

THE BOSTON PSYCHOANALYTIC SOCIETY AND INSTITUTE
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Soma as Canvas: A Psychoanalytic View of Uses and Misuses of the Body

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This elective will explore the nature of the body ego. We will explore the psychic and somatic underpinnings of ego development as it affects body boundaries and body integrity. We will discuss the uses and misuses of the body to express inchoate psychic states and behaviors such as body modification and eating disorders. We will consider the concrete somatic representations of such themes as taking in, keeping out, power, weakness, clinging to childhood, and identification with illness or death. We will look at the challenges facing the analyst in engaging analytically while simultaneously addressing issues that may, at the extreme, interfere with functioning. In discussing case material, we will focus on transference and countertransference phenomena. Participant vignettes will be welcome.

Week One:

We will identify the nature of the body ego. We will discuss how a sense of containment is achieved in normal attachment, giving the young child a sense of safety and facilitating the development of body boundaries and body integrity. The sense of safety is disrupted in disorganized attachment and traumatized states, leaving the child to construct a "second skin" in self-defense.

Freud, Sigmund (1923): "The Ego and the Id" *SE*, V XIX, pages 19-27. [PEP Web Link](#)

Bick, Esther (1968) "The Experience of the Skin in Early Object-Relations ", *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 49: 484-486. [PEP Web Link](#)

Bick, Esther, (1986) "Further Considerations on the Function of the Skin in Early Object Relations: Findings from Infant Observation Integrated into Child and Adult Analysis", *British Journal of Psychotherapy*, 2: pages 292-299. [PEP Web Link](#)

Klein, Melanie (1952) "The Mutual Influences in the Development of Ego and Id- Discussants" *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, 7: 51-53. [PEP Web Link](#)

Additional Reading:

Coates, Susan W.(2016) "Can Babies remember Trauma? Symbolic Forms of Representation in Traumatized Infants", *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 64: #4:751-776. [Available in [Library](#)]

Fonagy, Peter and Target, Mary (2007) "The Rooting of the Mind in the Body: New Links between Attachment Theory and Psychoanalytic Thought", *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 55: pages 422-455. [PEP Web Link](#)

Saporta, Jose (2003) Synthesizing Psychoanalytic and Biological Approaches to Trauma: Some Theoretical Proposals, *Neuro-Psychoanalysis*, 5 (1). [PEP Web Link](#)

Learning Objective: Participants will be able to describe “primary skin container” and “second skin formation.”

Week Two:

We will identify how transient ego states become more permanent traits: somatic representations of taking in, keeping out, agency and identification with illness or death. We will discuss the use of the body as a vehicle of expression for inchoate psychic states.

Anzieu, Didier (1989) The Notion of The Skin Ego," Chapter three in *The Skin Ego*, Yale University Press. [Available in [Library](#)]

Mitrani, Judith, L(1995) "Toward an Understanding of Unmentalized Experience", *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 64: pages 68-112. [PEP Web Link](#)

Additional Reading: Bromberg, Philip M., (2012) "Credo", *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 22: 273-278. [PEP Web Link](#)

Learning Objective: Participants will be able to identify one example of an unmentalized experience that is represented in the body.

Week Three:

We will discuss Body Dysmorphic Disorder: in which shame leads to hatred of and misapprehension of one's body appearance.

Lemma, Alessandra (2010) "Being Seen or Being Watched", Chapter 4 in *Under the Skin, A Psychoanalytic Study of Body Modification*, New York: Routledge Press. [Available in [Library](#)]

Parker, Rozsika (2003) "Body Hatred", *The British journal of Psychotherapy*, 19, pages 447-464. [PEP Web Link](#)

Additional Reading: Mitrani, Judith, (2011) “Trying to enter the Long Black Branches: Some Technical Extensions of the work of Frances Tustin for the Analysis of Autistic States in Adults" *International journal of Psychoanalysis*, 92, pages 21-42. [PEP Web Link](#)

Learning Objective: Participants will be able to describe one example in which a person might feel shame about their body.

