

MELANIE KLEIN, PSYCHOANALYSIS, AND FEMINISM

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Melanie Klein is little known outside British psychoanalysis. Within it she is arguably the single most important figure after Freud. Although she died in 1960, her pioneering extension of his ideas – on hysteria and neurosis and the treatment of depression and psychosis in children as well as in adults – continues to inform the work of many British analysts. It contributes to the ongoing ‘anti-psychiatry’ project of understanding and treating schizophrenia psychologically rather than pharmacologically. And its object relations development is widely adopted by analysts, psychotherapists and by feminist theorists and therapists both in this country and in the USA (see e.g. Kohon, 1986; Eichenbaum and Orbach, 1985; Greenberg and Mitchell, 1983; Chodorow, 1978).

The relevance to feminism of her own work, shorn of its object relations elaboration, is raised by the recent publication of the first full-scale account of her life (Grosskurth, 1986), and of a collection of her major writings (Mitchell, 1986). Her Canadian biographer, the English and Women’s Studies Professor, Phyllis Grosskurth, suggests that Klein’s own troubles as a woman might have been a major source of her specific contribution to psychoanalysis. In addition, Juliet Mitchell has drawn attention, in a recent Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) launch of the two books, to the uses made by feminists of Klein’s account of female sexuality and mothering. In this article I shall elaborate on these points before going on to outline a further and, in my view, more important bearing on feminism of Klein’s psychoanalytic theory and practice.

Personal life and work

In opening the above-mentioned ICA debate, Grosskurth quoted the review of her book by Sherry Turkle, author of *Psychoanalytic Politics* (1978), and referred specifically to Turkle’s remark that Grosskurth’s biography

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testifies to the courage if not the calm of a woman who drew on her own unresolved suffering to bring other analysts face to face with the 'witches of the night'. (Turkle, 1986:15)

Grosskurth does indeed claim that Klein's extension of psychoanalysis into the nether reaches of the mind derived from 'her own unresolved suffering' – from her sorrows as daughter, sister, wife, mother, lover, and woman analyst. She tells of her birth in Vienna in 1882 as the youngest and possibly least wanted of her parents' four children; of her adored brother's ignominious death at twenty-five; of the family's financial difficulties precipitating her into early and unhappy marriage to Arthur Klein; of her depression following the birth of her children (Melitta, Hans and Erich), and of her mother's death in 1914 as probably the most immediate cause of her then being initiated into psychoanalysis – reading Freud's *On Dreams*, and going into treatment with Ferenczi in Budapest where the Kleins then lived.

Grosskurth suggests that it was to further this treatment that Klein began analysing children: first her own,¹ and then others, including Karen Horney's daughters in Berlin, to which she moved in 1921, and Ernest Jones's wife and children in London, where she settled in 1926 following her divorce from Arthur. Launched into child analysis, according to Grosskurth, by her personal experience as a woman, she soon used it to extend Freud's theory of the Oedipus complex, to detail its intellectual (or 'epistemophilic') as well as sexual and emotional ramifications, and to insist on its early origins – both oral and anal – prior to the development of genital or phallic primacy and the construction of sexual difference in terms of castration therein involved.

She later went on to expand not only Freud's theory of the Oedipus complex but also his account of depression, work in which Grosskurth says she again drew on the griefs of her sex: in this case, that of being discarded in 1926 by her Berlin lover (C.Z. Kloetzel); being bereaved of her son Hans, killed in a mountaineering accident in 1934, and being vehemently attacked through the 1930s by her daughter Melitta both privately and publicly in the British Psycho-Analytical Society to which both women then belonged.

