



## **Erotic Transferences and Erotic Perversions – 2020-1** *Andrea Celenza, Ph.D.*

It has been said that psychoanalysis is all about sex; except for sex – that's about aggression. This seminar aims to put sexuality back in psychoanalytic theorizing in both early formulations (as in the maternal erotic) and to delineate a place for pure erotic longing, along with the illustration of the variety of forms of homo-erotic and hetero-erotic desires. The framework of felt-experience (embodiment), multiplicity, and contradictory gender theory will be employed to propose ways in which binarial constraints (e.g. feminine and masculine) may be transcended.

This elective also reconceptualizes and restores the term perversion into the clinical lexicon. By viewing perversion as a quality of relating rather than a specific action or behavior, the term is both narrowed and reformulated so that it may be (paradoxically) more broadly applied.

Case illustrations of erotic material will be used as examples of phases in treatment as well as moments of defensive impasse. Clinical material will be examined from both classical and contemporary perspectives in terms of theoretical understanding and technical considerations. Countertransference difficulties, including the handling of erotic countertransferences will be discussed.

### **SYLLABUS**

**Week 1** – The desexualization of psychoanalytic theorizing is not unusual for our time, but rather is a phenomenon that can be observed throughout the history of psychoanalytic theorizing. This discussion will focus on the threatening aspects of sexuality and the ways in which our culture, even within psychoanalysis, shies away from understanding and containing such desires. The oversexualizing extant in our culture is used as a counterpoint to the way in which sexuality is subjectively experienced. The varieties of erotic transferences are reviewed. The importance of understanding and formulating the meanings of erotic transferences and countertransferences at any particular point in the treatment is emphasized as guiding technique.

**Green, A. (1995). Has sexuality anything to do with psychoanalysis? *Int J Psa*, 76, 871-883. [PEP Web Link](#).**

**Optional:**

Bolognini (1994). Transference, Erotised, erotic, loving, affectionate. *Int J Psa*, 75, 73-86. [PEP Web Link](#).

Fonagy, P. (2008). A genuinely developmental theory of sexual enjoyment and its implications for psychoanalytic technique. *JAPA*, 56, 11-36. [PEP Web Link](#).

Kernberg (1994). Love in the analytic setting. *JAPA*, 42, 1137-1157. [PEP Web Link](#).

Celenza, A. (2014). Sadomasochistic relating: What's sex got to do with it? In *Erotic Revelations: Clinical Applications and Perverse Scenarios*, London: Routledge. [Download from the [Reading folder](#) or request from [library@bpsl.org](mailto:library@bpsl.org)].

**Week 2** – The maternal erotic transference is examined as another form of erotic desire. Historical tendencies to de-eroticize the mother is discussed. Interpreting tends to move away from erotic aspects in favor of linear, desexualized forms of transference. Examples will be given to illustrate ways in which erotic factors can be retained. A case illustration is presented, especially with regard to countertransference evocations in understanding the meaning of the repetitious transference.

**Wrye, H.K. & Welles, J.K. (1994). The maternal erotic transference. In The Narration of Desire, Erotic Transferences and Countertransferences, pp. 33-60, Hillsdale, NJ: Analytic Press. [Download from the [Reading folder](#) or request from [library@bpsl.org](mailto:library@bpsl.org)].**

**Optional:**

Salomonsson, B. (2012). Has infantile sexuality anything to do with infants? *Int. J Psa*, 93(3), 631-647. [PEP Web Link](#).

Bach, S. (1994). Being heard: Attunement and the growth of psychic structure. In Bach, S. (1994). *The Language of Perversion and the Language of Love*. New York: Jason Aronson, pp. 139-162. [Download from the [Reading folder](#) or request from [library@bpsl.org](mailto:library@bpsl.org)].

**Week 3** – Interventions that retain the erotic level of experience have been difficult to find and enact both in the literature and in clinical practice. Power issues (especially with regard to the mutuality/asymmetry dialectic within the treatment dyad) is regarded as particularly evocative for certain patients. As always, countertransference experience can be key to uncovering and fostering the emergence of more intense forms of erotic desire and their meanings.

**Wrye, H.K. & Welles, J.K. (1994). Erotic terror in men. In The Narration of Desire: Erotic Transferences and Countertransferences, pp. 157-172, Hillsdale, NJ: Analytic Press. [Download from the [Reading folder](#) or request from [library@bpsl.org](mailto:library@bpsl.org)].**

**Optional:**

Britton, R. (2004). Subjectivity, objectivity, and triangular space. *Int J Psa*, 87, 1549-1567. [PEP Web Link](#).

Britton, R. (1989). The missing link: Parental sexuality in the Oedipus complex. In R. Britton, M. Feldman & E. O'Shaughnessy, *The Oedipus Complex Today: Clinical Implications*. London: Karnac, pp. 83-102. [PEP Web Link](#).

Stoller, R.J. (1975). Hostility and mystery in perversion. In Stoller, R.J. (1975). *Perversion: The Erotic Form of Hatred*. New York: Karnac, pp. 92-113. [Download from the [Reading folder](#) or request from [library@bpsl.org](mailto:library@bpsl.org)].

