

ALL IS NOT SEXUALITY THAT LOOKS LIKE IT

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I am grateful for the observations of these five wonderful and thought-provoking interlocutors: Camille Robcis, Todd Shepard, Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg, Regina Kunzel, and Michal Shapira. They have prompted me to read a whole range of clarifying texts—from Jacques Derrida’s reflections on Friedrich Nietzsche to the work of classicist James Davidson on Michel Foucault and George Devereux (as well as more writings by Devereux) to historian Chris Waters’s recovery of Edward Glover, and from literary scholar Shoshana Felman’s brilliant Jacques Lacan-inspired rescue operation for psychoanalytic textual interpretation (in the special issue of *Yale French Studies* she edited in 1977) to Charles Shepherson’s turn-of-the-millennium revisionist take on Lacan and Foucault in *Vital Signs*. They have prompted me, too, to reconsider key texts by Sigmund Freud. And I am glad that the interlocutors challenge me with questions. These include: why the Left abandoned psychoanalysis (Robcis); how I have come to think about practices and desires and the relationships between “the sexual” and other realms of human existence (Shepard and Stewart-Steinberg, each in their own way); how a more integrated and comprehensive master narrative of psychoanalysis might be written, connecting the first and second halves of the twentieth century (Shapira); and how to delve more deeply into the role of *analysands* in shaping what counts as psychoanalysis (Kunzel).

It will surprise no one to hear that “psychoanalysis” is nowadays an embattled project. On the one hand, we find elaborate grouplets of connoisseurs speaking an obscure language, often disdainful of other grouplets, while vigilantly guarding the guild’s history against ignorant outsiders. On the other hand, in many departments of psychology or psychiatry, the name Freud merits at best a raised eyebrow. Freud is rarely required reading (except perhaps in a literary- or cultural-studies classroom). We are now in the world of pharmaceuticals and of neuroscience, and psychoanalysis is declared thoroughly outmoded. Why would a historian—or any politically engaged person—study the conceptual intricacies

of this phenomenon, if it is all wrongheaded anyway? A preliminary answer to Robcis's question about the left's disinterest is that what "psychoanalysis" has come to stand for is all too often unimpressive; there are historical reasons for that, which *Cold War Freud* explores. But another answer is that there were exceptional individuals who represented the critical curiosity and generosity that were also part of the promise of Freudianism, and they remain worth learning from. Some were liberals, in the best senses of that term. Others are better defined as anarcho-utopians, individuals who could be seen as pursuing what it means, in difficult times, to try to live a non-fascist life. The integrated history that Shapira is justly calling for will reveal even more clearly the multisited production of the iridescent potentialities of psychoanalysis, and the intricate filaments of lines of connection between dissident imaginations.¹

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I was drawn to the study of psychoanalysis in part because of a long-standing interest in the powerful emotional appeal of right-wing political movements, from Nazism and other fascisms of the 1930s–1940s to the religious right of the 2000s–2010s. In addition, there was an equally long-standing curiosity about not just the history of sexuality but also the politics of sexuality. This included recurrent wondering about the frequently contradictory feelings human beings seemed to bring to sexuality—whatever they thought or felt "it" was—the ambivalences and vulnerabilities they appeared to have, and, relatedly, the question of why it was, throughout the twentieth century, and often up to the present day, that people were apparently quite so easy to manipulate around intimate matters, so simple to rile up for punitive measures towards the freedoms of others—or often even themselves. The two questions were not unrelated, but the connections between them were, I found, historically complicated and always again different. Very different, in fact: I take it as baseline that what counts as human nature is historically variable.

Stewart-Steinberg is exactly right to think of *Cold War Freud* as a kind of sequel to *Sex after Fascism*—one of three sequels, as it happens, each of which takes up distinct conundrums left unresolved.² It feels important to register

¹ Essential for broadening our geographical and conceptual imaginations: John Forrester and Laura Cameron, *Freud in Cambridge* (Cambridge, 2017); and Omnia El Shakry, *The Arabic Freud* (Princeton, 2017).