Grosskurth does not explicitly root in Klein's personal experience her next major breakthrough in psychoanalysis, her 1946 development of Freud's early ideas about schizophrenia. But she does provide material indicating a parallel between Klein's then description of the schizoid mechanism of 'projective identification' (as involving the splitting off and intrusive projection of parts of the self into others) and Klein's own intrusiveness as a person, particularly as a mother. And she also explicitly links to Klein's personal experience her later work on schizoid mechanisms – her 1955 account of the envy and greed involved in the idealization consequent on splitting love from hate. She claims that Klein instantiated all these processes in her own person: that she unrealistically idealized her mother; that she envied

other women (her sister, daughter and other women analysts), and that she was personally quite greedy. Furthermore, she implies that Klein's last, posthumously published paper on loneliness drew on the loneliness she herself suffered as an effect of people keeping their distance from her because they experienced her 'as a kind of ideal mother' (Grosskurth, 1986:455). Perhaps her loneliness in old age was also due to the wariness induced in others by the tenaciousness with which she sought to promote her approach to psychoanalysis. Certainly many objected to her forthrightness: Virginia Woolf criticized her as 'a woman of character & force...like an undertow; menacing'; John Bowlby complained of her 'overweening self-righteousness'; R. D. Laing of her 'adamantine dogmatism' (Grosskurth, 1986: 237,405,446).

Many now relate the loneliness of successful women, and women's depression and envy (see e.g. Nairne and Smith, 1984; Steedman, 1986), to their social subordination. Klein herself did not make this connexion. Nor is this surprising given the then lack of any widespread feminist movement. This may explain why Klein also did not apparently seek to use her personal or professional influence to advance the social status of women, say in the British Psycho-Analytical Society. Paradoxically, the Society's friendliness toward women analysts seems to have owed more to British and Bloomsbury snobbery about trade and the professions, expressed in respect for the so-called 'amateur professional' and in tolerance of non-medically qualified 'lay' and child analysts. Women were therefore not debarred from the British Psycho-Analytical Society, as they were from other psychoanalytic societies, by lack of professional medical training. And by 1925, when James Strachey first told the Society of Klein's work as regaled him by his wife Alix (then in Berlin with Klein), it already had many women (and men) members interested in working directly with children and accordingly eager to welcome Klein and learn more of her ideas on the subject.

Although Klein thus benefitted from the British Society's acceptance of women analysts, she herself did little to promote their standing as a sex within the Society. This is not to deny that she supported many women analysts. But this support seems to have been conditional on their adherence to her views and was withdrawn in the case of her one-time intimate friend and colleague, Paula Heimann, when Heimann dared assert her professional autonomy from Klein.

Klein certainly showed no special consideration toward her own sex when it came to dealing with her critics. Her sharpness toward Anna Freud is notorious. That the latter's work nevertheless remains a major influence on British psychoanalysis today can hardly be credited to Klein – whatever Kleinian analyst, Riccardo Steiner (1985), may claim to the contrary. This influence is instead generally and more plausibly credited to the loyalty of analysts to Anna Freud's father, and to British genius for two-timing compromise expressed in the Society's 1946 decision formally to divide itself into three – Kleinian,

Middle Group, and Anna Freudian: a 'ladies' agreement' remarkable for housing together under one roof factions that, in the case of men analysts (notably Freud, Adler and Jung), tore other societies apart.²

No more can Klein be credited with the matriarchalism of British psychoanalysis. In the context of Klein's work, matriarchalism involves the claim that the mother is central to human psychology, that the main task of development and of therapy is achievement of a sense of benign and gratifying relation to the mother (or her substitute, the analyst) as securely lodged within the self. This aspect of Klein's approach to psychoanalysis stands in marked contrast to the patriarchalism of orthodox Freudian theory and practice, to the primacy it accords the father in development, and to its claim that the main issue to be worked through in infancy and in therapy is the castration anxiety first experienced by the Oedipal child in relation to the father and then transferred, in therapy, on to the person of the analyst.

According to Juliet Mitchell (1986), the focus of British psychoanalysis on the child's relation to the mother predated Klein's arrival in England, and was an effect of the particular leaning toward childhood taken by British, and especially Wordsworthian, romanticism. However, although Klein benefitted from and strengthened this bent of British psychoanalysis, she also brought it into question because of the way she put it into practice in her own clinical work. Many joined her daughter in criticizing her maternal dominance over her *ersatz* progeny, her analytic trainees and patients. For example, analyst Marjorie Brierley attributed Klein's failure to analyse her patients' idealization and positive transference towards her as mother to her 'liking for control over people' (Grosskurth, 1986:300).