**Week 4** - Female sexual desire has often been downplayed or outright ignored in the psychoanalytic (and sociocultural) literature. Women have not been recognized as possessing agency or subjective erotic desire. Clinical cases will be discussed through the lens of female erotic desire to correct this misapprehension.

**Atlas, G. (2016). *Ella: The enigma of desire*. In *The Enigma of Desire: From Boundary Violation to Therapeutic Action*, pp. 15-31, London: Routledge.** [Download from the [Reading folder](#) or request from [library@bpsl.org](mailto:library@bpsl.org)].

**Optional:**

Chasseguet-Smirgel, J. (1970). *Female Sexuality: New Psychoanalytic Views*. London: Karnac. [2 copies are available in the [library](#) and can be mailed upon request]

**Week 5** - Achieving comfort with erotic language is key to being able to help our patients symbolize, process, metabolize and tolerate the affective experienced associated with their sexuality. Examples of verbatim process will be used to illustrate the level of comfort necessary for this work. Issues related to disclosure of erotic countertransference will be discussed.

**Bolognini, S. (1994). Transference, Erotized, erotic, loving, affectionate. *Int J Psa*, 75, 73-86.**

**Optional:**

Celenza, A. (2014). Erotic countertransference revelations. In *Erotic Revelations: Clinical Applications and Perverse Scenarios*. London: Routledge. [Download from the [Reading folder](#) or request from [library@bpsl.org](mailto:library@bpsl.org)].

Davies, J. (1994). Love in the afternoon: A relational reconsideration of desire and dread in the countertransference. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 4, 153-170. [PEP Web Link](#).

**Week 6** - The concept of perversion is reformulated by viewing perverse scenarios as a quality of relatedness rather than referring to particular behaviors. The analyst's 'neutral' stance is viewed as valuable in so far as s/he does not prescribe or prohibit behaviors but rather explores meanings underlying certain forms of relatedness. The concept of perversion will be reviewed both historically and in contemporary practice.

**Parsons, M. (2000). Sexuality and perversion a hundred years on: Discovering what Freud discovered. *Int J Psa*, 81, 37-49. [PEP Web Link](#).**

**Optional:**

Wrye, H.K. & Welles, J.K. (1994). Perverse narratives. In *The Narration of Desire, Erotic Transferences and Countertransferences*, pp. 105-136, Hillsdale, NJ: Analytic Press. [Download from the [Reading folder](#) or request from [library@bpsj.org](mailto:library@bpsj.org)].

Chassagueut-Smirgel, J. (1983). Perversion and the universal law. *Int Rev Psa*, 10, 293-301. [PEP Web Link](#).

**Week 7 -** Gender binaries are viewed as underlying many perverse narratives where patients can disclaim one side of the binary (versus the other) and entrap themselves in constricting modes of relating. Transcending binaries will be discussed as a method to liberating our patients from such illusory constraints.

**Layton, L. (2020). Enacting Identity: Normative Unconscious Processes in Clinic and Culture. Presentation at the Institute for Clinical Social Work, Chicago, IL, June 26, 2020.** [Download from the [Reading folder](#) or request from [library@bpsj.org](mailto:library@bpsj.org)].

**Optional:**

Celenza, A. (2014). Transcending binaries. In *Erotic Revelations: Clinical Applications and Perverse Scenarios*. London: Routledge. [Download from the [Reading folder](#) or request from [library@bpsj.org](mailto:library@bpsj.org)].

Celenza, A. (2000). Sadomasochistic relating: What's sex got to do with it? *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 69, 3, 527-543. [PEP Web Link](#).

Novick, J. & Novick, K.K. (1996). The essence of masochism. In Novick and Novick, *Fearful Symmetry, The Development and Treatment of Sadomasochism*, pp. 14-47, New York: Jason Aronson. [Download from the [Reading folder](#) or request from [library@bpsj.org](mailto:library@bpsj.org)].

Kaplan, L. (1997). *Female perversions: The temptations of Emma Bovary*. [FILM] [Amazon Prime Link](#).

Tylim, I. (1999). Female perversions, or the woman who mistook her power for her lipstick. *Psa Rev*, 86, 465-469. [PEP Web Link](#).

**Week 8 -** Positions of subjectivity will be reviewed and depicted in a graphic that serves to illustrate the range of healthy functioning. In contrast, positions of perverse subjectivity will be compared, demonstrating the limitation of perverse functioning and highlighting modes of relating that may guide technique.

**Bollas, C. (1982). On the relation to the self as an object. *Int J Psa*, 63, 347-359.** [PEP Web Link](#).

**Optional:**

Ogden, T. (1994). Winnicott's intersubjective subject. In *Subjects of Analysis*. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson. [Download from the [Reading folder](#) or request from [library@bpsj.org](mailto:library@bpsj.org)].

Celenza, A. (2014). Positions of subjectivity. In *Erotic Revelations: Clinical Applications and Perverse Scenarios*. London: Routledge. [Download from the [Reading folder](#) or request from [library@bpsj.org](mailto:library@bpsj.org)].

Grotstein, J. (2000). Preface: Who is the unconscious? In *Who is the Dreamer Who Dreams the Dream? A Study of Psychic Presences*. Hillsdale, New Jersey: Analytic Press.  
[Download from the [Reading folder](#) or request from [library@bpsj.org](mailto:library@bpsj.org)].