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Between the basic fault and second skin

ROGER WILLOUGHBY
8 Castle Hill Avenue, Folkestone, CT20 2QT, UK — psychoanalysis@btinternet.com
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The ideas that are commonly associated with Esther Bick, such as primal skin function, defensive second skin phenomena and adhesive identity, are traditionally seen as affiliated to the larger body of work that constitutes the Kleinian school. I shall argue, however, that Bick's thinking owes a largely communally unrecognised debt to the work of her training analyst, Michael Balint. Beginning with a discussion of Bick's early psychoanalytic formation within the British Psychoanalytic Society, her ideas will be reapproached in the light of her contemporary psychoanalytic milieu, with particular reference to Balint's notions concerning primary object-love, the basic fault and space. A brief history of the Manchester Training Centre, a short-lived but pioneering British attempt to extend psychoanalytic training beyond London, is included incidentally. Bick's early intellectual openness to diverse psychoanalytic streams will then be discussed in relation to the formation of psychoanalytic groups and their relative capacity to tolerate difference.

Keywords: primary object-love, second skin, clinging, basic fault, orthodoxy, leakage, unintegration, adhesion, Michael Balint, Esther Bick, Manchester Training Centre

Introduction

It is well known that Esther Bick felt a deep affinity with Mrs Klein and was a staunch supporter of her ideas (Harris, 1983; Grosskurth, 1986). In brief illustration, it was her espousal of primarily Kleinian thinking that supposedly resulted in her being replaced as Senior Tutor of the Tavistock Clinic's child psychotherapy training in 1960; it was she who escorted Klein home from Switzerland when the latter became ill that same year; and, evocatively, she inherited Klein's analytic couch following her death. However, particularly since Bick's own death in 1983, her original ideas have attracted criticism from the Kleinian mainstream (for a discussion of which see Spillius, 1988; Hinshelwood, 1997, 2002). Such affiliation and object relations are central to both individual and group formation. In the present paper I shall consider Bick's early psychoanalytic formation, which was rooted not with the Kleinians but within the British Independent group. I shall outline her life and professional training in Manchester and London up to 1950 and shall then juxtapose certain of her later ideas next to those of her training analyst, Michael Balint, whose influence, I shall argue, is thus made discernible, it having previously been rather communally unrecognised. Finally, I shall consider Bick's anomalous position as a bearer of independent ideas within the Kleinian group, and how this and her ideas may contribute to an understanding of the skin formations of psychoanalytic groups.

From province to centre

Bick and Balint were among some 70,000 European Jewish refugees who came to Britain after 1933 in the wake of mounting Nazi persecution. Bick arrived in 1938 and Balint,

his wife Alice and their son, John, the following year. Initially, in London, Bick made abortive attempts to begin analysis, apparently first with Barbara Lantos and then with a second, unknown analyst (Piontelli, 1981). Following this she spent the second half of 1939 as a house guest of Violet Oates on her Suffolk estate. For his part Balint was unsure where to settle: Ernest Jones (who found him difficult to work with) arranged for him to be based in Manchester (King and Steiner, 1991), although Balint also considered Scotland and visited Fairbairn to discuss that possibility (Sutherland, 1971).

Having plumped for Manchester, by mid-January 1939 the Balints had been granted permanent residents visas and were striving to develop analytic practices (Dupont, 2002). As both of them were training analysts with the Hungarian Society, they were granted equivalent status by the British Society in July 1939 when they applied for recognition.[1] Patients, however, were slow in coming. By the beginning of August that year, Balint had a mere four patients in psychotherapy, including one on a reduced fee, while Alice had a single once-weekly patient. A couple of weeks later, on 29 August, three days before the Nazis invaded Poland, personal tragedy struck when Alice unexpectedly died, leaving Michael a widower and a single parent in his new country.

Six months after Alice's death, during February of 1940, Balint moved his practice to St Peter's Square in the centre of Manchester, where he now had two five-times-weekly patients, paying fees of one guinea a session, while two others hesitated about reduced-fee vacancies. Wanting to be involved in psychoanalytic training, Balint now teamed up with Alfred Gross, the other Manchester-based training analyst, and approached the British Society's Training Committee with a view to establishing a local course in Manchester. Gross had unsuccessfully raised a similar idea the previous year. This time, however, the situation was different, as it appeared that Balint and Gross in Manchester could collaborate in forming a viable training group with Otto and Salomea Isakower, who were based 35 miles away in Liverpool. The Training Committee responded favourably to Balint's proposals, recognising the group as the 'North of England' training in March 1940, the main caveat being that candidates should come to London for interviews.[2] The departure of the Isakowers to the USA the next year effectively halved the group's training staff, following which the London Training Committee proposed that the Manchester Training Centre, as it now became known, should be an extension of the London training.[3] Accepting this as having been his understanding of the *status quo ante* anyway, Balint further concurred that candidates should go to London for supervision where possible, and went on to request that London members might occasionally visit Manchester to teach, an idea that the Training Committee supported.[4] Arrangements for Ernest Jones initially to undertake this collapsed, and, after some delay, Edward Glover went instead and held a long evening seminar with both the candidates and others interested in analysis, and corroborated Balint's favourable opinion on the ability of the Manchester candidates.[5] Although it had taken three academic terms to actualise this single event, it did occur within the context of an ongoing weekly Manchester seminar, and contrasted with the London training, which in October 1940 had

[1]Training Committee minutes, 3 July 1939, Archives, British Psychoanalytical Society.

[2]Ibid., 6 March 1940.

[3]Ibid., 11 June 1941. Miss Edna Henshaw was accepted as a Manchester candidate at this meeting, having been proposed by Balint.

[4]Ibid., 24 September 1941.

