

important letters. Aware of her position in the psychoanalytic movement, she realized the importance of setting down selected facts of her early life. Both a childlike vulnerability and a mature self-knowledge shine through the implacable façade of the public image.

Melanie Klein was the first European psychoanalyst to become a member of the British Psycho-Analytical Society, and ultimately she became its dominant influence. A somewhat exotic figure when she settled in England in 1926, rumored to be at odds with the Freuds, father and daughter, in disrepute with the Berlin Society of which she had been a member, a divorcee in the days when divorce still carried an aura of scandal, she inevitably became the subject of gossip. What, it was asked, had she done with her husband? To this day a ribald story makes the rounds that she ate him up.

The unpublished Autobiography is in the possession of the Melanie Klein Trust. Her story, as she relates it, is the "official" record. However, in 1983 a large collection of early family letters was discovered in her son's loft. These letters reveal information very much at variance with some of the facts related in the Autobiography. Why, then, did she not destroy them, since she must have been aware that they would ultimately be discovered? Several explanations are possible. Perhaps certain letters are not destroyed because the subject wants the truth ultimately to be told, even in its unpalatable aspects; yet naturally one is ambivalent about exposing desires, fears, and embarrassment to public scrutiny.

In Klein's case, it is possible that she simply could not bear to part with some of the most important areas of her past. Most of the letters from her mother and her brother seem to have been preserved, whereas only a single letter from her husband survives. The letters kept her relatives alive in a very concrete way. To the distanced biographer, her mother and her brother emerge from the letters as very different people from the portraits in the Autobiography; and it is conceivable that Klein idealized them to the point where the real and the official figures merged indissolubly.

In her Autobiography she moves back and forth in time and, in reflecting on time past and time present, she has created a family romance. Just as much as an analyst, a biographer finds self-mythologies revealing in their revelations of displacements, condensations, and evasions. Yet how can one encompass her turbulent life in a single telling, how give the allotted weight to each event and person who helped shape the course of that life?

Her background was one of both conventionality and rebellion. Her father's early life fascinated her, but the details she gives are scrappy and inconsequential. She does not even mention his date of birth (1828), but explains that Moriz Reizes came from a rigidly orthodox family, somewhere in Poland—the exact location she apparently regarded as irrelevant. It actually was Lemberg (now Lvov), Galicia, the site of one of the oldest and most distinguished universities in Europe.³ Her grandfather she describes as a "businessman," possibly a small shopkeeper, or a dealer in cattle or lumber.