In view of the above, it is perhaps little wonder that feminists have generally valued Klein less for her practice as a clinician and member of the British Psycho-Analytical Society, and less for the way she drew in her work on her personal sufferings as a woman, than for her theory. Specifically, as I shall now explain, they have found useful her account of female sexuality and mothering.

Female sexuality

Commenting on Juliet Mitchell's *Selected Melanie Klein*, one reviewer remarks:

as Melanie Klein may be thought of as charting feminine psychology and putting it on the psychoanalytical map it is fitting that the author of *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* should further the introduction of Klein's work to an ever-widening public. (MacGibbon, 1986:20)

Feminine psychology had in fact already been put on 'the psychoanalytical map' before Klein started writing about it, namely by

her protector, mentor and Berlin analyst, Karl Abraham, and, before that, by Freud himself. Klein's account is, however, quite distinct from theirs. Abraham and Freud came to hold femininity and feminine heterosexual desire to be made not born, to be an effect of penis-envy. By contrast, Klein held femininity to be innate and penis-envy to be secondary to envy of the breast. Feminine heterosexual desire, she stated, develops not in reaction to penis-envy but to breast-envy, to the oral and anal frustrations experienced by the child in relation to the mother, particularly in weaning and potty training. These deprivations, she says, strengthen the child's innately given genital impulses, leading boys to relate to the mother genitally rather than orally or anally, and girls to transfer their oral and biologically given incorporative genital aims away from the mother's breast to the father's penis of which, she maintained, the girl already has inborn, unconscious knowledge.

This nativist account of femininity is today developed by Janine Chasseguet-Smirgel and other contributors to the collection, *Female Sexuality* (1981). It was adopted and pursued much more vigorously, however, by feminist-minded analysts in the 1920s and 1930s. Karen Horney and Ernest Jones then took it up to counter the phallocentrism of Freud's theory. Ideologically opposed on grounds of sex equality to Freud's claim that femininity is predicated on high regard for male anatomy, on penis-envy, Horney and Jones instead adopted Klein's theory because it located the source of femininity in women's biology, independent of, and in no way construed as inferior to, men's biology.

Whatever the ideological considerations in favour of the postulate of innate femininity – and this postulate (say, in the case of sociobiology) is more often used against women's interests than in favour of them – the evidence does not conclusively prove femininity to be innate or biologically determined. Furthermore, the thesis that it is biologically determined in no way addresses feminism's central concern – namely, the way that women's destiny and psychology, their 'femininity', is socially determined by sex inequality, by their social subordination. Ironically, Freud is much more relevant to feminism than Klein in this respect. For he was concerned with the way femininity is conditioned by this subordination, at least as it is expressed in the 'sociological' equation of femininity with passivity, in the repudiation by both sexes of femininity, and in the construction by both boys and girls of sexual difference in terms of female inferiority and castration – the very reasons, paradoxically, that Horney and Jones reject Freud's theory in favour of Klein's as insufficiently sensitive to feminist issues!

Nevertheless some feminists continue to propound the view that femininity can best be understood independently of masculinity, not least because they believe this to be the surest means of enabling women to build up their confidence in themselves and their sex as autonomous from and independent of men. In this, however, today's feminists more often draw on the psychoanalytic account of

femininity put forward not so much by Klein as by Horney, and, latterly, by the French analyst, Luce Irigaray. Others are persuaded that Freud's account of femininity and female sexuality is more relevant to feminism's understanding of, and struggle against, women's social subordination. Of more use in this context, some believe, is not Klein's account of female sexuality but her account of mothering.

Mothering

Notable examples of this use of Klein's work are Dorothy Dinnerstein's *The Rocking of the Cradle* (1978) and Kim Chernin's *The Hungry Self* (1986). Before considering the arguments of these books, I shall first detail the aspects of Klein's account of the mother-child relation on which they draw, since many readers may be unfamiliar with them.

