

## LESBIANS IN PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORY AND PRACTICE

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A major project of lesbian and gay liberation politics has been its response to the pathologizing of homosexuality within classical psychoanalysis and its many revisions (ego psychology, self-psychology, object relations, and most recently, relational psychoanalysis).<sup>1</sup> Although Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, had offered contradictory views about homosexuality, it is primarily his negative ideas on the subject that permeate not only psychoanalysis but also all mental health work in psychology, psychiatry, and social work. And because Freud's influence has been so powerful, even feminist practitioners who reject Freud's theories find themselves in dialogue with his ideas. Now a spate of new books from within the field is reworking psychoanalytic theory and practice.

One of Freud's great strengths was that he continued to rethink his positions and frequently changed his mind, often without retracting an earlier idea. Because he did not try to create coherence in his theorizing, one can find support for many different (and sometimes opposing) positions in the twenty-four volumes of his collected writings. He had argued, on the one hand, that homosexuality was not a perversion but represented a mere "inversion" of "object choice," one that all human beings are capable of making; on the other hand, he posited that homosexual practices were forms of "arrested development" in a psychosexual process that had as its goal "mature sex," defined as normative heterosexual intercourse.<sup>2</sup>

Unfortunately, it was Freud's negative pronouncements that found the greatest resonance among Freud's American interpreters, especially in the work of Socarides and his followers, who focused solely on those, which they then used to guide their

analytic theory and practice. By substituting the term "perversion" for Freud's "inversion," they misrepresented his thinking and caused immeasurable harm to lesbians and gay men who became indelibly stigmatized in this process of relabeling. Where in previous centuries, homosexuality had been viewed either as a sin or a crime, once same-sex object choice was also interpreted as a *psychological* abnormality, lesbians and gay men were by definition considered irreparably damaged "perverts" who were easily locked away in mental institutions. By the mid-twentieth century, male and female homosexuals (as Freud called them) were as-

#### BOOKS DISCUSSED IN THIS ARTICLE

*Wild Desires and Mistaken Identities: Lesbianism and Psychoanalysis.* By Noreen O'Connor and Joanna Ryan. New York: Columbia University Press, 1993.

*Lesbians and Psychoanalysis: Revolutions in Theory and Practice.* Edited by Judith M. Glassgold and Suzanne Iasenza. New York: Free Press, 1995.

*Disorienting Sexuality: Psychoanalytic Reappraisals of Sexual Identities.* Edited by Thomas Domenici and Ronnie C. Lesser. New York: Routledge, 1995.

*Lesbian Lives: Psychoanalytic Narratives Old and New.* By Maggie Magee and Diana C. Miller. Mahwah, N.J.: Analytic Press, 1997.

*Sexual Subjects: Lesbians, Gender, and Psychoanalysis.* By Adria E. Schwartz. New York: Routledge, 1998.

sumed to be arrested in their psychosexual development, narcissistic, full of fear and hostility toward "the opposite sex," to suffer from gender identity confusion, and perhaps most damaging of all, to be incapable of ever attaining mature love. The resultant institutionalized discrimination against known lesbians and gay men is a well-known story that has yet to be fully reversed.

Public critiques of homophobic theories and practices originated with activists outside the field, but these were quickly taken up by lesbians and gay men working within psychiatry, psychology, and psychoanalysis beginning in the early 1970s.<sup>3</sup> Their first success occurred in 1973 when the American Psychiatric Associa-

tion voted to remove "homosexuality" from its list of disorders; the American Psychological Association followed suit in 1975. Even with these early victories, it took another fifteen years for the more conservative American Psychoanalytic Association to concur. And it was not until 1987 that activists succeeded in removing "ego-dystonic homosexuality" (an alleged condition in which the individual evidences distress and anxiety about being homosexual, accompanied by persistent concern with changing her or his sexual orientation) from the nomenclature of deviations on the grounds of utter disregard for the severe pressures placed on individuals living in a homophobic society (e.g., one in which sodomy laws remained on the books in twenty-four states).

Given that most practitioners whose theoretical framework is psychoanalytically based at best ignore the tension within Freud's writing about homosexuality and at worst continue to perpetuate the most negative of his ideas on the subject, how one answers the following question becomes a critical touchstone of one's attitude toward the psychoanalytic project: Does Freud's undisputed androcentrism and heterosexism (which allows him to generalize from the heterosexual European middle-class male model of human development) preempt the possibility of using psychoanalysis as a transformative and liberating process? The producers of the volumes here under review clearly share a belief in the emancipatory potential of psychoanalysis, which like feminism, is a deconstructive project aimed at freeing the individual from constricting structures. Although neither they nor we would minimize the damage historically done in the name of psychoanalysis to women in general and lesbians in particular, these authors (and we ourselves) nonetheless believe it is possible to salvage psychoanalysis as a healing process for lesbians and gay men across racial and ethnic differences. For these authors, as for us, the question is not *whether* psychoanalysis is usable, but *how* and *under what circumstances*? Implicit in these writings is an important caveat that psychoanalytic treatment for lesbians and gay men can only be successful if they work with therapists who, regardless of their sexual orientation, have not only educated themselves about the limitations of traditional analytic theories of sexuality but have also confronted and dealt with their own same-sex erotic attractions and fears. Unfortunately, attention to issues of race, ethnicity, and socio-economic class is minimal in all these

volumes. This is a serious omission that we hope will be corrected in future writings.

