

# **Mourning as transformation: the creative edge of traumatic and "ordinary loss"**

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Fall 2017

## **Course Syllabus**

This course focuses specifically on the dynamics of unresolved mourning in the consulting room. Freud's view of mourning will be reviewed and reconsidered. For those of you unfamiliar with the basic literature on mourning a list of useful background readings\* is included at the end of this syllabus. Art, film and literature references will be utilized during class to illustrate and enrich the psychoanalytic literature.

### **Week 1: Part A.**

#### **Grieving lessons for the analyst: the experience(s) of loss and mourning in and out of the consulting room**

In order to engage and support the candidates' confrontation with significant loss I begin by describing my clinical and community work with combat veterans, second -generation Holocaust survivors, and those with early and/or traumatic loss. A central aim of this mourning process is to help the patient surrender (Ghent) to the changes that loss brings. Candidates will be encouraged to discuss their personal encounters with and professional attitudes towards loss, death and mourning. Our discussion will attend to the difficulties working with extreme grief and loss. When relevant, I will address candidates' concerns regarding personal exposure.

#### ***Required Reading and Viewing***

Bassin, D. (2008) *Leave No Soldier*, [www.leavenosoldier.com](http://www.leavenosoldier.com)

Bassin, D. (2017) "The Art(s) of Witness: through the camera and the psychoanalytic situation. *Art, Creativity, and Psychoanalysis: Perspectives from Analyst-Artist* (Ed. G. Hagman) Routledge, N.Y. 165-180

Buechler, S.(2000). Necessary and Unnecessary Losses: The Analyst's Mourning. *Contemp.Psychoanal.*, 36:77-90.

Harris,A. (2009). "You Must Remember This". *Psychoanal.Dial.*, 19:2-

Schulz, K. (2017) Losing Streak: Reflections on two seasons of loss. *New Yorker*, Feb. 13 and 20, 66-71

Stolorow, R.D. (2005). Grief Chronicles. *Psychoanal.Persp*, 3:59--61

### ***Suggested Readings***

Doka, K. (1996). Living with grief after sudden loss. Bristol, P.A.: Taylor and Francis.

McCann, I. L. and Pearlman, L. A. (1990). Vicarious traumatization: A framework for understanding the psychological effects of working with victims. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 3, 131-149.

Pearlman, L.A. (1995). Self-care for trauma therapists: Ameliorating vicarious traumatization. In B.H. Stamm (Eds.), *Secondary traumatic stress: Self-care issues for clinicians, researchers, and educators* -(65-79). Lutherville, M.D.: Sidran Press.

### **Week 1: Part B.**

#### **How unresolved mourning presents: a continuum from "everyday" to traumatic loss**

The multiple (and sometimes co-existing) dynamic strategies used to cope with mourning will be discussed and illustrated with case material. These range from mild anxiety and/or depression to manic and/or dissociative responses, "rebellious" melancholia, the fracture of time and space, partial and/or indecipherable memories, collapse of the third, psychic deadness, rigid adherence to ritual, and attempts at creative psychic transformations. The film, *Manchester by the Sea* as well as the Case of Miss A (Bassin, 2011) will be used to explore traumatic loss and its relationship to unresolved mourning in the context of more ordinary expectable losses. Candidates will be encouraged to raise relevant clinical vignettes.

### ***Required Reading and Viewing***

Bassin, D. (2011). Ritual and beyond working through. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 21, 707-718.

Casement, P. (2000) Mourning and Failure to Mourn. *Fort Da*, 6B:20-32

Gerson, S. (2009). When the Third is dead: Memory, mourning, and witnessing in the aftermath of the Holocaust. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 90, 1341-1357.

Hagman, G. (1995). Mourning: A review and reconsideration. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, Vol. 76

Hagman, G. (1996) The Role of the Other in Mourning. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, Vol. 65

Slochower, J. (2011). Out of the analytic shadow. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 21, 676-690.

**Suggested Reading and Viewing**

Bromberg, P. (1998). *Standing in the spaces: Essays on clinical process, trauma, and dissociation*. New York: The Analytic Press.

Eng, D.L. & Han, S. (2000), A dialogue on racial melancholia. *Psychoanal Dial*, 10: 667--700.

Eng, D. L. & Kazanjian, D., eds. (2003), *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Felman, S., & Laub, D. (1991). *Testimony: Crises of witnessing in literature, psychoanalysis and history*. New York: Routledge.

Glennon, S.S. (2005). Psychoanalysis and Mourning—Two Distinct Views. *Psychoanal. Dial.*, 15:529-537

Gurevich, H. (2008). The Language of Absence. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 89, 561-578.

Laub, D. (2005) Traumatic Shutdown of narrative and symbolization. A death instinct derivative? *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 41, 307-326.

Nachmania, G. (2005). Proof of life: A discussion of Dori Laub's "traumatic shutdown of narrative and symbolization." *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 1, 327-340.

Steiner, J. (2005). The Conflict between Mourning and Melancholia. *Psychoanal Q.*, 74:83-104.

Van der Kolk, B., McFarlane, A., & Weisaeth, L. (Eds.). (1996). *Traumatic Stress: The Effects of Overwhelming Experience on Mind, Body, and Society*. New York: Guilford Press.

