# ON RESISTING WOMEN

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First published in 2026 by
Karnac Books Limited
62 Bucknell Road
Bicester
Oxfordshire OX26 2DS



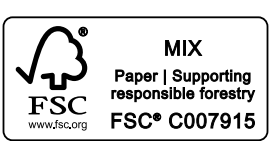
British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A C.I.P. for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-80013-403-4 (paperback)
ISBN: 978-1-80013-405-8 (e-book)
ISBN: 978-1-80013-404-1 (PDF)

Typeset by vPrompt eServices Pvt Ltd, India

www.firingthemind.com

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*For Augusta, Beattie, and Beckett who call me into a better world,*
*and for Dan who makes a better world possible*

‘You only have to look at the Medusa straight on to see her. And she’s not deadly. She’s beautiful and she’s laughing.’

Hélène Cixous, *The Laugh of the Medusa* (1975) (trans. by Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen) in *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 1*(4): 875–893

‘Today I’m having an attack of the male gaze.’

Teresa Cinque, ‘Quello “sguardo machine” dentro di noi.’ *Corriere della Sera*, 14 July 2020

‘Resistance, as resistance and not incapacity, is always a missed opportunity.’

Adam Phillips, On resistance (2025), *London Review of Books, 47*(14/15)

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# About the author



**Michaela Chamberlain** trained at The Bowlby Centre and studied in the Psychoanalysis Unit at UCL. Shortly after qualifying at The Bowlby Centre in 2016, she started teaching Freud and attachment theory and became chair of The Bowlby Centre. She worked as an honorary psychotherapist in two NHS trusts for several years. She has presented clinical papers at public forums, lectures internationally, and has been published in various journals. Her debut book, *Misogyny in Psychoanalysis*, released in June 2022, explores the historical and current context of misogyny in psychoanalytic theory and clinical practice.

She is in private practice in London as a psychoanalytic psychotherapist and is a supervisor and training therapist.

# Acknowledgements



I am very grateful to Kate Pearce for encouraging and developing a space for different voices in psychoanalytic writing. Thank you to her and the team at Karnac for supporting my work and making the process of bringing this book into being such an enjoyable one.

Thank you to Linda Hopkins for her insightful comments and encouragement in writing about censorship. I am also grateful to Helena Vissing for her feedback and to Christopher Bollas for his generous words about Chapter 5, "Misogyny as a fascist state of mind". Conversations with Debbie Zimmerman and Jane Selby have been invaluable in thinking about the nuances of misogyny, how it plays out in the therapeutic space and its impact across different contexts.

Gina Grundlich, Theresa Plewman, Kenneth Currie, Louise Hood, Jacqueline Glynn, Lawrence Kilshaw, Georgina Jones, Michelle Devine, and Brooke Morris, thank you for your continual support and being the community that always gives so much and laughs so much.

I am profoundly grateful to Adam Phillips for his encouragement, distinctive insights, and for enabling me to realise how important it is for me to write, to persevere with what I want to say and the importance of saying it.

This book is for Augusta, Beattie, and Beckett, the most insightful, quick-witted and kind people I know, who challenge and change my thinking on a daily basis. And for Dan, my first and most important reader.

# Preface



As a psychotherapist I live in an alternative reality. Each day I sit with people listening intently to what they are telling me, while I allow my attention to wander and then making sense of what is drifting into my consciousness, to question if it is telling me anything about what is going on with the person talking to me. My job is deeply personal in all senses. How people feel, what is impacting on their lives right now, what has happened to them in the past, what they think about all of it, what they tell me about all of it, and importantly what they don't tell me about all of it. I want to know all about it and understand how the world they live in impacts on them. But the world they tell me about is often very much at odds with the world I would think I am living in if I were to rely on psychoanalytic texts.

Psychoanalysis is often referred to as a religion. When I listen to podcasts or hear analysts speak, I am often reminded of my years at a religious school, where each soul is considered sacred and of worth: each analysand's unconscious is of importance and valued as being of interest. But with psychoanalysis the religious associations give way for something more Orwellian, with the idea of some people's unconscious being more important than others'. Psychoanalysis claims to be inclusive. I trained at various institutions, each focused on the individual; they talked about race, classism, disability, and discrimination on the grounds of sexuality. But they never talked about misogyny, almost as though it did not exist

So, I wrote a book about my experience of training as a psychotherapist and the glaring omissions about patriarchy and misogyny in the theoretical canon and active misogyny in the theory, practice, and institutions of psychoanalysis. When my book was published, I was pleased to be invited to speak with numerous groups and institutions. I presented to a group of renowned, 'establishment' psychoanalysts, where a male psychoanalyst told me that the misogyny I was talking about didn't exist, that *he* didn't recognise it. A couple of the women in the group echoed his reaction or quietly dismissed what I was saying. A couple were interested.

The response I have had from many more of the participants at other groups, emails sent to me, post-conference conversations, from people new to psychoanalysis to those in retirement, would strongly suggest otherwise. Misogyny in psychoanalysis is far from dead, it is alive and kicking, without being called to account.

The one constant among all the groups I have spoken to irrespective of where in the world they are, is the voicing of upset

during the question-and-answer session. There is always a moment when a woman will voice her anger and frustration of not being 'seen' in her training. When this is heard, a collective silencing is broken and more voices of discontent, resentment, and sometimes trauma can be listened to.

Psychoanalytic writing, trainings, conferences have long ignored misogyny. In *Misogyny in Psychoanalysis* I wrote that I wanted to 'invite' people into a conversation. I was too polite. I am curious why psychoanalysis is not ashamed of its history of misogyny and is doing little about it in the present. The conversation about misogyny in psychoanalysis has to happen, it is no longer an invitation or an option.

As therapists and analysts, we sit with people every day who have been and are traumatised by patriarchy and misogyny. For all genders there is trauma due to patriarchy but some profit more from it. And because of that 'profit', psychoanalytic institutions have failed to train therapists to sit with people and understand and make sense of that trauma, furthermore they have legitimised misogynistic writing and thinking.

In the current world we do not have to look far for evidence of misogyny: rape has been effectively decriminalised in the UK; gender apartheid in Afghanistan has been extended to the point that women are forbidden from speaking in public; the overturning of Roe vs Wade in the USA has signalled the end of women having autonomy over their bodies; in France Gisèle Pelicot was drugged and offered up online for men to come and rape her, resulting in the conviction of fifty men; in Germany in 2024 an international chat group has been discovered with over 70,000 members sharing information on how to rape and sexually assault women; around the world rape and sexual assault is widely used as a weapon of war; a UK-based

group, Everyone's Invited, has published a list of 1,664 primary schools in the UK that have sexual abuse claims against them, to tackle the extent of rape culture in schools (sadly I could list more evidence of misogyny).

But when I return to my alternative reality of reading psychoanalytic journals and books, listening to podcasts, and receiving flyers for CPD events, I am effectively told that world does not exist. Through the lack of address of misogyny on trainings, conferences, published papers, I am told that the woman sat in front of me, traumatised by being leered at on the train, being catcalled, being told that her skirt is too short for work, being ignored in meetings and talked over by men, or being choked during sex due to this being normalised in porn, really does not exist. And more importantly, if she does exist, she is interpreted as a modern-day Blanche DuBois, instantly pathologised and metaphorically dismissed to an asylum. The world beyond the woman's immediate family is rarely analysed and diagnosed: if it were, it might hint at where the real illness lies. (When I use the terms woman, female, man, male I am including all people who identify with those terms.)

Freud's main request of his patients was to speak freely, so I have accepted his invitation as I continue to put psychoanalysis on the couch. It might be easy to see my words as coming from a place of trauma, activism, revenge for injustices, and frustrations with psychoanalysis. It does not. This book is not a protest, it is a refusal. I refuse the misogynistic structures that have put in place a white, cisgendered, phallocentric viewpoint. I care about psychoanalysis too much to let those structures exclude me from something that has been immensely important and enjoyable in my life.

Misogyny in psychoanalysis is very much alive, but what is also punching through is a desire for change. I am immensely grateful

for the invitations I have received to speak with different groups. I am often taken aback by how much my experience of misogyny in psychoanalysis resonates with the different psychoanalytic communities and how ready people are for psychoanalysis to be genuinely inclusive. Thanks to the openness and forward thinking of some institutions wanting to engage with misogyny, the change is beginning to happen. I wish to continue the conversations with people from around the world that I have learnt from and who are also calling for change in psychoanalysis, who want their experiences to be included and to not feel the unconscious and conscious pull of submitting to misogyny. To be clear, there are losses for all people under patriarchy, for some much more than others.

This book is about the various ways in which we resist women, how we ignore women on a daily basis, tone them down, censor them, and pathologise them. It is about what causes misogyny and the impact it has on people of all genders. This book is based in lived experience, using psychoanalysis as an example of how misogyny seeps into every aspect of daily life and how we need to resist misogyny rather than women.

*CHAPTER 1*

# Primary paternal preoccupation



On a dreary autumn morning as I stand waiting for the Tube, a teenage girl stands next to me on the platform. She gets her phone out of her school blazer pocket and starts to flick through the messages on the screen as we wait for the train to arrive. From the other end of the platform a man in his forties, wearing a suit, carrying a rucksack over his shoulder walks down the platform. As he moves nearer towards us, he stares intently at the girl, looking her up and down as though taking in the information from a restaurant menu and deciding what he'll have first. When he is close to her, the girl who up to this point had been engrossed, sometimes smiling at the small screen she was holding in her hand, feels his stare and looks up. As he walks by, the man makes eye contact with her, looks her up and down again and continues on. The girl quickly looks back down at her

phone; her expression has changed from relaxed amusement to serious concentration; she crosses one leg in front of the other and reaches her hand across her chest to clasp her other arm: she retreats into herself.

I hesitate to describe this as an 'interaction' as it was more of an intrusion or invasion, but the scene that I am describing is one that is familiar to most women. What is particularly disturbing is the sense of confusion and violation these experiences evoke. At 8am on a Tuesday morning, the schoolgirl was most preoccupied with catching up with messages from friends and escaping the cold weather. What she experienced was an intrusion that suddenly threw her out of the position of being a girl thinking about amusing interactions with friends, to being informed by a stranger that at the very least, she was being considered for her physical appearance and he felt entitled to take pleasure from it; to the thought of sex being pushed in to her mind and that he wanted to use her for that purpose.

It may well have been that the teenage girl had a desire to be seen, and to be seen for lots of different reasons, including sex; however, what this interaction illustrates is the difference between a reciprocated glance or gaze and what Mulvey (1975) described as 'the male gaze'. Mulvey, using Freud's theory of scopophilia, 'taking other people as objects, subjecting them to a controlling and curious gaze', described how women in cinema were being portrayed by the usually heteronormative, male directors and protagonists—women were reduced to 'passive, sex objects' with the director and protagonist deriving sexual and visual pleasure exercising the male gaze, the men positioning themselves as 'dominant, powerful and in control'. While Mulvey's 'male gaze' has been developed beyond a reductive, generalised description of the male gaze (Sassatelli, 2011), it remains useful in naming

a male, heteronormative gaze in patriarchal societies (Piechucka, 2020). In many ways, this is the first visceral introduction teenage girls get of the 'male gaze', which is deceptive because of course the male gaze has begun for them from before birth. What is perhaps key in this is what the male gaze chooses to see or not, and indeed what it chooses to impose on the girls and women on whom the gaze is being placed.

The origins of psychoanalysis are firmly rooted in what the male gaze saw of women, beginning with Freud's interest in the hysterical women being presented in Charcot's auditorium, to the development of attachment theory with Bowlby studying the behaviour of young children with their mothers, and Winnicott's key paper on 'Primary maternal preoccupation' (1956), which describes and prescribes the correct condition a mother should be in with her infant for a 'healthy' mother–baby relationship. It is interesting that in the sixty plus years since Winnicott's paper was first published, there has not been an equivalent paper in response, focusing on the father's relationship with a newborn, perhaps because those who would write it would already have a sense of how restrictive such prescriptions and proscriptions might be.

The role of the father in psychoanalysis has traditionally taken the place of authority. Freud's Oedipus complex (Freud, 1923b) clearly requires the dominance of the father and for the son to want to grow up to be like him, having what he has (the 'having' being a woman); Lacan's role of the father was to establish order and to bring the child in contact with the outside world, a failure of which could lead to psychosis (Bailly, 2009). The male theorists that constructed these ideas mirrored the societal view and contemporary male gaze, giving men the most powerful of positions, even in the realm of the unconscious, a tradition that has

been challenged but has continued in psychoanalysis both theoretically and literally.

Freud is often referred to as the 'father' of psychoanalysis and Bowlby as the 'father' of attachment theory, with a presumption that this title holds gravitas, authority, and should command respect. This does miss the obvious in that the meaning associated with the term 'father' will be dependent on each individual's experience of their own father and for many the term conjures up the experience of the male gaze and much more beyond that. It is a term that needs to be used with caution or at least considered as to exactly what kind of father Freud and indeed Bowlby were to the followers of the theories they put forward.

Poppy Jackson's live artwork *Television Lounge* (2014) directly interrupts these ideas of presumed paternal authority, male gaze, and what the father figure chooses to see or negatively hallucinate. In 2014 in an endurance piece lasting seven hours, the artist stands facing the wall, in the corner of a room of what looks like a standard disused 1980s-built office. All the furniture has been removed, just a stained, partly worn, standard blue carpet covers the floor; the walls in a well-worn shade of cream provide the backdrop for the artist's naked body.

Watching the performance taking place there is of course the anticipation of what might happen, which gradually dissipates as there is no movement made by the artist; she remains motionless, turned towards the wall for the entire piece. The work takes on more meaning when connected with the location of where Jackson is standing—not an office, but the room is in a disused police station; the corner she stands in is where the television was situated in the police officers' break room.