The earliest of the volumes here under review, *Wild Desires and Mistaken Identities: Lesbianism and Psychoanalysis* (1993), by British analysts Noreen O'Connor and Joanna Ryan, marked the first wide-ranging survey of psychoanalytic ideas about lesbianism. In keeping with a constructivist perspective that is shared by all the volumes under review, the authors challenge the notion that a psychology of *the* lesbian is a meaningful construct. In contrast, they believe that the only shared experience lesbians can legitimately claim is living in a homophobic, patriarchal society. Not surprisingly, they critique Freud's failure to consider the subjective experiences of women as well as his male-centered perspective, which is particularly strong in the arena of homosexuality, where he focuses almost entirely on men. They observe that in the one case in which Freud describes his work with a lesbian, "The Psychogenesis of a Case of Female Homosexuality" (1920), he attributes the patient's lesbianism to a "masculinity complex" which, he posits, has its origins in the girl's Oedipal disappointment in the father whom she had desired, leading to her subsequent identification with him, and resulting in her repudiation of men.<sup>4</sup> Most likely, this case, in which Freud conflates "feminism" with "lesbianism" (because the girl critiqued the limited role allowed to women), has served to legitimate the homophobia so often used to discredit feminism. However, to his credit, Freud does not consider the girl (who was pressured to go into analysis by her father) to be "ill," or even neurotic, because her sexual desires did not activate internal conflict.

Given that Freud has been blamed for so much of the homophobia of the Western world in the twentieth century, it is also important to acknowledge a less wellknown piece of writing in which Freud offers a positive response (for his time, quite bold) to a letter he received from an American mother who was worried about her son's homosexuality, a word she could not even bring herself to write down, for which he gently admonished her. "Homosexuality is assuredly no advantage, but it is nothing to be ashamed of, no vice, no degradation, it cannot be classified as an illness." Freud does, however, qualify his response: "We consider it to be a variation of the sexual function, produced by a certain arrest of sexual development." But then, in this same letter, he

again reverses himself: "Many highly respectable individuals of ancient and modern times have been homosexuals, some of the greatest men among them."<sup>5</sup> Freud's belief in the potential bisexuality of object choice also suggested that the exclusive interest felt by men for women is also a problem "that needs elucidation and is not a self-evident fact—not of a chemical nature," and that "inverts may be sound in other respects," perhaps even especially creative. And although Freud never wavered in his belief that same-sex object choice reflected arrested psychosexual development, he surprisingly did not believe that homosexuals should be excluded from joining analytic institutes "without other sufficient reasons, as we cannot agree with their legal prosecution."<sup>6</sup>

O'Connor and Ryan skillfully, and with humor, expose Freud's illogic in presuming that choosing a woman as a love object necessarily means repudiating men: "If I am offered tea or coffee (as often happens) and I choose tea, does this mean I have repudiated coffee or my desire for it?" (p. 42). The authors also demonstrate how, in Freud's faulty conceptualization, lesbianism is inevitably seen as a reactive and inferior choice, foreclosing "femininity" and motherhood; he does not even consider the possibility that a woman may have a positive desire for another woman as erotic love object. Unfortunately, such attitudes seem still to be alive today. In fact, O'Connor and Ryan note that many practitioners find it difficult to enable erotic material to emerge in therapy with lesbian patients, as evidenced by the many case studies they have systematically reviewed.

One of the book's major strengths is its chapter-by-chapter discussion of specific psychoanalytic theorists who build on (and in some cases disagree with) Freud—for example, Karen Horney, Clara Thompson, Ernst Jones, Helene Deutsch, Melanie Klein, Carl Jung, Masud Khan, Jacques Lacan, Joyce McDougall, and Hanna Segal—so that a reader who is troubled by the antilesbian bias of a particular analyst can turn to the relevant chapter for an excellent critical appraisal which exposes the explicit and sometimes implicit misogyny and homophobia that informs these writers' theories. The book also contains an excellent chapter on countertransference issues in work with lesbian patients, a welcome contribution on a topic that had been virtually untouched. Here the authors examine the analyst's psychological defenses against the experience and/or recognition of lesbian eroticism as

well as the dynamics of maternal eroticism, another topic from which analysts have shied away. In response to the irresponsible generalizations made about lesbians by homophobic analysts (who, like Freud, often base their generalizations on only a single case), O'Connor and Ryan's insistence on the specificity of particular lesbians' experiences and life histories is welcome.

