

LONDON KLEINIANS IN LOS ANGELES

Laying the Foundations of Object
Relations Theory and Practice

Edited by

Jennifer Langham



PHOENIX
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firing the mind

Also edited by Jennifer Langham

*Contemporary Object Relations in Los Angeles:
Building on the Work of the London Kleinians*

To the memory of

ALBERT MASON

with gratitude

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Jennifer Langham

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About the editor and contributors

Wilfred Bion is one of the most innovative and influential psychoanalytic thinkers of the twentieth century. After acquiring a degree in history at Oxford, he studied medicine at University College London and spent seven years at the Tavistock Clinic training in psychoanalytic psychotherapy. He soon became chairman of the executive committee of the Tavistock Clinic and director of the London Clinic of Psychoanalysis, completed a psychoanalytic training, and eventually became president of the British Psychoanalytical Society. Bion wrote what many consider to be the most important body of work on psychoanalysis after Freud and Klein. In addition to his many published papers, he is particularly noted for the following volumes: *Experiences in Groups*, *Learning from Experience*, *Elements of Psycho-Analysis*, *Transformations*, and *Second Thoughts*.

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Albert Mason trained at the British Institute of Psychoanalysis and practised in London before emigrating to the United States in 1969 with Wilfred Bion and Susanna Isaacs to further the work of Melanie Klein. Dr Mason was a clinical professor of psychiatry at the University of Southern California and a training and supervising analyst at The Psychoanalytic Center of California (PCC) and the New Center for Psychoanalysis in Los Angeles. He published and taught extensively in the US and abroad and was a founding member and twice president of PCC as well as a past member of the House of Delegates of the International Psychoanalytical Association. Dr Mason maintained a private practice in Beverly Hills for nearly fifty years.

Donald Meltzer was born in the United States where he completed medical school and his psychiatric training before emigrating to London to pursue his interest in the work of Melanie Klein. He trained as both a child and adult analyst at the British Psychoanalytical Society, where he later became a training analyst and supervisor. His psychoanalytic writings are extensive and highly influential; his writings on the treatment of autistic children are considered especially valuable. Notable among his publications are *The Psychoanalytical Process*, *Explorations in Autism*, *The Kleinian Development*, *The Claustrum*, *The Apprehension of Beauty*, and *Sincerity and Other Works*.

Of German origin, **Herbert Rosenfeld** attended medical school in Munich and came to England in 1935 to escape Nazi persecution. In London he requalified as a psychiatrist, went into analysis with Melanie Klein, and later completed his analytic training at the British Psychoanalytical Society. He was most noted for his treatment of psychosis using Kleinian concepts, for his groundbreaking work on the destructive aspects of narcissism, and his contributions to the understanding of projective identification. Of particular interest are his volumes *Impasse and Interpretation* and *Psychotic States*.

Polish-born **Hanna Segal** studied medicine in Warsaw and Paris before completing her training at the Polish School of Medicine at the University of Edinburgh. She became one of the most significant figures in British psychoanalysis, known particularly for her ability to clarify and extend the work of Melanie Klein. She qualified as both a child and an adult psychoanalyst at the British Psychoanalytical Society and has published numerous papers and books including *An Introduction to the Work of Melanie Klein*; a biography of Melanie Klein entitled *Klein*; *The Work of Hanna Segal*; *Dream, Phantasy and Art*; *Psychoanalysis, Literature and War*; and *Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow*. She twice served as president of the British Psychoanalytical Society and as vice president of the International Psychoanalytical Association.

Frederick Vaquer has served as president of both The Psychoanalytic Center of California (PCC) and the New Center for Psychoanalysis. He was a founding member of PCC as well as a founding member of the Confederation of Independent Psychoanalytic Societies in the US. As a senior faculty member and a training and supervising analyst, Dr Vaquer has taught extensively at both Los Angeles institutes and was for many years chairman of the Ethics and Wellness Committee at The Psychoanalytic Center of California where he is now a member emeritus.

Introduction

Frederick Vaquer and Jennifer Langham

Sigmund Freud had little patience with those who put forth what were held to be psychoanalytic ideas, theories, and practices with which he disagreed; Alfred Adler and Carl Jung were prominent examples of those he expelled from the ranks of his early circle of supporters. Although Freud did not openly dismiss the theories and practices of Melanie Klein, her ideas were vehemently attacked and rejected by his daughter Anna. In the early 1940s, Klein and Anna Freud engaged in a series of Special Scientific Meetings organised by the British Psychoanalytical Society to debate the controversies generated by the theories and clinical practice of Klein and to determine to what extent her work deviated from Freud's basic concepts. The outcome of these "Controversial Discussions" was a reorganisation of the British training institute (the Institute of Psychoanalysis) to reflect three differing perspectives represented by the Klein group, the Middle or Independent group, and the Anna Freud group, which carried on the tradition of the classic Freudians.