[5]Ibid., 20 April 1942 and 29 June 1942.

to suspend its own seminars due to the Blitz, London candidates getting by solely with prescribed reading.[6] Not only was Balint taking a lead in the seminars for the Manchester candidates, he was also teaching general practitioners and a mixed group of teachers and child guidance workers. The Training Committee now agreed to assist with these projects also, Ella Sharpe and Marjorie Brierley consenting to contribute to the latter group and Glover to the former.[7]

Bick moved to Manchester during December 1939 to accompany Marianne Prager, a friend since her time in Vienna, who was now working with refugees. After initially gaining work as a nanny, Bick (on a meagre wage of two pounds) then sought an analysis. Dismissing Gross, having heard one of his lectures, she went instead to Balint (Piontelli, 1981). He refused her impetuous offer of the two pounds per week, but did agree to take her on as an analysand, setting her initial fee at a very reduced (and for Bick more realistic) rate of a few shillings a session,[8] and the analysis apparently beginning some time in 1941.[9]

Soon Balint was able to assist Bick in gaining further employment, first as a teacher in a day nursery in Salford, near Manchester, and then, from 1942, as a nursery adviser with the National Association for Mental Health, a forerunner of the British mental health charity MIND. Working across the West Riding of Yorkshire, Bick sought to develop nursery provision for pre-school children. She was generally unimpressed by the nursery nurses, observing:

> … What they did with the children was terrible. Babies they scrubbed and they washed them. In the mornings after breakfast they put them into chairs [and tied them in] with strings to wait till lunchtime. And meanwhile they tore each other's hair out. It was shocking (Sayers, 2000, p. 138).

In addition to her organisational role Bick accepted an invitation to undertake sessional clinical work at a child guidance clinic in Leeds. Untrained for such work, Bick sought some support from the publications of Anna Freud and Melanie Klein, and, finding this in the latter's ideas, saw this contact as formative of her own clinical allegiance.

In late 1942, with Balint's support, Bick applied to the Institute of Psychoanalysis for training, her application and that of Balint's other analysand, Betty Joseph, coming before the Training Committee on 25 November. (Joseph went to Balint following Bick's earlier recommendation of him.) As Marjorie Brierley and Ella Sharpe were due to assist with Balint's teaching anyway, it was agreed that they would interview the Manchester applicants locally. Thus, by February 1943, four Manchester applicants, including Bick, had been seen by Brierley, following which final interviews were conducted by Sharpe, and Bick's application to train being approved by the Training Committee on 7 June 1943.[10] In the meantime, Bick had visited London and taken the opportunity on 17 March and 7 April 1943 to attend the third and fourth scientific meetings of the so-called Controversial Discussions within the British Society, as a guest, possibly under Balint's sponsorship.

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[6]Ibid., 30 October 1940.

[7]Ibid., 29 June 1942.

[8]The actual fee initially settled on is unclear. Bick claimed it was two shillings per session in her interview with Piontelli (1981) while to Dubinsky and Magagna (1983) she suggested she had paid Balint £1 per week.

[9]Index card, British Psychoanalytical Society.

[10]According to the Training Committee minutes of 24 February 1943, the other applicants interviewed by Brierley in Manchester were Joseph, Dr Muriel Hughes and a Dr McNair. On 7 June 1943 the Training Committee also accepted Joseph, Dr Helen Kirk and Dr Muriel Hughes as Manchester candidates (Archives, British Psychoanalytical Society).

Both meetings were devoted to an ongoing discussion (see King and Steiner, 1991, pp. 385–439) of Susan Isaacs's paper 'The nature and function of phantasy'. The experience seems reminiscent of the aforementioned babies in the nursery and, as with that, it left a deep impression on Bick, who was shaken by the tone of the meeting. Klein, she felt in retrospect, 'stood to be chopped up … It was terrible. I was so shocked, I can't tell you' (Piontelli, 1981). Despite this, Bick later remarked that she had used this visit to talk with Sylvia Payne and another member of the Training Committee.[11] On returning to Manchester, she could now officially participate in the Training Centre course there.

One of the first Manchester events following Bick's admission was Klein's weekend visit to the group in June 1943. Klein gave a lecture on technique and transference to its nine members, and later reflected that Balint 'seems to have strong sympathy not only with our work but also with our position, and seems quite capable of expressing this when occasion arises' (Grosskurth, 1986, p. 330). But it was not only Balint that had made a favourable impression on Klein: the candidates also impressed her and she departed feeling 'quite refreshed … reminded … of old times when people got pleasure and benefit from what I had to say' (p. 330).

Given the size of the Manchester Training Centre, relationships were close, with Balint and Gross occupying *overlapping* roles of analyst, supervisor, teacher and tutor to their candidates, an overlap which (at least in relation to the roles of analyst and supervisor) Balint positively favoured, following the Hungarian Society model (Gillespie, 1971). It was within this atmosphere that Balint in July 1943 married Edna Henshaw, a Manchester candidate and his former analysand (Moreau-Ricaud, 2000, 2002).[12] The emotional impact of this on Bick is unknown, although a confusion of rivalrous oedipal disappointment and critical feelings would be easy to hypothesise, and such *may* have contributed to her subsequent judgement of Balint. For his part, Balint, at least with other analysands, appears to have clinically neglected these events; Betty Joseph, for example, who worked with Henshaw at the Salford child guidance clinic during this time, recalled the curious interpretative lacuna surrounding this during her own analysis with him (Joseph, personal communication, 26 November 2002).

Within this context, Bick's analysis was reported by Balint in May 1944 as progressing well,[13] mirroring his own rising satisfaction. Thus, at the end of the summer, Balint remarked: 'I can say without exaggeration, I have made my position here' (Dupont, 2002, p. 364). He had moved to consulting rooms at 30 St Ann Street, had a busy private practice, was Director of the Preston and North East Lancashire Child Guidance Clinics, Honorary Psychiatrist to a Voluntary Hospital and was on the British Psychoanalytical Society's Council and Training Committee (Dupont, 2002). The Manchester Training Centre now amounted to some 10 people. About five of these (including Bick) were active students who attended the weekly seminar taken by Balint and Gross, its focus being at that time on instinct theory and metapsychology. In the absence of any central base or clinic, the seminar venue rotated among the homes of qualified members, while students

[11]No mention was found in the relevant Training Committee minutes of these meetings, suggesting perhaps they were more in the nature of informal conversations than part of the actual admissions process.