Jackson is making a clear statement about the objectification of bodies, the place of women, what women are being used for,

and what the male gaze does and does not see. As the viewer pays closer attention to Jackson's body, what becomes apparent is that a part of the artist's body is far from motionless; there is a small trickle of menstrual blood which moves down the inside of Jackson's leg. Through the work, an internal process instantly becomes external and visible for all: there is an unsettling confrontation between the stillness of Jackson and the movement of blood; there is also an unsettling confrontation between what the gaze sees initially and presumes to be there with what is actually there. How much does the male gaze reliably see what is present in another subjectivity?

In 'Gender as perspective: The on-going psychoanalytic privilege of the penis', Terhaar (2020) argues that psychoanalysis is 'founded on a view of human nature that is masculine' and that 'psychoanalytic theories have espoused white, heterosexual, male experience, without it being recognised as a particular perspective'. Since the establishment of the psychoanalytic movement there have been women who have tried to challenge this viewpoint but who have been ignored, dismissed, or relegated to a feminist niche. Margarete Hilferding, the first woman admitted into the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society, in 1911 presented her first and only paper speaking about women not just as caregivers but also sexual beings and spoke of the physical impact of childbirth to Freud's group, but this was discarded with little if no consideration. Karen Horney who directly challenged Freud on his view of female development was dismissed from the Psychoanalytic Institute in New York (Chamberlain, 2022).

The challenge to the phallocentric model in psychoanalysis has continued into more recent times. Bracha Ettinger (Ettinger, 2020) has been writing and been published since 1990 challenging the phallocentric viewpoint in psychoanalysis and developing her

theoretical construct of the matrixial. In 2000 Golder and Dimen founded the journal *Studies in Gender and Sexuality* with the specific intention of not holding with the usual Freudian tenets around women. The MaMSIE (Mapping Maternal Subjectivities, Identities and Ethics) network based in the Psychosocial Department at Birkbeck University has been publishing its free, online journal to 'develop maternal scholarship' since 2009. This is not to mention the various writings of Muriel Dimen, Jessica Benjamin, Nancy Chodorow, Joan Raphael-Leff, Joyce McDougall, Rosemary Balsam, Susie Orbach, and Luise Eichenbaum.

However, I wonder how much of this is mainstream psychoanalysis and included on trainings, or do psychotherapy students have to go searching to find out about it and discover for themselves the history of how different genders have and are perceived in psychoanalysis? Is the common 'everyday' trauma of intrusion by a girl or woman having a man's sexualised gaze imposed on them discussed, particularly when this may have direct clinical implications. Research carried out by Barendse and Byrne (2022) found that girls who show physical signs of entering puberty early, such as breast changes, are at higher risk of depression and anxiety. This increased risk may be for a number of reasons—as highlighted by the authors, this area is under-researched—however they do link this to the increase in sexual harassment experienced by girls which is directly correlated to the timing of puberty.

When working with one analysand whose father began sexually abusing her when she started menstruating, the societal impact of being a girl was not missed by her. She had no recollection of her father's gaze during the incidents of abuse; however, she had a vivid recollection of one occasion when her mother had walked into the room, briefly witnessing her father abusing her. The analysand and her mother held each other's gaze for a few

seconds, her mother then backed out of the room. In that one moment my analysand felt utter despair, not because her mother did not help or intervene—for her it was a realisation that her mother was caught in the same 'system' as her, having to submit to what men want to do with women and women having to collude. What my analysand had been experiencing in what she described as 'microaggressions' by being a young girl feeling the impact of a sexualised male gaze in her local community and at school, suddenly coalesced in a deeply traumatic moment. As an adult she felt and knew that what her father had done was wrong, but her recurring thought was, 'Why did he think it was OK?'

In many ways her recurring thought, or question, feels pertinent to the 'microaggressions' in psychoanalysis. Winnicott (1969) offers a partial solution in that the role of the mother has traditionally been that of the object that has to survive destruction by the other. A sense of the fragility of the infant's ego has meant that for both the mother and child to survive, the aggression has to be tolerated and for the mother to 'not retaliate'. Perhaps it is this deep sense of male fragility in the face of the dependence on mothers that has had to be tolerated so that women are not destroyed by men and women have had to not retaliate. Perhaps not, but the tolerance of misogyny in psychoanalysis is somewhat extraordinary given the nature of the discipline.

It would be interesting to know how much the basics of stereotypical female development and physical experience are included and discussed on psychoanalytic trainings such as menarche, menstruation, menopause, pregnancy, and miscarriage. Indeed, how much of this is discussed to include people who have these experiences and do not identify as being female or who do identify as being female but are not experiencing these stereotypical developmental events? As highlighted by

Balsam (2015) there is an absence in writing about such topics, but not a lack of interest.

Even a cursory reading of key psychoanalytic texts gives an instant view that the place of women within psychoanalysis is fundamentally different to that of men. The number one most viewed paper and third most cited paper on PEP-Web, the database of psychoanalytic texts (in 2022), was 'The theory of the parent–infant relationship' (1960), in which Winnicott gives a vivid and clear description and prescription for the woman's role in developing a 'healthy' child with only one reference to the role of the father. Freud was very clear on the role of women from the descriptions of penis envy (Freud, 1908c) to women's inferiority to men (Freud, 1925j). Bowlby has been criticised for having 'effectively attributed all the world's ills to bad mothering' (Davis & Dean, 2022).

These original theories have evolved and developed, or in some cases been completely disregarded. There are and have been many female writers who have challenged these theories since the forming of a psychoanalytic movement. This could have and perhaps has been interpreted as 'job done', male heteronormative psychoanalytic theorising has been addressed. But a cursory glance at the list of previous presidents and treasurers of the International Psychoanalytical Association, British Psychoanalytical Society, and UK Council for Psychotherapy would suggest otherwise. The International Psychoanalytical Association was founded in 1910 by Freud. Since then it has appointed twenty-five presidents, all of whom were men until the first, and only, female president was appointed in 2017. Furthermore, of the twenty-five secretary generals that have been in place, ten were women, and of the eighteen treasurers in post only two have been women, the first being Phyllis Greenacre in 1957, the second Nadine Levinson in 2003.

In the UK, within the original psychoanalytic establishment, the British Psychoanalytical Society, there is a slightly higher presence of women: of the thirty appointed presidents to date, eight have been women (Chamberlain, 2022).

The International Psychoanalytical Association and the British Psychoanalytical Society are not alone in their lack of gender diversity. According to the UK Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP), in a member survey in 2016, 74% of members are female, 24% are male (Brown, 2017). But a quick glance at former chairs of UKCP since it was formed in 1989 to date shows that out of the eleven chairs that have been in post, seven have been men, four were women (Chamberlain, 2022).

Equally I would contend that the absence of discussion about misogyny and sexism hints to that exact misogyny hiding in plain sight, unless what is being asserted by the psychoanalytic profession is that we are immune to being misogynistic. In a step towards addressing the subject of misogyny, the Institute of Psychoanalysis held a conference, 'The Roots of Misogyny' in January 2022; however, it was only in the closing remarks that there was an acknowledgement that the culture of misogyny prevalent in society may be present in the discipline itself.

There is also a denial in psychoanalysis of women's lived experience. The clinical practice of analysis requires the prioritising of the deeply subjective, and the attention paid to each person's experience and how they have made sense of the world. But what it seems to have missed is that in the intersubjective space that is created between analyst and analysand, lives not only the analysand's unique experience of the family they were born into, the care they received, and of course their own internal world; but also the influence of the sociopolitical context in which their family, the adult carers, were brought up. Importantly there is also

sociopolitical context that impacts on the analysand and analyst themselves too. It is exactly this sociopolitical context which may well have been absorbed and remain most in the unconscious without being disturbed, particularly if the impact of that context is to the advantage of both analyst and analysand, analyst and training analyst, analyst and supervisor, and those in the training institution.

In recent years there have been significant changes in addressing the risk and abuse that women face in their everyday lives, such as the #MeToo movement, Everyone's Invited movement, and the 'Reclaim These Streets' marches and campaign following the kidnap, rape, and murder of Sarah Everard in 2021 by police officer Wayne Couzens. What has perhaps gone without notice is the lack of 'upsurge' in training, conferences, articles, and books being written on the place of women in psychoanalysis. Following Everard's murder, the results of a survey (Johnson, 2022) found that in the UK 26% of women had stopped leaving home alone at night and 50% of women said that they would feel unsafe after dark walking on their own in a quiet street near their home. It is curious that as a profession it did not seem to be felt that there was a need to address this or look at our own roles in this context. What might it mean to be a male therapist working with a female analysand when 50% of men said that they had changed their behaviour in the aftermath of Sarah Everard's murder, when the vulnerability and anger felt by many women in the presence of an authority figure had been brought into sharp focus? What did it mean for a female therapist to sit with a male analysand with an active backdrop of debate and protest about the prevalence of male violence against women? I wonder how many training institutions, supervisors, or governing bodies have highlighted or even discussed issues such as lone working policies or safety

considerations for meeting new clients or how to manage threatening situations. The importance of this is not necessarily about the need for such policies and guidance, which should be in place, it is more to highlight that the assumption in thinking is based on the tradition of the 'fathers' rather than the 'mothers' or anyone other than a 'father' in psychoanalysis.

When beginning to work as a therapist, a colleague and senior analyst discussed with me what I might anticipate in my first session with my analysand, including practicalities such as considering how long it might take me to reach the waiting room and at what time the session should start, all incredibly helpful considerations in preparing for the reality of this first meeting. When I mentioned that I would 'obviously' sit nearest to the door, he looked perplexed and politely enquired as to why that was important to me. I explained that in my previous work in inpatient services, it had been standard practice when meeting alone with a new patient that you would sit close to the nearest exit so that you could leave the room quickly if needed. The senior analyst questioned if I would *really* be able to leave a room and moved on without giving me the chance to reply that on various occasions, I had done exactly that to get additional support. This is not to suggest that all new analysands need to be viewed with suspicion or indeed that there should be a mandate for therapists to sit next to the nearest exit. But what it did highlight to me is the absence of thought that a woman's experience of being a therapist may well be different from a man's.

The senior analyst had not even considered what it might mean for me as a woman to sit alone in a room with a man who I had never met before and about whom I had minimal information. Perhaps he had never had to consider what that might mean as perhaps it was not within his personal context that one

in five women in England and Wales have experienced some form of sexual assault (Johnson, 2022, p. 16), one in five women have been the victim of stalking since the age of sixteen years (80.4% of stalking victims are women) (ibid., p. 38), 71% of women have experienced harassment in a public space (this increases to 86% for eighteen to twenty-four year olds) (ibid., p. 43). That lived experience was not his, nor has it been actively addressed by the discipline in which we are both trained.

Perhaps the prevalence of the fathers of psychoanalysis and attachment theory have silenced the m/others, or perhaps the experience of those who tried to speak has unconsciously quietened us all or lulled us into a false sense of security that this particular battle has been won. But if the growing awareness of intersectionality has taught us anything, it is that there is a need to fully consider all aspects of the person; if you miss one, the reverberations are felt more deeply elsewhere.

Psychoanalysis does indeed suffer from a primary paternal preoccupation, the preoccupation being Freud and a need for patriarchs to give authority to theoretical constructs. This in itself would not be problematic except that the need for the patriarchs has squashed out or diminished the presence of anything other than that which presents the patriarchal viewpoint. Rey (1988) in his paper 'That which patients bring to analysis' describes the common situation of patients coming to therapy for 'self-improvement' but suggests that the unconscious reason they have come to therapy is to bring 'damaged internal objects' to be treated. The patients have been keeping these objects 'going' in the hope that one day 'help will come'. It could be seen that Rey's description of the desire to hold onto 'damaged internal objects' provides a partial explanation of this need to retain these figures without question; perhaps in continually referencing the psychoanalytic

patriarchs there is an unconscious wish that they too might be fixed, with the hope that psychoanalysis might fully integrate and acknowledge not just the glories of the fathers but also the traumas they have inflicted and that are being repeated by negatively hallucinating 'uncomfortable' papers or theoretical constructs.

When working with one woman who had come to therapy primarily due to her relationship with an intrusive and frightening father, the end of therapy was signalled when she reported a conversation she had at a bus stop. She described a man in his seventies who also had a daughter about her age who had started talking to her, initially pleasantly but then began putting forward 'ludicrous' and 'outdated' opinions that she considered to have 'absolutely no intellectual foundation'. I commented to her that he could have been her father. She paused a little taken aback and then replied, 'Yes, he was just an old duffer too—what a radical thought'. She could finally take back the authority she had placed in her father and the unquestioning reverence that had been demanded by him so that she could fully question what was myth, what was trauma, and more importantly what was relevant for her in her current situation, liberating her from the tie to the trauma in her past. It would be comforting to hope that the work started by a conference being held examining 'The Roots of Misogyny' could develop into an ongoing investigation not just into the origins but the current context in psychoanalysis so that it too could free itself from the constraints of its history.

*CHAPTER 2*

# Touched out / tapped out: Misogyny in the countertransference



When I read papers or attend conferences, I sometimes imagine the psychoanalysts who are presenting their work when they are at home doing domestic chores or going shopping, guessing if they would be able to name the most current game played in a playground or the most irritating programme on children's television. At school drop-off or pick-up, I would think of Freud, Winnicott, or Bowlby standing in my children's school playground and wonder if they had ever known what mothers experienced at these times, the rituals of the day, preparing snacks and the visceral pulls of seeing your child elated or deflated as they exit the classroom.

