantasies that showed the double edged sides of her primal cravings to merge with me and to have erotic desire be the fuel towards this preoedipal merger. This was captured in the fantasy she articulated to me on the couch of wishing to inhabit a special place in my vagina, which she would get to through her phallic penetration of me, still imagining herself, as she had imagined me in her dream, to have a penis. However, the fantasy flipped to the underbelly of unconscious fear as she then imaged a vortex of black swirling fluids inside of me, like the Grand Canyon, that would swallow her up. Ellen's double edged desire and conflicting fear resonated with the same erotic wish versus terror scenario in one of my male patient's fantasies, Phillip. Phillip imagined entering me through sexual penetration of my vagina, seeking then to be in my womb, only to end up in lost in this railway tunnel that becomes a labyrinth of endless avenues to nowhere, one form of vagina dentata fantasy.

Ellen's fantasy desire flipped to the dark side each time I failed to instantly reciprocate her wishes. But her conscious protests could be more clearly understood through the vivid illustration of her unconscious fantasy as it emerged into her consciousness through her free associations on the couch, echoing a beginning treatment dream of being trapped in the waters underneath a swimming pool in her health club.

If I did not express feelings akin to her own, I became the sadistically withholding mother of 'unrequited love.'" But with the container of the holding environment of psychoanalytic treatment, Ellen could feel her rage and disappointment, and could ultimately surrender to the grief of loss that allowed her to be reborn through connecting with her inner self, her internal world, and to others in her interpersonal world.

Mourning helps to create a safe analytic space to contain the erotic transference in treatment. Simultaneously, disappointments in erotic transference wishes also open up cycles of grief and mourning, and cycles of mourning and erotic transference interact interacting (see Kavaler-Adler 2003b). The working through of erotic transference fantasies involves a natural evolution of mourning in which sadomasochistic fantasies transform into mutually interpenetrating dimensions that are truly erotic. With each transference disillusionment, Ellen relived the experience of unrequited love, and mourned the related self and object loss. Consequently, she

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regained, through mourning, parts of herself that had been formerly trapped in old psychic attachments.

During the third year of treatment, Ellen became more whole and thus more able to deal with all kinds of mourning. She ultimately processed bereavement mourning for both her dead parents, which involved her regrets that she couldn't have been there more for them due to her anger. Then forgiveness came. Ellen also had mourned the loss of self in her narcissistic injuries incited by her mother and by other women as well as by her male husband of former years. Ellen mourned her separation losses with each break in the connection with me in treatment, whether due to actual gaps in treatment and vacations or due to her anger that pushed me away. She did all the levels of developmental mourning, as she separated, differentiated and found her way to creating her own unique, somewhat bi-sexual identity. In addition she processed the grief of bereavement.

Ellen processed her oedipal level mourning in relation to me in the transference, and also in relation to a male mentor that she fell in love with for some time, fantasizing that he would marry her. As Ellen mourned, and became someone who knew she was making interpretations, she also viewed my interpretations very differently than in the beginning of treatment when she had been so vulnerable to experiencing interpretations as rejections. She came to poetically describe my interpretations as "gifts of insight," and became a full psychoanalytic companion on the analytic journey.

In the fourth year of treatment, Ellen decided that she has to relinquish the belief that she could really be my lover. She could then do the oedipal level mourning. She said, "I feel sad about giving up the fantasy of being your lover." She relinquished the fantasy, but did not renounce the oedipal object in the way Freud speaks of. She mourned and lessened the reality of this fantasy for herself. The mourning allowed for surrendering and relinquishing, rather than some kind of forced cognitive renunciation or submission to reality.

Ellen relinquished her protosymbolic action of sending me roses. She began to express her flowering feelings for me. She reached a symbolic level through the mourning. Her erotic desires became thoughts with feelings, not actions or delusional beliefs.

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Ellen's words became alive to her with all the nuances of core heart felt affect combined with erotic desire. Words became authentically integrated with feeling level reality, the reality of the true internal self. Both metaphor and symbolism came alive. Ellen's words came into poetic form in the spontaneity of the moment, the moment that can only be felt by the true inner feeling self: The eroticism was no longer sexualization, but rather authentic desire that joins the heart and the mind in words that contain the body sensation so that it does not have to be enacted to be felt. After a separation with me in her fourth year of treatment, 3 times a week, she could greet me upon my return with the following words echoing authentic erotic desire, without any coercive script that she is trying to force me into as in her first years of treatment. Ellen said: "I see myself entering your open vagina with your beautiful vulva and clitoris opening like a flower, glowing, radiant and receptive." See how different this language is than the earlier language of "drowning in my come," and "taking my pearl." The words were now spontaneous, in the moment of feeling, no longer contrived or stereotypic in any way. There were no longer any euphemisms for vulva and clitoris like "pearl."

Now my sexual body was all out there in Ellen's mind, living, evocative, inviting, and no longer in any way confined to a script. This was all part of the movement from the protosymbolic to the symbolic level that began with her feeling compelled to actually send me long stem roses from the florist.

Ellen mourned the disillusionments with her idealized mother. She mourned the self loss that she had repressed when constantly, through her life, she had been confronted with unrequited love. She mourned by feeling her grief related to hostile attacks on me, as she projected her cold internal mother onto me. This resulted in her arriving at the point of true, sublimated, symbolic level interpenetration. She then could accept her separateness, and her ability to re-connect in an authentic way, as mutuality and symbolic communication have emerged beyond sadomasochism, just as in the case of Lewis.

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