

‘Hold my hand, I’m dying’: Identification in attachment and melancholia

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Abstract

This paper explores a young mother’s experience of the loss of her infant as it unfolded in a parent-infant psychotherapy. Her experiences are understood within a psychoanalytic attachment theory framework. The paper considers the intergenerational transmission of early relational trauma, with a particular focus on the concept of identification with a lost object within Freudian melancholia and a mother’s identification with her infant in the state of what Winnicott calls primary maternal preoccupation. Post-Kleinian conceptualisations of projective identification and the role it may play in complicated mourning is also elaborated.