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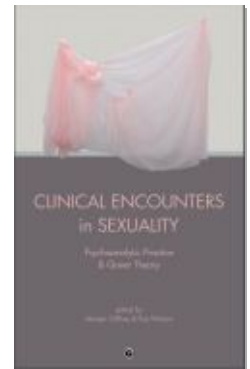
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The Psychoanalysis That Dare Not Speak Its Name

Ona Nierenberg¹

In the opening essay of *Love In A Dark Time: Gay Lives from Wilde to Almodovar*, Colm Tóibín refers to Borges's essay "The Argentine Writer and Tradition" to describe the position of exile as a condition for creation, for the possibility of the emergence of the new. Tóibín situates gay literary figures alongside the Jewish, Argentine, and Irish artists that Borges refers to, underlining that the place of estrangement, of foreignness, is the *sine qua non* for speaking at the limits of the sayable. While certainly not sufficient, extra-territoriality is absolutely necessary to affect a break with the mortifications referred to by Freud (1926a) as "the compact majority" (274).

Psychoanalysis, Freud's creation, is born of exile, wanderings from the disciplines with which it shares borders (psychology, philosophy, anthropology, sociology, literature, poetry) while remaining entirely Other to them (Fuks 2008). As Freud conceived it, psychoanalysis shatters received notions of subjectivity, and by definition, *sexuality*, subverting the idolatry of common sense, pseudo-science and morality. Its originality was to bring into being a new realization of being human which marks a rupture from psychiatry and medicine. This break is not a social/historical contingency; it marks the specificity of the Freud-

1 Special thanks to Salvatore F. Guido, PhD for the conversations that led to this commentary.

ian field, where the truth of the divided subject undermines supposed knowledge and its limits. That is why encountering the pronounced antipathy towards psychoanalysis amongst so many of the queer theorists writing in this volume should give us pause. While surely it would be problematic to find an ideal of harmonious coupling, a complementary pair (i.e., “queer theory *and* psychoanalysis”), it is also unsettling to find such mistrust, disparagement and anger based on “the familiar psychoanalytic tropes” (Weatherill).

It is evident that many of the clinical psychoanalysts writing here who are oriented by a Freudian/Lacanian formation do not recognize their work in a theory and practice described as *normalizing*, *pathologizing*, and *denigrating* by queer theorists such as Downing, Snediker, Bond Stockton, Kuzniar, and Farina. How can we think about this *méconnaissance*, with psychoanalysis repeatedly identified with suspicion and hostility? Equally curious is the identification of Freudian or Lacanian ideas that would seem to be well-suited to the ideology of queer theory with other psychoanalytic thinkers. For example, Kuzniar’s assiduous avoidance of acknowledging Freud as the discoverer of the unconscious and her misguided generosity in bestowing this honor upon Jean Laplanche. Furthermore, we should question what motivates her to identify Nancy Chodorow as the psychoanalytic source for the idea that heterosexuality should be analyzed as critically as homosexuality, when this is practically a verbatim quote from Freud’s “Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality” (1905). Of course, we must include in our query the occurrence of completely false identifications, for example, Farina’s idea that the “Electra Complex” is part of the Freudian corpus and her assertion that, for Freud, the Oedipus complex is “solvable.”

Here we find a series of “missed encounters” between Freudian psychoanalysis and queer theory, and such “misses” are most telling (and for a psychoanalyst there is no “telling” without the “missing”). What is revealed, among other things, is the enduring impact of the vexed history that marks the troubled relationship between institutionalized psychoanalysis and homosexual-

ity. It is my proposition that this revenant haunts every effort by queer theorists to work with psychoanalysis, preventing queer theory from potentially finding a way through its impasses and logical contradictions with respect to identity.

Incalculable suffering to countless men and women took place in the name of psychoanalysis, and this must never be forgotten. However, what is equally essential to remember is that there is a distinction between the Freudian field and the institution of psychoanalysis, the latter being a construction made possible only by the rejection of the exilic essence of Freud's creation. It is *resistance* to psychoanalysis as Freud conceived it that led to petrifying and dogmatic psychoanalytic institutions, which is why Lacan cried for the necessity for a *return* to Freud. In my opinion, the future of any possible encounter between psychoanalysis and queer theory rests upon our rigor in upholding the differences between Freud's invention and the resistances through which the institution of psychoanalysis took place. This contrast has been kept in the foreground by some notable theorists who have done significant work on the question of the history of psychoanalysis and homosexuality, i.e., Henry Abelove (1986), Tim Dean and Christopher Lane (2001), Élisabeth Roudinesco (2002), Kenneth Lewes (1988). *Clinical Encounters in Sexuality* provides us with another valuable opportunity (never once and for all) to underline that the virulent homophobia that stains the history of psychoanalysis is a symptom of the *rejection* of Freud's strange invention. Ironically, by effacing the distinction between Freudian psychoanalysis and the institutionalization of psychoanalysis, queer theorists would situate themselves on the same side as those who pathologized homosexuality in the name of psychoanalysis by expelling what is most radical to Freud.