Most interestingly, from our perspective, O'Connor and Ryan reveal the extent to which the concept of normative heterosexuality is perpetuated even among feminist interpreters of Freud, such as Horney, Thompson, and, in our own day, Dorothy Dinnerstein, Juliet Mitchell, Jessica Benjamin, and Nancy Chodorow.<sup>7</sup> Even in contemporary feminist psychoanalytic writings, there is "an absence of lesbianism, the dearth of any extended attempts to understand sexual love between women, or to include this in the suggested reformulations of female heterosexuality" (p. 214). Perhaps it was Freud's linking of feminism and lesbianism that has led even feminist psychoanalysts to "establish feminist psychoanalytic interests as predominantly heterosexual, and to deny or minimize any lesbian implications of their positions" (p. 215).

Issues of visibility and explicitness among psychoanalytic theorists writing on lesbian sexuality are attended to more fully in *Lesbians and Psychoanalysis: Revolutions in Theory and Practice*, edited by Judith M. Glassgold and Suzanne Iasenza (1995). Both editors and many of the twenty-six contributors clearly identify themselves as lesbians and draw on their own life experiences as lesbians and as clinicians engaged in the process of transforming theory. Although the book seems to have been most strongly influenced by the theories of self-psychology, an impressive variety of psychodynamic perspectives are represented, including Jungian, intersubjective, imago therapy, and object relations, which are all reconceptualized to better account for the actuality and diversity of lesbian experiences.<sup>8</sup> Like all the other authors whose work is under review, the contributors to this volume critically examine and debunk past psychoanalytic theories based on their own clinical experiences with lesbian patients. They also note that lesbians are deprived of familial and social mirroring, and they worry about the effects of such absence on the lesbian experience of self. Further, they address the challenge of self-cohesion for patients who carry shame and have formed a defensive "false-self" that feels inauthentic to them.<sup>9</sup> Other topics include therapeutic

approaches to strengthening lesbian relationships, therapist self-disclosure of sexual orientation, and manifestations of homophobia in training and in the supervisory relationship. A particularly vital contribution to this book, especially given the miniscule attention to race and ethnicity in all the books reviewed here, is Beverly Greene's chapter, "Addressing Racism, Sexism, and Heterosexism in Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy," in which she urges therapists to consider the psychic complexities that occur when a despised sexual identity interlocks with a marginalized, devalued racial one. This essay should be required reading for all workers in the mental health field (regardless of their sexual orientation).

In a final section, *Lesbians and Psychoanalysis* focuses on new directions in theory and practice. Glassgold proposes that psychoanalysis be reformulated as a theory of critical reflection and purposive action (agency), building on one of Freud's most useful insights—that in order to change, it is necessary to become aware of the factors that influence one's personality and behavior. In the light of this idea, it is profoundly ironic that psychoanalysis has, almost without exception, failed to recognize the social realities that influence the psychological functioning of lesbians. Glassgold further suggests that failure to explore the psychological consequences of societal homophobia and misogyny denies the client essential information she needs to understand herself and to participate in effective liberatory action. In a multiauthored essay, Betsy Kassoff, Ricki Boden, Carmen de Monteflores, Phern Hunt, and Rachel Wahba take up this same issue, postulating that the experience of cultural marginalization and rejection have profound effects on lesbians' sense of self. Beverly Burch critiques the traditional polarization (and presumed mutual exclusivity) of gender identities, arguing that each individual has the capacity for varying degrees of identification with female and male, and that as a result, all persons embody aspects of both genders within the self.

The fluidity of categories is also a central theme in *Disorienting Sexuality: Psychoanalytic Reappraisals of Sexual Identities*, edited by Thomas Domenici and Ronnie Lesser (1995), which is the outcome of a 1993 conference, "Perspectives on Homosexuality: An Open Dialogue," that drew over 500 people. Both editors are founding members of New York University's Postdoctoral Program's Committee on Lesbian and Gay Concerns and most of the

contributors are lesbians or gay men. All the contributors have extensive training and experience at psychoanalytic institutes and all are decidedly lesbian/gay affirmative. The conference in which these papers were presented marked the first time in history that a psychoanalytic institute sponsored an event in which psychoanalysts themselves exposed and incisively critiqued the homophobic and heterosexist views that have characterized mainstream psychoanalysis from its earliest days to the present. This book is also the first to integrate insights from feminism, queer theory, and postmodernism in an effort to reformulate psychoanalytic theories of sexuality.

The analysts who contribute to this volume examine an array of issues that focus on the theory and practice of treating lesbians and gay men from an empowering stance. For example, Lee Crespi proposes that for many lesbians, the establishment of a positive lesbian identity entails mourning some aspects of heterosexuality, such as societal sanction of one's identity, sexual intimacy with men, physical security, family approbation, or the capacity to conceive a child with one's partner. According to Crespi's experience in working with lesbians, such mourning is a common developmental process, one which is often misinterpreted by heterosexual therapists (and perhaps even some lesbians) as a manifestation of sexual orientation conflict. Although Crespi's ideas are original and thought-provoking, her notion that lesbian identity development necessarily entails mourning may be interpreted by some readers as minimizing the celebratory, self-liberating aspects of embracing a lesbian identity and therefore may be viewed as controversial.