I am not sure when I started doing this, but without realising it I had created my own form of reality or authenticity test and wondered what I was testing and why. At a conference I attended,

listening to the philosopher Slavoj Žižek, it became apparent to me what my version of a reality test was about. Žižek referenced the cinema box office hit *The Fast and the Furious* and its many sequels and amicably berated a fellow panellist for not knowing the film; his concern was about the capacity to understand people and society if you did not have an awareness of popular culture. My test felt the same but was more urgent for me in that I was desperately seeking a translator of psychoanalytic theory who knew my language of being a woman. In fact, it was less specific than that, I was seeking anyone who spoke a language that was in a genuine 'mother tongue' and not what I was hearing, which was a kind of 'father tongue' flowing from psychoanalytic mouths with an absence of women's actual experience.

In *Touched Out: Motherhood, Misogyny, Consent and Control* (2023) Amanda Montei's memoir of her early years as a mother, Montei describes the term 'touched out' as 'common millennial parlance for the physical overwhelm women felt often in motherhood' (ibid., p. 5), describing her own experience as having 'overpowering flashes of not wanting to be touched by my children and my husband, and of feeling like I had no escape' (ibid., p. 6). Montei delves deeper into the meaning of the phrase that came to be dismissed as a feeling that should be taken for granted in motherhood and connected it to the larger culture of touch without consent (assault) in which women have grown up. 'Touched out' becomes the expression that envelopes all previous experiences of being a woman and having a female body that is taken for granted and over which power and ownership can be asserted within a patriarchal structure, as she describes:

> When my children hit me in frustration, or when they studied me as I dressed or peed, or when they played with my body like a toy—then when I turned away from them,

> only to see the hungry eyes of my husband or the news of men ascending to positions of power despite having assaulted women—I had the desperate urge to finally say no, though I didn't know how, nor to whom I might say it. (Ibid., p. 6)

It is the final part of this sentence that seems to encapsulate the feeling of being 'touched out', the exhaustion, frustration, and implicit silencing of not hearing yours or a similar voice being heard with the energy-draining rage of being expected time and time again to accept the overriding voice of the day—the patriarchal voice—and to submit.

Feeling 'touched out', as Montei describes it, is much more than a feeling connected specifically to motherhood; it also describes a feeling of alienation, being othered and diminished. It feels connected to my need in reaching for a reality test when confronted with papers or conferences in which I would feel a disconnect on a visceral level. My initial enthusiasm for attending many and varied conferences gradually became more and more 'touched out' as at each conference I started to notice an uncanny, predictable familiarity. For me this feeling was not dissimilar to visiting different places of worship where the central figure may change but the iconography, rhetoric, and hierarchy or studied anti-hierarchy become a variation on the same theme. I became aware of how much I would bristle, hearing women and mothers being spoken about and presented in case studies but not being able to relate to or recognise these women in any way as women I knew or coming from my own experience. Instead, the women I would hear spoken about felt like 2D cartoons, with their lives stripped back of complexity or nuance. Seemingly these women could only be understood once they had fitted into very limited theoretical frameworks that were sold as a discovery of what was really going on for these women. My 'touched outness' developed

to the point of wanting to 'tap out', becoming almost phobic about attending or seeing flyers for future conferences; my only interest would be in seeing the same usual names appear and noticing what could or could not be spoken about.

Thankfully I am aware that I am not alone in my phobia of conferences. The French psychoanalyst and co-writer of *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, J.-B. Pontalis describes his abhorrence of psychoanalytic conferences, writing, 'I haven't set foot in a psychoanalytic congress for years …. Faced with this massive, public affirmation of a supposed common identity—"We psychoanalysts, sworn experts on the unconscious"—I disappear.' Pontalis continues:

> Analysis is the most intimate, the most unusual experience and the most difficult to impart or speak about, even though it is opposed to the vagueness of the ineffable …. A congress, at its best, is a gathering of specialists who come to share information presumed to be objective, controlled …. At its worst, it is like a fair where each person shows off his or her wares. (2003, p. 6)

Pontalis writes of his relief when he attends a conference and finally hears an analyst whose talk was 'truly analysis'. By this I understand he is describing someone who is wanting to communicate something, to connect, and that she was comfortable enough to not feel too defensive and able to allow herself to take the risk of showing something of herself and what might be meaningful to her. There is a relief in this for both the 'orator' as Pontalis describes her and those listening, as the work of interpreting can be let go of, the orator can speak freely, and the listener can let go of their own resistance to what is being said. This experience would seem to be the opposite of being 'touched out' and more one of being 'welcomed in'.

These are precious and sometimes rare moments of genuine inclusivity and vulnerability, particularly in the public domain of conferences, but perhaps also infrequent in the private sphere of psychoanalytic sessions—where Winnicott vividly describes the need for the analyst to be aware of his hate for his patient (he/his are the pronouns used by Winnicott). In 'Hate in the countertransference' (1947), what Winnicott demands of the analyst is paradoxically for the unbearable to become bearable by not tolerating it. He describes how the analyst needs to pay attention to what he is having to suppress due to the burden of the treatment so that the treatment can be effective: 'However much he loves his patients he cannot avoid hating them and fearing them, and the better he knows this the less will hate and fear be the motives determining what he does to his patients' (ibid., p. 195).

In the same paper, Winnicott compares the work of psychoanalysis to that of being 'the mother of an infant unborn or newly born' in that 'The analyst must be prepared to bear strain without expecting the patient to know anything about what he is doing … he must be easily aware of his own fear and hate' (ibid., p. 198). Winnicott then illustrates this need to tolerate hate with his experience of taking in a nine-year-old boy to a hostel for evacuated children in the midst of World War II. The little boy had been sent to the hostel due to running away from all the previous placements. We are told that the boy first ran away from home aged six, but all that Winnicott writes of his background is in reference to 'the child of a broken home or without parents' (ibid., p. 199).

Winnicott goes on to describe his experience with the boy and the way in which he and his wife (who is unnamed in the paper) managed the boy's behaviour, citing the importance of letting the child know when he did something that made Winnicott 'hate him'. The importance of this was not just for the child's development, but

in allowing Winnicott to 'tolerate the situation without letting out, without losing my temper and without every now and again murdering him' (ibid., p. 200). Winnicott comments that the boy's 'deeply rooted relation to us has remained one of the few stable things in his life', which would suggest that he felt that there had been some success in the way that he and his wife had managed the boy.

Significantly, Winnicott describes the story of his and his wife's time with this deeply traumatised nine-year-old boy during World War II as an 'episode from ordinary life' when sadly there seems to be nothing 'ordinary' about it. Winnicott uses his experience at a hostel with the boy and the feelings it evoked in him as a form of template for the 'general topic of hate', focusing specifically on why mothers hate their babies, writing that 'the mother hates the baby before the baby hates the mother, and before the baby can know his mother hates him' (ibid., p. 200).

Winnicott's paper is well recognised for being groundbreaking if not shocking for its brutal candour about negative feelings that the analyst may have towards the patient (Shah, 2023). What is more shocking is the list Winnicott provides of eighteen reasons why a mother may hate her baby—even if it's a boy—the note being important as Freud argued that it was not possible for a mother to hate her son (Winnicott, 1947). Winnicott lists that a mother may hate her child for a range of reasons, not least of all, 'The baby is an interference with her private life …. He is ruthless, treats her as scum …. He tries to hurt her' (ibid., p. 201).

There is an additional point that Winnicott has missed in his list of reasons of why a mother hates her baby, which would be the point made by Jacqueline Rose (2018, p. 183) in that 'to be a mother is to be saturated with the good and evil of the day'. The reality of the position of mothers in society, how mothers are treated, and the inherent trauma of living in a patriarchal society

seems to have been avoided by Winnicott in much the same way as the boy's reality is overlooked. While Winnicott, through tolerating the boy's behaviour, seems to be acknowledging that the nine-year-old has been severely let down by an environment that has not given him parents who can look after him, there is scarce mention of the fact that this is in the midst of a war, where the boy's surroundings are literally being bombed and the immense fear, anxiety, and loneliness the child is trying to bear. Winnicott seems to be disavowing the trauma the nine-year-old boy has endured and what might be being communicated by his need to continually end up at police stations. It could be that for this child, the police station may be the one place where he would feel safe and have the same uniformity in approach both literally and symbolically. The police are the embodiment of law and, importantly, order, both of which the boy seems to be desperately seeking out, to have a reassurance of some ongoing stability. Indeed, the police could represent the one parent that would accept him in his totality and be capable of managing and withstanding his behaviour; if anything, his aggressive behaviour would cause the 'police parent' to hold onto him more rather than throwing him outside.

In many ways the police station could give the stability for the boy that Winnicott demonstrates he is unable to provide by throwing the boy outside each time he did something that made him hate him. It is interesting that Winnicott says the boy would misbehave more when only his wife was at home—as a suggestion that it was due to his wife's incapacity to manage him, when in fact it may well have been the opposite. For the boy, knowing that he did not have to be afraid of being hated by Winnicott and sensing that Winnicott would not bear his own feelings towards him lest he lose his temper or murder him, the boy may have known that his wife was more able to tolerate his emotional pain

and trauma and could allow himself to fully express his feelings. It may also have been that Winnicott's wife, and the police (in the boy's fantasy) could express their anger towards the child, allowing him to feel something other than guilt for wounding his 'innocent' carer.

Winnicott's recounting of his experiences is in stark contrast to a study quoted by Rose in her book *Mothers* (2018, p. 186), in which research on depression was carried out in South Africa with low-income, Black mothers who had been identified as being aggressive towards their children. The research found that these mothers were bathed in guilt and self-reproach due to 'the pain and disappointments associated with not being the mothers they wanted to be. They felt they had failed because they lashed out at their children; but they lashed out at their children because they felt they had failed.' The societal expectation of what or how mothers should be had ensnared these women due to the complete absence of an external or internal voice that might acknowledge the immense stress that was being placed on them. For Winnicott, his hate for the nine-year-old boy lay purely in his response to the boy's behaviour: there is no reflection by him whether the way he treats the boy is correct or suitable or has a good outcome, there is no hint of self-reproach or idea of external judgement. The mothers' experience as researched among the cohort in South Africa, is at the other extreme, where there is almost no room for anything but torturous self-reproach.

It is perhaps the absence of this part of the mother's internal world that has led to Winnicott being criticised for his idealisation of motherhood (Slochower, 2013). His list of eighteen reasons for a mother to hate her baby gives a saccharin and sanitised version of a martyr or victim who bravely contains and processes all these feelings for the sake of her child, her own needs disappearing and

as described by Slochower (1996), 'her sense of self is defined by her capacity to mother or to hold'. In Winnicott's version it is as though the gift of becoming a mother is such an honour to the woman that her own feelings become completely insignificant. Later psychoanalysts have called for a more nuanced understanding of motherhood, not least of all Jessica Benjamin who argued that the mother's subjectivity is vital for the baby's separate experience of self (Baraister, 2008, p. 94), and Slochower who asserted that motherhood is a struggle precisely because the mother cannot fully identify with her baby's needs and that it is not possible for a mother to fully set aside her own needs as she 'rarely loses complete contact with her subjectivity' (Slochower, 1996).

It was precisely this lack of ability to lose one's subjectivity that became apparent to me when I had my first child. I remember the first baby group I went to, populated by mothers taking maternity leave from important, high-powered jobs and speaking to the nearly retired health visitor who ran the group. I expressed my tiredness and gratitude that my partner was still on leave from work, commenting that I did not know how teenage single mothers managed. The health visitor laughed, saying how it was the middle-class thirty-year-olds they worried about as 'they are on their own without mums to support them'.

As our babies developed week by week, and each of the mothers' partners returned to work, spending increasingly longer hours in the office, and more and more of my new friends from the baby group were prescribed antidepressants, I began to fully understand what the health visitor meant. For many of the partners and for the mothers themselves, mothering was not seen as 'real work' and it had been expected to be easy and straightforward. What was straightforward was that what was being misdiagnosed as postnatal depression in many cases was a clear

symptom of anger and frustration or indeed, as described by Rose (2018, p. 185) a 'registering griefs past, present and to come, an affront to the ideal'. As soon as paternity leave ended, it became common practice for fathers to sleep in a separate room so that they would not be woken by their infants during the night as they needed to do a full day's work. What was rarely considered was that the mother would also be doing a full day's work the next day caring for the baby, and all the other household chores that had now become hers since being at home; and that her full day's work would come with a backlog of many sleepless nights, with no coffee or lunch breaks, but the occasional compensation of a lie-in at the weekend. It would seem for many that the antidepressants worked in enabling these women to further depress and suppress their needs, thinking, and shock at having left a job where they were valued as being important to the sudden depreciation of being a mother with little agency. This is not to say that this is the only cause of post-partum depression, but more to raise the importance of a question being asked about how the woman is experiencing caring for a baby.

What I am describing in the baby group is not new, and would be more than familiar to previous generations, especially the diagnosing of frustration in the mother as being due to something lodged in her (her depression) rather than what is being expected of her as causing the depression. Winnicott's paper is a fundamental shift away from this and seems to be backing the mother. His eighteen reasons a mother may hate her baby could be seen as an argument for not having babies at all, but where he stops is in not introducing the role of the father or what the woman has internalised of the ideal mother she expects herself to be and more importantly is expected of her. Winnicott misses these important aspects of mothering which I would suggest is due to

his presumption of 'knowing' a female experience of mothering without recognising his own subjectivity in his interpretation of mothers' responses to their babies. Some of those aspects that are missed pertain to loss and fundamentally to the gendered experience of mothering, whether that be from a female cisgendered perspective or that of a non-binary, queer perspective.