In the United States, psychoanalysis has traditionally been represented chiefly by classical and ego psychological theories and practices. At one point the American Psychoanalytic Association ejected

members espousing what it considered to be dissident notions. Harry Stack Sullivan and Karen Horney were two of the more prominent targets of this expulsive tendency, while Kleinian and British object relations schools of thought were relatively ignored, as few clinicians held them to be of value.

The Los Angeles Psychoanalytic Study Group, established in 1935, became the first psychoanalytic organisation on the West Coast. Later known as the Los Angeles Psychoanalytic Society and Institute (LAPSI), it became the clinical home of many Viennese and German émigré analysts. Disputes between the American medical analysts and the predominantly European lay analysts were among the many complex factors that precipitated a split in the Society in 1950. The new group called itself the Society for Psychoanalytic Medicine of Southern California, clearly distancing itself from LAPSI and clearly leaving the lay analysts behind. In the early 1960s the remaining members of LAPSI were again polarised, due this time to an ideological and personal rift that developed between the supporters of two prominent psychoanalytic figures, Leo Rangell and Ralph Greenson. The two groups actively worked against each other, producing an atmosphere of deep distrust and animosity. It has been suggested that the chaotic and paranoid atmosphere at LAPSI during the 1950s and 1960s provided a generally hostile environment for the arrival of the London Kleinians who eventually settled in Los Angeles.

In the early Sixties a group of young analysts, recent graduates of the Los Angeles Psychoanalytic Society and Institute, formed study groups examining the theories of Melanie Klein and Wilfred Bion; most active in these endeavours were Bernard Bail, Marvin Berenson, James Grotstein, Arthur Malin, and Bernard Branchaft. Subsequently a continuous stream of London Kleinians was invited to lecture, supervise, and settle in the Los Angeles area. Accepting the invitation, Wilfred Bion and Albert Mason emigrated from England in the late 1960s and established practices in Beverly Hills. They were soon joined by Susanna Isaacs Elmhirst. Highly qualified as an MD and training analyst in the British Institute of Psychoanalysis, she had worked for eleven years as physician-in-charge of the Child Psychiatry Department at London's Paddington Green Children's Hospital, where she had succeeded Donald Winnicott. However, she was refused LAPSI

membership on the basis of her Kleinian orientation and ultimately returned to London.

Mason quickly became the leading spokesperson for the Kleinian group and, as such, became the centre of a backlash led by Anna Freud with the help of Ralph Greenson. Miss Freud sent a plea to the local analytic establishment demanding the elimination of what she characterised as a metastasis of destructive Kleinian ideas brought to the United States, and Greenson was only too eager to help. The resulting hostility within LAPSI culminated in a formal complaint against the interlopers lodged with the International Psychoanalytical Association. Nevertheless, the ideas of Klein, Bion, and other British object relations theorists gradually took hold.

Since the early 1970s psychoanalysts from the British Psychoanalytical Society have been invited to Los Angeles on a regular basis to lecture and to supervise, thereby contributing to the development of object relations theory and practice in the psychoanalytic community. Part I of this volume contains transcriptions of some of these early lectures, and Part II contains seminal papers written by some of the founding members of The Psychoanalytic Center of California (PCC) before and after its formation in 1984. Today PCC continues to function as a vital centre of psychoanalytic training and education in the British object relations tradition.

Foreword

Barnet D. Malin

At 7:30 one evening, sometime in the mid-1960s, my brother and I were ready to say goodnight to our father, Arthur Malin. He was in yet another of those seemingly endless series of evening meetings, but luckily it was his turn to host it at our home. We stood outside the closed door as Mom tapped lightly and poked her head inside. She motioned for us to go in.

We'd encountered such evening psychoanalytic seminars at our home before. As usual, there were about ten people, some smoking cigarettes, and everyone looking very intent and very serious. But this evening the group seemed a bit perturbed by our intrusion. You'd think it was a primal scene enactment or something. What caught our eyes immediately was the most unusual sight of an older, stout woman with greying hair, settled into a chair, smoking ... a cigar. A small one, but a cigar, nonetheless. This was extraordinary. We stared at her in amazement as Dad motioned for us to come over. "Dr Segal, I'd like to introduce my boys, Barney and Norman." She said something like, "It's a pleasure to meet you," in a voice that was just as surprising as her appearance, which now included cigar smoke wafting from her mouth.

She had this wonderful English accent and spoke in a low, grumbly voice that sounded both tough and inviting at the same time.

Dr Segal asked our names, which we repeated politely. She smiled and then asked us, “Do you like James Bond?” We nodded vigorously, and she responded, “Well then, I have something for you.” We approached as she reached into her bag to pull out two small metal toy cars. They were gold-coloured Aston Martins, just like James Bond drove. We were absolutely delighted. Dr Segal showed us their special features—press one button and a bullet shield comes up behind the rear window, press another button and groovy machine guns pop out at the front and, best yet, press another button and the top springs open and a little plastic driver goes flying out from the ejector seat. This was fantastic! We thanked her profusely and hoped we could stick around a bit more. I’m sure that Dad’s friend, Dr Grotstein, made some sort of joke; I wish I could remember it. But we got the message that it was time to go, because Dad wiggled his eyebrows up-and-down in a not-too-subtle manner. We thanked Dr Segal once more and made our way out. Naturally we began playing immediately with our new James Bond Aston Martin cars (made by Corgi, model 261, the James Bond Aston Martin DB5).