Martin Stephen Frommer explores the insidious heterosexist bias that often creeps into the work of heterosexual analysts who, despite public declarations of open-mindedness and neutrality, nonetheless view heterosexuality as more "natural" or "normal" and therefore superior to other forms of sexual expression. Ronnie C. Lesser suggests that when such unspoken feelings are indirectly communicated in the treatment, significant psychological damage can be done. David Schwartz examines the ways in which essentialist thinking with regard to sexual orientation can undermine the analytic process. He takes issue with the "reification and endorsement of sexual stability and implicit devaluation of erotic flexibility and mobility" that characterize not only the work of ob-



viously homophobic theorists such as Socarides but also the work of many lesbian/gay analysts who denigrate erotic indeterminacy and the variations within gay/lesbian sexual practices as necessarily indicative of "confusion" or "lack of boundaries."

Muriel Dimen deconstructs assumptions about "the Natural," showing how psychoanalytic notions of "normality" are used to serve the social and political ends of social reproduction, whose job it is to re-create the status quo. Dimen emphasizes the ambiguities and complexities of desire, noting that no particular sexual desire is "natural," that human desire is highly malleable and inevitably shaped by social and historical forces. Dimen compares the obliviousness that heterosexuals display with regard to the sociopolitical legitimation of their desire to white people's frequent failure to notice the unearned privileges their skin color confers. Dimen vehemently rejects all attempts to explain the etiology of homosexuality, which, she insists, only harm, pathologize, and delegitimize lesbians' and gay mens' lives. Also concerned with the recent focus on etiology, Noreen O'Connor (co-author of *Wild Desires and Mistaken Identities*) here provides a cogent analysis of issues that may indeed be common to clinical work with lesbian patients. But she suggests that instead of making inappropriate generalizations about the families of origin or life histories of lesbian patients, it would be more logical to recognize that common features may arise from common experiences and the struggles of living in a heterosexist, homophobic society that denies, ridicules, and punishes love between women.

*Wild Desires and Mistaken Identities: Lesbians and Psychoanalysis* and *Disorienting Sexuality* were the first to break the silence about lesbians within psychoanalytic discourse in the early- to mid-1990s. Two recent books are more closely linked to the perspectives of lesbian feminist theory:<sup>10</sup> *Lesbian Lives: Psychoanalytic Narratives Old and New* by Maggie Magee and Diana C. Miller (1997) and *Sexual Subjects: Lesbians, Gender, and Psychoanalysis* by Adria E. Schwartz (1998). We find it particularly heartening that although Magee and Miller are practicing analysts associated with analytic institutes, the spirit of their book ties them as closely to the cultural productions of the Second Wave of U.S. feminism as to constructivist and postmodern gender theories that too often leave grassroots feminism behind. For example, in *Lesbian Lives* there are numerous quotations from Adrienne Rich's early poetry

which was so central to the creation of woman-centered conceptualizations of our lives. Where psychoanalysis had not been able to conceive of women's erotic desire for women, Rich helped us to see "two women, eye to eye, measuring each other's spirit, each other's limitless desire, a whole new poetry beginning here."<sup>11</sup> Magee and Miller also offer us the voices of other feminist and lesbian poets, activists, theorists, and artists, such as Joan Larkin, Kitty Tsui, Judith Katz, Judy Chicago, Joan Nestle, and Marilyn Frye, whose names may be unknown to feminist psychoanalysts but are likely to be familiar to many feminist scholars, especially those associated with women's studies within and outside the academy. In so doing, they put into action the feminist belief that theory does not reside only in discursive essays but in poetry and fiction as well.

As these examples from *Lesbian Lives* demonstrate, Magee and Miller's book is the most far-ranging and interdisciplinary of the volumes under review. Topics range from a critique of major psychoanalytic and biological theories about female homosexuality and gender identity to a chapter based on previously unpublished documents about Annie Winnifred Ellerman, who called herself Bryher and was the life partner of the imagist poet Hilda Doolittle, who signed herself H.D.<sup>12</sup> In the context of a chapter on "coming out," Magee and Miller offer an illuminating comparison of the book and film versions of *Fried Green Tomatoes* in which they show that although both versions hedge on the sexual dimension of Ruth and Idgie's relationship, the film completely censors the more "feminine" Ruth's powerful and immediate feelings of love for Idgie, the "butch" of the story. They interpret this erasure as the means by which a patriarchal society makes it impossible for a woman who looks and acts like a "real" woman to be granted agency to actively love another woman.