More than a hundred years ago, Freud contested that sexuality was not fixed from birth, but it has only been in recent years that this has been more widely debated and expanded upon to include fluidity in gender. As Gherovici (2023) describes, 'One of the truths the transgender phenomenon illustrates is that body and gender consistency is a fiction that is assumed through identification,' or, as Saketopoulou and Pellegrini (2023) describe, that gender is a 'becoming' something that emerges through trauma. In the binary constrictions of gender within a patriarchal society, 'sexual identity is learned through the given dynamics of identification' (Gherovici, 2023). Despite these theoretical advances and prominence of the current discussion about gender, the moment of birth is when the gender dynamics are at their most transparent and reductive: for the newborn baby a lifetime of societal expectations are bestowed onto them from a visual recognition of the external body. What is also stark at this moment is the reinforcing and extreme narrowing of gender for the mother and the inherent loss of identity. As most mothers have experienced, the moment of birth also signals a moment for the woman when her identity fundamentally changes. She is immediately introduced to this via the everyday interactions with midwives, health visitors, and doctors where she is no longer referred to by her name or even asked for a name but spoken to as 'Mum' with the sometimes unsettling experience of having professionals she is meeting for the first time calling her 'Mum' directly. Of course, this is a call

or naming of the woman in her capacity and responsibility as the mother, in the same way as a medical professional may be referred to as 'Doctor' or 'Nurse'. This naming by job title is to communicate that they are being interacted with as a 'professional' whose training and standardised qualifications are being called into action, except the term 'mother' has no such training or process of standardisation. In those moments the 'Mum' is referring to that individual's judgement and experience of a mother and of what is expected of her and her every move.

Men too go through a similar transformation in the mechanics of a shift in identity, however the underlying assumptions are different. As pointed out by Orbach in her paper, 'And then there is Oedipus':

> Dinnerstein so pervasively showed, the hand that rocks the cradle constructs a psychic imago of women we all wrestle with and—in part—wish to control or disavow. Mothers exert control. They say 'yes' and they say 'no' …. Repudiation, along with the attempt to control and sometimes diminish the person who is felt to have so much power, becomes a bedrock of relations to women for everyone mother reared. It's a well-trod territory among theorists such as Dinnerstein (1976) and Klein (1975) that because we all have mothers who were in charge, we are accustomed to seeing women as controlling and diminishing. (Orbach, 2018, p. 646)

While, as Orbach describes, there is this diminishment of women due to their power as mothers in early life, it seems that this diminishment is baked into the role of being a mother. The familiar refrain of 'wait till your father gets home' points to the fact that the mother's power is reliant on the father, the mother effectively is given the role of 'the snitch', she may be the one who is giving the orders or the 'yes', 'no' but she is effectively enforcing laws set up by the father. The father becomes the exciting external figure,

who not only has real power in the outside world but supersedes the mother. The mother is given the role of an enemy collaborator, working against her children to gain the power attached to the father. This system is played out in Freud's explanation of the Oedipus complex and Lacan's Name of the Father; however, what is not included in Freud's and Lacan's theories and what is pointed to by Orbach is that this is not the working of inescapable unconscious processes, but is due to a societal construct of the place of mothers and how they are devalued. If the true authority stopped with mothers, rather than having to be reinforced with the role of the father, then perhaps the imago of the mother would not have to be diminished or disavowed. The mother imago would be seen to be reasonable or trusted in, as being for the child's benefit and valued as such.

In Winnicott's depiction of the mother–baby relationship, he describes a type of colonisation by the baby, an overtaking of the mother's body and the mother is then enslaved to the tiny dictator: 'The baby hurts her nipples even by suckling …. He tries to hurt her, periodically bites her …. The baby at first must dominate … if she fails him at the start she knows he will pay her out for ever' (1947, p. 201). Winnicott takes these actions by the baby as a given, which they may be, but what may be more interesting is why the mother might interpret or respond to these actions in a certain way. The mother may well 'hate' the baby for hurting, biting, or dominating her, but it may not be as straightforward as the direct response to the baby's actions as he suggests. The nature of the relationship, and being put in a submissive role, may feel so unbearable because it reminds the mother of previous trauma, a trauma that now even in the face of her own part in creation feels inescapable. The baby's demands or the needs of the mother may at times leave the mother feeling that her body

is not fully hers but is there to be made use of by another, with the added demand for her to enjoy this and feel privileged to do so. This feeling is not such an unfamiliar one for women as they have traversed from being a girl into adulthood and how they have been viewed or been expected to behave. This being made use of has perhaps had a salve or been made bearable by a thought that 'when I grow up and get to be in charge it will be different', only to discover that at the moment of becoming pregnant, giving birth, and as a mother, she has been plunged back into the depths of the original colonisation. The overturning of Roe vs Wade was a frightening reminder that women lose ownership of their bodies as soon as they are pregnant.

The colonisation becomes deeply personal when this feeling resonates with previous trauma that extends beyond the 'everyday trauma' of living in patriarchal societies but is perhaps conspicuous in its absence from Winnicott's list. Vissing in her book *Somatic Maternal Healing* describes how traumatic childbirth 'can cause a range of rippling consequences, including breastfeeding complications, bonding issues and relationship issues (Beck et al., 2013)' (2023, p. 24). The unpreparedness for the physical changes and challenges of pregnancy, birth, and post-partum can also be traumatic in their own right (ibid., p. 40), not least of all if the professionals supporting the pregnant person have not been properly trained in gaining consent at all stages of physical examinations. When this experience of being intimately examined, often by people the mother is meeting for the first time, is considered with statistics that '40% of women of childbearing age have experienced some form of sexual assault … 17.6% of women surveyed reported that they have been the victim of a completed rape or attempted rape' (ibid., p. 31), the colonisation becomes clearly not one by

the baby, but by the reminiscences of previous over-takings and feelings of extreme vulnerability.

Throughout Winnicott's writing and broadcasting he refers to the process of being a mother as 'natural', famously using the phrase 'good enough mother'. The term was meant to describe the ordinariness of parenting, that mothers do not need to be superheroes, but instead he bequeathed a term that is tormentingly lacking in definition with the appearance of an objective prescription but is in fact describing something highly subjective and culturally defined; what may have been deemed 'good enough' for a child in 1950s Britain may be considered abusive now. The term leaves mothers at the whim of what the governing culture determines to be 'fit for purpose' or not. Bowlby's description of a secure base (2005) equally tried to explain what a 'good enough' relationship would look like for an infant, but in more behavioural terms with clearer definitions of the child's behaviour that would indicate if the mother had done an adequate job of parenting or not. However, Bowlby too fell into the same trap as Winnicott of imagining what is happening in the unconscious (for Winnicott) or the internal world (for Bowlby) and naming what can be witnessed without the reflection that the witness is of course biased and subjective.

As a trainee and mother of very young children, I had hoped Winnicott's papers would be an antidote to the proliferation of parenting manuals all trying to sell a novel and unique panacea for the difficulties of raising children. I remember reading the papers and reflecting on my own return to work, my experiences when I had left my children at home with another carer, and the times of hearing them upset and protesting at my leaving. I wondered if there was a prescribed amount of time that was acceptable for the child to cry and at what point protest became upset or distress; and I recall questioning if as a mother, I should already have the

answers to these questions. Discussions with other mothers led to a spectrum of responses about separation upset, with one mother reassuring me that it was 'important for children to cry it out'; when I asked for how long, the simple response was 'until it stops', while another mother declared that a securely attached child would be one who cried for a minute and then moved on. When studying attachment theory, the definitions for how to parent seemed to tighten but not really be applicable to 'real life'. How did the much observed 'happy reunion' in the Strange Situation Test translate into school pick up in a chaotic playground with parents watching out for multiple children at the same time; or how does parenting fit in to the seemingly infinitely elastic definition of 'good enough' or 'natural' when many parents, primarily mothers, would be carrying an infant while watching their toddler run around and waiting for their other children to come out of school? Winnicott's good enough mother also does not account for the individual differences such as neurodiversity or individual circumstances such as solo parenting. For example, if the child is autistic, the primary carer may need to be there for the child to do the important translation work to make the outside world safe; a separation and reunion may look very different for that dyad.

The more papers I read, the more I would be left overwhelmingly anxious and defeated by feeling stuck in a complex web of manoeuvres and ways of being with my children, all of which could be judged, and approval given or not if seen within a clinical setting. I felt the burden that these judgements could be given, seemingly without reference to external stressors or mitigating circumstances that may go beyond the mother's control. When first reading Winnicott's reasons for me to hate my babies I expected his list to continue for many more pages and to include the various other reasons that I have heard from many mothers.

I expected Winnicott to expand the list to reasons as to why mothers hate the job of mothering (rather than the baby), the reasons that preoccupy mothers, and those they talk to other mothers about, such as:

1. The mother is expected to enjoy being pregnant and 'to blossom'; to continue to work as usual at her job despite feeling exhausted as her body is taking her energy to grow a baby, and to dress in ways that will make her look attractive while her body is changing shape.
2. If the mother feels nauseous, she should accept this as part of pregnancy and that this is 'natural' and will not be taken seriously by many medical professionals unless she is at the point of needing to be admitted to hospital. She should equally accept that the subject of nausea in pregnancy is grossly under researched and that she is supposed to endure the feeling.
3. She is not supposed to complain about her body changing, needing to eat more, or feeling uncomfortable with looking bigger despite most of her life being indoctrinated that she must restrict her eating and look as thin as possible.
4. As soon as she gives birth, she is meant to return to her pre-pregnancy body as soon as possible.
5. She will be expected to accept the trauma of childbirth as 'natural' without any reference to the fact that something extremely shocking and intimately invasive has just happened to her. Even if it has been recognised that the birth was traumatic due to medical reasons, talking about this will be treated as taboo.
6. The mother is constantly sleep deprived but told that she should be able to cope with this as her work is less important than other jobs. Her angry feelings towards her baby due

to sleep deprivation may well be viewed as her failing as a mother rather than a sign that she needs help.

7. Feeding and weaning a baby often have to be learnt, researched, advice taken, and many hours spent experimenting with ways to encourage the baby to eat different foods. Whichever way the mother chooses to do this, she will feel the weight of the many other opinions of how she should do this differently.
8. Many aspects of looking after a baby have to be learnt and are not innate, but mothers are told that they are. For example, mothers are expected to intuitively know how to settle a baby to sleep and how best to manage the different developmental stages through their first years of life.
9. Mothering is considered 'easy' and 'natural' rather than the fact that the mother is spending at least the same amount of time observing and researching the child's needs as she would if she were completing a PhD.
10. She is expected to be a good mother irrespective of whether or not she had experience of that herself and she is meant to know how to support baby and child development even if she has never cared for a baby or child before.

The mother will continually have to straddle the two chains of thought that her job is easy, straightforward, and therefore undervalued, and at the same time that she is fundamentally responsible for how this child develops in adulthood and therefore if anything goes wrong it will be judged as all her fault as a mother.

There is something uncomfortable in asking on what grounds Winnicott had the authority to speak about being a mother given that he had never been one. Such unease is not because of a need to have experienced something in order to be able to theorise about it, but more because this would involve grappling with difficult

questions about the foundations of psychoanalysis; asking who has been included or excluded in the theories and the privileging of a white, male cisgendered, heteronormative perspective even in the most biologically sexed domains of birth and the birthing mother–infant relationship. It appears what Winnicott has given us, based on his experience and work, is an extremely detailed view of his fantasy and interpretation of the maternal, something he may well have acknowledged himself, and it needs to be seen as such.

What might help psychoanalysis to be less othering would be the obvious: instead of women being touched out and using them in service of certain papers and theories or to preach to them, is to acknowledge these past traumas and recognise how they spill into the current. If Winnicott had allowed the inclusion of the voice of the people who have been pregnant, given birth, and cared for babies, that voice may well have added to a sense of authenticity. Instead, we have been left with a paternalistic interpretation that presumed to know and think what women were incapable of articulating for themselves.

CHAPTER 3

# Fragment of an analysis of a case of misogyny: From Dora to decreation



In 1900 Freud treated an eighteen-year-old woman for various symptoms including loss of voice, nervous cough, depression, and suicidal ideation. The story that he tells is of a young girl unable to cope with the sexual excitement of the advances of a man who is 'still quite young and of prepossessing appearance' (Freud, 1905e, p. 29, n. 3), who embraces and kisses her and who two years later again unsuccessfully tries to seduce her. Freud diagnoses her response to the gentleman's advances as 'entirely and completely hysterical' (ibid., p. 28), her symptoms are further diagnosed as a case of jealousy over losing her father to another woman, the other woman being the wife of that same young man of 'prepossessing appearance'.

The more literal context of this story is best redescribed as a sexual predator, who plans his assault by lying to a fourteen-year-old child

to get her to come to his office under the pretext that his wife and the other workers will be present. Then he ensures that his wife and the other workers are not there so they are alone. He then sexually assaults her. This is all done with the consent of the child's father so that the father can continue having sex with the paedophile's wife. Freud becomes part of this abuse ring when he treats her by pathologising the then young woman's trauma as her inability to accept or even enjoy being sexually groomed and assaulted. As noted by Mahoney (2005), concerning the young woman Ida Bauer, who Freud called Dora in the case study, 'never once did Freud call Dora a victim, and never once did he designate her specifically as the target of sexual abuse by an adulterous adult'.

Freud himself acknowledged the failing of his treatment of Dora, especially given that she ended it. He describes himself as not escaping 'unscathed' from the treatment (1905e, p. 109).

There have been many criticisms and interpretations of Freud's treatment of Dora, ranging from Ernest Jones who described the case study as a 'model for students of psychoanalysis' and Erikson who declared it the 'classical analysis of the structure and the genesis of a hysteric' (Mahoney, 2005), to Cixous and Clement's theory that Dora's symptoms 'developed as a form of protest, a silent revolt against male power' (Moi, 1981).

