

The prosthetic third in violent, psychotic, male patients

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Abstract

The paper introduces the 'prosthetic third', a complex clinical phenomenon evident in work with psychotic, violent patients. The prosthetic third describes the semiotic object, a self-contained pocket of meaning manifest as a story, song or game which is used by the patient as an artificial ego. The semiotic object is also used to deny, control and ameliorate intolerable aspects of reality, the most clinically salient being the reality of the thinking-other in the therapeutic encounter. The paper provides clinical examples of the prosthetic third and concludes with some thoughts on the relationship between the prosthetic third and violence.