² The other two sequels are Dagmar Herzog, *Sexuality in Europe: A Twentieth-Century History* (Cambridge, 2011); and Herzog, *Unlearning Eugenics: Sexuality, Reproduction, and Disability in Post-Nazi Europe* (Madison, 2018). The first, covering as it did twenty-five countries and a hundred years, among other things allowed me to think through a

that I did not know what to expect when I began the research. I did have a few supplemental problems in my head when I started. One had to do with trauma. I knew from prior work in Holocaust studies that there had been a controversy in the 1960s over the very existence of such an entity as “survivor syndrome” and that many survivors had initially been denied any recognition of, much less recompense for, mental health damages incurred in flight, hiding, or imprisonment in concentration and death camps, but I did not know the details—nor could I have guessed that it would be former Nazi psychiatrists who would be the ones to invoke Freud as they denied pensions to survivors. Another mystery had to do with aggression. I found it strange that previous scholars often assumed that the question requiring explanation with regard to the emotional pull of right-wing movements was either why people would submit to authority or why they would choose against their own interests; it seemed odd that pleasure in cruelty, and delight in a sense of superiority, were so infrequently considered. I was thus especially interested to learn what psychoanalysts, from Freud on, might have to offer on the subject of aggression.

Other puzzles had to do with the theme of desire. I was intrigued to learn more about the work of a handful of New Left-allied sexologists and sex rights activists in post-Nazi West Germany that had briefly been characters in *Sex after Fascism*. Mentored by a combination of ex-Nazis and re-émigré Jews, combining Alfred Kinsey-emulating large-scale social-science empirical research with Masters-and-Johnson-style hands-on therapies with Theodor Adorno-inspired critical theorizing, they produced remarkable insights into human beings’ apparently conflicted feelings about sexuality during the height of the sexual revolution.³ Although they ended up not being the subject of a chapter in *Cold War Freud*, learning about their work gave me another clue about what questions I could

number of the questions about periodization, causation, and interpretation that only a comparativist study could begin to provide. The second, investigating as it does the roots and some of the consequences of the currently growing impasse between disability rights and reproductive rights, allowed me to assess the complex evolution of lessons drawn from the Nazi mass murder of the disabled and its entwinement with the Holocaust of European Jewry and to return to my long-preoccupying question of unexpected repercussions between different periods in time.

³ Various dimensions are discussed in Dagmar Herzog, “‘Where They Desire They Cannot Love’: Recovering Radical Freudianism in West German Sexology (1960s–80s),” *Psychoanalysis and History* 16/2 (July 2014), 237–61; Herzog, “Zwischen Marx und Freud und Masters und Johnson: Kritische Sexualwissenschaft in der BRD um 1979,” *INDES: Zeitschrift für Politik und Gesellschaft* 1 (2016), 45–54; Herzog, “Sexuelle Traumatisierung und Traumatisierte Sexualität: Die westdeutsche Sexualwissenschaft im Wandel,” in Meike Sophia Baader, Christian Jansen, Julia König, and Christin Sager, eds., *Zwischen Enttabuisierung und Entgrenzung: Sexuelle Revolution, Kindheit und Sexualität im historischen Kontext der 1970er und 1980er Jahre* (Vienna and Cologne, 2017), 37–54.

be pursuing further. For crucially, these critical sexuality researchers and the gay rights activists with whom they worked closely insisted that what was needed in post-Nazi West Germany was *more* Freud, rather than less. How could this be, given that one of the major results of gay rights activism in the postwar United States was the disparagement of psychoanalytic approaches to the topic of same-sex desire? Could it be that there were two different Freuds on the two sides of the Atlantic? Dozens of conversations and an uncountable number of texts later, I realized there were many, many more.

Cold War Freud is an intellectual history of the transatlantic politics of psychoanalysis in the post-World War II period. Freud had died in 1939; the book traces what happened in the psychoanalytic diaspora set in motion by the brutal rise of Nazism and the flight into often vehemently anticommunist nations. *Cold War Freud* is about post-Freudian reworkings of Freud. Psychoanalysis was an enormous success in the West in the era of the Cold War—so much so that governments in the Soviet bloc devoted an extraordinary amount of time to combating its purported allure and rebutting what it took to be its main findings. Across the West, though, in every nation with unique valences, psychoanalysis came to inflect virtually all other thought systems, from the social-science disciplines and the major religious traditions to popular advice literature and radical protest movements. My book above all concerns the impact of the epochal historical transformations of the era—from (delayed-reaction) engagement with Nazism and the Holocaust to the Vietnam War and decolonization, and from the sexual revolution to the rise of gay and women's rights—on theories of human nature, especially around the key topics of desire, trauma, anxiety, and aggression. It analyzes how constantly the contents of theories changed, even when the words—libido, ego, id, Oedipal, drives, defenses, resistance, object relations, projection, perversion, narcissism, transference and countertransference—seemed to stay the same. Foucault's long-ago *aperçu*—that “the world of speech and desires has known invasions, struggles, plundering, disguises, ploys”—proved all too pertinent.⁴