In 1985 Jacqueline Rose argued that what the case study reveals is Freud's 'incomplete and contradictory' (Moi, 1981) theory of the feminine and refutes the oversimplification that the treatment failed 'because Dora is repressed as a woman by psychoanalysis' (Rose, 1985). She continues to conclude that Freud was unable to respond adequately to Dora as he was responding to her in the wrong register of sexuality, as content rather than as demand and desire, and that 'desire cannot be answered, it can only be presented as a question and an enigma' (Gammelgaard, 2017). While theoretically

cohesive, Rose's conclusion also feels like a very generous interpretation of how this young adult was treated. She provides a framework for why the treatment was not successful, but does not address the actual treatment of Dora, what she experienced through Freud's interpretations or what were the drivers of those interpretations. Put simply, any analyst can choose from a number of responses or interpretations at any time, any of which may be based in different cultural, theoretical, philosophical perspectives, but the ones Freud chose were based in misogyny. Rose also refers to Freud's understanding of the case as 'based on a simple identification of the oedipal triangle' (Rose, 1985), which also misses the inherent misogyny within Freud's theory of the Oedipus complex.

Despite Freud's case study being able to be read on many different levels and in many different ways, Dora poses a simple challenge to Freud, in that she refused to submit to his treatment. The treatment with Freud lasted eleven weeks, as she chose to end it. This act in itself could be described as a successful outcome to the analysis in that, along with her sexual predator's advances, she also refused to lie down and let Freud enter her mind, or put another way, she tolerated his presence in her mind and then rejected him. Her refusal to submit to Freud can equally be seen not as the usual feminist interpretation of revolt against male power, but as argued by Moi, more one of a moment of acting out resignation, in the same way as hysteria can be seen as a 'declaration of defeat … a cry for help when defeat becomes real'. Dora is again defeated by her conversations with Freud, her ending the treatment as a visible sign that her only choice is to continue to endure the demands for her submission.

A hundred and fourteen years after Freud's treatment of Dora, from 2014 to 2015, Emma Sulkowicz walked around Columbia University carrying a halls-of-residence mattress. She took it to

lectures, around the university campus, she took it everywhere she went. She accepted help if it were offered but would not ask for help. She carried out this act, returning to her studio to write the rules of engagement for her art piece entitled 'Mattress Performance: Carry That Weight' (2014–2015) on the walls of her art studio, eventually submitting her act of defiance for her degree from Columbia University. Her live art performance was in response to being raped by another student at the university. She reported the rape to the university along with two other students who had also been attacked by him. The university in return continued to accept the accused as a student—sadly the university's response was not unusual, but Sulcowicz's was—every day carrying the mattress around, making the private act of rape public. Each person who helped her carry the mattress and 'carry the weight', implicitly and explicitly gave their support to her. As greater awareness of her performance grew, she was joined by students on 130 campuses around the world in articulating their protest against sexual assault, who brought out their own mattresses (Elkin, 2023, p. 24). Her act of carrying the mattress was a symbolic act of refusal of submission and an open declaration of a lack of surrender, not only to the rape but also to the university's patriarchal collusion with her attacker, suggesting the hysterical woman needed to calm down. Her only option was to make a visible statement about the university's demands for her submission.

Over several years I have led seminars introducing psychotherapy students to an attachment lens on Freud. Some come already having read or studied Freud and are 'fans', some have absolutely no interest and have already decided that he is outdated and irrelevant—my challenge has been to bring these transferences about Freud into consciousness so that his work can be engaged with. My hope is to raise the possibility of having a

conversation with him and allow some of his work in, to surrender enough to meet him critically—in short, asking the students to not believe the hype, whether it be good or bad.

It is my experience that it is this act of surrender that always feels more difficult for those identifying as women, I suggest due to Freud having always written for men and presenting, as Terhaar (2020) described in 'Gender as perspective: The ongoing psychoanalytic privilege of the penis', that psychoanalysis is 'founded on a view of human nature that is masculine' and that 'psychoanalytic theories have espoused white, heterosexual, male experience, without it being recognised as a particular perspective'. As much of a surrender that has been tolerated to that point in studying Freud, a revolt takes place when reading 'Fragment of an analysis of a case of hysteria' (1905e), the story about Dora. A coalescence emerges in that Dora becomes representative not only of the feminist icon as described by Cixous and Clement but more that her story and treatment is the prototype of the female experience studying psychoanalysis. The history of psychoanalysis is that it is white men who are in authority and/or are 'the authority', the canon of readings on psychoanalytic trainings reify the male writers such as Freud, Winnicott, Lacan, or the women who have taken up the phallocentric viewpoint such as Klein or Anna Freud. These writings are given as the bedrock of psychoanalysis and ones to which the psychotherapy or psychoanalytic trainee should submit despite the notable absence of a full description of female development or subjectivity. There is a distinct discomfort at this point as with even having a cursory knowledge of the 'manosphere' there are echoes here of the online misogynistic rhetoric of the requirement for women to submit and certainty of the superiority of male thinking.

The case study of Dora sets out clearly the psychoanalytic demand for women not only to submit but to surrender and is a warning in the same way as is the painting of Charcot's auditorium that looms above Freud's couch of the position of women in psychoanalysis. In the picture Charcot takes centre stage, formally dressed. He stands addressing his all-male audience while next to him is his medical specimen—a woman being supported to stand by another man, reclining backwards in a semi-conscious state. The woman's dress has been taken off to the waist, her corseted undergarments exposed, revealing her bare shoulders and chest, her breasts just covered by her undershirt. The female exhibit's clothes are in stark contrast to the formality of the men surrounding her and the female staff standing behind her. The male audience look on engrossed, clamouring forward as the male neurologist Charcot explains what is in the hysterical woman's head to the surrounding men.

Freud's requirement for women to not just submit but to surrender was clear from his formulation of the Oedipus complex in that the fate of women was to submit to their life of inferiority due to not having a penis which would permanently mark the woman's sense of self, causing 'a scar, a sense of inferiority … she begins to share the contempt felt by men for a sex which is the lesser in so important a respect' (1925j, p. 253). Freud's banishment from his psychoanalytic circle of those such as Karen Horney, who rejected his formulation of female development as depicted in the Oedipus complex, made it clear that women were required to surrender. Indeed, as described by Balsam (2015), 'no Freudian psychoanalyst worth his salt criticized or questioned these supposedly in-built, 'normative' (but patriarchal) elements of family life'.

For those who do not submit, psychoanalysis has described and diagnosed them as disavowing the feminine, this being not

just from Freud's day but in contemporary psychoanalysis. Despite the many advances in writing about women in psychoanalytic literature, the fragment of a deeper misogyny that was revealed in Freud's story of Dora has continued to remain not just in the foundations but in the very structures and sometimes the scaffolding used to support psychoanalytic literature, practice, and organisations.

When these foundations and structures have been questioned they become relegated to a niche perspective of feminist psychoanalysis, as though issues pertaining to women are not of relevance to general psychoanalysis; or alternatively, something monstrous occurs, the monster being seen as the person opposing the exclusion of anything other than a cisgendered heteronormative approach, rather than the approach itself.

In 2019 the philosopher Paul B. Preciado addressed the French Lacanian Society naming himself as the 'monster' presenting a paper titled 'Can the monster speak' (published as a book, 2021). Watching the presentation that was uploaded onto YouTube, the laughing and jeering of his paper is audible, calls for him to be taken off stage with one woman shouting, 'We should not allow him to speak, he is Hitler' (Gherovici, 2023), and in the end his paper was cut short by the organisation. This outrage was caused by Preciado as a trans man presenting the fact that 'gender, sexuality and transsexuality are historical constructions. If they are taken as universal, timeless categories, they become "cages"' (ibid.) and arguing for a process of de-patriarchalisation, de-heterosexualisation, and decolonisation of psychoanalysis, imagining 'a mutant psychoanalysis, one equal to the paradigm shift we are experiencing. Perhaps only this process of transformation alone, terrible and devastating as it may seem to you, now deserves the name of psychoanalysis' (ibid.). It is of note that

Preciado was not demanding a submission or surrender to his request but a reimagining, a new construction of psychoanalysis as something more collaborative and inclusive, but this alone was too much for the audience to bear.

Emmanuel Ghent, in 'Masochism, submission, surrender: Masochism as a perversion of surrender' (1990), proposes the term 'surrender' to 'convey a quality of liberation and expansion of the self as a corollary to the letting down of defensive barriers', as against 'hoisting a white flag … carrying a connotation of defeat'. Ghent, in the Winnicottian tradition, imagines this surrender as the subject saying to the object, 'I went all out, completely vulnerable, in the faith (or surrender) that someone was out there—and it turned out to be true, as I could only have known by destroying you with all my might, and yet here you are, I love you.' Indeed he argues that there is 'however deeply buried or frozen a longing for something in the environment to make possible the surrender, in the sense of yielding of false self'.

Ghent, continuing Winnicott's theories on the use of an object, is describing the need for the object to be resilient and non-retaliatory; for the subject to be able to find itself in the presence of another who can tolerate without shaming, punishing, or restricting the fullness of the other's subjectivity. The subject for their part needs to take apart the object, like demolishing a house made of Lego so that the object can be discovered brick by brick, rediscovered and rebuilt to the design of the subject's desire. This process takes place time and time again; each time a bit more of the object's subjectivity comes into play so that eventually the object's full subjectivity can be seen in its own right and separate from the subject's desire.

What Winnicott was modelling this destruction and reconstruction on was, of course, the mother and infant relationship.

It is in this construction where there is the risk of misogyny. The theory lays the groundwork and points to the expectations of what women should do as mothers and beyond, this use of women being taken into psychoanalysis as the model for what 'the feminine' should be.

Masud Khan, Winnicott's former analysand and a key member of the psychoanalytic establishment for several decades, makes the role of women explicitly clear in his most famous paper 'The concept of cumulative trauma' (1963). He adapts Freud's description of a 'protective shield' to Winnicott's theory of the parent–infant relationship, in which the protective shield becomes the mother. Khan then lists the nine objectives that are achieved by this mother's caretaking role as the protective shield, which requires the mother's empathy being 'maximally receptive to the infant's needs', the mother 'providing the right dosage of life experiences', her 'lending her own ego functions as well as her libidinal and aggressive cathexes', and 'to help the infant with his first experiences of inner instinctual conflicts on the one hand, and yet sustain for him that flux from primary identification to realization of separateness'. All of which sounds like a remarkable, almost superhuman feat. However, Khan's requirements of mothers extends further in that 'if her personal needs and conflicts intrude on the child', Khan sees this as 'her failure in respect of her role as a protective shield'. All of which prompts the obvious question, what or who is this mother and has anyone met her? With a follow-up question of, is there a woman present in this mother–infant construct or a dystopian mother robot? It is of note that throughout the entire paper the father is not referred to or even named; however, it does appear that the wishes of the patriarchy, and, more specifically, Khan, were writ large.

This expectation of women as there to be used or made use of by the other, with the woman taking the role as passive receiver and container of difficult feelings, was of course not new and has been what women have been socialised to do for centuries across many different cultures. But when this process occurs so that the woman's part in this is no longer seen as a 'gift' to be given or valued, it becomes expected, and it is in that expectation, when devoid of gratitude, that misogyny grows.

If the developmental stage of the child finding themself through the object's destruction and recreation is not achieved or, most importantly, not achieved with a sense of this being a gift within a relationship—hence the 'I love you' as described by Ghent (1990) and Winnicott (1969), when it is an expectation—the template is set for further uses of women. Indeed, one could see that if in these early stages of infant development, if the mother has internalised the devaluing of her work in the same way as it is devalued by society, it becomes difficult for gratitude or even acknowledgement of the work of mothering to be incorporated into the relationship. As one mother told me when she had been discussing difficulties with her young children with her father-in-law, his response was, 'That's what comes with being called mother,' a comment that was meant to be reassuring and normalising her experience, but simultaneously belittling the physical and emotional labour of mothering, again referring to her need to submit to her role.

To return to Freud's Oedipus complex, it is indeed at the point in a woman's life of having a baby that she is confronted directly with the pain of not having a penis, when she realises how birthing a baby, the daily work of breast and bottle-feeding, and caring for her baby are devalued. The pain she feels is not of her internal world, but the pain created by the misogyny of the society in

which she lives. In 2022, in a series of polaroid photos, the artist Sarah Maple, in 'Labour of love' (2022) recorded and displayed images of the 650 feeds she gave her baby in a three-month period in response to the claim that one of the obvious benefits of breastfeeding is that it is free. In Maple's words on Instagram, 'Breastfeeding is [an] on demand, physically exhausting task that women are told they need to do for at least six months. Free? It's only free if you don't value women's time.' It seems extraordinary that in 2022 this point needed to be made, but what it highlights is the supposition that women as 'objects' are there not only to submit but to surrender, give in to the expectation that this is their role without acknowledgement or gratitude.

What Maple's and Sulkowicz's works illustrate is the expectation of submission, in the latter's case submission to sex that was not wanted by her, but wanted by her male attacker, in Maple's the submission to being constantly available for feeding a baby, even if she does not want to but it is what her patriarchal society wants of her. Both have to endure the invisibility and ubiquity of these misogynistic expectations that come from a white, heteronormative privileged position. In Ghent's paper he lists 'some features that characterize' the meaning of surrender. The second on the list, 'Surrender is not a voluntary activity. One cannot choose to surrender, though one can choose to submit,' feels like an extraordinary statement to make given that this paper was first presented in 1983 in a climate of increasing global outrage at the system of apartheid in South Africa and a few years before the release of Nelson Mandela who had to submit to being imprisoned by that system for twenty-seven years. The paper (1990) also highlights the absence of the everyday experiences of anyone other than those who have the privilege of being a white man living in a patriarchal society where submission is not a

choice but an expectation. The recent events of the overturning of Roe vs Wade and the repercussions of the protests in Iran are painful examples of the lack of choice in submission, let alone the complete lack of international response to the gender apartheid currently in place in Afghanistan where the idea of submission as a choice is obliterated.