Going beyond Freud's later theory of anxiety, and of the Life and Death Instincts, and using her observations from both child and adult analysis, Klein concluded that the infant's first and primary anxiety, emanating from the Death Instinct, is fear of annihilation, fear lest it be destroyed by the hatred it feels, say, when it is frustrated by the mother (or her breast), so fragile and precarious is its initial sense of itself as integrated and whole. Defending against this anxiety, says Klein, the baby projects its disintegrating hatred out of itself into the mother (and her breast). It now experiences her as the locus of hatred, as hating and attacking it. This gives rise to persecutory anxiety, writes Klein, against which the baby defends by splitting off and denying its experience of the mother as frustrating and persecuting. Instead it idealizes her as totally good, loving and gratifying – in sum, as the very embodiment of the Life Instinct. But this provokes rage against her for the liveliness and goodness she now seemingly possesses at its expense. This is the initial cause, Klein argues, of the attempt enviously to spoil and greedily to expropriate rather than enjoy and feel grateful for the goodness of others – in the first place, the contents of the mother's body.

As the Life and Death Instincts become increasingly fused, she maintains, the baby comes to have a more secure sense of itself and of its mother as whole, both loved and hated, good and bad. But this recognition of the mother's wholeness and separateness brings with it another fear – depressive anxiety lest, in attacking the hated and frustrating mother, the baby harm, destroy or lose the loved and gratifying mother. Defending against this anxiety, writes Klein, babies often resort to 'manic' denial of their dependence on the mother, deriding her as someone not worth depending upon, omnipotently protesting their self-sufficiency, as in the vehement temper tantrums of toddlers.

Again, says Klein, the child is rescued from anxiety by its innate tendency toward integration. It thereby develops even more secure



Melanie Klein, c.1912

trust in itself as whole and good – a development that she maintains crystallizes around its internalization or ‘introjection’ of its gratifying experience of the mother as a ‘good internal object’. This gives it the confidence of containing within itself the wherewithal to make good any harm done the mother by its hatred and aggression. As a result the child feels able to acknowledge the reality of both its hatred and love, of its dependence and independence of the mother, of her separateness as a whole person, neither all-good nor all-bad, neither ideal nor contemptible, but both good and bad, loved and hated, gratifying and frustrating.

What has all this to do with feminism and women’s social subordination? According to Dinnerstein, this subordination – especially the unequal division of childcare it involves – causes us never to work through the paranoid and depressive anxieties in the way Klein claims to be necessary if we are to abandon our infantile idealization and denigration of the mother as ‘dirty goddess’ (Dinnerstein, 1978:124) and gain a realistic sense of her, of women generally and of ourselves as whole and independent beings capable of governing our own lives without recourse to dependence upon and control by others. Rather than work through these anxieties to achieve independence and autonomy, says Dinnerstein, we avoid the pain involved in this process by turning away from women upon whom dependence is fraught from infancy onward with the anxious phantasies associated with splitting, idealization and denigration. Instead both girls and boys, women and men seek dependence on and rule by the father and by men generally who, because they are less involved in infant care, are less imbued with the infantile phantasies that make rule by women so fearful.

The solution to this ‘our current sexual malaise’, argues Dinnerstein, is shared parenting. If men participated equally with women in childcare, she implies, they would then equally be invested with the phantasies involved in the paranoid and depressive anxieties of infancy. There would then be no escape from working through these anxieties and developing a more realistic attitude toward both women and men, and toward ourselves as capable of autonomy and independence of rule and dominance by others, women or men.