Another enigma I soon confronted was the—to me—repellent politics of psychoanalysis in the postwar US. Nowhere was Freudian psychoanalysis more successful, and psychiatry more psychoanalytic, than in America in the first two Cold War decades: 1949–69. This was *the* “golden age” of psychoanalysis, the time and place in which it gained the greatest traction within medicine and mass culture alike. This was also a time and place when psychoanalysis was intensely normative and conservative. Two decades in, its cultural and medical authority collapsed, nearly completely, under the dual impact of impassioned women's

⁴ Michel Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” in Paul Rabinow, ed., *The Foucault Reader* (New York, 1984), 76–100, at 76.

and gay rights and New Left activism and the renewed ascendance of biomedical psychiatry as well as popular self-help.

Yet this was just the moment when the fortunes of psychoanalysis were rising dramatically elsewhere. Eventually I realized—and this became one of my core overall arguments—that there was a *second* “golden age” of psychoanalysis, running from 1969 to 1989, but this one in Central and Western Europe and Latin America. Moreover, it was carried precisely by those New Left and feminist and gay movements that had crushed the conservative version of psychoanalysis in the US. It was, indeed, an utterly different interpretation of Freud that was ascendant—not least in continental Europe, as part of the New Left’s efforts to recover the radical Jewish heritage of the early twentieth century that had been banished by the Nazis. The hostility, or condescension, or incomprehension, that to this day is provoked by the word “Freud” has, I submit, a great deal to do with the fact that many of the histories we have center on the postwar American story. But the psychoanalysis everyone loves to hate is only *one* kind of psychoanalysis. So, for example, when in 1977 Felman, along with her many contributors, worked to redirect the conversation in literary studies and confidently mocked a particular kind of Freudianism (“The one characteristic by which a ‘Freudian reading’ is generally recognized is its insistence on sexuality”) before providing a smarter read of Freud, her target was not just critic Edmund Wilson’s 1934 spin on Henry James’s *The Turn of the Screw*. It was, instead, exactly the absurd reductionism of the postwar US that still gives psychoanalysis its bad name—and her alternate Lacan-inflected reading, emphasizing ambiguities of meaning, was yet another of the hundreds of possible ways to put Freud to use.⁵ As it turns out, however, there would also be many ways to flee the ostensible centrality of sexual matters to the psychoanalytic enterprise, and as the 1970s gave way to the 1980s and 1990s, the idea that sexuality was gone became a commonsense consensus.⁶

All through the book, one of my aims was to recover the ingenuity of neglected or misperceived individuals and reincorporate their writings into the intellectual-historical canon. Thus I consider the role played by Kurt Eissler, for instance, in rebuffing the contempt for survivors in the debates over post-Holocaust trauma—and show, in another instance, how Alexander Mitscherlich demonstrated that otherwise stringently antipolitical forms of ego

⁵ Shoshana Felman, “Turning the Screw of Interpretation,” *Yale French Studies* 55–56 (1977), 94–207, at 103.

⁶ Paul Parin, “Die Verflüchtigung des Sexuellen,” in Paul Parin and Goldy Parin-Matthèy, *Subjekt im Widerspruch* (Frankfurt am Main, 1987), 81–9; André Green, “Has Sexuality Anything to Do with Psychoanalysis?” *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 76/5 (Oct. 1995), 871–83; Susan Budd, “No Sex, Please—We’re British,” in Celia Harding, ed., *Sexuality: Psychoanalytic Perspectives* (Philadelphia, 2001), 52–68.

psychology could usefully be blended with the role of calmly reassuring liberal public intellectual for a wrenched but all too often inadequately remorseful nation.⁷ I document how the discoveries of German Dutch Jewish analyst and novelist Hans Keilson, who worked in the Nazi-occupied Netherlands with children in hiding and generated a powerful theory of sequential and chronic traumatization, was subsequently taken up by the German-born but longtime Chilean resident David Becker who in the 1980s provided therapy for survivors of torture in the Latin American dictatorships and now works in places like Zagreb, Gaza, and Luanda—and who has formulated a devastating critique of the present inflationary, self-serving, and lamentably ineffectual trauma industry and the ways in which it has all too often used PTSD in depoliticized and amoral ways.⁸

Inevitably, however, I remained preoccupied with recovering individuals who offered fresh insights into the history of sexuality. Thus, for instance—in the very first chapter, where I build an argument that the so-called “Jewish science” of psychoanalysis underwent a process of “Christianization” in the immediate postwar years in the US, due to an unanticipated conjunction of impasses and rivalries—I revisit the writings of the now routinely scorned neo-Freudian Karen Horney. These days, Horney is typically interpreted as above all a feminist—and often snootily dismissed as not even really an analyst. My contention, however, is that she needs to be understood also as a theorist of sexuality and—more importantly—as someone who retheorized in interesting ways the relationships *between* the sexual and other realms of existence.

