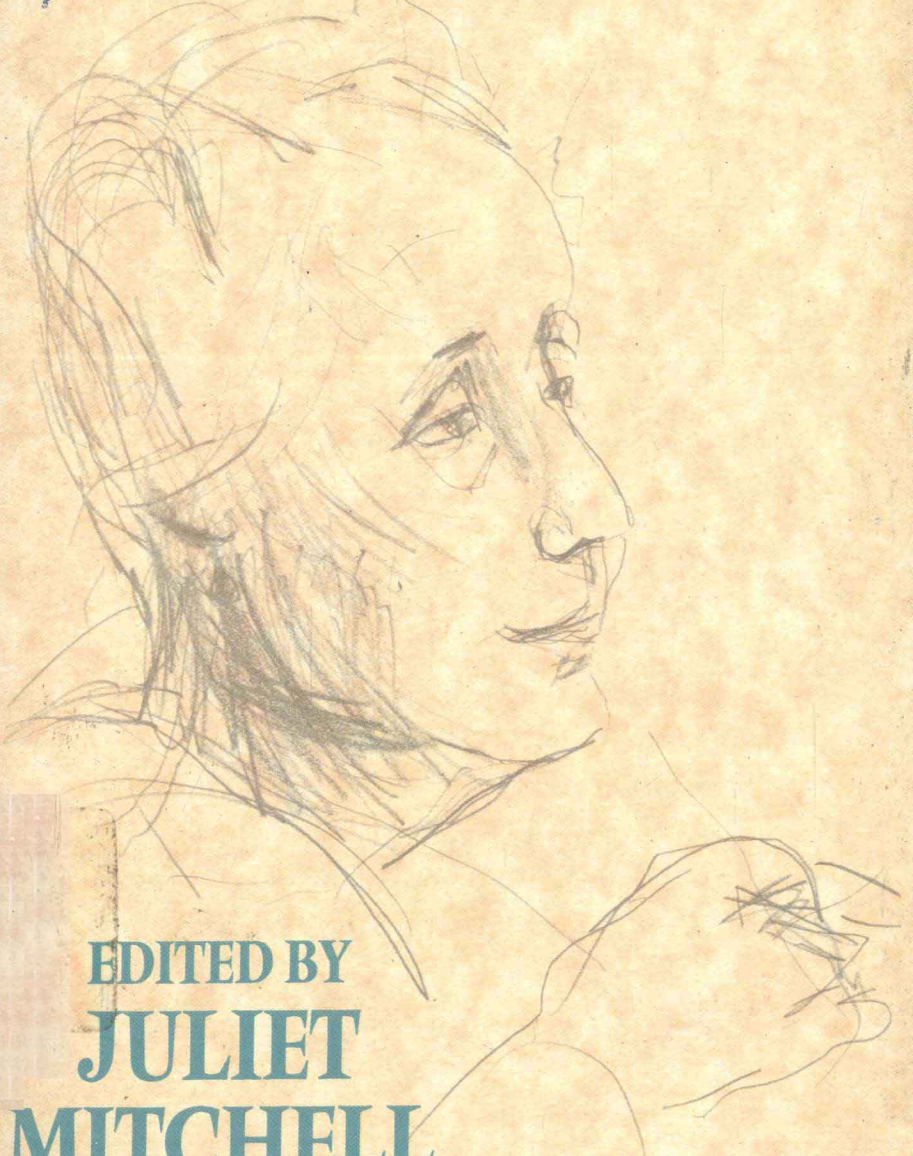
THE SELECTED

Melanie Klein



EDITED BY

JULIET MITCHELL

Peregrine Books
The Selected Melanie Klein

Melanie Klein (née Reizes) was born in Vienna in 1882. In 1903 she married Arthur Klein, from whom she was later divorced. They had three children.

Klein's interest in psychoanalysis began when she was living in Budapest between 1910 and 1919. While there she was in a training analysis with Sándor Ferenczi. She was one of the pioneers of child analysis and early on developed her distinctive method of the play technique. In 1921 she moved to Berlin and continued her personal analysis with Karl Abraham. In 1926 she moved to London, where she lived and worked until her death in 1960. After the Second World War a distinct Kleinian School was established. It is concerned particularly with understanding the earliest infantile conflicts and with deciphering psychotic mechanisms.