[12]Henshaw's training analysis had finished some time prior to June 1942 (see Training Committee minutes, 29 June 1942), subsequent to which she continued to see her control cases and qualified in January 1944 (Training Committee minutes, 24 January 1944) following the recommendations of Balint and Gross.

[13]Training Committee minutes, 10 May 1944, Archives, British Psychoanalytical Society.

saw training patients in their own rooms and dealt with fees directly (in contrast to the London practice, whereby fees went into a central fund).[14]

Alongside such professional issues the continuing war was taking its personal toll. By December 1944 Balint still had no news of his parents in Budapest, and, hoping they were well, he arranged permits for them to travel to Palestine, having failed to get visas for England. January of 1945, however, brought unconfirmed news of their deaths, leaving Balint, as he put it: 'walk[ing] around as if I got a blow on my head, I am scarcely able to think; I drag myself from work to work' (Dupont, 2002, p. 365). It was another 10 months before definite news of Balint's parents' fate seeped through: they had committed suicide by morphine injection to avoid arrest by the Nazis (Stewart, 1996; Dupont, 2002). Bick's remaining family and relatives in Poland had also met an extremely grim end; all died in the concentration camps, bar one niece, news of whose survival only percolated through to Bick in the 1950s (Harris, 1983). It must have been an emotionally harrowing time for analyst and patient during the years of wartime uncertainty and afterwards, as the story of the occupation and the camps emerged; addressing it in analysis cannot have been an easy matter given their respective massive losses.

During this time Balint, encouraged by Sylvia Payne (the new Society president), began to plan a move to London, with Bick and Betty Joseph agreeing and in tow. By July 1945 it was decided that Bick could begin her first training case in the autumn and that she would integrate into the second-year London courses.[15] Unhappy with this, Bick and Balint petitioned for her to join the third-year courses, the request being unsuccessful as the Training Committee observed that Bick had yet to commence her first case.[16] Eventually, on 1 November 1945 Balint's move occurred. Needless to say, this left the Manchester Training Centre in serious difficulties. Although Hilde Lewinsky, a Manchester graduate, was now granted provisional recognition as a training analyst,[17] by Christmas of the following year, when Gross accepted a job in the United States, the Education Committee decided to mothball the training. Two of the remaining candidates transferred to the London course, while one opted to continue his analysis in Manchester.[18]

With Bick and Betty Joseph moving in concert with Balint to London, Joseph now assisted Bick in finding sessional work conducting psychological tests to make ends meet, after which Bick obtained a clinical post more to her taste with Portia Holman at the Ealing Child Guidance Clinic in late 1945. Thus she began working as a child psychotherapist in London as in Manchester rather by the seat of her pants. Her analytic training, however, continued. Balint now suggested that he might supervise her first training case 'as an experiment', a suggestion the Training Committee vetoed, although they did confirm Bick could continue attending Scientific Meetings.[19] (In time, the Training Committee would accede to Balint's 'experiment' when he renewed the request in relation to other candidates (Gillespie, 1971).) December 1945 saw Bick began her first

[14]Ibid., 16 July 1945.

[15]Ibid. Bick suggested she had been interviewed by John Bowlby at some point during the transition from the Manchester Training Centre to London to determine the appropriate entry point for her into the training (Piontelli, 1981).

[16]Training Committee minutes, 15 October 1945, Archives, British Psychoanalytical Society.

[17]Ibid., 18 September 1945.

[18]*The Institute of Psycho-Analysis Report for the Year Ending 30 June 1947*, p. 15.

[19]Training Committee minutes, 14 November 1945, Archives, British Psychoanalytical Society.

control case supervised by James Strachey,[20] and in June 1946, when she was passed to begin third-year seminars, she was also provisionally approved as ready for her second case.[21] Following final approval in October, Bick began that case in November 1946, under Klein's supervision.[22] Strachey now, however, fell ill, disrupting Bick's supervision, and at the start of 1947 Hedwig Hoffer took over his role—her alternative choice, Anna Freud, was unavailable.[23]

Meanwhile, at Ealing Bick's work was proving a satisfying experience. One early case stuck in her mind, significant perhaps owing to its echoing her own early experience with a loved grandmother. Bick thus recalled:

> One boy who passed and saw us, child guidance clinic, he said, nine years old, he said: 'I need guidance. Can I come?' I said 'Yes, come with your mother'. He said: 'No, I'll come with my grandmother'. So he came with his grandmother to be my patient. This was wonderful (Piontelli, 1981).

Not long after, John Bowlby (Deputy Director of the Tavistock Clinic) tried to recruit her for the Tavistock's Children's Department, an overture on which Bick initially demurred, knowing little of the latter clinic and feeling attached to Ealing. Balint's subsequent analytic intervention enabled her to take up Bowlby's offer in 1946, and she began to think about the training needs of would-be child psychotherapists (Dubinsky and Magagna, 1983). She was not alone in seeking to meet such needs: there was a certain groundswell of interest within the post-war British Labour zeitgeist, with a new National Health Service being planned at this time and the 'Association of Child Psychotherapists (non-medical)' provisionally inaugurated in 1947.

