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A Classic Revisited

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COUNTERTRANSFERENCE AND PSYCHOANALYTIC TECHNIQUE: A RESPONSE

SANDER M. ABEND

The designation of my 1989 paper on Countertransference as a "Neglected Classic" by *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly* certainly took me by surprise. I am now retired from clinical practice, although not from the psychoanalytic literature, or from frequent discussions with colleagues. That said, it has been at least a couple of decades since I last looked at that particular essay myself. I chose to read the various commentaries before daring to re-read it, and I was thus somewhat apprehensive that I might find it disappointingly dated. With a certain degree of relief, I must say that that turned out not to be the case.

I will not respond specifically to each of the writers who addressed my paper, especially since they all, to some extent, pursued issues connected to the overall theme in somewhat individual and rather different ways. I do, however, appreciate that some of them explicitly chose to credit me for having focused some attention on the then burgeoning alterations in the Zeitgeist of our field. I shall have a bit more to say about that issue later on, but first a word or two on the topic of countertransference, to which the paper was originally directed.

As I recall, my writing of it was stimulated by a personal conversation with Dr. Slakter, who hoped I would enthusiastically endorse his recent work on recounting and applauding the broadening interpretation of the meaning of the term countertransference. I was not prepared to do so, although I did acknowledge the by then evident popular success of that assessment of the situation. I had not been an active participant in the lengthy debates between so-called "mainstream" Freudian thinkers who objected to the change in the definition of countertransference, and those analysts who presented and endorsed the expansion of the

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