Juliet Mitchell was born in New Zealand in 1940, but has lived in London since 1944. She was a lecturer in English Literature at the universities of Leeds and Reading in England, and she has been a visiting professor at a large number of universities abroad.

Juliet Mitchell has written numerous essays of literary criticism, on the political theory of women's oppression, and on psychoanalysis and is one of Britain's foremost feminist thinkers. Her published work includes *Woman's Estate*, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*, *The Rights and Wrongs of Women* (co-edited with Ann Oakley), all published in Penguin, *Women: The Longest Revolution* and, with Jaqueline Rose, *Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the école freudienne*.

Juliet Mitchell is now a psychoanalyst practising in London, where she lives with her husband and daughter.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

The main writings of Melanie Klein have been published in four volumes of collected works by the Hogarth Press and The Institute of Psychoanalysis under the general editorship of Roger Money-Kyrle. I have used the first full English publication for this selection, but references in the Introduction other than to essays printed here are to the Collected Works as these are more easily available. The final essay, 'A Study of Envy and Gratitude', is the second lecture version on which the book of that title was based. It has not been published previously.

The notes on pp. 230–41 are Melanie Klein's own footnotes, with minor revisions to bring the bibliographical details up to date.

The following abbreviations are used:

CW	*Collected Works of Melanie Klein*, Vols. I–IV, 1975, London, Hogarth Press and The Institute of Psychoanalysis.
SE	*Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vols. I–XXIV, 1953–74, London, Hogarth Press and The Institute of Pyschoanalysis.
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I also wish to thank Enid Balint-Edmonds, Jill Duncan, Harry Karnac, Martin Rossdale and Margaret Walters.

INTRODUCTION

MELANIE KLEIN: HER PSYCHOANALYTIC HERITAGE

Psychoanalysis starts but does not end with Freud. Yet his work remains the reference point, the still explosively creative point of departure or of return both for clinicians and for theorists. Melanie Klein started work as a psychoanalyst at the time of the First World War and died, still working, practising and developing her ideas, in 1960. In her first ten years as a psychoanalyst she was anxious to stress that her work was a direct and loyal extension of Freud's thinking. Gradually she acknowledged an occasional, important disagreement. By the second half of the thirties, her contribution to psychoanalysis, though at least to her and her followers' minds remaining within a Freudian framework, was developing into an autonomous unit, a growing independent body.

To recount the many arguments as to where the ideas of Klein and Freud conform and where they differ would be tedious here. More important, in a brief introduction it would be misleading. It is for the new territories she explored and started to chart, not for the failures or successes of orthodoxy, that Melanie Klein should be acclaimed. What she did was new. She was an outstanding clinician and her ideas, despite problems with their presentation, represent an important new departure in the theory of mental processes. Yet, this having been said, her ideas, like all ideas, were not self-created; their context and their relationship to Freud's innovation are important.

In 1910 Melanie Klein, with her husband and two children, went to live in Budapest. There she discovered psychoanalysis. Probably in 1912, she started her analytic training with Sándor Ferenczi and became a member of the Hungarian Psychoanalytic Society. In 1921, she moved to Berlin and continued her psychoanalytic work there. From the beginning of 1924 until the summer of 1925, Karl Abraham was her analyst. Abraham's importance for Klein's work is always

emphasized – both by herself and by her commentators. The period in Budapest with Ferenczi is mentioned only briefly. As far as conscious influence is concerned, this bias is undoubtedly correct – as regards unconscious influence, I am less sure. The Budapest Psychoanalytic Society, in the crucial years when Klein was there, was vibrant and inventive, a small, dynamic group of creative thinkers with Ferenczi at their centre. Sándor Ferenczi was a maverick. By contrast with Budapest, Berlin, though the world's most active psychoanalytic city, was more rivalrous and conscious of its intellectual proximity to Freud's Vienna. Karl Abraham's work is important, and interesting particularly on the period of earliest infantile development, but it never quite escapes from his reverence for Freud. Where Ferenczi loves, quarrels and bursts with ideas, Karl Abraham respects, smooths things over and binds his new insights in a strait-jacket of dubious loyalty. Intellectually, consciously, there is no doubt that Melanie Klein owed most to Karl Abraham's encouragement and to his ideas. Spiritually, something of the freedom of Ferenczi and the excitement of Budapest seems to have found its unconscious echo in her. But ultimately more important than either Budapest or Berlin was Klein's move to England where she was most warmly welcomed. Once in England, her work became freer and more coherent.