At the time of these developments Balint was Director of the Chislehurst Child Guidance Clinic, a post he held from 1945 to 1947. For several weeks during June and July 1946 he travelled as the British Society's envoy to Budapest in an effort to reconstruct professional links. Balint's personal life was in difficulties, his marriage to Henshaw, which had been difficult for a long time, finally collapsing later that summer. Two years later, in 1948, he joined the staff at the Tavistock Clinic, where Bick that year had been promoted to the role of Senior Child Psychotherapist and Tutor on the newly inaugurated child psychotherapy training. This followed her qualification as a psychoanalyst in March 1948,[24] and delivery of her first psychoanalytic paper, 'Notes on a case of a boy treated on a once a week basis', to the British Society in April that year. One wonders whether this now lost paper was based on the boy who came with his grandmother to Bick in her days at Ealing. Whatever the case, her title shows openness to weekly *psychotherapy*, which further linked her with Balint, who, from 1955, organised the Tavistock's brief psychotherapy workshop. Similarly, Bick's introduction of Infant Observation seminars as an integral part of that first 1948 course parallels Balint's development of case discussion seminars within the Family Discussion Bureau that

[20]Ibid., 3 December 1945.
[21]Ibid., 3 June 1946.
[22]Index card, British Psychoanalytical Society. Training Committee minutes, 8 October 1946, Archives, British Psychoanalytical Society.
[23]Training Committee minutes, 27 January and 24 February 1947, Archives, British Psychoanalytical Society. In her interview with Piontelli Bick suggests she went to Hoffer at Balint's recommendation.
[24]Training Committee minutes, 8 March 1948, Archives, British Psychoanalytical Society.

same year and his introduction of GP seminars from 1950, both developments building on Balint's earlier group work with doctors in Budapest and Manchester, and on a wider Tavistock interest in group dynamics (Bion, 1961).

Bick had considered beginning training in child analysis in September 1947, which the Training Committee was willing to sanction as long as Mrs Hoffer agreed, and it was suggested by Klein that Gwen Evans supervise her. However, Bick postponed beginning the training, a decision perhaps influenced by Klein's discussion with her about supervision.[25] Six months later, in March 1948, synchronous with the completion of her adult training, Bick began the child course, with Klein supervising her first case.[26] In September that year she took on her second child case under Paula Heimann.[27] By December 1949 Heimann was recommending her qualification, and, with Klein concurring, Bick was designated a child analyst from early 1950.[28]

Her experience with Klein encouraged in Bick a wish to go to her for further analysis. Characteristically, Balint did not seek to oppose such a move; Bick recalled that 'he was very decent in that way', before going on to suggest *rather vicariously* some of the feeling associated with such a weaning by adding that 'his heart was broken when Betty Joseph wanted to also go to somebody [else]' (Piontelli, 1981). Balint's analysis of Bick appears to have been drawn to a conclusion as she completed her child training. As the latter ended Bick was thus able to cease supervision with Klein, which freed the way to see her now for analysis. Thus the analytic transition from Balint to Klein occurred in 1950 (Grosskurth, 1986), from which date Esther Bick would come to be increasingly associated with Klein, a circumstance that concomitantly contributed to the collective scotomisation of Balint's formative influence on her.

While the Balint–Bick analysis appears to have covered some nine years—lengthy by the standards of the day—Bick voiced reservations about it, suggesting it was 'valid but not sufficient' (Haag, 2002, p. 16), and later suggested Balint was 'not a good analyst' (Piontelli, 1981). An inkling of possible grounds for this judgement may be gleaned from an anecdote Bick told Hanna Segal. Briefly recounting the analysis, Bick said that on occasion she did not or could not offer free associations, reflecting perhaps ongoing expressive struggles. Balint in response would sometimes say that he was then going to read the newspaper, an intervention (as distinct from an interpretation) that Bick found less than helpful (Segal, personal communication, 26 September 2002). Tallying with these views, Betty Joseph recalled Balint's stance as potentially encouraging a kind of acting out, graphically illustrated in a session with Joseph when he encouraged her to perform a cartwheel: she saw him as being insufficiently neutral, seemingly neglectful of transference, and essentially 'more a kind of psychotherapist than psychoanalyst' (Joseph, personal communication, 26 November 2002).[29] In contrast to his role as analyst, Bick highlighted Balint's personal qualities, saying that he was 'a very good, kind man, exceptionally kind … like a father to me' (Dubinsky and Magagna, 1983, pp. 4–5). Whatever the shortcomings of the analysis, and leaving

[25]Ibid., 22 September and 13 October 1947.

[26]Ibid., 8 March 1948.

[27]Ibid., 27 September 1948.

[28]Ibid., 12 December 1949. See also the *Institute of Psychoanalysis Report for the Year Ending 30th June 1950*, p. 5.

[29]Elsewhere, Balint describes a clinical breakthrough when a stuck patient performed a somersault in the course of a session (1968, pp. 128–32).

aside the paternal transference, Bick appears to have internalised something of Balint's independent thought and flexibility, without needing clingingly to idealise him.

Clinging, sticking, adhering

I shall now turn to consider briefly Bick's own key theoretical contributions. When Bick delivered her British Society membership paper, 'Anxieties underlying phobia of sexual intercourse in a woman' (Bick, 2001), on 10 June 1953, she clearly demonstrated Klein's growing influence on her thinking. She predominantly cites Klein and centrally employs her concepts in the analysis. Others' ideas are, however, discernible, particularly those of Balint, whom she cites (alongside, *inter alios*, Ferenczi, Bertram Lewin and Fenichel). The reported analysis covered the years 1948 to 1953, coinciding with the transition from Balint to Klein. Bick's patient, a married woman in her mid-thirties, presented with suicidal impulses and pervasive disabling phobic states, including claustrophobia and vaginismus. She was torn between a desperate 'clinging' to her objects for her own survival and concerns for their well-being, particularly given her strangulating omnipotent control of them. Thus, for example, during the Christmas break of 1950 Bick saw the patient for an emergency session following severe panic symptoms. The patient, Bick wrote,

> … told me of a most terrifying experience she had in the morning on waking. It was so frightening because she was sure she was not dreaming. She saw herself very small, clinging to her husband with her mouth and body. She felt she must get down or she would damage him irreparably, but knew that if she got down she would go mad and die. She could neither go on clinging nor get down and felt paralysed in agony. Her associations to clinging were 'a leash, no—she corrected—I mean a leech, a vampire'. I interpreted that through making her aware in the analysis that the leash with which she clung to me and her husband was her vampire mouth, she felt that I had made her more ill than before she came to me. The patient confirmed this (2001, p. 12).