Magee and Miller also grapple more fully than any of the other analysts with what it means to be analysts who are visible as lesbians not only in the community but also in their work environments. They offer case material to demonstrate their wise conclusion that for the healing process of any given patient "neither analyst disclosure nor non-disclosure determines what is therapeutic." What is important is the establishment of an analytic frame "that fits and works for the two persons engaged in the analysis" (p. 215). In a chapter that offers a history of homosexuality and

psychoanalysis, they document their own struggles to find training institutes that would accept them; their descriptions of the compromises they had to make because they were known lesbians are illuminating, moving, and infuriating. Most unusual in a book that is so strongly theory- and case-based is the 100-page appendix which offers a year-by-year update on information about issues of concern to lesbians in the arenas of education, religion, child custody, adoption, reproductive rights, domestic partnerships, same-sex legal rights, and same-sex marriage. This information is a welcome and useful addition to an excellent volume.

In another welcome reach back to grassroots feminist writings, Adria Schwartz in the slim volume of essays, *Sexual Subjects*, offers us images from Audre Lorde's *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* (1982) in which Lorde struggles to articulate (in language that does not exist in masculinist discourse) lesbian erotic experience that is neither essentialist nor dichotomous yet captures the multiplicity and abundance of Lorde's desires. Schwartz also ties her own writings to the groundbreaking manifestos of the 1970s (for example, the Radicalesbians) whose work made hers possible. She is also attentive to current issues such as lesbian motherhood, but rather than focus on the psychological ramifications, her approach is to deconstruct gendered motherhood altogether, in order to "allow us to envisage a new parenting subject that would be less unitary and more conditional, a conception of motherhood that transcends gender" (p.152). In a similarly postmodern vein, Schwartz explores the (in)stability of (lesbian) identity, concluding with other analysts that "we need both a notion of identity, which may or may not be gendered, stable and continuous over time, and a postmodern notion of multiple subjectivities that can be fragmented and discontinuous as well" (p. xiv). At the same time, she explores issues that are significant to self-identified lesbians, such as butch/femme roles, the privileging of genital sex by psychologists who take heterosexual intercourse as *the* definition of sexuality,<sup>13</sup> and a phenomenon that has been dubbed "lesbian bed death" (lesbians' alleged loss of interest in sex within a few years of moving in together). Yet, in spite of the significance of Schwartz's subject matter, the brevity of her essays makes it impossible for her to develop her ideas and we are left wanting more.

Although the books reviewed here have their own particular focuses, they show a number of conceptual convergences. All are

informed by insights from postmodernism and social constructivism, and all provide strong indictments of the homophobic views about lesbians that have permeated psychoanalytic thought. In all the books, lesbian and/or lesbian-affirmative practitioners share insights gleaned from their own lives and/or extensive work with patients. All systematically explicate and deconstruct traditional unspoken assumptions about gender polarity and gender-identity formation, definitions of psychopathology, and the analytic relationship. All call into question the psychoanalyst's traditional polarization of hetero- and homosexuality and the notion of a fixed and immutable sexual identity. Based on case material that reveals the complexities and transformations that have characterized real-life experiences of lesbian desire, all critique the tendency of psychoanalysis to universalize theories of lesbian development from exceedingly small samples, usually based on a handful of highly disturbed lesbian patients. All the books attempt to consider ways in which lesbian patients are affected by the dangers, erasures, and humiliations that characterize lesbian existence in a society which berates women for loving one another and belittles same-sex desire.

In challenging the traditional psychoanalytic association of lesbianism with perversity and arrested development, these books continue a lesbian feminist tradition that began with Adrienne Rich's (1980) classic "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," in which she asked a then radically disruptive question, "If women are the earliest sources of emotional caring and physical nurture for both female and male children, it would seem logical . . . to . . . [ask] whether the search for love and tenderness in both sexes does not originally lead toward women; *why in fact women would ever redirect that search*. . ."<sup>14</sup> Rich maintained that far from being a natural or biological given, heterosexuality is systematically and relentlessly enforced through overt violence and pervasive institutional practices, in order to ensure the continued subordination of women in patriarchal societies. The authors of these psychoanalytic writings on lesbianism similarly call into question the privileging of heterosexuality and the a priori pathologizing of lesbians.

These books also share a number of omissions. First, the overwhelming majority of the authors, editors, and contributors to all the volumes are white. Moreover, with the exception of Beverly

Greene's chapter on racism, sexism, and heterosexism in *Lesbians and Psychoanalysis*, the books are strangely silent on matters of race. Although Schwartz urges clinicians to be aware of racial, ethnic, and cultural differences among lesbians, her book does not adequately reflect this awareness. It seems especially ironic that the authors of books that are critical of the historical absence of the voices of openly lesbian and gay analysts in the psychoanalytic discourse on sexuality should seem unperturbed by the relative absence of voices of women of color in their own volumes. This problem whereby one oppressed group does not recognize its own complicity in oppressing others is neither new nor peculiar to the lesbian and gay community; in fact, it represents a template in which one silence is broken only to highlight other silences that were also always present. Because one corrective clearly does not correct for all others, it is imperative that we sensitize ourselves to recognizing differences within difference. There are several missed opportunities for an exploration of racial/ethnic issues in the psychoanalytic discourse on lesbians, but O'Connor and Ryan provide a particularly startling example of a missed opportunity. They note that many psychoanalysts assume that for same-sex partners, having the same gender is a barrier to "real" sexual desire. They argue that "such a position assumes that all features of a homosexual relationship pale into insignificance compared to the sameness of gender, including all other possibly important differences between the partners" (p.190). Yet, they do not go on to explicate how these potential dimensions of difference might play out in relationships between two women of different races or ethnicities, nationalities, and/or socioeconomic class. Indeed, depending on the relative salience of particular dimensions of identity for a given person (or within a particular relationship), it can certainly be argued that in a relationship between a white, middle-class man and a white, middle-class woman there is likely to be more "sameness" or "likeness" than in a relationship between a white woman and an African American woman, or between a Jewish and Catholic woman, or between a woman raised poor and a woman raised in the upper class, or between a woman raised in the United States and a woman raised in, say, India.

