

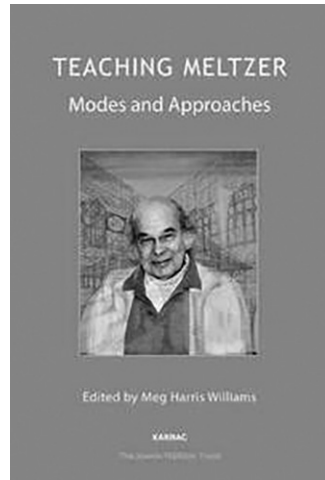
Teaching Meltzer: Modes and Approaches

edited by Meg Harris Williams with Miriam Botbol Acreche, Silvia Fano Cassese, Jeanne Magagna, Neil Maizels, Maria Angélica Maronna, Marisa Pelella Mélega, Kina Meurle-Hallberg, Cecilia Muñoz Vila, Clara Nemas, Robert Oelsner, Maria Elena Petrilli, Lise Radøy, Lennart Ramberg, Kenneth Sanders, Maria do Carmo Sousa Lima, Joao Sousa Monteiro, Virginia Ungar, Monica Vicens
London: Karnac Books, 2015, 238 pp.

This is a collection of essays about how to “teach” Meltzer, both the man and his concepts, about how to convey the experience of being supervised by him and/or of reading him. It has to be considered along with the question by some of whether or not it is possible to teach Meltzer to others—the question of teaching versus learning (from experience). Some consider a familiarity with Freud, Klein, and Bion a crucial prerequisite to understanding Meltzer, especially getting a grasp of his evolving concept of projective identification. Most propose an immersion in reading him with the chance to talk freely about the experience, along with using his concepts to think about clinical examples.

Editor Meg Harris Williams introduces the nineteen authors, with summary statements about each chapter, and says the book

is an attempt to present Meltzer as a teacher through the eyes of those whom he taught. That is, it hopes to convey the “simplicity” which he aimed



to transmit, which was essentially a reliance on the teaching power of internal objects. (p. xiv)

Some of the approaches to Meltzer as a teacher are outlined in detail and seem appealingly useful. When Miriam Botbol Acreche tried reading *The Psychoanalytic Process* out loud in groups, it produced a distinctive effect (not specified) that favoured a kind of thinking different from that generated from reading in silence. She then tried reading *The Kleinian Development, Part II*, in which Meltzer established the principle concept, at its inception, that was linked with what had happened each week, and “immersing ourselves in Melanie Klein’s case study of Richard” (*Narrative of a Child Analysis*). There followed the question of how to approach Freud (with whom her groups were not familiar), and they read *The Kleinian Development, Part I*, along with Freud’s “Little Hans,” and finally, they read Bion in *The Kleinian Development, Part III*. Neil Maizels states that Disney’s animated *Pinocchio* and Meltzer’s ideas “were made for each other.” He says “[the] three-dimensional dream imagery is perfect for a cross-sectional view of various interlocking concepts as they develop in the characters over time,” and he tries to capture the flavour in how he presents this to a group (p. 181).

By its nature, this book does not provide a systematic overview of Meltzer’s teachings; however, many of his concepts are discussed, and collectively this approach adds a helpful dimension: the aesthetic conflict and claustrum theory; pseudomaturity arising from a denial of separation (different from Winnicott’s formation of a false self conforming to external requests); the counter-transference dream (akin to the mother’s reverie); and the combined object. I will excerpt some of these ideas here.

Maria do Carmo Sousa Lima writes that a key to understanding claustrum theory is understanding Meltzer’s discovery that the drama of projective identification unfolds not in the external mother’s inside (Kleinian thinking) but in the internal mother’s inside. We concretely experience the internal mother’s inside divided into three very different spaces, each with different phenomenologies. (This is related to Meltzer’s concept of adhesive identification in autism: children who are *unable* to form the concept of an internal space both in the object and in the self identify with an object that has no inside—they identify by adhering to the surface.) Sousa Lima’s approach to teaching is to start with “Little Hans” as seen by Freud, then Klein, and finally Meltzer, then reading about Klein’s patients “Dick” and “Richard,” and finally Meltzer’s own patient “Barry,” thereby

getting a sense of the evolution of the concepts, including the concreteness of unconscious phantasies.