The reprobate discourse and practices that designated homosexuality a pathology cannot be separated from the effort to provide psychoanalysis with a home in the field of medicine, to suture the cut that constituted its birth. Freud observed the difficulty of those who called themselves psychoanalysts to remain stateless, on the side of uncertainty and the unknown:

“Sometimes I am amazed that analysts themselves should not be radically changed by their relation with analysis,” he wrote in a letter to LaForge (Bourguignon 1991, 27). As early as 1914, Freud expressed his great disappointment that the resistances to psychoanalysis that were once external became internal to its organization, and he recognized this as a far greater peril. Certainly, this reactionary direction was not the one Freud intended for the psychoanalytic movement.

Often characterized by his supposed pessimism, Freud was perhaps far too optimistic in calling his creation “the plague” during his one and only visit to America in 1909. The powerful immunological response that arose here took the form of suppressing psychoanalysis by domesticating it, insisting that it belonged to the land of medicine. While Freud (1926b) unwaveringly held that psychoanalysis is unequivocally Other to medicine and cannot be mapped on to a medical model of treatment, the Americans made clear that they fundamentally renounced the alterity of the Freudian thing by restricting the practice to medical doctors. Although the question of lay analysis appears to be about who can (or cannot) practice psychoanalysis, it is actually the kernel of truth that reveals what psychoanalysis is. “A profession of lay curers of souls who need not be doctors and should not be priests” was one of Freud’s poetic descriptions of the odd path that refuses the illusory mastery of scientism or religion (Meng and Freud 1963, 126). The crisis over lay analysis, which reached a head in the 1920s had dire consequences for institutionalized psychoanalysis’s relationship to homosexuality.

Among the many reasons Freud named medicalization as one of the greatest resistances to psychoanalysis was his awareness that his radically novel theory of human sexuality diverged completely from the medical conception (Nierenberg 2007). Whereas medicine considered human sexuality to be the fruit of an instinct, a sign of the continuity between human beings and nature, Freud discovered a peculiarly human foundation to sexuality that is characterized by a rupture with the “natural” order of things. The mythology of the drive allows for no

human subject, no speaking subject, to escape the exigencies of “deviant” sexuality. All are subject to the drives’ cacaphony, subverting any ideal of sexual harmony in human life. One of the four fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis, according to Lacan, the drive marks the impossibility of any biological real to function as a guarantee of desire, object, or sexuation. Where the *parlêtre*, the “speaking-being,” is concerned, all aspects of sexuality are equally curious. The drive annuls any necessary link between homosexuality and psychopathology, as Freud’s well-known position vis-à-vis homosexuality makes clear.

The borderline status of the drive, “lying at the frontier between the mental and the physical” (Freud 1905, 182), belonging neither to one side nor the other, proved nearly impossible to sustain after Freud’s death. But without this concept, that founds the “out-of-sync-ness” between the human order and supposed “biological reality,” there can be no psychoanalysis. Once the strangeness of the drive was replaced by ego-psychology’s term “instinctual drive” (an oxymoron in Freudian terms), it opened the way for the return to the idealization/naturalization of reproductive heterosexuality and its complement: the pathologization of homosexuality. While Freud was able to leave behind the certainties of “normalcy and deviance,” his followers retreated to this pernicious paradigm with all-too-well-known disastrous consequence.

While the chapters in *Clinical Encounters in Sexuality* reveal that psychoanalysis and queer theory have taken divergent paths, they share an inescapable and painful inheritance. However, any encounter between the two will prove difficult if the institutionalization of psychoanalysis is taken for the all of psychoanalysis. For the necessary mourning of the past to take place, this distinction must be made. It is by way of the “not-all” that we may reinvent the clinic of Otherness and the ethics of exile.

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