In light of Freud's assertion that choice of a same-sex partner represents an early developmental libidinal fixation in which the

object is loved as an extension of the self, such concrete examples of the role of difference in lesbian dyads might do more to discredit the psychoanalytic misconception that lesbianism entails a denial of difference and is therefore inherently narcissistic than the theoretical statements and critiques presented in these volumes. A related omission that characterizes all five volumes is the absence of any mention of lesbians from Third World countries, despite the fact that in recent years excellent material has become available.<sup>15</sup>

With respect to another significant dimension of lesbian life, only Schwartz includes any notable consideration of lesbian parenting and childrearing issues, from the perspective of either lesbian mothers or daughters of lesbians. This seems an important area to address not only in light of the fact that lesbians are choosing to become parents in record numbers (some speak of the past two decades as the "lesbian baby boom") but also because psychological theorists and practitioners who pathologize lesbians have caused lesbian mothers and their children profound psychological harm by supporting court decisions that have denied lesbians child-custody rights. Another limitation is that most of the discussions on the formation of gender identity presume a traditional female-male, two-parent family, without considering the large percentage of families both within the United States and around the world for whom this presumption is inaccurate. Again Schwartz is an exception here when she argues for the reconstruction of families and a conception of motherhood that transcends gender—a shift from mothers to "mothering ones."

With the exception of Magee and Miller, another area of omission in the remaining four volumes is the absence of substantial discussion of the relationship between lesbianism and the Second Wave of the women's liberation movement. There is relatively little emphasis on the consciously political and emancipatory aspects of lesbian identity, the role of lesbian feminist ideology in shaping women's same-sex desire, and the cultural space opened by the women's movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In particular, scant attention is given to the role of collective action via the lesbian and gay liberation movement in creating a public space for the expression of lesbian desire and for the pursuit of same-sex erotic and life partnerships. Greater consideration of these issues would have been particularly useful with reference to

the books' discussions on the fluidity of sexual identity and the malleability of desire. For example, Christine Downing's discussion of "late-blooming lesbians" (in *Lesbians and Psychoanalysis*) would have been considerably enhanced by consideration of sociopolitical factors that facilitated the uncovering of repressed sexual desire. These issues are aptly explored in a chapter, "Our Politics and Choices: The Feminist Movement and Sexual Orientation," by Carla Golden in an excellent 1994 anthology, *Lesbian and Gay Psychology: Theory, Research, and Clinical Applications*, edited by Beverly Greene and Gregory M. Herek.<sup>16</sup>

The shifts over time in sexual object choice for any one person seem particularly important to address in light of the current debates regarding "choice" versus biological determinism in sexual orientation. For example, a handout published by the Office of Lesbian and Gay Affairs of the American Psychological Association, "Answers to Your Questions about Sexual Orientation and Homosexuality," states that "psychologists do not consider sexual orientation to be a conscious choice that can be voluntarily changed." Indeed, this issue of etiology marks a crucial point of divergence between contemporary lesbian and gay male thinking. In general, gay men seem to feel it a better strategy to argue that sexual orientation is innate and unchosen (and perhaps many experience it that way since boys become aware of their sexuality earlier than girls). In contrast, many more women (albeit not all) describe their coming-out process as being more gradual, often encouraged by feminists' normalizing of lesbian desire, and linked to insights gained through participation in the feminist movement.

A related problem concerns the relative lack of attention in these books to empirical research on lesbians. In light of the books' primary mission of critiquing traditional theories and advancing more affirmative theoretical stances, some reference to the numerous empirical studies produced over the past decade would have served to refute many basic, flawed psychoanalytic assumptions about lesbians and thereby strengthened the books' purpose. For example, it is now clear from empirical studies on nonclinical populations that there is no particular family configuration or life experience that predicts object choice. The books would also have benefitted from the many studies showing that children of lesbians are at least as well adjusted and perhaps more resilient than their peers who have grown up with heterosexual parents. At

least some passing mention of recent writing on "femme-identified" lesbians and "lipstick lesbians" would have been useful in helping to counter the traditional psychoanalytic claim that lesbian sexuality necessarily entails a renunciation of traditional views of femininity. In addition, there is little mention of bisexual identity and politics or of the recent proliferation of anthropological and cross-cultural studies that document gender boundary crossings. Because publication takes so long, the books under review cannot be expected to have documented the transgender movement that has become so visible in the past few years, but insights from this movement would strengthen the authors' arguments regarding the social construction of gender and the fluidity and multiplicity that often characterize sexual desire.