*Waltz with Bashir*, (2008) Directed by Ari Forman.

**Week 2: The therapeutic and restorative aspects of non-analytic memorial spaces and aspects of "memorialization" in the clinical setting.**

A variety of public memorials, religious, and secular rituals of burial, mourning, and commemoration (e.g., the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial, the World Trade Memorial, the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C., The Day of the Dead, and *Shiva* ritual) will be psychoanalytically deconstructed in order to illuminate the needs of the mourner and the co-created strategies employed by patient and analyst to support mourning. We will explore the creative use of these kinds of structures and inter-subjective activities as they potentiate therapeutic action in the analytic dyad. The therapeutic function of collective memorial and traditional mourning rituals will be considered as they inform the

treatment process. Can we apply these rituals to therapeutic dialogue? Can we reinvent or creatively make them over? Using both my own case material and examples from candidates' clinical experience, we will explore how to enhance the therapeutic processes central to work with unresolved mourning.

### **Required Reading**

- Pivnick, B. (2011). Enacting Remembrance: Turning Towards Memorializing September 11<sup>th</sup>. *Journal of Religious Health*.
- Klein, M. (1940). Mourning and its Relation to Manic-Depressive States. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 21, 125-153.
- Odgen, T. (1985). On potential space. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 66, 129-141.
- Hagman, G. (1996). The Role of the Other in Mourning. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 65, 327-352.

### **Suggested Reading**

- Bordo, J. (2003). The keeping place. In R. S. Nelson & M. Olin (Eds.), *Monuments and memory: Made and Unmade*, pp. 157-182.
- Gans, A. (1987). The War and Peace of the Vietnam Memorials. *American Imago*, 44, 315-329.
- Slochower, J. (1996). The holding function in mourning. In: *Holding and Psychoanalysis Relational Perspective*, Hillsdale, N.J.: The Analytic Press.
- Winnicott, D.W. (1964). The importance of the setting in meeting regression in psychoanalysis. *Psychoanalytic Explorations*, pp. 96-102.

## **Week 3: The re-instatement and co-creation of relational structures as they appear in treatment, dreams and artistic products**

In this final week, we will explore the emergence and continuities/ discontinuities of states of resilience, renewal/remembrance and despair/hopelessness/emptiness as they are enacted in the analytic dyad as well as in dreams and other artistic/literary production. Creative products and processes can represent attempts to contain experiences of loss that cannot be fully verbalized. They reflect the re-emergence of subjectivity, the re-integration of a new identity, as well as movement towards re-

engagement with others. The work of artists Kathe Kollwitz, Maya Linn, Shimon Attie, Horst Hoheisel and others will be examined and discussed. Their work represents attempts to create opportunities for re-integration and remembrance for themselves and others. Candidates will be required to re-visit a clinical case in light of new understanding and treatment of mourning.

### **Required Reading**

Bernstein, J. W. (2000). Making a memorial place: The photography of Shimon Attie. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 10, 347-370.

Ogden, T. (2000). Borges and the art of mourning. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 10(1), 65-88.

Segal, E.B. (1957) 'Notes on symbol formation' *Melanie Klein Today*, Vol. 1 ed. Spillius, E.B. London: Routledge 1988.

### **Suggested Reading**

Abella, A. (2010) Contemporary art and Hanna Segal's thinking on Aesthetics. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 91, 163-181

Grand, S. (2002) *The Reproduction of Evil: A Clinical and Cultural Perspective*, Analytic Press, NY see pages 9,24-25, 37-38, 96-97,

Richman, S. (2006) When the Analyst writes a memoir. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 42, 367-392.

Oates, J. C. (2011). *A widow's story: A memoir*. New York, NY: The Ontario Review.

Orfanos, S. D. (1997). Mikis Theodorakis: Music, culture, and the creative process. *Journal of Modern Hellenism*, 14, 17-37.

Ornstein, A. (2008) Artistic creativity and the healing process. *Psychoanalytic Inquiry*, 26, 386-406.

Segal, H. (1991) *Dream, Phantasy and Art*. London and New York: Tavistock/Routledge

Spitz, E.H. Loss as Vanished Form: On the Anti-Memorial Sculptures of Horst Hoheisel. *American Imago*, 62, 419-433.

### **\*Background Readings**

Aragno, A. (2007). Transforming mourning: a new psychoanalytic perspective. *On Death and Endings: Psychoanalysts' Reflections on Finality, Transformations, and New Beginnings*, pp. 22-41.

Freud, S. (1914). Remembering, repeating and working-through. *Standard Edition*, 3, 147-156.

Freud, S. (1915). Thoughts for the times on war and death. *Standard Edition*, 14, 273-300.

- Freud, S. (1916), On transience. *Standard Edition*, 14: 303--307.  
London: Hogarth Press, 1957.
- Freud, S. (1917). Mourning and melancholia. *Standard Edition*, 14,  
239-258.
- Hagman, G. (1995). Mourning: A Review And Reconsideration. *Int. J.  
Psycho-Anal.*, 76:909-925.