

Through the mother's eyes: A crochet of thoughts on the maternal and paternal

Yvette Esprey

University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa

Abstract

In this paper I engage with some of the ideas presented by Burkhalter in his article \pm Playing with the father in memory and desire: Exilic thirdness in transitional space \pm in which he journeys with the reader into the intricacies of his particular relational response to, and understanding of, the concept of paternal function. Responding to his invitation to readers to adopt a subjective stance in relation to his writing, I have gathered a mix of associations and thoughts as they emerged in my reading of this highly complex and layered offering, focussing on three themes which are especially salient for me. I engage initially with the meaning of paternal function from my perspective, both as a mother and clinician. Through this enquiry I contemplate the relative absence of the mother's subjectivity in the historical mainstream psychoanalytic canon, and I consider the increasing visibility afforded maternal subjectivity when mothering is regarded through the lens of recognition theory, as posited by contemporary relational theorists.