Relatedly, then, one of the puzzles I pursue recurrently in the book has to do with the riddle of the relationship between sexual desire and other aspects of human motivation. For some psychoanalytic commentators, sex—desire for it or troubles with it—explained just about everything. For others, sex was about everything *but* itself; *nonsexual* issues—including, precisely, aggression, ambition, anxiety—were continually being worked through *in* the realm of sex. In 1937, Horney effectively shorthanded the point: “Just as ‘all is not gold that glitters,’” she wrote, so also “all is not sexuality that looks like it.”⁹ Just because something *looked* sexual—and might even involve sexual activity in the narrowest definition of that term—did *not* mean that its aim or function was primarily sexual. Sexual activity might rather be seen as serving all kinds of other emotional

⁷ Kurt Eissler, “Perverved Psychiatry?” *American Journal of Psychiatry* 123/11 (1967), 1354–6; Alexander Mitscherlich, “On Hostility and Man-Made Stupidity,” *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 19 (1971), 819–34.

⁸ David Becker, *Die Erfindung des Traumas: Verflochtene Geschichten* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 2006).

⁹ Karen Horney, *The Neurotic Personality of Our Time* (New York, 1937), 157.

purposes. Moreover, even when there were sexual difficulties, Horney rethought the direction of causation. For her—as she put it in a subsequent book—“Sexual difficulties are the effect rather than the cause of the neurotic character structure.”¹⁰ Horney may not have been right, but the provocation is certainly productive. The notion that people seek sex for nonsexual reasons would not get put forward again in the US or elsewhere until the sexual revolution exploded in the 1970s. Even more germane, however, are the prompts her comments provide for intellectual historians to ponder more frequently: how better to theorize intimate matters; how to make clearer sense of how human beings have categorized reality in general; and how to express the direction of causation in dealing with topics that involve bodies and emotions and the politics that can be made of these.

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Kunzel and Shapira astutely and graciously note the centrality of concern with homophobia that constitutes a major thread of inquiry in *Cold War Freud*. The whole topic is one of the most complicated and irresolvable in the history of psychoanalysis (and is connected as well with Robcis’s and Stewart-Steinberg’s questions about the place of gender difference and sexuality within the edifice of psychoanalytic thought). Also with regard to Shepard’s crucial query about Devereux: it is always distressing, but somehow never really surprising, to learn that yet another Freudian psychoanalyst made ugly homophobic remarks—as homophobia turns out to be one of the indicative, unifying characteristics of this otherwise constantly mutually combative profession, whether one looks to developments in the US, the UK, continental Europe, or Latin America.¹¹ I am delighted, moreover, that Kunzel mentions not just the tenacity of the

¹⁰ Karen Horney, *New Ways in Psychoanalysis* (New York, 1939), 10. In pointing this out, Horney was turning upside down the ideas of many conventional Freudians for whom her work was a challenge, yet her comments were in keeping with remarks made by Sigmund Freud in 1910 in the lovely essay cited by Stewart-Steinberg Sigmund Freud, “Wild’ Psycho-Analysis,” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 11 (London, 1957; first published 1910), 219–28.

¹¹ Devereux, it is safe to say, was an equal-opportunity obsessive when it came to tracking down the endless variety of things human beings can do with each other’s bodies. And even a focus solely on Devereux’s writings about classical Greece would have to take in more than just the 1968 essay with which the Oxford classicist Kenneth Dover was in partial (both ambivalent and problematic) conversation—with all the ensuing consequences for how Michel Foucault constructed his *History of Sexuality*, to which we all now owe so much. The theme of homosexuality, it turns out, is pursued in at least fifteen of Devereux’s essays between the 1930s and 1960s, and in these he addresses same-sex behavior, desire, and/or myths not just among the ancients but also among the Sedang Moi in Vietnam and (above

homophobia defining the profession but also its *flexibility*, and the ways in which the profession self-renovated in turning to theories of narcissism and character disorders purportedly rooted in pre-Oedipal difficulties.