Kim Chernin’s use of Klein’s work is more modest in conception. Dinnerstein’s starting point is nothing less than the general human condition, ‘our current sexual malaise’. Chernin’s is the eating disorders suffered by herself and the women she treats in Berkeley, California. She attributes these disorders to the guilt women feel in surpassing their mothers in a male-dominated world which, despite the gains made by previous generations of feminists, does not accord girls and women the same right as boys and men of transcending their parents. Women, she says, feel all the more guilty toward their mothers on this account because their mothers so often clearly feel depleted by the mothering whereby they enable their daughters to outgrow them. Chernin claims that today’s mothers have often been unable wholeheartedly either to resist or to commit themselves to the

self-sacrifice involved in mothering as perhaps their mothers could before them when society faced women with a more straightforward choice between mothering and female emancipation. The result, she says, is that today's daughters often feel that the phantasies, described by Klein as universal in infancy, have indeed taken effect, that in feeding from the mother and thus being launched on the process of growing up and transcending her, they have actually devoured, expropriated, drained and exhausted her (see also Friedman, 1985). It is this destructive phantasy, or 'primal feast', writes Chernin, that is unconsciously expressed in the bingeing, shame, guilt, purging and self-starvation of bulimia and anorexia – conditions she describes as produced in women by the contradictions they face between aggression and atonement, regression and development, negation and affirmation of the mother and of the self as female (see also Sayers, 1986b).

Treatment, argues Chernin, depends on undoing the resistances involved in these disorders to women recalling their positive – comforting, pleasurable, even rapturous – as well as negative childhood experiences of their mothers and of food. She envisages that out of these recollections might be forged a positive image of woman into which girls might be initiated without recourse to the eating disorders that currently plague them now that they are offered no other ideal but quasi-male slenderness to which to aspire.

But recollections and memories, however positive, are insufficient in themselves to bring about women's liberation. If the positive experiences of the past are to be realized in the present we have to do more than 'dream of the future, out of the transformed obsessions that presently rule our lives' as Chernin recommends (1986:204). We also have to take practical steps to actualize this dream in reality. Sadly Chernin, like Dinnerstein, fails adequately to detail the means whereby the solution she advocates to sex inequality might be realized in practice. Unlike Dinnerstein and other feminists, however, she draws attention to and evidently finds useful Klein's focus on the place of aggression and rage in mental life. It is with this aspect of Klein's work that I shall now end.

Aggression

Aggression poses a peculiar problem to oppressed groups in society. Not only are they more frequently its victims, but they are also often regarded as essentially lacking in aggression. While aggression – respectably garbed in the mantle of law, order and ideology – inheres in the very power of the ruling class, race or sex, it is disqualified as illegitimate in others. Women are often castigated as wantonly hysterical for raging against the wrongs done them by male-dominated society – their sex being deemed naturally unaggressive, submissive and passive in contrast to the dominance and aggression of men.

Participating in this estimation of our sex as intrinsically lacking in aggression, we often fail to recognize as such the anger and rage evoked in us by the effects of our social subordination. Instead of being galvanized by these feelings into collectively confronting their causes in external social reality, we all too often act on them in an illusory and individual fashion.

Rather than consciously experience our feelings of frustration and rage as our own, we often vicariously indulge these feelings by projecting them into and dwelling on their expression by others, especially by men – the seeming natural repository of aggression in male-dominated society. This perception flatters us with the illusion of innocence, of being the more morally upright, peace-loving sex. But this advantage is gained at the cost of divesting us of the angry feelings which, were we to own to them, might fuel our resistance to our social subordination, including the all too real aggression and violence perpetrated against women by men. By disowning and projecting our anger we instead exacerbate the paranoid sense of ourselves as hapless victims of men's aggression and social dominance, as impotent hostages to fortune, powerless to change it.

Alternatively, we deal with the anger and rage produced by the frustrations of our social subordination, again in illusory fashion, by dealing with these frustrations as though they were internal to the self. Instead of acting collectively on our anger to confront the causes of these frustrations as they exist in external reality, we battle individually with these causes as internal phantoms within the self – a depressive form of shadow-boxing that again does nothing actually to engage with or change and improve our social lot as women.