Still, all these books serve to unmask both the pervasive privileging of heterosexuality that has occurred in psychoanalytic theory and practice and the patronizing and pathologizing stances perpetuated by analytic practitioners. If psychosis can be defined as a denial of reality, then psychoanalytic approaches may be said to have been permeated with psychotic processes characterized by persistent disregard for the physical, sociocultural, political, and economic realities of lesbian lives. These books help to correct this situation, thereby increasing the possibility that psychoanalysis and related forms of psychotherapy (informed by feminism) will be used to further, rather than to thwart, authentic self-expression, human liberation, and a more just society.

We are supported in this hope by the recent publication of Mari Jo Buhle's *Feminism and Its Discontents: A Century of Struggle with Psychoanalysis*<sup>17</sup> which documents the tangled relationship between feminism and psychoanalysis, movements which, as Buhle so carefully documents, have been in continuous dialogue since Freud first introduced his revolutionary ideas a century ago. The books here under review measure the distance we have come since socialist feminist Juliet Mitchell was the lone feminist voice attempting to rehabilitate Freud in response to the vilification of him by early-Second Wave U.S. feminists (many of whom had not actually read his works).<sup>18</sup> Although lesbians are mentioned only sporadically in Buhle's volume, readers of this review will surely be interested as she unravels the story of feminism and depth psychology which is at the heart of lesbians' engagement with the psychoanalytic project.



## NOTES

1. Writing as we are, within a postmodern current in which established verities are being deconstructed and questioned, we cannot proceed without exposing the uncertainty of our definitional terrain: neither "psychoanalysis" nor the term "lesbian" is unitary or static. Nonetheless, it is possible to find some agreement on the meaning of these words. In contrast to Freud's concept of *psychoanalysis* as a science, today it is defined variously as a theory of psychosexual development, a clinical method of inquiry, a set of techniques for exploring the underlying motivations of human behavior, and a method for treating various mental disorders. Similarly, *lesbian* is most often taken to refer to any woman whose primary emotional, sexual, and social interest is with women, as articulated by Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon in their groundbreaking *Lesbian/Woman* (New York: Bantam Books, 1972) and echoed by Adria E. Schwartz's book under review.
2. Freud also said quite explicitly, "Inversion is also found in people who exhibit no other serious deviations from the normal" (p. 138). These contradictory pronouncements can all be found in Freud, "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality" (1905), in *The Standard Edition* (London: Hogarth Press, 1933), 7: 123-245.
3. For a history of the struggle around declassifying homosexuality, see Herb Kutchins and Stewart A. Kirk, "The Fall and Rise of Homosexuality," in *Making Us Crazy: DSM: The Psychiatric Bible and the Creation of Mental Disorders* (New York: Free Press, 1997).
4. This is also the only case in which the patient is never named but simply referred to as "the girl." See "Psychogenesis of a Case of Female Homosexuality," in *Standard Edition*, 18: 145-72. Renewed interest on the subject of this case is evidenced by a recent multidisciplinary anthology, *That Obscure Subject of Desire: Freud's Female Homosexual Revisited*, edited by Ronnie Lesser and Erica Schoenberg (New York: Routledge, 1999).
5. Freud is here referring to Plato, Michaelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci. This letter can be found in the Freud collection, B4, LC, quoted by Peter Gay in *Freud: A Life for Our Time* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1988). Gay is typically defensive when he comments (610) that he is sure Freud's stance would not satisfy contemporary homosexuals "intent on regarding their sexual tastes as an alternative adult way of loving."
6. Sigmund Freud to Ernst Jones, quoted in Kenneth Lewes, *The Psychoanalytic Theory of Male Homosexuality* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988), 33.
7. Jessica Benjamin credits O'Connor and Ryan for calling her attention to the absolute nature of the heterosexist assumptions in her *Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and the Problem of Domination* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988); and in *Like Subject, Love Objects: Essays on Recognition and Sexual Difference* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), she deconstructs binary notions of identity but does not interrogate what it would mean for her theorizing to seriously take same-sex love into account (17). In *Femininities, Masculinities, Sexualities: Freud and Beyond* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1994), Nancy Chodorow has also extended her thinking by recognizing that psychoanalysis does not have an adequate developmental account of heterosexuality. The interrogation of heterosexual identity development is the subject of a special issue of *Feminism and Psychology* 2, no. 3 (1992), which focuses on "Heterosexual Feminist Identities: The Personal and the Political," edited by British lesbian psychologists Celia Kitzinger, Sue Wilkinson, and Rachel Perkins.
8. Psychodynamic is a label used to describe all those theories and modalities of psychotherapy (sometimes used interchangeably with psychoanalysis) that emphasize processes of change and development. Self-psychology makes the healing of narcissistic wounds to the self the central focus of analytic work, especially the regulation of self-esteem which, if impaired in the very early mother/infant relationship, remains vulnerable and must be repaired or reconstructed by means of the analytic process. Object relations also focuses on such early wounding but places greater emphasis on the effects of

