

Sharpening the senses: White men and otherness in the time of Corona

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Abstract

A story is presented from within psychoanalytic practice to illuminate and provoke a set of troubled, dislocated, and haunted, white, male subjectivities, in postapartheid South Africa, during the COVID-19 pandemic. It seeks to contribute to the psychosocial in how we conceive psychoanalytic practice, and in particular, how we experience and envision (counter)transference. It talks to intersubjectivity, identification and dislocation, looking to locate and situate otherness and processes of othering, both in the narrative recounted and its effects. This paper is an enacted performance, explored through interdisciplinary sources, with a reflexive, intersectional perspective on race, gender, and history, sensitive to how subjectivities are constituted within the postcolonial. While it is concerned with discourse, it also seeks a language that articulates the 'intelligence of the flesh', in order to convey how sense, emotion/affect, moods and atmosphere are implicated in less conscious transmissions between bodies. It speaks to the play of desire and is further an engagement with the disruptive and creative potential of the uncanny, to haunting more generally, and to the related psychoanalytic formulations of *Nachträglichkeit* and *après coup*.