Bick comments that the patient's feeling of paralysis was a 'defence of immobility … [with which] she attempted to suspend the disintegration of the good object and the self and to deny the death of the good object' (2001, p. 13). This description (and other similar references within the 1953 paper), I suggest, prefigures Bick's subsequent elaboration of her concepts of second skin phenomena (1968) and adhesive identity (1986).

These primitive defensive and relational modes occur when primary skin containment fails. Primary skin containment (Bick, 1968, 1986) occurs when the primitively undifferentiated personality-and-body, which is initially subjectively experienced as being without inherent relational force, utilises the skin of self-and-mother as a boundary, which may in due course be introjected and its containing function then identified with. This view is allied to Freud's thesis that 'The ego is first and foremost a bodily ego; it is not merely a surface entity, but is itself the projection of a surface' (1923, p. 26) and to Tausk's (1919) important discussion of the infant's initial experience of its body as discrete foreign objects, a 'disjecta membra', which it gradually pieces together into a synthesis and identifies with. However, Bick's emphasis is both genetically prior and complementary in that she highlights the normal disambiguation of the personality from the body, with primary skin containment then aiding the stabilisation of the non-unitary

personality, a *disjecta ego*. This represents a rudimentary conception of the container (Bion, 1962), the instantiation of which facilitates the conceptualisation of robust inner space and dimensionality, necessary precursors to primal splitting and idealisation of self and object. Without a sense of introjection into caulked internal space, projective identification would predominate, Bick here agreeing with Klein's view that 'the introjection of the good object, first of all mother's breast, is a precondition for normal development' (1946, p. 103). This reading, in which it is *introjective mechanisms* that are held to be primarily facilitated by the skin-object, differs from others (e.g. Etchegoyen, 1999) which suggest that Bick saw its incorporation as a precursor to *projective mechanisms*. Bick's text, however, seems clear on this point in its emphasis on secure introjection of the containing functions facilitating further introjection, without which '*further projective identification will necessarily continue unabated*' (1968, p. 484, my italics). Nevertheless, along the way projective identification is in all likelihood progressively transformed, as increasing introjective security facilitates a moderation of projective identification in its massive form (wherein it can be experienced as catastrophic leakage) to less global, more nuanced varieties.

A conceptual problem arises at this point, in that Bick suggests, rather circularly, that it is introjection of the containing functions that facilitates the development of a conception of internal space, which in turn aids further introjection. However, if introjection requires an internal space into which objects can be incorporated, then some rudimentary conception of internal space is *implied* into which the initial containing skin functions are internalised. Therefore, introjection of the containing skin functions does not create the idea of internal space *per se*, as Bick implies; rather, it bolsters a pre-existing sense (a *preconception* in Bion's terminology) of such a space. This appears to be a maturational step, in the course of which containing functions and internal space are concomitantly sustained, through enabling shape retention and dimensionality and above all resistance to catastrophic leakage. Thus, I suggest, it is the sealing or caulking capacity (epitomised by the nipple in the mouth) that needs to be securely introjected, securing the container to allow it to function *as a container*, allowing not merely introjection but more particularly regulated retention of introjected objects without the danger of catastrophic seepage. The nipple, initially conceived of as part of the self (Rickman, 1926–7), is thus presented as an object (plug) that may be actively gripped or clung to, its gratifying solid presence allowing the development of sphincter control, which, in combination, then acts as the equivalent of the cork in the bottle, allowing containment and greater internal object constancy (cf. Tustin, 1978).

Bick described exposure to unintegration, equated with loss of the experience of primary skin containment, as exposure to 'catastrophic anxieties of the dead end, falling through space, liquefying, [and] life-spilling-out' (1986, p. 298). To counter such anxieties, various forms of muscular self-containment may be resorted to, wherein the body is taken as an object and reassurance of its integrity sought through either active motor discharge or muscular tension, procedures which act as a self-generated patch, bung or sphincter to plug the threatening leak. The second skin phenomenon thus 'manifests itself as either [a] partial or total type of muscular shell or a corresponding verbal muscularity' (Bick, 1968, p. 486). Later, Bick (1986) supplemented this account of defences against the catastrophic experience of unintegration with her notion of adhesive

identity. The basic idea had, in fact, been outlined in her earlier paper when she described how, when faced with the terrors of unintegration, there may ensue

> … a frantic search for an object—a light, a voice, a smell, or other sensual object—which can hold the attention and thereby be experienced, momentarily at least, as holding the parts of the personality together. The optimal object is the nipple in the mouth, together with the holding and talking and familiar smelling mother (1968, p. 484).

Clinging adhesively with the eyes, mouth, ears or other means to such part-objects calms the terrors of massive separation anxiety and unintegration. In illustration of this Bick describes how one baby,

> … when not held by his mother, clung at times in other ways. He would focus on a continuous sensory stimulus as, for example, a light or a continuous sound like that of the washing machine. By holding on to it, be it with the eyes or with the ears as with the touch, the organs would serve as suction pads like a mouth holding on to the nipple … The need to cling applies in a similar way to the mother … [Mother] described what comfort it was to her to see the light from the Post Office Tower and to hear the hooting of an owl. She too was clinging in her distress with her eyes and ears to something sensual, different from the background, that she could focus on (1986, p. 297).

Some writers (e.g. Symington, 2002) suggest that adhesion precedes a conception of inner space and three-dimensionality, arguing, for instance, that if such existed then primitive anxiety would foster defensive intrusiveness into such a supposedly protective container. This would thus bolster Bick's previously discussed views on a stage of psychic two-dimensionality and the need to introject the containing functions. However, given the conceptual problems with the latter, I suggest that adhesion in and of itself does not validate such an inference; rather it may be indicative of either an impervious object or one within which other terrors lurk, such as within the claustrum (Willoughby, 2001). Adhesion thus can be viewed as a narcissistic seeking of protection from threatening external *and* internal dangers.

