
In the Shadow of Baba Karam”: A Rorschach Test Analysis of the Psychological Processes and Identifications of a Transgender Man and His Mother

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Résumé

This study explores the Rorschach test findings of a transgender man living in Iran who has applied for hospital-based gender transition treatment, and his mother. Although psychoanalytic investigations of trans identities through projective tests are underrepresented in the literature, such assessments hold significant potential to provide deep insights into identity formation and unconscious conflicts (see Gherovici, 2010; Gozlan, 2015). While psychoanalytic studies with trans populations have predominantly focused on early mother-child relational dynamics, there is growing recognition of the importance of including families in the clinical process of gender transition.

In this context, the preliminary interviews and Rorschach findings of E., a 23-year-old transgender man assigned female at birth and diagnosed with gender dysphoria, and his 56-year-old mother, V., are examined through the lenses of identity development, early object relations, and both feminine and masculine identifications. Psychoanalytic theory emphasizes the role of maternal identifications in the construction of femininity. Gaining insight into the unconscious processes of a young adult attempting to reject femininity becomes clinically relevant. Equally compelling is how the mother-as a transmitter of femininity-constructs and relates to her own feminine identifications.

E. has expressed a male gender identity since childhood. According to interviews with his mother, these expressions led to recurring conflicts and power struggles between them. The figure of "Baba Karam," which came to the mother's mind when reflecting on this period, became a central identification figure in E.'s life. "Baba Karam," a significant symbol in Iranian culture, refers to a traditional dance performed at weddings and festive gatherings, in which a male character is portrayed using feminine gestures and expressions. The dance embodies a simultaneous representation of masculinity and femininity on the same stage, making it a powerful symbolic figure within E.'s inner world. The narratives of mother and child appear to reflect and complete one another.

This study aims to integrate the consciously articulated narratives from preliminary interviews with unconscious material revealed through the Rorschach test. The interviews will be analyzed using discourse analysis, while the test protocols will be evaluated through content analysis aligned with the French School of Rorschach interpretation.

Keywords : Transgender Identity, Rorschach Test, Feminine Identifications, Object Relation

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