It is here, it seems to me, that Klein's work is most relevant to feminism. For she developed techniques of undoing the self-destructive phantasies and illusions whereby, instead of recognizing our anger and its social causes, we variously project it, as in paranoia, or introject its causes, as in depression. In effect, she sought to enable people, through therapy, to own to and to act constructively – in reality rather than in phantasy – on the feelings produced in them by the frustrations of everyday social life. True, she focused on individual and constitutional factors, on the vicissitudes of biology and personal biography that cause women and men to defend in paranoid and depressive fashion against social hardship and frustration. But if the techniques she thereby developed are helpful in undoing these defences insofar as they are individually produced, perhaps they might also be helpful insofar as they are socially produced by sex inequality.

Klein's method of treatment, like Freud's, involved seeking to dispel the illusions involved in these defences by interpreting and making conscious the anxieties underlying them as these anxieties become manifest in therapy. According to Freud, the main anxiety underlying the defence of repression stems from the Oedipal child's construction of sexual inequality and difference as signifying

punishment of its sexual desire by castration. It is this anxiety, he argued, that causes sexual desire to be repressed into the unconscious, so that it can then be consciously gratified only in the hallucinatory and illusory form afforded by neurotic and hysterical symptoms. Klein's clinical concern was less with these symptoms than with paranoid and depressive states of mind. She believed the main anxieties involved in these conditions to arise from aggression rather than sexual desire: in the case of paranoia, from fear lest expression of anger and aggression destroy the self such that these feelings are instead projected out of the self into others; in the case of depression, from fear lest outward expression of anger and aggression provoke the loss of those one loves such that these feelings are instead turned inward against the self. Others have since pointed out that women's social subordination renders them particularly prone to both types of anxiety: to paranoid anxiety because their subordination makes them peculiarly subject to experiencing themselves as vulnerable, helpless and liable to fragmentation by hatred and aggression; to depressive anxiety because their subordination renders them economically as well as emotionally dependent on those they love, and hence particularly fearful of losing them through outward expression of their anger and frustration. (These points are further explained in my recent book, *Sexual Contradictions*, 1986a.)

An example of Klein's treatment of paranoid splitting-off of aggression from the self comes from her account of a woman who recounted the following dream in therapy:

she had to deal with a wicked girl child who was determined to murder somebody... I (Klein) also entered into the dream and the patient felt that I might help her in dealing with the child. Then the patient strung up the child on a tree in order to frighten her and also prevent her from doing harm. When the patient was about to pull the rope and kill the child, she woke. (Klein, 1946:195)

Klein interpreted the dream as expressing the patient's unconscious anxiety lest in acting on her feelings of anger and frustration she destroy or annihilate part of herself, represented in the dream by the child. The dream, she said, also expressed the patient's hope that Klein might protect her from thus destroying herself. By interpreting and making conscious the patient's splitting-off of her hostile and aggressive feelings, and by working through the anxieties for the self that these feelings evoke, Klein sought to enable her patients to use their angry feelings constructively rather than destructively, as occurs when they are expelled and disowned. By thus counteracting the splitting-off of aggression from the self, she sought to strengthen the self's integration – a process that, as we have seen, she believed usually occurs naturally with development.

Kleinian treatment of depression also aims to foster self-integration. An example comes from Hanna Segal's introduction to

Klein's work. It concerns a woman who, after unburdening herself of the frustrations of her social lot, specifically of her financial worries (asking Segal to waive her analytic fees on this account), arrived at her analytic session

complaining that my waiting room was very cold. She also thought, for the first time, that it looked very drab and dreary, and she deplored the lack of curtains in the room. (Segal, 1973:71)

She then recounted a dream about icebergs, recalling in association to it a memory of an old, white-haired woman whom she had neglected and about whom she felt guilty. Here, in abbreviated form, is Segal's interpretation:

the cold waiting room was the same as the cold icebergs in her dream... she must feel that her demands to pay reduced fees or no fees at all had completely exhausted and impoverished me – the waiting room being drab and dreary without curtains. (Segal, 1973:71)

By thus making conscious and working through the anxieties about losing others – in this case about losing and impoverishing the analyst – as a consequence of outward expression of anger and frustration, Kleinians hope to enable their patients to recognize that hostile feelings do not have the dreaded effect of destroying either the analyst or the helpful aspects of therapy, that these remain intact and can be internalized as 'good object relations' around which further ego integration can take place. Patients, it is hoped, thereby grow confident of having sufficient goodness within themselves to be able constructively to repair any damage done by the outward expression of their anger.