In summary, I have here suggested that second skin and adhesive identity both serve as related defences against massive fears associated with unintegration and the realisation of dependency. Clinging characterises both defences, in the case of second skin phenomena this being to one's own body as object, while in the case of adhesive identity it is prototypically (though not exclusively) to an external object.

Primary object-love and its discontents

This complex of ideas, most clearly instantiated around the key concept of clinging, I wish to now suggest, owes a significant debt to the work of Balint and the Budapest school (Haynal, 1988). Balint, following Ferenczi, from early on in his career dispensed with the concept of primary narcissism in favour of passive object-love (Balint, 1935), later to be termed primary object-love (Balint, 1937; A. Balint, 1939) in view of the manifest active features in infant behaviour within 'the mother–infant unit (a dual unit)' (Balint, 1937, p. 99). Balint and his Budapest colleagues here interestingly anticipate the idea that 'there is no such thing as a baby', now routinely associated with Winnicott,

who in actuality only expressed this five years later (King and Steiner, 1991) and wrote of it 15 years after Balint (Winnicott, 1952).

In primary object-love the aim is to '*be loved and satisfied, without being under any obligation to give anything in return*' (Balint, 1937, pp. 98–9). Describing this in relation to the original paradigmatic situation, Alice Balint argued that '*the relation between mother and child* is built upon *the interdependence of the reciprocal instinctual aims* … [entailing the belief that] *there is no need to be concerned about the partner's well-being*' (1939, p. 256). In his final formulation of the concept, Balint depicts primary love as involving the neonate in 'a state of intense relatedness to [the] environment, both biologically and libidinally … [a kind of] harmonious interpenetrating mix-up' (1968, p. 66), such as occurs between fish and water, ourselves and air, or foetus and mother.

The harmonious interpenetrating mix-up that is primary object-love Balint initially saw as associated with the tendency to cling and the related fear of being dropped, phenomena investigated by his Budapest colleague Imre Hermann and his wife Alice Balint respectively (Balint, 1935, p. 61). Hermann (1976; Berner, 1996) had observed, first, that primates cling to their mothers for several months after birth and, secondly (anticipating Lacan), that the human infant is prematurely separated from its mother, to which 'dual unit' the infant wishes to return. Frustration of this wish leads to 'the general tendency to cling to something in moments of threatening danger' (Balint, 1937, p. 99), clinging being seen as the root of many object relations, its distillation through 'touching, stroking [and] caressing [leading to] tenderness' (pp. 99–100), for example. In addition to describing the fear of being dropped, Alice Balint drew attention to the mother's need to cling as a correlate of her infant's, within the overall dual unit, and noted how 'the expressions "attachment", "clinging" as well as the German "Anhänglichkeit" and the Hungarian "ragaszkodás" (adhesiveness, stickiness), describ[e] this kind of infantile love' (1939, p. 254).

Congruent with these ideas, Balint noted that many later defence mechanisms may be traced back to two 'primal … almost physical' ego defences, these consisting of either panic (when overwhelmed) which quiets with 'an outbreak of affect and uncoordinated movements' (1936, p. 86) or 'call[ing] up all [one's] energies to stem the excitation. The first method resembles a clonic, and the second method a tonic, spasm' (p. 87). In these ideas Balint was following the lead of Ferenczi, who, he acknowledges, 'was the first to draw attention to these physical forms of defence (especially chronic muscular tension)' (p. 87).

These various defences originated out of the traumatic discovery of the independence of key objects, particularly the primary object, hence the rupturing of primary object-love, to which state of equilibrium the infant seeks to return via use of such defences. The discovery is of a soft-focus limitless world suddenly becoming sharply or harshly focused and delimited, with objects now having edges, distinct existences and clear space between them. This experience would form the seeds of the 'basic fault', as Balint (1968) would later term it, where the child–environment fit is particularly poor and the rupture markedly traumatic. At this basic-fault level relationships are felt to be exclusively of a two-person variety, lacking the oedipal third position and the dimensionality within psychic space associated with that level. Building on these early works, Balint introduced a revised model in his paper 'Friendly expanses—horrid empty spaces' (1955), coining the terms 'ocnophilia' and 'philobatism' to specify what he now saw as two *basic* defensive modes

of object relations. In the ocnophilic mode, denial of basic-fault separateness is promoted essentially by a clinging to the object and an avoiding of 'horrid' intervening space. For the philobat, the lost continuity of primary love is illusorily recreated by developing skilful mobility through which objects (here seen as obstacles) may be navigated around, while inhabiting the intervening 'friendly' spaces (cf. Berner, 1996). In economic terms the ocnophil '*over-cathect[s] his object relationships* … [while] the philobat *over-cathects his own ego-functions*' (Balint, 1968, p. 68). These ideas formed the core for Balint's subsequent writings within this area (see especially Balint, 1959, 1968, 1969).

Balint's influence on Bick's ideas, mediated through their close associations up to at least 1950, is discernible in her writings. Her notion of an initial stage of unboundaried unintegration and her ideas on second skin and adhesive identity have Balint's discussions of primary object-love and the clinging ocnophilic and philobatic defences associated with it as their intellectual progenitors. These affiliations are acknowledged explicitly, albeit in a limited and condensed way, in Bick's 1953 membership paper (Bick, 2001), through her citation of Balint's observational M.Sc. study of infants' individual sucking rhythms (Balint, 1948). Bearing in mind Tom Main's remark that Balint 'had a horror of proselytising schools and training systems for their danger to independent thought … [and] was determined that his work should be used for work and not for apostolic function' (1971, p. 23), Bick's intellectual development and legacy represents a certain fruition of his wish.

