

Reading psychoanalysis in the diaspora: South African psychoanalytic psychotherapists' struggles with voice.

Sally Swartz

Abstract

This paper draws on a wide range of experience of being part of the South African psychoanalytic community. It uses this to discuss access to voice, defined as the ability to sustain a speaking/writing self that relates in an authentic way both to theory and experience. Struggles with voice seem to have affected groups across South Africa in different ways. The paper will suggest that being on the psychoanalytic periphery has encouraged an idealization of – and sometimes rebellion against - the centre, with complicating effects on our independence of thought. This dynamic, amplified by the effects of working intensively with theories that deal with unconscious phenomena seems to have encouraged local groups to repeat, rather than move beyond, some traumatic aspects of the history of the psychoanalytic movement. Practical problems in relation to confidentiality, boundaries and intimacy are raised. The paper will end with some suggestions about ways forward.