It is important to record that homophobia's contents and aims change over time—it does not stay the same, but each historical recurrence serves new and divergent needs. That also means that efforts to combat it change tack as well. It turns out that there are quite a number of ways to queer Freud. The two idiosyncratically creative anti-homophobes who bookend my study—the Los Angelean Robert Stoller in the US and the Zurich-based Fritz Morgenthaler in Europe—both evolved significantly between the 1960s and 1970s, not least because both learned tremendously from their patients' pushbacks and from gay liberation activists. More work on both men is long overdue. Stoller was a key figure in finally getting homosexuality removed from the list of psychiatric illnesses in 1973; his resourceful strategy was to argue, cheerfully, that we are all perverts, heterosexuals by no means exempt—and he was the creator of a wonderful innovative theory of sexual excitement.¹² For the US, I additionally highlight the work of Kenneth Lewes, who did more than anyone to document the breadth of the post-Freudian homophobia and identify it as a symptom of the deep ambivalence of psychoanalysis about sex, and who has, more recently, written one of the most eloquent critiques of present forms of purportedly gay-friendly analysis that have shifted away from an interest in sexual drives and desires to a blander focus on attachment and coupledness.¹³ Yet Kunzel is right as well to ask for acknowledgment of Stoller's more ambiguous involvement in his pre-1970s work with transsexuals.¹⁴ And

all) the Mohave Indians in the US; at least seven of these also address “rectal intercourse” or “anal coitus”—with the tone ranging from a neutral-documentary to an intrigued-by-fascinating-ethnographic-detail style—or contain related discussions ranging from tall-tale legends involving anality to discussion of the “anal phase” of toddlers' psychological development due to the relaxed manner of Mohave toilet training; heterosexual anal coitus also makes an appearance in Devereux's writings, as does homosexual mutual masturbation and fellatio. This is all worth further study. The larger relevant task will involve the effort to trace the histories of anthropology, sexology, and decolonization together—an effort that is just beginning. An inspirational model is Jean Walton, *Fair Sex, Savage Dreams: Race, Psychoanalysis, Sexual Difference* (Durham, NC, 2001); a new collaborative venture by Benjamin Kahan (Louisiana State) and Greta LaFleur (Yale) is also auspicious.

¹² Robert Stoller, “Sexual Excitement,” *Archives of General Psychiatry* 33/8 (Aug. 1976), 899–909.

¹³ Kenneth Lewes, “Homosexuality, Homophobia, and Gay-Friendly Psychoanalysis,” *Fort Da* 11/A (2005), 13–34.

¹⁴ On Stoller's evolution see Joanne Meyerowitz, *How Sex Changed: A History of Transsexuality in the United States* (Cambridge, MA, 2002); Linda Hopkins, *False Self:*

essential, too, is Shapira's reminder in this forum, looking at earlier decades, to think of psychoanalysts' engagement with same-sex desires and diversity in gender expression as a "multifaceted, contradictory development, oscillating between the normative and the reformative." Morgenthaler was conflicted and contradictory in his 1960s writings about work with homosexual patients but in the 1970s became the first European analyst of any nationality not only to declare, cogently and repeatedly, that homosexuality was not a pathology and that everyone was on a spectrum of desires and identity configurations, but also to develop, more generally, a theory of "the sexual" (*das Sexuelle*) as a kind of unruly guerilla force in ever-uneven battle with the dictatorship that was already-formed "sexuality" (*Sexualität*). There is an as yet underexamined connection between Morgenthaler's extensive ethnographic travels in Africa and Papua New Guinea at the moment of decolonization and the critical leverage he gained not just on his own society but on his profession and on himself.¹⁵

Finally, I keep thinking about Shepard's crucial observation that few other epochal global transformations remain as messy and contested in interpretation as the (ever-incomplete) process of decolonization. And I wonder about what the connections might be, in the present, between the intensification of economic disparities and growing insecurity worldwide and the intransigence of trans- and homophobia and their resurgence in novel, postmodern forms.¹⁶ For, ultimately, it would appear—also around ostensibly sex-related topics—that it is *aggression* that we need to understand more fully.

The Life of Masud Khan (New York, 2006); John Forrester, *Thinking in Cases* (Cambridge, 2017). Jeffrey Escoffier's forthcoming project on Stoller's friendship with the sexologist William Simon will yield yet more.

¹⁵ Fritz Morgenthaler, *Homosexuality, Heterosexuality, Perversion* (Hillsdale, NJ, 1988).

¹⁶ Masha Gessen, "Why Autocrats Fear LGBT Rights," *New York Review of Books*, 27 July 2017, at www.nybooks.com/daily/2017/07/27/why-autocrats-fear-lgbt-rights-trump.