If the above techniques are effective in undoing the depressive and paranoid anxieties that otherwise impede women's ability to act constructively rather than self-destructively on the anger produced in them by their social subordination, then they are clearly relevant to feminism and its concern to remedy the ill effects of this subordination. Indeed, insofar as Kleinian therapy is effective in this respect it is surely relevant to all oppressed groups insofar as the disqualification of their aggression by the institutions and ideologies of those in power in society causes them to deal with their oppression in phantasy rather than reality through paranoid projection and/or depressive introjection of the anger and rage it produces in them.

If Klein's work bears on social oppression in general Freud's work bears on women's oppression in particular. This is because his work with hysterical and neurotic conditions led him to recognize the repression of sexual desire involved in these conditions. And, as feminists have shown, women are particularly prone to repress into the unconscious this desire, given its contradiction with their conscious recognition of the dictates of patriarchy that fully accords only to the father the right of realizing sexual desire, accordingly symboliz-



photo by Jane Brown, courtesy of the Wellcome Institute Library, London

Melanie Klein

ed by the male genital – the phallus.

However, neither Freudian nor Kleinian therapy explicitly engages with or addresses the social fact of women's subordination. To the extent that this subordination is the cause of women variously repressing, projecting and introjecting their sexual desire and aggression, then any relief afforded by such therapy of the neurotic, paranoid and

depressive effects of these defences is bound to be short-lived. On the other hand, in helping individuals become conscious of the illusory character of these defensive resolutions of the conflicts of sexual desire and aggression produced by sexual inequality, psychoanalysis provides a starting point beyond which feminism rightly strives in mobilizing women to act on their individual desire and anger, collectively to struggle to change and improve their social lot.

Conclusion

Klein was extremely single-minded in her commitment to psychoanalysis. She almost entirely neglected the social world beyond its confines. Many (e.g. Fuller, 1986; Seabright, 1986) have been struck by the fact that she and other analysts were so intent on one war-time discussion of her work that Winnicott had to draw their attention to the need to take shelter from an air raid then going on outside. If Klein was oblivious to the war, she was even more oblivious to the battle of the sexes. Nevertheless, as I have sought to demonstrate in this article, her work is germane to this battle. While others have seen its relevance as residing either in the details of her personal life and work, or in her theoretical ideas about female sexuality and mothering, I have been arguing that the aspects of her work that are most important to feminism are precisely those for which she is generally most valued in psychoanalysis – namely, for her extension of Freud's theory and practice as regards hysteria, neurosis and sexuality to the understanding and treatment of the paranoid and depressive anxieties associated with aggression: anxieties that all too often stymie feminism's otherwise constructive fight to remedy women's social subordination.

Notes

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- 1 In this respect Grosskurth is shocked by Klein's drawing on her personal experience. Like feminism, however, psychoanalysis has always drawn first and foremost on its practitioners' private experience, beginning with Freud's self-analysis and continuing, in the case of child analysis, with its founders' first analysing the children with whom they lived: Hermine von Hug-Hellmuth describing in 1912 her observations of the nephew she brought up (and by whom she was killed – an event that threw a pall over the early days of child analysis, as reflected for instance in Gide's 1925 novel, *The Counterfeiters*); Melanie Klein giving a paper in 1919 about her analysis of her youngest child, Erich; and Anna Freud devoting most space in her 1926

book on child analysis to documenting her treatment of the daughter of her life-long companion, Dorothy Burlingham

- 2 An example of this continuing division of the British Psycho-Analytical Society is the separate public lecture days mounted by it in the autumn of 1986 to discuss the work of Melanie Klein, Donald Winnicott and Anna Freud respectively.

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