In July 1925 Klein's good friend Alix Strachey, with the help of her husband, James, arranged for Klein to lecture at the Institute of Psychoanalysis in London. At Christmas, after an illness that had fluctuated for months, Abraham died. Early in 1926 Klein settled permanently in Britain.

In England analysts thought in ways similar to Klein's; she was not struggling with an ill-fitting coat. British empirical traditions, which privileged direct and careful observations and, at their best, an open-mindedness that resulted from the lack of a habit of reference to and reverence for an over-arching philosophical mode of thought, were not only congenial to a new investigator but in Klein's case coincided with her own propensities. In addition, although interest in child analysis was becoming strong on the Continent, perhaps in London it was given added impetus by that aspect of English culture which had for three hundred years, and more emphatically since the Romantic poets and nineteenth-century novelists, put the determinative effect of childhood at the centre of its world-view. It was

Wordsworth, not Freud, who first said that 'the child is father to the man'. Also, there was at the turn of the century in England an efflorescence of interest in the mother–child relationship. It was this relationship that was to dominate psychoanalysis in Britain until the present day. When she started work, Klein was a mother with young children.

THE CHANGING PSYCHOANALYTIC BACKGROUND

1 · Theory and Therapy – Free Association and Reconstruction. Sexuality, the Unconscious and Psychic Reality

By the beginning of the twenties, psychoanalysis, though in no sense 'accepted', was an established body of thought. The theory concerned the formative importance of early childhood. Therapeutically Freud and his adherents treated patients whose free associations led to their unconscious life and whose imagined histories were interpreted and reconstructed within a clinical session.

Over time, Freud developed 'free association' as the fundamental rule of psychoanalysis. The patient says everything, however trivial or unpleasant, that comes to mind – this gives access to unconscious chains of associations, to the unconscious determinants of communication. In this way one's actions or the language of the body is squeezed into words. Instead, for instance, of getting locked out of one's home repeatedly or having a cramp in one's neck for which there is no physical explanation, one hears the chain of associations that leads to one having lost the key idea or to finding out what or who is a pain in the neck. In interpreting a dream, although symbolism may be important, access to its meanings is through the patient's free associations. A patient dreams of two cars crashing: in recounting the dream his first association is of the supermarket he had visited the day before; he had come out, seen a car like his own but in better condition, and, envious, hoped it would crash. Another patient with a similar dream-story thinks first how she hates travelling by car, she gets car-sick, she's suffering from morning sickness, she's frightened of giving birth . . . it's so violent . . . Between different individuals, a similar dream-image may have some symbolic aspects in common – but the particular history of the individual patient, discovered through his or her free associations, gives access to the

particular meaning of the symbol and the wish. This is why interpretations of dreams can only take place in an analytic setting. The dream of crashing cars immediately suggests a 'primal scene' (phantasies of parents in intercourse) – but it is useless to say this, for the many-layered meaning depends on the person's hitherto undiscovered history, past and present, which is reconstructed through associations to something that is latent in the unconscious.

Roughly speaking, during the first twenty years of this century the very diverse preoccupations of Freud's work can be subjugated to two central tenets: the formative importance of infantile sexuality and the existence of an unconscious mind that works on principles quite distinct from those of the conscious mind. These two discoveries come together in Freud's theory of the Oedipus complex and its destruction by the castration complex. Together these organize, and offer normative possibilities for the psychological expression of sexuality in human life. The structuring role of these complexes makes them for Freud the nuclei of the neurosis and the key tenets of psychoanalytic understanding.