It is striking that in Ghent's paper, despite almost perfectly describing the experience of patriarchy for women—'submission … one feels one's self as a puppet in the power of another; one's sense of identity atrophies … in surrender there is an absence of domination and control; the reverse is true in the case of submission'—that he makes no reference to gender in this experience. Dora's actions towards Freud have been interpreted as a refusal of exactly this kind of submission that Ghent describes, but in fact she has already had to submit to her treatment by her father and her abuser from an extremely young age and has had to submit to being treated by Freud. What is much more relevant is that what Dora does is highlight Freud's blind spot in terms of his own privilege in much the same way as Ghent's definition of submission does. The relevance of this is more than a theoretical, historical, or hysterical debate, it is an issue for clinical practice in that having internalised these papers and theories from the deities of psychoanalysis, we need to ask what it is that we expect our non-white male cisgendered patients to submit to and more specifically, as women analysts and therapists, what submission we have internalised and is expected by ourselves and others.

Ghent relates his description of surrender to Marion Milner's 'blanking out', an oceanic feeling she characterises as experienced by composers and artists in their creative process. Ghent furthers this description as: 'This subjective "blanking out" … or as "emptiness", the beneficent state of being that is at the centre of the Tao, which has been likened by analysts to the state of

blissful satisfaction at mother's breast', a reference which points to the placing of women in psychoanalysis. The mother's breast becomes the giver of 'bliss', and as described by Klein, the withholder of such bliss too, but for the mother and her subjectivity, her mutual bliss, or not, is absent, almost irrelevant. The feeling Ghent is referring to is of course the release of oxytocin, the same hormone released during orgasm. The latter would refer to an adult experience where the person has sought out that experience which feels much more suited to the adult's engagement in artistic pursuits that he and Milner are describing than the mother's breast analogy, but it is interesting that the baby-to-mother's-breast relationship is seen as the template. Indeed, later in the paper, when exploring sadism and masochism, Ghent says, 'The closest most of us come to the experience of surrender is in the moment of orgasm with a loved one.' It is interesting why this is not seen as the oceanic feeling, whereas instead this feeling is linked more to the image of infant and mother, the instantly available mother acquiescing to the infant's needs. This raises the question of what feels more attractive about this unilateral image of bliss for use in psychoanalytic theory than that of the oceanic feeling of orgasm. The image is also used with the omission of reference to the bliss the mother might experience as she also experiences the feeling of oxytocin released when she breastfeeds her baby.

In much the same way as Winnicott focusing on the mother–infant relationship to the point of the mother and baby no longer existing separately but as a 'unit', it is as though this is what continues or is the expectation in later life; missing the point that in adult life, the woman is not an evolved version of the mother breast to an infant, but that then she may have her own views and desires. The reification of this relationship perhaps reveals more about what it is these psychoanalytic authors, in this case

Ghent, Winnicott, and Khan, are 'longing for' in women, not just as mothers but also as partners, and this 'longing for' has become psychoanalytic fact.

In 1950, Winnicott wrote in his paper 'Some thoughts on the meaning of the word democracy' that it is indeed this absence of acknowledgement or gratitude to women who, he writes, 'had absolute power at the beginning of the infant's existence', that leads to misogyny. Winnicott described this fear of dependency as 'the fear of woman', something that we all have to come to terms with and acknowledge:

> The root of this fear of woman is known. It is related to the fact that in the early history of every individual … there is a debt to a woman—the woman who was devoted to that individual as an infant, and whose devotion was absolutely essential for that individual's healthy development.

What is perhaps more startling is that he does not refer to the lack of writing about this gratitude to women in psychoanalytic literature, nor does he acknowledge the impact of his or others' patriarchal attitudes and misogyny on women. Winnicott, who argued with Klein about the need to fully involve the role of the mother and her emotional state in infant development (Caldwell & Taylor Robinson, 2017, p. 131), somehow also restricts himself from fully involving the mother's subjectivity and applies his patriarchal lens when describing the nuanced interplay of breastfeeding, the mother knowing 'how to do this, not through any training and not through being clever, but just because she is the natural mother' (ibid., p. 231). This is a surprising statement from Winnicott, who was a keen observer of mothers and babies. It would be interesting to compare his assumption of breastfeeding being innate with the experience of those who support people who breastfeed or who may spend a short

time talking to new parents who usually very quickly begin to share feeding problems and tips and tricks on positions etc. for breastfeeding.

When giving a description of the brutal treatment of nurses to a new mother and her baby where they 'forced his mouth onto the breast, held his chin to make him suck, and pinched his nose to take him off the breast', Winnicott presumes that the mothers do not complain to the nurse because of a debt they feel to the nurse, not what is perhaps more accurate, especially when this was written in the 1950s, that the woman was used to not being listened to and was infantilised, particularly in medical environments. Winnicott himself remarks, 'I must not believe that what mothers say to me gives me an accurate picture. I must be prepared to find the imagination at work' (ibid., p. 230), yet does not apply how his disbelief of the accounts may be experienced by the mothers or that indeed his attitude may well be typical of the medical profession.

Similarly, Klein, who wrote extensively on gratitude and the primacy of the infant's relationship to the mother for symbolic life, did not write specifically about misogyny. Nor in her writings on love and hate did she explore what this meant specifically for women's place in society or in psychoanalysis. It is almost as though psychoanalysis itself has failed to master the developmental achievement of realising that it has destroyed its object, woman, and recreated her according to its desire, inscribing misogyny throughout its theory. As loudly and aggressively demonstrated by the response to Preciado's presentation, it seems the next developmental step, of realising the full subjectivity and holding the love, hate, and everything in between of anyone other than a man, cannot be held in psychoanalysis.

The debt to women that Winnicott describes in very undramatic, sanguine terms that needs to be acknowledged, and that Sarah Maple literally shows in terms of the hours spent in

breastfeeding, does not address why this debt is not paid, why for some the debt is much bigger and instead is converted into hate. This perhaps has not been explored in psychoanalytic literature due to a lack of interest in what comes before the visible mother–infant relationship as noted by Balsam (2015): 'Only a few analysts allow full appreciation of the sheer power of childbirth in female psychic life as seen in the writings of Deutsch, Raphael Leff and Kristeva', Kristeva being the one who linked the fear of the abject to the terror of returning to the maternal (Zerelli, 1992).

In contrast to the usual description of birth as the moment of omnipotent creation, the writer Kate Zambreno described the day of labour as a 'mortality event', 'an extreme act of decreation' (Elkin, 2023, p. 264). The decreation she references is that of Simone Weil, best described by Chris Kraus as 'a plateau at which a person might with all their will and consciousness, become a thing' (ibid.). The decreation in childbirth is whereby the woman dissolves her previous identity to reconfigure herself during and after the event of birth, while she is simultaneously being seen as the creator of life. But she is also birthing decreation as what is coming into the world will also be leaving it, as Elkin writes, 'the acceptance of the self as finite, the act of procreation as prolongation of the material of the self and the unbearable knowledge and impossible acceptance of our children's eventual finitude', or more succinctly put by Claudia Dey, 'Mothers are makers of death' (Elkin, 2023, p. 266).

If one accepts birth as an act of decreation—bringing to life something that will fail and decay—then there is much more at play than just gratitude for a debt of care or time. There is an extreme sense of love and hate that has to be held, as well as a need to acknowledge where overwhelming power and strength lie. It is perhaps in this overwhelm where misogyny provides a quick

resolution to diminish the vastness of these feelings and to reclaim a sense of autonomy for all of us.

In writing this I think back on my own experiences of childbirth, the fear that terrorised and paralysed me while pregnant with my first child. My main knowledge of birth came from television dramas and stories of medicalised births that had trained me to think that women cannot be relied on by themselves to successfully give birth. When I gave birth to my third child I had the confidence to know that I was doing what I had done twice before and that I would hopefully be joining the many other women who had gone through childbirth and it had been taken for granted; that the fundamental bodily change that had happened to me would be greeted with little acknowledgement except by those who remembered feeling the same.

I also had the confidence that when my labour extremely rapidly advanced, my body knew what to do and I refused the many demands of me to lie down on a bed to be monitored so that instead I could be in the position I needed to be in to deliver my baby. In those moments I felt fear for what might happen to me and my baby. I hadn't managed to dispel all the medical dramas from my mind. I also felt my strength, growth, and capacity to endure immense pain, and to insist on doing what I needed to do to birth my baby.

I welcomed my decreation because I was in a privileged position to do so. I did not feel like a maker of death. Each time it felt that I and my baby were the makers of life, albeit finite ones. Being a 'maker of death' could not have felt further from my mind; if anything, the medicalisation of my third birth felt like the 'maker of death'.

However, there is something that resonates in the phrase when I apply it to others or in the abstract: of course, if you

create life you are part of the death, but it is in the inability to hold this paradox that true misogyny lies. If there has been a developmental failure in which the child has not been able to acknowledge both love and hate for the 'decreator', the 'thing' that has brought them into being, then one resolution to this dilemma is to diminish, belittle, and abhor the mother and all those with potential to be or who have been mothers. It is a resolution that is easily found, given that it has been in existence for centuries and is part of the very structures in which most societies exist. Perhaps the reason the quote 'maker of death' resonates with me, is not because women are the 'makers of death', but more that I have lived my life in a patriarchy and trained in a discipline that finds something unbearable and monstrous about women.

Preciado's request for psychoanalysis to reimagine itself was so threatening because it was an imagining of an act of decreation: for psychoanalysis to have the capacity to give up its identity for a greater good, which of course resonates with birth and the love and hate of those who do that work—primarily women.

CHAPTER 4

# The price of memory



In the short story 'Funes the Memorious', the Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges (2000) tells of a man's patchy recollection of his friendship with a man Ireneo Funes, who is able to remember everything in every detail. As a child, Funes had the ability to tell time precisely without using a clock, becoming an oddity in his small village, but his 'gift' becomes heightened following an accident that rendered him unconscious and bedridden. Gaining consciousness, 'the present was almost intolerable in its richness and sharpness', his perception and memory became 'infallible' and Funes felt 'his immobility was a minimum price to pay'.

As the story unfolds it becomes clear that the price Funes has paid far exceeds his physical imprisonment. He is acutely aware of the discomfort of others to the extent that it causes him pain;

furthermore, his ability to remember or rather his inability to forget means that he has become locked in a state of loneliness, being the only one to bear the consequences of perpetually living in an ongoing cataloguing and sequencing of moments in time.

The desire to forget is often a faithful companion to trauma. When recalling a traumatic event, the awfulness of that trauma can fill a person with a desire for amnesia; it is almost as though if we could erase a memory from our mind, we could return to our lives as usual. Our capacity to remember becomes the problem rather than the trauma itself. When speaking to a father whose young son had recently died in an accident, I asked if he was able to sleep. For a brief moment his demeanour completely transformed, he became extremely animated and spoke of his love of sleeping, that he spent most of his day looking forward to the moment he could fall asleep as it was the only time he was not constantly remembering that he was alive and his son was dead.

As documented by Freud, as humans we have developed different ways to try to forget the unbearable, the only problem being that it always seems to leak out in some way; there is always a price to pay for forgetting. Sometimes it was in the loss of voice or temporary paralysis in the case of hysteria or the development of what in Freud's term was called melancholia. What Freud hypothesised was that when there was an overwhelming trauma, something too much for human capacity, there would be an internal attempt to forget or censor the trauma, but that attempt, while it may be successful, would leave its traces and that censorship may well be traumatic in its own right.

Freud himself had direct experience of the imposition of an external censor on knowledge. In Austro-Hungarian Vienna, newspapers were routinely censored, especially during World War I where the censorship intensified to the extent that Freud was forced to leave any correspondence he was sending unsealed

and to delete any contentious content. The censorship in this case became the trauma itself as the enforcement of withholding information served to communicate to people the level of control being exerted over them. This of course was a precursor to the much more widespread censorship that would be inflicted under Nazi rule (Galison, 2012).

Freud experienced censorship not just by those in political power but also during his life and in death by those who were supporters of his work. Galison (ibid.) describes the three times his letter to Fliess of 22 December 1897 was redacted, first by Marie Bonaparte, Anna Freud, and Ernst Kris in 1950, by Eric Mosbacher et al. in 1954, and again by James Strachey in 1966. The full content of Freud's letter was only able to be published almost ninety years later. Ironically the part of the letter that was censored and deemed unpublishable was a case study of internal censorship. In the omitted section, Freud describes how his patient had a recollection of being a small child and witnessing her:

> mother shouting and cursing, the mother ripping her clothes off with one hand, holding them against herself with the other, the mother staring at a point in the room, her face altered in rage, covering her genitals with one hand, pushing something away with the other. She bends backwards, then all the way forward … finally falling quietly over backward onto the floor. (Ibid.)

With the censorship in place, the patient's account describes a mother behaving in a seemingly 'crazy' or 'mad' way; she would be easily diagnosed as an hysterical woman urgently requiring treatment for an illness and being judged as an unfit mother, traumatising her young daughter through her behaviour. However, once the censorship was able to be lifted via Freud's work with his patient, the mother's 'madness' could be seen in its fully sane

horror and more than reasonably understood as a trauma that desperately needed to be forgotten.

Freud's patient who herself had been raped and contracted gonorrhoea from her father at the age of two, was censoring what she had witnessed at the age of three—the attempted rape and anal rape of her mother. The mother's seemingly bizarre and grotesque behaviour becomes terrifying and horrifying once the father's image is returned to the violent scene the child was seeing. The price of forgetting for this patient was a neurosis that made her story seem 'delirious'; the price of remembering was having the knowledge of her father's actions and the suffering of herself and her mother. The lifting of the censorship would also cost her the pain of realising that her neurosis was the carrying over of her suffering into adulthood and that she had continued to pay for her father's violence and entitlement to treat both her and her mother as he saw fit, irrespective of the harm this was doing.