Week Four:

We will discuss issues of taking in and keeping out, body Image concerns, dissociation, and how shame is expressed in Eating Disorders such as Bulimia and Binge Eating:

Kullman, Alitta (2007) "The Perseverant Personality: A Preattachment Perspective on the Etiology and Evolution of Binge/Purge Eating Disorders", *Psychoanalysis and Contemporary Thought*, 17: pages 705-732. [PEP Web Link](#)

Reilly, Elizabeth A. (2004) "Skin Deep: Psychic Skin, Second-Skin Formation and its Links with Eating Disorders", *Free Associations*, 11: pages 134-174. [PEP Web Link](#)

Additional Reading: Bromberg, Philip (2001) "Treating Patients with Symptoms and Symptoms with Patience: Reflections on Shame, Dissociation and Eating Disorders" *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 11: 891-912. [PEP Web Link](#)

Rizzuto, Ana Maria (1988) "Transference, Language, and Affect in the Treatment of Bulimarexia" *The International journal of Psychoanalysis*, 69:369-387. [PEP Web Link](#)

Learning Objective: Participants will be able to define an example of how shame and dissociation can lead to Binge Eating and Bulimia.

Week Five:

We will discuss the issue of self-destruction and the mechanism of omnipotent denial in, for example, Anorexia.

Joseph, Betty (1982) "Addiction to Near Death" *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 63: pages 449-456. [PEP Web Link](#)

Willner, Alexandra (2009) "Inaccessibility in Eating Disorders" *Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy*, 23: pages 89-111. [PEP Web Link](#)

Additional Reading: Phillips, Adam (2001) "The Aesthetics of Defiance", Chapter Six in *Hunger and Compulsion*, Jean Petrucelli and Catherine Stuart, Editors, New Jersey: Jason Aronson, Inc. [Available in [Library](#)]

Winnicott, Donald W. (1960) "Ego Distortion in Terms of True and False Self" in *The Maturational Processes and the Facilitating Environment*, pages 140-152, London: The Hogarth Press. [PEP Web Link](#)

Learning Objective: Participants will be able to describe how addiction to near death can lead to Anorexia.

Week Six:

Although both involve piercing the skin barrier, why are some people drawn to decorating their skin in acts such as massive tattoos and multiple piercings, whereas others cut themselves repeatedly?

Elmendorf, Donna M. (2007) "Containment and the Use of the Skin", in *The Embodied Subject: Minding the Body in Psychoanalysis*,: Jason Aronson, Inc. [Available in [Library](#)]

Lemma, Alessandra (2010) "Ink, Holes and Scars", Chapter 8 in *Under the skin: A Psychoanalytic Study of Body Modification*, New York: Rutledge Press. [Available in [Library](#)]

Additional Reading:

"Clinical Commentary", (2009) *Journal of Child Psychotherapy*, 35: 81-94. [Available in [Library](#)]

Knafo, Danielle (2009) "Castration and Medusa : Orlan's Art on the Cutting Edge", *Studies in Gender and Sexuality*, 10: 142-158. [PEP Web Link](#)

Learning Objective: Participants will be able to identify one dynamic in piercing the skin through self-decoration and self-injury.

Week Seven:

Why do some people engage in repeated cosmetic surgeries? What are they searching for? We will discuss the issue of self-creation by means of changing the contours of the body.

Goldberg, Peter (2004) "Fabricated Bodies:A Model for the Somatic False Self", *International journal of Psychoanalysis*, 85: pages 823-840. [PEP Web Link](#)

Lemma, Alessandra (2010) "The Botoxing of Experience", Chapter Seven in *Under the Skin: A psychoanalytic Study of Body Modification*, New York, Routledge Press. [Available in [Library](#)]

Additional Reading: Baker-Pitts, Catherine, "Look at me...what am I Supposed to Be? Women, Culture and Cosmetic Splitting" in *Body States: Interpersonal and Relational Perspectives on the treatment of Eating Disorders* (2015) Jean Petrucelli, Editor, New York, Routledge Press. [Available in [Library](#)]

Learning Objective: Participants will be able to identify one need expressed by repeated cosmetic surgery.

Week Eight:

We will discuss the technical implications, including transference and countertransference in working with patients who have disorganized and traumatized attachments. How do they move towards self-contained and mentalized states of being? We will sum up, discuss and evaluate our course.

Lombardi, Ricardo (2010) "The Body Emerging from the 'Neverland' of Nothingness", *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 79: pages 879-909. [PEP Web Link](#)

Additional Reading:

Ogden, Thomas H. (2010) "On Three Forms of Thinking: Magical Thinking, Dream Thinking, and Transformative Thinking" *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 79:317-347. [PEP Web Link](#)

Winnicott, Donald W. (1949) "Hate in the Countertransference" *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 30: 69-74. [PEP Web Link](#)

Learning Objective: Participants will be able to describe one transference and one countertransference phenomenon with non-mentalizing patients.