the internalized images of the significant "objects" (people) in a person's life. Because Freud held that the analyst should remain a blank screen, his method is often referred to as a "one-person" treatment. This has been replaced (by all but the most classical analysts) by a "two-person psychology," in which the subjectivity of the analyst meets the subjectivity of the patient, and in which the analyst's responses to the patient (not necessarily shared with her/him) are considered important sources of information. Such a two-person psychology is often referred to as "intersubjective" or "relational." Imago therapy is based on the notion that people's relationships get into trouble because they project the idealized images of their parental figures on to significant others who can never live up to these internalized false ideals.

9. The vexing question of "self" must be addressed by anyone cognizant of postmodern deconstructions. The reader interested in pursuing this topic is referred to Lynne Layton's *Who's That Boy? Who's That Girl? Clinical Practice Meets Postmodern Gender Theory* (Northvale, N.J.: Jason Aronson, 1998). Layton, with degrees in comparative literature and clinical psychology, is familiar with the postmodern contestations surrounding the very concept of "self" that is at the same time so central to clinical work. She notes that "indeed, there is a radical schism between postmodern celebrations of identity fluidity and what most people find it like to live an embodied, raced, and gendered life in contemporary America" (24). To people living with psychic pain who often feel as if they have no "self," the process of strengthening, repairing, or finding a self that feels authentic is a significant source of hope. Yet, this "self" need not be conceived of as either unitary or fixed. Analysis remains an on-going process even when the analysis has ended, for the process itself is never complete.

10. By using the term "lesbian feminist" we are basing ourselves on Sheila Jeffrey who makes a useful distinction between lesbian feminists and lesbians who are also feminists: "In lesbian feminist philosophy the words 'lesbian' and 'feminist' are integral to each other, the lesbianism is feminist and the feminism is lesbian," in *The Lesbian Heresy: A Feminist Perspective on the Lesbian Sexual Revolution* (Melbourne, Australia: Spinfex, 1993), xi.

11. From Adrienne Rich's 1978 poem, "Transcendental Etude," in her collection, *The Dream of a Common Language: Poems 1974-1977* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1978), 76.

12. Both Bryher and H.D. were closely involved with well-known figures from the European psychoanalytic community. Bryher underwent analysis with Hanns Sachs over a four-year period and contributed to the survival of the early psychoanalytic movement by offering financial and moral support. She encouraged and also paid for H.D.'s brief analysis with Freud. Magee and Miller had access to the letters Bryher wrote to Hanns Sachs, Sigmund Freud, Anna Freud, Annie Reich, and Havelock Ellis.

13. For a discussion of how lesbian sexual practices do not count as being "sexual" according to heterosexual definitions of sex, see Marilyn Frye, "Lesbian 'Sex,'" in *An Intimate Wilderness: Lesbian Writers on Sexuality*, ed. Judith Barrington (Portland, Ore.: Eighth Mountain Press, 1991), 1-8.

14. Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," *Signs* 5 (summer 1980): 631-60.

15. See, for example, Makeda Silvera, ed., *Piece of My Heart: A Lesbian of Color Anthology* (Toronto: Sister Vision Women of Color Press, 1991); Carla Trujillo, ed., *Chicana Lesbians: The Girls Your Mothers Warned against* (Berkeley: Third World Press, 1991); Juanita Ramos, ed., *Companeres: Latina Lesbians* (New York: Routledge, 1994); Rakesh Ratti, ed., *A Lotus of Another Color: An Unfolding of the South Asian Gay and Lesbian Experience* (Boston: Alyson Press, 1993); Sharon Lim-Hing, ed., *The Very Inside: An Anthology of Writings by Asian and Pacific Island Lesbians and Bisexual Women* (Toronto: Sister Vision Women of Color Press, 1994); Mark Gewisser and Edwin Cameron, eds., *Defiant Desire: Gay and Lesbian Lives in South Africa* (New York: Routledge Press, 1995); Monika Rein-

- felder, ed., *Amazon to Zami: Towards a Global Lesbian Feminism* (London: Cassell, 1996); Stephen Murray and Will Roscoe, *Islamic Homosexualities: Culture, History, Literature* (New York: New York University Press, 1997); Honor Moore, ed., *Lesbiot: Israeli Lesbians* (London: Cassell, 1997).
16. Beverly Green and Gregory M. Herek, eds., *Lesbian and Gay Psychology: Theory, Research, and Clinical Applications* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1994); 54-70.
17. Mari Jo Buhle, *Feminism and Its Discontents: A Century of Struggle with Psychoanalysis* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).
18. See Juliet Mitchell, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism: A Radical Reassessment of Freudian Psychoanalysis* (London: Penguin Books, 1974).

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