Psychoanalytic groups and orthodoxy

Finally, I want to turn to the question of orthodoxy and psychoanalytic groups. Psychoanalysis has been exploding for a long time. Even with Freud psychoanalysis had multiple identities, theories being superimposed on or juxtaposed next to each other, often without explicit supersession. Some ideas and their thinkers became dissidents and were placed or chose to position themselves outside of the psychoanalytic establishment—Jung, Adler and Rank being well-known early examples. Within psychoanalysis, however, new ideas continued to proliferate and have been managed in ways not dissimilar to the apostates—through splitting and localisation within groups, a process that accelerated after Freud's death. Indeed, this internal splitting may be regarded as the inverse of the earlier psychoanalytic schisms and expulsions, with the loss of Freud at the centre being the nodal point for such a development (Bergmann, 1993, 1997). The growth of distinct psychoanalytic schools has been variously regarded as a healthy pluralism (Wallerstein, 1988; Hill and Grand, 1996), a tower of Babel (Steiner, 1994) or as masking a bedrock of common ground (Wallerstein, 1992).

The positioning of Bick by herself and others as a Kleinian coexisted with the development of her own idiosyncratic psychoanalytic voice, based on her own perspective on clinical phenomena. Thus she advocated 'attention to close observation and description rather than ideology and theory' (Harris, 1983, p. 102), a theme vividly taken up by Haag (2002) in his recollection of Bick propounding an attitude of not knowing, of observing in order to observe rather than reconfirm theory, of refusing to foreclose. Such an attitude is clearly discernible in her writings. Thus, while remarking on the uncertainties inherent in child analysis, Bick observed how

> one may have to sit … for a long time completely in the dark about what is going on, until suddenly something comes up from the depth[s] that illuminates it, and one interprets without always being able to see how one reached that conclusion. It imposes … a greater dependence on [the analyst's] unconscious to provide … clues to … meaning (1962, p. 330).

Here Bick's technical position, eschewing a classical authority stance, brings her work closer to Bion's later formulations on memory, desire and the selected fact, ideas which will be briefly considered below. Her papers on child analysis (1962) and infant observation (1964), I suggest, were contributions to psychoanalysis *as a whole* rather than to any single group, while her clinical and theoretical writings (1968, 1986, 2001) incorporate ideas from diverse schools, although (interestingly) few explicit references are actually cited subsequent to her membership paper. If citations are, as Reider (1976) suggests, one way in which authority and pedigree are constructed, then Bick's silences in this area may be seen hermeneutically as symbolising a psychoanalytic genealogy that is subjectively felt to be rather less than kosher within a perceived orthodoxy. More generally, Bick's well-known difficulties in setting down her ideas and in allowing their publication (Harris, 1983; Joseph, 1984) represent, I suggest, an example of the subjectively felt conflicts between group affiliation and the declaration of potentially dissonant ideas, disruptive of the (at least partially phantasised) orthodoxy of the group's normal science paradigm, as has been elsewhere discussed by Britton (1994).

More explicit in his source citations and less impaired by publication anxiety, Balint was well known for regarding the various analytic schools 'not as wrong or inaccurate but lopsided in emphasis, incomplete and limited and … possessors of important half-truths and techniques' (Main, 1971, p. 22), or, more stultifyingly, fostering ocnophilic within-group orthodoxy at the expense of creativity. Such an idea follows directly from Balint's views on primary love as the original state of being, from which other modes are partial derivatives. Similar ideas have been expressed by others at varying levels of abstraction: Winnicott, for instance, by way of his famous remark that 'there is no such thing as a baby' (1952, p. 99), postulated an original composite environment–individual set-up, out of which (given favourable circumstance) the baby matures towards independence; while Bion (1970) employed '*O*' as a sign denoting ultimate reality and truth, which he saw as an inherently unknowable Platonist form, to be contrasted with accessible sensuous phenomena. The psychoanalytic vertex is *O*, and it is this—the unknown and unknowable—that Bion saw as the proper focus of the analyst's attention, a focus facilitated through the development of negative capability (1970) and the eschewing of 'memory, desire and understanding' (1994, p. 315). This state of mind, described by Freud (1912) as one of 'evenly suspended attention', Bion termed 'patience' (analogous to the paranoid-schizoid position), from which sustained state a pattern may evolve in due course which he named 'security' (the analogue of the depressive position). This selected fact could then form the kernel of an interpretation, whose foundations in the oscillation between states of patience and security (the analyst's version of PS↔D, which is concomitantly an expression of the container–contained relationship) Bion regarded as a hallmark of valuable analytic work (1970, p. 124; cf. Britton and Steiner, 1994). Given the unknowable nature of the psychoanalytic object, *O*, Bion makes clear that this or any other thought contained within a thinker (which in the present context naturally includes psychoanalytic groups and schools) is false, the *degree* of this depending on

whether the relationship between container and contained is commensal, symbiotic or parasitic (1970, p. 117).

Balint's interpenetrating mix-up of primary object-love, Winnicott's environment–individual set-up and Bion's *O* represent oceanic states, the loss of which totality sharpens distinctions or boundaries between self and non-self, exposing the nascent self to something between a depressive weaning, anxieties of persecutory separation and later castration or catastrophic annihilation. Thus, a boundary is always the site of a relative trauma, a scar tissue, which, as Bick (1968, 1986) highlighted, may develop into relatively healthy psychic skin or aberrant second skin formations.