In the letter to Fliess, the story was removed so as to just leave a comment by Freud which seems 'unmotivated' (ibid.). Almost in a perfect re-enactment of Freud's experience with the patient, the result is that in the letter the apparent non sequitur of his comment makes Freud himself seem a little 'delirious' as the context has been extracted. When pieced together with the omitted section it perfectly summarises the trauma the patient experienced:

> Have you ever seen a foreign newspaper which has passed the Russian censorship at the frontier? Words, whole clauses and sentences are blacked out so that what is left becomes unintelligible. A Russian censorship of this kind comes about in psychosis and produce the apparently meaningless deliria. (Ibid.)

What Freud is describing is how a censorship can be self-imposed and necessary to survive. What the act of censorship by Bonaparte,

Anna Freud, Strachey and others demonstrates is how that same 'meaningless deliria' can also be imposed by others, perhaps for many different reasons beyond survival.

In *Diary of a Fallen Psychoanalyst* (Hopkins & Kuchuck, 2022), the edited workbooks of Masud Khan give further witness to the censoring of Freud's work. Khan details the plot twists and subterfuges in getting Freud's correspondence published via the Freud Estate and the intricacies of dealing with the Freud family and the desire to withhold some of Freud's work for fear that it might damage his reputation and therefore sales of Freud's books. Khan also refers to the politics within the psychoanalytic community, his awareness that his rejecting papers for a journal he was editing would result in retaliation by the authors, that they would 'avenge themselves' (ibid., p. 113). This recounting reads like the machinations of different cliques in a teen drama; however, given that the people he was writing about are not teenagers, it would seem that something larger is at stake.

All of which may seem of little interest beyond documenting the history of psychoanalysis until the censorship is brought starkly into the present via the book's preface. The editors, Hopkins and Kuchuck, state that a stipulation of Masud Khan's workbooks coming into being was that the International Psychoanalytical Association (IPA) insisted on the publication being verified by three IPA psychoanalysts of their choosing who 'would have to agree that no confidential patient information was being published' (ibid., p. xv). A second concern expressed to the editors was that the book might do harm to Winnicott's reputation, which is an interesting concern as it raises the question of what can or cannot be known and by whom this should be decided, which is the price we are all paying by being presented with curated versions of psychoanalytic writing without the curator's interests being declared.

Linda Hopkins has also described her unsettling experience of legal threats made against the book from within the psychoanalytic community, which resulted in their first publisher deciding not to continue with the book in case there were a lawsuit; the desire to impose a censorship by those opposed to the book at that stage worked irrespective of the price the editors and anyone else who may want to read the workbooks would pay. The reason for the legal threats was unclear, as any patient information had been meticulously removed, and the book did not contain discussion of Khan's clinical work, plus other reassurances had been given by Hopkins and Kuchuck about the contents of the book. What was even more astounding was the ferocity of the response to the book and the book editor ending the contract, given that at that point the book had not even been read by the editor or by those within the psychoanalytic community objecting to it.

For Freud, a censorship was invoked due to an event that was so distressing it would 'arouse the effects of shame, or of self-reproach and of psychical pain'. Given the history of Masud Khan's work and his now infamous fourth book in which he is blatantly antisemitic, racist, and misogynistic, it would be easy to see why there may be a wish to prevent any further 'psychical pain' for any of his former patients and to protect them from non-consensual disclosures about their treatment. However, given the guaranteed anonymity, it would seem that there is a deeper institutional shame to which the censors are responding, perhaps not least of all in recognising the way in which Khan as an immigrant from recently partitioned Pakistan was treated by the institutions in which he served, and which has not been acknowledged.

In 'Gender without identity', Saketopoulou and Pellegrini describe the censorship that was imposed on them by the editors of the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*. Their paper, which

they later published in their book *Gender Without Identity* (2023), was awarded the inaugural Tiresias Prize by the International Psychoanalytical Association. The paper argued for a revolution in psychoanalytic thinking about sexuality and gender, and had been agreed to be published by the journal. However, they describe how in the final stages of preparing their acknowledgements, they took a step too far in the acknowledgement and welcoming of 'queer and trans subjects into psychoanalysis' (ibid., p. xi). This seems to have invoked the affects of 'shame, self-reproach and or psychical pain' in that given how the cisgendered, phallocentric model of sexual development and gender identity has historically been and continues to be presented as 'psychoanalytic fact', the naming of queer and trans subjects becomes unbearable. In response, the *IJP* then refused to publish the paper with the inclusion of the acknowledgements and even went to the further step of attempting to stop the authors from publishing their work elsewhere. In many ways, the hope would be that the censorship was due to shame and self-reproach as this may be an acknowledgement of how the LGBTQ+ community has been and still is marginalised and pathologised by psychoanalysis.

The paradox of a censorship is that it is only when it is uncensored that the full extent of the censorship becomes apparent. Only when Hopkins and Kuchuck and Saketopoulou and Pellegrini lift the censorship does the trauma that it is trying to render invisible become visible and so too does the trauma inflicted by the imposition of the censorship itself come into view. In much the same way as Freud's patient had to live with a neurosis caused by her need to forget, so psychoanalysis is living with its own form of psychosis due to its wish to forget, leading to scotomisations of the hurt it has caused and fragmentations within its sense of self.

In 2016 at a meeting of the APsA (Garfinkle et al., 2019) an audience member addresses the panel of psychoanalysts saying:

> I am greatly distressed. I think the plenary speaker and discussants should be made aware of the damage they have caused by their use of the term homosexual. The history of the word, and the oppressive uses to which it has been put, both inside and outside of psychoanalysis, make it unusable, except as an instrument to do further harm.

Wilson (ibid.) refers to this moment as being 'a version of Althusser's concept of "interpellation" (1971): we are called upon to answer, "hailed" to give an account (Butler, 2005)'. He describes it as being 'quintessentially psychoanalytic in that we are always acting and engaging in ways that far exceed our conscious intentions and awareness'. In response to the audience member's comment, Wilson gathers a panel of psychoanalysts to consider this 'moment … that was both quintessentially psychoanalytic and extremely painful' and uses certain prompts to help facilitate the discussion. The ensuing panel discussion is extremely wide-ranging, initially focusing on critiques of feminism before considering the impact of religion and transgender rights and the impingements caused by unacknowledged ideologies and prejudices. As the discussion develops, a censorship becomes apparent. A panel which has been gathered, prompted by a comment in which the audience member was declaring their distress and the trauma that had been caused and felt by them due to the term 'homosexual' and how it had abusively been used in psychoanalysis, could not directly be addressed. Instead, a discussion of what can and cannot be said in psychoanalysis takes place, which did not appear to be the pressing concern or direct address of this 'interpellation'. A member of the panel called for psychoanalysis to be 'vigilant in attending … both

to the structural silencing of voices by dominant ideologies of the privileged and to veiled calls to homogeneity or hierarchical ordering' (Gentile as quoted in Wilson), but a direct response to the 'interpellation' is conspicuous in its absence.

This panel discussion raises the inherent dilemma of how one measures a censorship when the censorship is there to make what it is censoring invisible. We can observe, categorise, thematically analyse the conferences that are held, the books and papers that are published, but how do we do that for what is held back by the censors? There is no central database that holds all the papers and book proposals that have been submitted and rejected. It is only the absence that becomes observable, such as the lack of papers written about queer subjectivity, neurodiversity from the perspective of lived experience, and the many absent papers on menstruation, menopause, birth, and misogyny. But how the censors are held to account, and by whom, when the censorship is not even apparent or when the protest against the censorship is censored so that all is left is what may appear as 'mad' or grotesque behaviour in response to the invisible trauma?

In an attempt to manage my own feeling of being censored and to make visible some of the hidden fault lines, I would like to give an example of my experience of submitting a paper. The paper focused on the prevalence of misogyny in psychoanalysis, highlighting the lack of address and acknowledgement within the psychoanalytic field about misogyny and the predominance of men in positions of power in psychoanalytic institutions. I sent the paper to various psychoanalytic and psychotherapy journals. Due to the subject matter of the paper, I feel it is relevant to include the gender of the editors.

The response from the journal editors varied: it was accepted by one female editor and a male editor; another male editor

responded that while it was not suitable for that journal, as he did not consider it to focus enough on clinical issues, he suggested another journal to which it might be better suited.

Two journals rejected the paper. One male editor wrote to me stating that 'while your overall argument or claim (since you don't advance an original or novel thesis), is unassailable, your effort as it stands lacks the depth and focus a compelling paper possesses'. He commented on the lack of a 'thoughtful literature review' and the 'cursory fashion' in which he felt I mentioned the 'long and extensive literature on the topic of misogyny in psychoanalytic theory and practice'. In the final two sentences he thanked me for considering his journal and his hope that this outcome would not discourage me from submitting future work. It felt like being shouted at while also being apologised to for the noise.

Another male editor politely replied, regretting to inform me that my paper in its current form was not a good fit. Then in what seemed to be an enactment of the main argument of my paper, he continued in five further paragraphs to detail my lack of appropriateness for the journal, opening with 'Allow me to explain', and then continued by listing other writers I should have mentioned, as my paper 'reads more like an op ed piece than a paper that is conversant with the field'. He also disputed my argument that 'feminist scholarship is not really taught in psychoanalytic training … [as] … our experience is quite otherwise', and cited the journal he edits plus another as 'a steady resource for the conversation'. It is of note that my paper argued for a move away from the phallocentric model and more inclusion of women writers and women's experience, not for 'feminist writers'. What felt most intriguing was the penultimate paragraph in which the editor wanted 'to reiterate that our decision is based not on your convictions or assessment of patriarchy in psychoanalysis' and referenced another book.

The referencing to other works that could be cited is for some journals part of a standard editorial response in further developing the work for publication, that is, after it has been accepted for publication. In the responses I received as rejections of my paper, the references to other writers were examples of things that 'should' have been included in my paper, with the implication that in some way I had betrayed the feminist writers that had gone before me by not paying due respect or being grateful enough to their work, almost as though I had been a 'bad feminist' with the implicit shame attached. It intrigued me that in writing a paper that was drawing attention to the hierarchy of patriarchy in psychoanalysis, I was being reprimanded for not remembering my place in the hierarchy of feminist writers and that in some way I should be thankful for their work. There was no recognition of what the shadow side of that gratitude might imply, that I should be grateful for my freedom rather than angry at the trauma and the reminder that that freedom had been granted by men in a system organised to denigrate women on the basis of gender.

This response was not unfamiliar to me as I imagine it is not unfamiliar to many women. At the age of seventeen, my male history teacher told his all-female class of students that it was our duty to vote: if we did not it would be a betrayal of the courageous suffragettes who had given up their lives for us so that we could have our voice heard. The teacher was confused and frustrated by the lack of response and uptake in enthusiasm about his stirring invocation, until a student asked him why it was thought that women could not vote in the first place. He had missed the more horrifying story that he was telling this group of teenagers, that they should consider themselves lucky to be treated as equal to men and grateful to no longer be in servitude to men. In his rejoicing of female freedom, he had missed the trauma of women

having been arbitrarily incarcerated in a misogynistic system and that his recounting of their liberation was an introduction for some and a reminder for others that girls and women could and have been hated on the basis of gender. It might be understandable for this shadow side or unconscious communication to be missed by a history teacher, yet it is striking that this has not been considered by those firmly rooted in psychoanalytic structures such as journal editors.

It should be emphasised for context that in submitting papers to psychoanalytic or psychotherapy journals, it is often the case that if the work is published, the author receives no payment but is required to sign over ownership of their work to the journal prior to publication. Often even at the initial submission stage, the author is required to declare that they have not submitted the work elsewhere, which may appear reasonable given a desire to avoid miscommunication, but given that the acceptance of a paper being submitted for peer review and then finally publication can take up to three months or more, there is a remarkable personal *submission* required on the part of the author to make a journal submission.

In choosing to submit my paper to the journals, I was asking if my work would be of interest to that particular journal and to offer to work with the editor in bringing it to publication. It would be intriguing to know how many other writers have received such responses or if there was something in the question I was asking through my paper that felt like it needed to be stamped on; the message was clear, not that my paper was not a 'fit' for their journals but that those journals were superior to my paper, the presumption being that their editorial choices were better than what I had chosen to write and that this was without reproach. These responses, not so unconsciously, almost seem to prove

the existence of patriarchy within these psychoanalytic journals and that the price for these editors of remembering the pain and trauma caused for everyone caught in the patriarchal system and therefore understanding the need to change it, was apparently still too high.

Chadwick (2023) describes the idea of 'epistemic generosity' as an

> 'open receptivity' to (their) ideas, persons, perspectives, non-human worlds and texts. As a stance of openness, it is associated with waiting, slowness and listening, rather than pursuit, vigilance, and self-affirmation. Furthermore, as a non-directive mode of relating (i.e. not concerned with sharply defined objects or goals) epistemic generosity does not presume to know. Open to surprise, wonder, and connection, it is fundamentally an orientation to thinking and knowing rooted in hopefulness.

Chadwick also points to the 'substantial risks' in this approach, drawing on the work of Lorde (1977) to demonstrate the costs of such generosity for those situated in 'historically and socially marginalised positions', in that epistemic generosity requires 'that we remain highly attuned to our affective sensate bodies and actively work to engage with friction and difficulty' and 'involves critical attentiveness to our visceral feelings, struggles, dilemmas and perplexities'. However, Chadwick highlights that for those who have experienced marginalisation this involves returning to the original feelings of trauma and pain due to that marginalisation.