Until the 1920s the term 'unconscious' had been used either loosely, as still it is today in non-psychoanalytic discussions, to describe everything which is not present to consciousness, or more strictly, and as the object of psychoanalytic inquiry, as a mental process, a system in its own right containing all that has been repressed from consciousness. Crudely speaking, within the Freudian unconscious there is a hypothetical area that is always unfathomable and which is produced by what is known as 'primal repression'. Then there is an area (whose testing-ground is the psychoanalytical clinical setting) produced by the restriction of the wishes of infancy and early childhood: by repression 'proper'. Repression proper acts on illicit or unacceptable wishes so that they disappear from consciousness to form an unconscious domain with its own laws, the so-called 'primary process'. The wishes are forgotten and the result is an amnesia that covers our earliest years.

In Freud's theory the same sexual energy that originally belonged to the wishes tries to push the ideas back into consciousness. If they manage to re-emerge from the unconscious, they do so in a form that is distorted by the marks of the prohibition on them. They come back not as direct wishes, but as hidden, disguised, displaced wishes represented in the symptoms of neuroses, in 'normal' slips of the pen

or tongue, in dreams – these can be 'interpreted' and the history of the original wish reconstructed so that it is made more acceptable to consciousness. For the patient, at its centre, this is a painful and a brave endeavour.

The concepts of the Oedipus and castration complexes include the observation that the human infant is born with sexual drives which will only eventually – and then never in a final or absolute way – become dominated by genital urges. A primary relationship to the mother becomes culturally problematic at the stage or level when the child wants to occupy the place already filled by the father, when, in a phallic and hence competitive way, it wants to be everything for the mother, to have everything she needs to satisfy her and thus to have exclusive rights to her.

The forbidden wishes and all the phantasies connected with them constitute the core of what is called 'psychic reality'. This concept replaced Freud's first idea that some actual occurrence such as seduction in childhood caused the later production of neurotic symptoms. Unconscious processes completely replace external reality (with which they have no truck) by psychical reality. Psychical reality is not commensurate with an inner world in general or with all psychological productions; it is a hard core, a nugget, felt to be as real as the grass and the trees, as real as (and not unconnected with) the fact that one is born to two parents and is either a boy or a girl. Like other realities, with time and effort it can, if it is so wished, be modified to a degree. Historical reality both is and is not changed by new ways of seeing and experiencing – so too is psychical reality.

2 · *The Ego, the Object, Life, Death and Anxiety*

Freud developed psychoanalysis through an attempt to understand some inexplicable occurrence, a symptom, a dream, or an hysterical (not an organic) illness. In the years after the First World War other aspects of his work were being taken up, developed, and diverged from. Instead of the symptoms that indicated the primary process of a system of the unconscious, aspects of human relationships that determined the psychological dimension of character development started to come to the fore. In Vienna, interest increased in the agency that implemented the repression along with other defences. Eventually this led to the emergence of 'ego psychology', which was

vastly extended when it was transported by refugee analysts to North America. In Berlin, Abraham emphasized the significance of the earliest oral and anal experiences of the nursing baby and the toilet-trained infant. In Budapest, Ferenczi, back from work with war neurosis, was interested, among other things, in the present analyst–patient relationship and in working out a therapy that utilized it more actively. In London, an interest in children and their human environment and in the vicissitudes of 'normal' development led to a tendency known as 'object relations analysis'. The period prior to (or, speaking structurally, 'underneath') the Oedipus complex gained in theoretical and clinical importance.

Under the impact of clinical experience, speculative necessity and confrontation with colleagues' differing psychoanalytic theories, Freud's work itself was changing. Here, I shall select the new theories that are of relevance to Klein's thinking. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1919) Freud subsumed the previous dominance of the sexual drive under a 'life drive' that, while still sexual (and hence not to be confused with Jungian notions), also included the urge for self-preservation. He introduced, in opposition to the life drive, the highly controversial speculation of a death drive, a force that strove to return the human being back into a state of inertia, of the inorganic. Clinically it is seen in masochism, in an unconscious sense of guilt, in the quality of driven-ness within the compulsion to repeat certain experiences and in the wish not to recover.