Silvia Fano Cassese brings the concepts of the *claustrum* and aesthetic conflict together, stating that they are complex ideas and presuppose a good knowledge of Meltzer's previous work. She discusses them together, considering them

complementary, philosophical opposing aspects of human nature: the former containing perverse and malignant split off parts, the latter creativity and the search for beauty. Both are based on Meltzer's theory of an inner life space: the "enigmatic inside" ... of the aesthetic object and the terrifying inner space of the *claustrum*. (p. 26)

Lennart Ramberg states that Meltzer shares Bion's idea that the *absence* of an object creating a state of frustration stimulates the child to represent the object symbolically, thus initiating the development of thinking. However, at least as important in Meltzer's view is the working through of the emotional experience of the object's *presence*. Fano Cassese emphasizes the latter as well. There is "the mysterious inner space, inside the mother, from which not only beauty and pleasure are brought forth but also mental pain" when mother's moods or expression vary inexplicably, causing uncertainty. "This ambiguous unattainable inner space is the source of the search for knowledge, imagination and creativity" (the epistemophilic instinct). Opposed to this is intrusive projective identification with violence and trickery. "Meltzer describes how all the senses and orifices can be potential entries for intrusion into the mother's body, and how intrusion into the different compartments inside the mother's body (head-breast, genital, rectum) gives rise to different claustrophobic pathologies" (p. 27).

Meg Harris Williams contributes the final rich chapter and also writes about the aesthetic conflict, which she says is

the key to considering normal development as more complex than pathology, and the "new idea" at any stage in life is always a re-experiencing of the beauty of the world/mother. The first experience of beautification ... precedes the paranoid-schizoid recoil from the aesthetic conflict, which is aroused by the doubts about the meaning of the mother's enigmatic interior. The desire to know ... establishes the container-contained, reciprocal, symbol-forming dialogue. (p. 210)

Then she outlines the danger of instead of trying to know intrusively, "the phantasy ... of possessing the mother from the inside ... the internal

war now hinges not on pleasure versus pain, or even envy versus gratitude, but on emotionality (stirred by beauty) versus anti-emotionality (the recoil from beauty)” (pp. 210–211).

This is a selective review of the book, but I hope it conveys how Meltzer’s writing and teaching have inspired many to want to write, and to teach his concepts.

Angela Sheppard
7 Rosecliffe Crescent
London, ON N6K 3X9
contactas@mac.com

Body Talk: Looking and Being Looked At in Psychotherapy

by Janice Lieberman

Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 2000, 277 pp.

In an article titled “The Dowdy Patient,” in the *New York Times*, 18 June 2015, a (male) therapist complains that he has the bad luck of always seeing dowdy (female) patients. He asks why, in one example he gives, his patient’s friends had not informed her about how to dress and apply make-up. There are many reasons we shudder in reading his plea, most of them covered in *Body Talk*, by Janice Lieberman.

Lieberman is an accomplished writer, psychoanalyst, and also a lecturer at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City. The last gives away her interest in the visual, which is integrated in her psychoanalytic thinking and treatment, described in detail in this extremely readable work.

Dr. Lieberman’s thesis is that “vision, language development, and the development of body narcissism are intimately connected” (p. 14). She states, “It is time for the therapeutic lens to focus on the important but neglected role of vision—of looking and being looked at, of seeing and being seen—in the development of self and self-esteem, in object awareness and object interaction, and in the psychotherapeutic situation itself” (p. 15).

The book opens with a discussion of the visual ego, a study of the positive and negative feelings about our bodies that we get from being looked