Similar processes, I suggest, contribute to group formation and to the frequent difficulties both within and between groups, existing as they do within a group-skin (cf. Houzel, 1996). Psychoanalysis as a body, beginning within Freud's skin, arguably exhibited group second skin phenomena during its early years with both pervasive clinging to father (and his ideas) and muscular productivity. Toleration of otherness within second skin systems is difficult given the nature of the prevailing survival anxieties, a feature that is likely to have contributed to so-called dissenters being totally expelled in an attempt to preserve a safe within-group orthodoxy. The latter may be seen as a species not only of clinging but also of mimicry, antithetical to profound development, and with adhesion occurring to Freud the person and deviation from his supposed thinking downplayed. The gradual withdrawal of Freud from the psychoanalytic scene during the 1920s and 1930s, together with the group crisis precipitated by his death at the end of that decade, allowed the evolution of other psychoanalytic voices ('modifiers' in Bergmann's (1993) terminology) to occur explicitly over this period without recourse to banishment for perceived heterodoxy. No longer having Freud physically as its kernel, the psychoanalytic community, both in experiencing this 'no-Freud present' and through profoundly introjecting his image and thought, could increasingly move towards a dialectically structured or decentred constitution (Ogden, 1992). Thus, internal differentiations within psychoanalysis could begin to be recognised and subject to debate, with school formations catalysing within differentiated locales, the skins of which were more or less muscular. These developments hinge, I suggest, on the introjection of and later identification with a benign, thoughtful psychoanalytic object, whether this is construed in part-object terms as the breast, as Klein (1946) suggested, or in the more contemporary language of psychological functions (Spillius, 1988), such as Bick's (1968) emphasis on the containing functions of the skin. The result is an increase in mental space, thinking and reflective capacity within the group (or indeed an individual) and an open-minded attitude towards alterity.

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Translations of summary

Zwischen Grundstörung und zweiter Haut. Die Konzepte, die man im allgemeinen mit Esther Bick in Verbindung bringt, etwa die primäre Hautfunktion, das Abwehrphänomen der zweiten Haut und der adhäsiven Identität, werden traditionell in die Theoriebildung der kleinianischen Schule eingebunden. Demgegenüber

zeigt der Autor, dass Bicks Denken der Arbeit ihres Lehranalytikers Michael Balint vieles verdankt, ohne dass dies tatsächlich anerkannt würde. Im Anschluss an die Beschreibung von Bicks früher psychoanalytischer Sozialisation in der Britischen Psychoanalytischen Gesellschaft werden ihre Konzepte einer Neubetrachtung im Lichte ihres zeitgenössischen psychoanalytischen Milieus unterzogen, wobei Balints Überlegungen zur primären Objektliebe, zur Grundstörung und zum Raum vorrangig berücksichtigt werden. Eine kurze Geschichte des Manchester Training Centre—ein erster, wenn auch kurzlebiger britischer Versuch, die psychoanalytische Ausbildung auch außerhalb Londons zu etablieren—schließt als Exkurs an. Bicks frühe intellektuelle Offenheit für unterschiedliche psychoanalytische Strömungen wird sodann im Hinblick auf die Bildung psychoanalytischer Gruppen und ihre Fähigkeit, Unterschiede zu tolerieren, diskutiert.

Entre la falta básica y la segunda piel. Las ideas asociadas con Esther Bick, tales como la función de la primera piel, el fenómeno defensivo de la segunda piel y la identificación adhesiva, son tradicionalmente asociadas con el conjunto de las aportaciones mas emblematicas de la escuela kleiniana. Sin embargo el autor sostiene que el pensamiento de Bick tiene una deuda, en general no tenida en cuenta, con la obra de su analista didacta, Michael Balint. El artículo comienza con una reflexión sobre los comienzos de la formación analítica de Bick en la Sociedad Británica de Psicoanálisis. Después reexamina sus ideas en el ámbito del clima psicoanalítico de su época con una referencia especial a los conceptos de Balint sobre el amor de objeto primario, la falta básica y el espacio. El autor incluye de manera incidental una breve historia del Centro de Formación de Manchester, un intento pionero, aunque de corta duración, para extender la formación psicoanalítica más allá de Londres. Por último el autor describe la precoz apertura intelectual de Bick a diversas vertientes psicoanalíticas en relación con la formación de grupos psicoanalíticos y su capacidad de tolerar diferencias.

Entre le défaut fondamental et la deuxième peau. Les idées habituellement associées à l'œuvre d'Esther Bick, comme la fonction primaire de la peau, les phénomènes de deuxième peau défensive, et l'identité adhésive, sont traditionnellement considérées comme apparentées à l'ensemble des travaux produits par l'école kleinienne. Toutefois, l'auteur argumente la thèse, selon laquelle la pensée de Bick doit beaucoup, bien que cette dette soit souvent méconnue, à l'œuvre de son analyste didactique Michael Balint. L'article commence par une discussion des débuts de la formation analytique de Bick au sein de la Société Britannique de Psychanalyse. Puis, les idées de Bick sont re-examinées à la lumière du milieu psychanalytique de son époque, avec une référence particulière aux notions de Balint sur l'amour objectal primaire, le défaut fondamental et l'espace. Incidemment, l'auteur évoque brièvement l'histoire du Centre de Formation de Manchester, une tentative anglaise de courte durée, mais d'avant-garde, pour étendre la formation psychanalytique au-delà de Londres. Enfin, l'article discute l'ouverture intellectuelle précoce de Bick vers divers courants de pensée psychanalytique, en la mettant en rapport avec la formation des groupes psychanalytiques et avec leur capacité relative à tolérer les différences.

Tra difetto fondamentale e seconda pelle. Le idee comunemente associate a Esther Bick, come la funzione primaria della pelle, i fenomeni della seconda pelle difensiva e l'identità adesiva sono tradizionalmente viste come associate al più ampio *corpus* che costituisce la scuola kleiniana. L'autore sostiene però che il pensiero della Bick dipende largamente, cosa comunemente non riconosciuta, dall'opera del suo analista didatta, Michael Balint. Partendo da una discussione della sua prima formazione psicoanalitica nell'ambito della British Psychoanalytic Society, ci si riaccosta alle idee della Bick alla luce dell'ambiente psicoanalitico a lei contemporaneo, con particolare riferimento alle nozioni di amore oggettuale primario, difetto fondamentale e spazio. È inoltre incidentalmente inclusa una breve storia del Manchester Training Centre, un tentativo inglese di breve durata, ma a carattere pionieristico, di allargare fuori di Londra la formazione psicoanalitica. È quindi discussa le precoce apertura della Bick verso le diverse correnti psicoanalitiche, mettendola in rapporto con la formazione di gruppi psicoanalitici e la loro relativa capacità di tollerare le differenze.

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