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The Interior Design of the Kleinian *Heim*:
Donald Meltzer and the Afterlife of Freud's *Uncanny*

The production and transmission of psychoanalytic knowledge are the culmination of an immersive process that takes place in the intense setting of the analytic encounter. As Wilfred Bion teaches us, it is by weathering the »emotional storms« created when two personalities meet that the raw rudiments of the mind are transformed into elements of thoughts, dreams, mythologies, and finally abstract concepts and scientific theories. There is an intrinsic relationship between clinical practice – the work performed on the couch or in play therapy – and its conceptualization and systematization in analytic theory. The latter relates to the former as, say, the philosophy of science relates to the practice and laboratory work of scientific investigation, or anthropological theory (even ontology) to fieldwork and ethnography, without which it would be free-floating and freewheeling. As Kant said, ideal concepts without empirical intuitions are empty, just as intuitions without concepts are blind.

It is precisely this psychoanalytic clinical experience that leads Freud to write in *The Uncanny*:

To conclude this collection of examples, which is certainly not complete, I will relate an instance taken from psychoanalytic experience; if it does not rest upon mere coincidence, it furnishes a beautiful confirmation of our theory of the uncanny. It often happens that neurotic men declare that they feel there is something uncanny about the female genital organs. This *unheimlich* place, however, is the entrance to the former *Heim* [home] of all human beings, to the place where each one of us lived once upon a time and in the beginning. There is a joking saying that »Love is home-sickness« and whenever a man dreams of a place or a country and says to

himself, while he is still dreaming: ›this place is familiar to me, I've been here before, we may interpret the place as being his mother's genitals or her body.¹ In this case too, then, the *unheimlich* is what was once *heimisch*, familiar; the prefix ›un‹ [un-] is the token of repression.²

In this paper, I would like to suggest that while Freud claims in *The Uncanny* that the *Heim* could be the mother's body – a body that creates desires, but also triggers *unheimlich* feelings at its very entrance – it was Melanie Klein who first furnished and animated this *Heim* with its *internal objects*. Further, it was Wilfred Bion who studied the different *functions* of this *Heim-as mother's body* in the development of the mind, and Donald Meltzer, the American-born British psychoanalyst, who offered a complete interior architecture of it as well as a rendition of the experience it offers to its inhabitants or, more precisely, to the inmates of its different compartments. He also suggests a possible decent exit from the *Heim* when it becomes a claustrophobic space.

Before he walks us through the interior of this *Heim* and introduces us to its various rooms, Meltzer teases out of Klein's model of the mind a geography of *life spaces*³ that covers five areas. In his interpretation, the mind can be divided into the external world of objects, the inside of the external object, the internal world of objects, the inside of the internal object, and the »nowhere«.⁴

Although this topography is Meltzer's contribution, the idea that the inner space of the maternal body – the inside of the *Heim* – is a place where life happens had been introduced by Freud in his earlier writings. Both in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (referenced in a footnote in *The Uncanny*) and in the case study of the Wolf Man⁵, the internal space of the mother's body is where copulation takes place. Klein, for her part, revolutionized Freud's model of the mind by emphasizing that this internal space is not just a place where life happens, but also where one experientially *live* in. More precisely, she suggests we inhabit two different worlds at once: an external shared world and an internal private psychic/mental world, which is nonetheless just as real to us as the outside world. Klein further observes that psychic reality, the world of unconscious phantasy, is not only a space where relationships take

place, but also where the meaning of life is generated. It is the place where the experience of the external world is organized.⁶

For Klein, unconscious phantasies play the role that Freud assigned to the unconscious wish. The earliest and deepest unconscious phantasies are bodily, and they underlie not just dreams but all thought and activity, whether creative or destructive, including the expression of internal object relations, with their anxieties and defenses.

When Freud writes in *The Uncanny* that the female genital organ is an *unheimlich* place, precisely because it is the entrance to the *Heim* we originally inhabited, he acknowledges that the »beginning« is fraught with anxieties »from which the majority of human beings have never become quite free«⁷. In one of her very few papers on aesthetic, art, and creativity, Klein (1928) develops Freud's general idea of *infantile anxiety* and posits an object-relation version of it, which she describes in terms of *infantile anxiety situations*.⁸ According to Klein, the earliest anxiety is invoked by the sadistic attacks on the mother's body and everything that is phantasized to be *in it* (babies, the father's penis, and so on). All other danger situations, such as the loss of the loved object and castration, are merely a later modification of this earlier anxiety.

Her idea of an infantile phantasy that includes the attacks on these internal objects, the anxiety and the defense that are part of the »situation« a phantasy she terms *projective identification*⁹, was already alluded to by Freud in *The Uncanny*. He writes:

[...] the subject identifies himself with someone else, so that he is in doubt as to which his self is, or substitutes the extraneous self for his own. In other words, there is a doubling, dividing and interchanging of the self.¹⁰

Klein takes up this analysis while also drawing on Karl Abraham's (1924) ideas of whole and parts objects¹¹, in addition to using her own terms of *splitting* and *projective identification*, to propose the idea that one can live many separate lives at once in the present and in different spaces. She also imagines the mother in her corporeal form, as a concrete body, and intimates that the phantasy