



Violent Attachments

Reid J. Meloy

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In this investigation, Dr Meloy begins with a question: why does most human violence occur between those who are emotionally involved or, more technically, within an attachment paradigm? He finds answers by applying attachment theory in the tradition of Bowlby and Ainsworth, and object relations theory in the tradition of Klein, Jacobson, Mahler and Kernberg, to case studies of bizarre and unusual homicides. These idiographic portraits illustrate erotomanic delusional disorder, chronic catathymia, the psychopath as love object and assassination as a form of pathological attachment. He elucidates the ways in which certain psychodynamics that inexorably move toward murder can only exist within a fixated or regressed pre-Oedipal personality structure. Such individuals are organised at a borderline or psychotic level, and most often utilise defences of projection, projective identification and omnipotent control. This book is written for psychotherapists, psychologists, psychoanalysts, psychiatrists and social workers in clinical or forensic practice. Biological foci include concepts about the deep limbic structures of the brain and the biochemistry that inhibits or disinhibits such violence. Psychological patterns include both psychoanalytic constructs and the specific psychological test data from the case studies that support such constructs. Social factors include the behaviour of the victim and, in the case of assassination, the political acts that contribute to predatory violence. The book emphasises the crucial need for mental health professionals to go beyond descriptive diagnoses and find the motivation and meaning of such acts. The professional's causal and purposive formulations about such violent attachments leads to more effective evaluation, treatment and intervention and, perhaps, testimony in subsequent criminal and civil litigation.

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