In 1923, in *The Ego and the Id* (*SE*, XIX), Freud introduced a new metapsychology. Though the division between unconscious, preconscious and conscious continues to be used by Freud after the twenties, it is superseded by a new topographical division of the mind: the id, the ego, the super-ego. All have unconscious parts and origins – the id is completely unconscious and inherits the characteristics of the previous system of the unconscious. Finally, in 1926, prompted explicitly by Otto Rank's argument that the nature and degree of the trauma of birth is causative of all future development, but also by a more general tendency of psychoanalytic work of which Klein's was an important part, Freud revised his understanding of the affectual state of anxiety. Earlier he had thought that when a sexual idea is repressed the idea becomes unconscious but the feelings are converted into anxiety. Now he argues that, although this does happen to a degree (particularly in what were known as the 'actual neuroses'),

in most other cases the feeling of anxiety comes first and warns of the danger inherent in certain sexual desires and ideas.

Freud's many revisions did not cancel out his earlier ideas: they are more like new layers on old rock – affecting it and changing its composition, but not annihilating it.

FREUD'S NEW IDEAS: DIVISION AND THE WEARISOME CONDITION OF HUMANITY

In the 1920s Freud argued that the neonate is born with what is to become the id, the ego and the super-ego undifferentiated. The ego and the super-ego (in that order) are carved – never totally, never for ever – out of the id. The id (like the previous system of the 'unconscious') is the repository of ideational representatives of human drives and desires. The ego is the organized part of the mental structure. The super-ego is the protector and critic of this ego. While originating in the id, the super-ego takes its form from an internalization of particular external injunctions and prohibitions and of particular 'inherited' ones – of the world's *thou shalts* and *thou shalt nots*. Freud wrote:

> thus a child's super-ego is in fact constructed on the model not of its parents but of its parents' super-ego; the contents which fill it are the same and it becomes the vehicle of tradition and of all the time-resisting judgements of value which have propagated themselves in this manner from generation to generation. (*SE*, XXII, p. 67)

The concepts of id, ego and super-ego are metapsychological descriptions – phenomenologically the distinctions may well not be perceived. (We shall see this lack of differentiation again later in Klein's observation of the proximity of conscious, preconscious and unconscious in the very young child.) Freud thought that the division into ego and id characterized humankind and was one of three factors that might well be causative of our unique (or exceptional) proclivity to neurosis.

Freud mentions certain preconditions which he saw as crucial for the unique development of the human psyche.

The human baby is born prematurely. Its instincts are weak – it seems to have only a slight instinctual notion of how to avoid danger or to get satisfaction for its own needs from the outside. It is thus

much more helpless and dependent on others for the satisfaction of its vital needs than even those mammals most closely related to human beings. When its caretaker (usually – but, more important, prototypically – its mother) satisfies the baby, she is 'at one' with it and hence not felt as separate. When, however, she is felt to fail to satisfy the baby's need, she (or her breast) is experienced as separate from the baby and hence as the first distinct psychological object. When she is thus perceived to be missing, two things happen. One is that the loss or the removal of the means whereby its needs are met make the baby feel anxious. Anxiety is an affectual state that warns the baby of a danger. The danger is not experienced directly but is apprehended as a danger on the model of a preceding danger that was actually experienced (a 'trauma' – such as birth). The second is that the baby re-creates the mother for itself, making the satisfaction she has represented seem now to be inside itself (for instance, by hallucinating a 'good feed'); it thus forms a separate area within itself – which in part becomes its ego (the ego is 'the precipitate of abandoned object cathexes').

For the prematurely born infant there is a perception of the danger of helplessness and a signal of anxiety. The ego is formed on this bed of helplessness and anxiety. But the infant's helplessness relates to its inside as well as to its outside world. The internal needs and wishes, which are the instigators of the problem, themselves come to feel dangerous. Thus the ego which is being constructed has to cope with dangers from two directions: it develops means of avoiding external dangers and of rejecting internal ones that emanate from the id – these means are termed the ego's defences.

The biphasic nature of human sexuality is a further condition that Freud always felt was responsible for the predisposition of humankind to neuroses. In other mammals there seems to be a straightforward uninterrupted progression to sexual maturity; in humans amnesia overtakes infancy. The first phase is the efflorescent generalized sexuality of the infant (called 'polymorphously perverse'), then for a period sexuality is 'forgotten' and only latent, then it re-emerges in a second phase of ebullient sexuality in puberty and adolescence. This biphasic situation of infantile and then pubertal sexuality with a gap between them indicates the repression of infantile sexuality, the mark of the unconscious. Once again it suggests a division within the subject which seems to be the hallmark of the