Sometime after Hanna Segal’s visit, I was again outside the family room where a meeting was taking place. But this meeting was different. The door was open rather than closed, and it was very, very noisy in there. I walked in to say hello to everyone. There were perhaps eight people sitting around the massive circular main table. Once again there were cigarettes, with alcohol newly added to the mix, and once again there was someone smoking a cigar. This time the smoker was Ralph Greenson (Romy to his friends), who comported himself as the major-domo of the group. Voices, laughter, and spirits were high. It was the monthly poker game; I waved hello to the very important people seated at the table and, as a beginning player, stayed to watch. After a few minutes my father rose and beckoned me back towards the door. “What’s wrong?” I asked. He replied, “Barney, you know this is a group of psychoanalysts playing poker here. They are all watching your face, and you are giving their hands away.” I burst out laughing and left.

Psychoanalysis in Los Angeles was volatile, political, occasionally corrupt, and always brimming with intensity during the 1950s and 1960s.

Much lay hidden under the rocks of local psychoanalytic societies and institutes. At the Los Angeles Psychoanalytic Society and Institute (LAPSI) Leo Rangell and Ralph Greenson wrestled for power and dominance, practically forcing analysts there to select one camp or another, almost as if to pledge fealty to a tribal leader. Independent thinking was indeed difficult although some, like Ivan McGuire, held their personal ground. Arthur Malin, James Grotstein, and others had personal analyses with McGuire who was very interested in Fairbairn's work and more than familiar with British psychoanalysis. Soon Bernard Bail, Marvin Berenson, James Grotstein, and Arthur Malin—a group whom Grotstein would come to call the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse—teamed up with another local analyst, Bernard Brandchaft, and began inviting Kleinian analysts from London to sunny southern California for wonderful sojourns presenting to their private study group (that was the apocalypse). This was how Hanna Segal ended up in our family room. The group also brought Herbert Rosenfeld, Donald Meltzer, and Albert Mason to give seminars.

Wilfred Bion moved permanently to Los Angeles in 1968, followed a month later by his young London colleague, Albert Mason. British Kleinian Susanna Isaacs Elmhirst soon joined them and lived and worked in Los Angeles during the mid-1970s. Mason became, unquestionably, the central figure of Kleinian psychoanalysis in Los Angeles, and some might say in the United States. He taught tirelessly, analysed and supervised hundreds of clinicians, gave countless lectures and seminars both there and abroad, and helped establish the Confederation of Independent Psychoanalytic Societies in the United States.

In just a matter of years a Kleinian foothold became firmly established in Los Angeles. The ensuing internecine warfare hit more widely, deeply, and destructively than many might have expected, as individuals and even their non-psychoanalyst family members suffered its impact. Psychoanalysis in Los Angeles suffered as well, as history testifies clearly. And yet, after going somewhat underground, British psychoanalysis re-emerged in the form of The Psychoanalytic Center of California (PCC), founded in 1984, and organised initially by James Gooch and others from the Department of Psychoanalysis at the California Graduate Institute (CGI). The rest, as they say, is history, and thankfully it has been a good history. The PCC became, and still

remains, a premier independent North American psychoanalytic society and institute, founded on the principles of British psychoanalysis. Its active and vibrant success stands as a testament to the curiosity and passion of those early psychoanalytic explorers at CGI and LAPSI, to the seeds planted by the Kleinian visitors of the 1970s, and in large part to the dedication and effort of Albert Mason over five decades to teach and train analysts in the Kleinian tradition. The contents of these two volumes demonstrate the success of his pursuits and the durability and value of this psychoanalytic training.

I will close with a personal comment about Dr Mason. After finishing medical school, I returned home to Los Angeles to take a residency in internal medicine. I was aware of something called an Oedipus complex and, comforting myself by intending to “work it out in treatment one day”, I switched from medicine to psychiatry and began psychoanalytic training in 1984. Things felt very different in psychoanalysis than what I recalled encountering as a child twenty years earlier. The atmosphere at LAPSI felt quiet, leaden, even dead at times. As a first-year candidate I had only six weeks of studying Melanie Klein during all four years of seminars. Luckily, however, these six weeks were taught by Albert Mason. His breadth of knowledge in metapsychology and clinical case examination, along with his extraordinary articulateness and capacity to relay complex ideas clearly, and his ridiculously wonderful sense of humour, captivated me immediately. I still believe I learned more about psychoanalysis in those six weeks than in any other seminar course I took, and my ongoing contact with Dr Mason afterwards helped make me into the psychoanalyst and person I am today. It gives me, therefore, a great sense of personal satisfaction to help introduce these volumes.