Sedgwick (2003), utilizing Klein's binary psychic structure of the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions, describes two 'orientations' in ways of reading, calling them paranoid and reparative reading, paranoid being 'one in which suspicion and scepticism predominate' (Chadwick, 2023). Klein's theory was that

this position comes about or gets stuck as a response to excessive anxiety (1946). It could be argued that it is this mode in which many psychoanalytic journals have become unconsciously stuck. The history of psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic institutions offers vivid illustrations of what Klein described as the paranoid-schizoid position with the resulting splits that have ensued, shoring up the paranoid-schizoid position. The difficulty with the lack of reparation among the splits is that the defences have been allowed to remain, so each institution begins to preach from its own prayer book; any disagreement has meant that the one disagreeing is treated like the black sheep of the family who has to leave home or find and set up a new home, while the challenge is never addressed. There is growth in diversification of new training schools that have emerged but the splitting risks a collapse in creativity or never being able to address real disagreement for fear of abandonment. Or as has happened with writers who have challenged the phallocentric viewpoint, they are split off into a separate group, that is 'feminist psychoanalysis'. In the same way as there are theorists who specialise in narcissism, borderline states, infant observation, or attachment theory, it is either pathologised or seen as not pertaining to the rest of psychoanalysis.

As described by Freud, the more painful the trauma, the heavier the censorship and a larger price to be paid by those who enforce it and those upon whom it is enforced. For the censor this can result in negotiations to mitigate the pain of remembering, as happened with Freud's letter and Khan's workbooks. The one wanting to lift the censorship so that they can speak also pays a price. Perhaps in the case of Saketopoulou and Pellegrini's 2023 paper, the negotiation, internal and external, to lift the censorship around gender was to not lift all censorships. It is remarkable that in a groundbreaking paper that confronts foundational

psychoanalytic thought and presents a vision of sexuality and gender as something that is based in trauma for all and not just those who have been pathologised, that a clear blind spot emerges. The case study they present of a traditional family of a mother, father, and two children, is still centred upon the impact of the mother, Ilana, on her child's formation of self; even though what the child has done with the 'mother's gender trouble' (2023, p. 67) is celebrated, there is much made of the mother's own early development. It is posited that the child Ory's gender is 'carrying the mother's own disavowed early conflicts regarding her relationship with her religion' (ibid., p. 61) and that both Ory and his older brother have 'symptoms that speak not just to their own difficulties, but to Ilana's trouble'. There is a hypothesis 'that the mother needs her son's gender atypicality to perform a kind of psychic work in the family system that helps locate herself in the centre by means of locating him in the margins' (ibid., p. 71).

What is striking in this account is that Saketopoulou and Pellegrini are able to challenge the censorship in psychoanalysis of seeing anything other than heteronormative development as abnormal and that gender 'is no final destination' (ibid., p. 28) with trauma always at play 'in all gender becoming'. What is equally striking is that the censorship in the way women are treated in psychoanalysis has remained: perhaps this has been the unconscious compromise made. Despite referencing earlier psychoanalytic writing for the role it has played in blaming the mother for 'boyhood femininity', their consideration of the child's traumatic incursion still revolves around the mother. The emphasis on the mother may well be due to the ongoing meetings with her after her son stops attending therapy and the fact that the mother is the primary carer; however, little consideration is given to the role of the father in the son's 'gender becoming'.

Similar to the case of censorship presented by Freud, where the man has been removed from the scene, the same is done in this retelling. There are many references to the father, such as his 'leaving early for work and returning at night with little participation in the everyday care of the children' (ibid., p. 37), 'his numerous corrective comments' (ibid., p. 37) to the mother or his insistence against the mother's ambivalence in sending the extremely anxious brother to boarding school 'to "teach" him the lesson he needed that his acting out would not be tolerated' (ibid., p. 38), and that the father's impatience with the son had reached such a point that Ory had become avoidant of him. The father even directly makes his position clear about his son's sexuality with his brisk declaration to the analyst that 'You should know that if he becomes a homosexual, he would not be welcome in our home,' and he 'welcomes' his son's decision to stop treatment as 'he had begun feeling that his son should be seeing a male therapist as the point was, after all, to eradicate his femininity'. The father's fragile masculinity is further revealed as he lashes out at both the therapist's authority due to her gender and also his son, whom he belittles for embodying that which he hates. We are told by the therapist that the father was, 'becoming worried that, like Ory's mother, I was not good at setting appropriate limits on Ory's girlie-ness' (ibid., p. 48). But despite all that is presented about the father, his impact on the son's gender becoming is largely left uninterrogated and more presented as a fact. Instead, the usual psychoanalytic formula of centring the discussion on the mother's trauma takes place, with the mother's trauma amplified by the lack of context of the father's.

This is not to suggest that Saketopoulou and Pellegrini's assessment of the mother's impact on the child is in any way inaccurate or invalid. The paper feels radical in citing the mother's own trauma as a contributing factor that is adding something of value

rather than being a pathologised cause of the son's development. However, the references throughout the paper to prejudices due to sexuality, gender, religion, race, and once to misogyny, make the absence of the father's impact more tangible. The absence of the father and the lack of discussion of the misogyny at play at all levels in such a forceful paper speaks more to the power of censorship, perhaps the most powerful censorship in psychoanalysis being its inherent misogyny and the trauma that has inflicted.

Gilligan and Snider, in *Why Does Patriarchy Persist?* (2018), describe the risk and damage of not giving the full picture, especially in psychoanalysis. Freud famously used the myth of Oedipus to name the stage in development where a child's desire for their parent of the opposite sex and jealousy towards the same-sex parent needs to be resolved for healthy, normal development. Gilligan and Snider argue that Freud made the fundamental flaw of taking a story that develops out of trauma as typical development, namely that Oedipus' father, Laius, had sexually abused a boy and the resulting story is the consequence of retribution for his actions. Omitting this essential beginning of the myth and taking it as a truth for all development, 'holds the danger of mistaking the culture of men's violence and women's silence for nature' (ibid., p. 24).

In the myth of Oedipus there is also the demand on Oedipus' mother Jocasta, that she upholds the patriarchal order by suffering the trauma of her child being taken away from her and left to die so that Laius, her husband, could save himself. However, in the myth, Jocasta is criticised for her silence, she becomes the bad mother. Her trauma as a mother whose child has been taken and killed and then being married off unknowingly to her son is not acknowledged in the myth or by Freud. Her lack of voice is amplified in her ultimate act of self-silencing and self-choking by Jocasta hanging herself.

In Freud's version, the myth of Oedipus revolves around the impact on the child, missing the severe trauma for the silenced woman in this, not to mention the inherent trauma of this myth and the child abuse that initiates the cascade of events (Gilligan & Snider, 2018). The antidote to the Oedipus complex is the myth of Psyche and Eros, which Gilligan and Snider see as the 'way out of patriarchy', but more importantly the myth also illustrates what happens when a prohibition is broken. Psyche refuses a demand placed on her to not see Eros or speak about her love for him to others. She rejects his demand that she is silent about their relationship when she is not with him. Psyche instead takes a risk, she trusts her instincts that she is safe to look at Eros, she sees 'a vulnerable young man' and what ensues is 'a marriage of equals and the birth of a daughter named Pleasure' (ibid., p. 25). For Gilligan and Snider, the lifting of the imposition of silence, the baring of female knowledge and male vulnerability is the exit route from patriarchy.

There is a double bind in breaking the amnesia that surrounds misogyny; misogyny enforces restrictions on women and what it is OK and not OK for women to say and do, and requires women's adherence to its laws; however, the breaking of the amnesia also is a responsibility that is placed on women. As Amanda Montei describes, 'We place the blame on girls and women when boys and men wrong them': girls and women are supposed to be the ones who break the amnesia by reminding boys and men that they should not police girls and women. Montei writes about the common experience of most mothers when raising their daughters:

> When little boys hit her or pushed her around on the playground, I used to rush in to tell her to hold up her little hand and yell, 'Stop!' Sometimes, it turned into an odd

> victim-blaming moment, in which I'd scold her, 'You have to stand up for yourself!' (2023, p. 171)

But she reflects that

> asking anyone to know themselves unfalteringly as a means for avoiding violence against them discounts that self knowledge is not a reliable feature of female sexuality, nor of sexuality in general … And self protection is not the same as feeling safe. (Ibid.)

It's a myth women from childhood are sold and buy into, that if we wear the right clothes we will not draw unwanted attention, if we shout 'stop' loudly enough the attack on women will stop, except we all secretly know it will not. When speaking with one mother and her adult son who enjoyed going out wearing very bright and colourful clothing that accentuated certain parts of his body and made him feel feminine, the mother was filled with anxiety and gripped with terror for her son's safety. The mother enjoyed the son's sense of style and confidence but her underlying fear and repeated refrain and appeal to me was, 'but you know what men are like, they could kill him'. The thought about personal safety was very present in the son's mind and he made accommodations for this when going out, but his sense of terror as a cisgendered queer man was very different from the mother's and became an impasse between them as their two experiences of the world came from very different places.

This impasse is accurately described by Margaret Atwood (1983, p. 413):

> 'Why do men feel threatened by women?' I asked a male friend of mine … 'They're afraid women will laugh at them,' he said. 'Undercut their world view.' Then I asked some

> women students … 'Why do women feel threatened by men?' 'They are afraid of being killed,' they said.

When writing my book about the pervasiveness of misogyny in psychoanalysis (Chamberlain, 2022), I was acutely aware of my own potential death, that my head would be chopped off for speaking out. Atwood's quote resonates with my experience on a profound level. What men fear most of women is to be laughed at, or in other words humiliated, rejected. This is not to undermine the power and pain of those experiences and the unconscious shutting down those experiences can cause, or that indeed women can be murderous and traumatising too. However, what Atwood's quote is referring to is the everyday interaction and experience between men and women. What I am referring to is a book and a paper that highlighted misogyny in psychoanalysis.

This led me to wonder how many other writers in psychoanalysis and psychotherapy have felt silenced or been silenced and felt the shock collar of misogyny. I am curious about how many supervisees have done this in supervision, trainees on training courses, analysands in analysis, unconsciously or without words taking up the position that they have been taught and socialised to do since their gender was assigned to them. The kicker in this is the insidious nature of the policing of women therapists and analysts, the obvious jolts of the shock collar of direct rejection; but also, as Robillard describes in her book about the pervasiveness of misogyny in academic English departments, there is also the everyday gaslighting that women internalise, such as, 'You're being oversensitive … You're overanalysing' or 'Does any of this really matter in the scheme of things?' (2023, p. 108). The cumulative impact can be devastating:

> Being told over and over again that what is happening to you is not actually happening to you, that it is not worth identifying,

> responding to, or reporting, is a form of gaslighting that leads to women's questioning their own ability to understand themselves. (Ibid., p. 94)

The risk in psychoanalysis is even greater; gaslighting can easily slip into becoming more formalised and weaponised further with the person's actions being described with terms such as paranoia, splitting, projecting, or envious and destructive attacks.

For Borges' Ireneo Funes, the price he paid for remembering was the inability to think; remembering every moment left no space for reflection. The trauma of being unable to forget had cost him his youth; at nineteen years old he appears 'as monumental as bronze, more ancient than Egypt', a warning that lifting a censorship, fully remembering, can at best be traumatic, at worse deadly. More importantly, Funes was also alone in remembering.

Perhaps the bigger caution in the story is the need for a collective remembering so that the trauma can be processed together and not just left on the shoulders of an individual. The amnesia of misogyny in psychoanalysis carries a very high price tag for all. It is only once we are able to lift a censorship so that the trauma can be remembered and acknowledged and worked through that a return to an integrated whole can happen; instead, we carry on paying the price for forgetting.

CHAPTER 5

# On beginning the treatment of misogyny: Misogyny as a fascist state of mind



It is clear that reading and therefore writing are corporeal acts; from the feeling of excitement when reading a sentence that deeply resonates, to the feeling of boredom or cut-off-ness when the author's voice fails to connect with the reader. The disconnect in voices can be from a lack of interest but can also be through a sense of insistence that the other person's experience is more important, valid, should be of note in some way. The disconnect is visible when the insistence takes the form of the usual rhetoric of debate. What can be much harder and less obvious is when that feeling of disconnect occurs due to a suggestion that appears collaborative, permission-seeking, and subtly snakes into insistence, gaslighting the person into believing that it isn't insistence at all.

The term 'mansplaining' has captured the move from a suggestion or helpful explanation to an unwanted, patronising

interjection, laden with sexist and misogynistic attitudes towards the women at whom the 'explanation' was aimed. What the term mansplaining does not capture, however, is the impact of the more subtle interjections, presented as suggestions, questions that are dripped through conversations until they become sodden with insistence and the aggression behind the insistence is placed in the other.

In Hemingway's 1927 short story, 'Hills like white elephants' (in *Men Without Women*), the story revolves around a conversation about an abortion without ever naming it. The unnamed 'man' and the unnamed 'girl' wait at a train station; a conversation takes place where the man continuously chips away at the girl to persuade her of his decision that she should have a termination. The man continues to insist on pushing his thoughts into the 'girl', despite her gentle and then less gentle requests that he stop, until she arrives at the point of saying, 'Would you please, please, please, please, please, please, please stop talking?'; to which the man responds by looking at their bags with 'labels from all the hotels where they had spent nights' and simply continues his protestations that she might continue with the unmentioned pregnancy, replying, 'But I don't want you to.' It is as though the 'girl' and the bags are interchangeable pieces of his property; her seven 'pleases' are irrelevant to him, what he needs to say is more important. She threatens to scream if he continues, and as the train is due to arrive, the man picks up the bags and takes them to the platform. When he returns, he asks the 'girl', 'Do you feel better?' with the implication that it was something in her that was unwell that led to the outburst, or that her upset was due to the pregnancy, not due to him. In response, she is left having to repeat her feelings twice in the hope that they might be heard. 'I feel fine,' she said. 'There's nothing wrong with me. I feel fine.'

It is this repeated insistence to the point of exhaustion that in women is stereotyped as 'nagging' and therefore easily dismissed; the inherent misogyny with which the term 'nagging' is laden is also dismissed. What Hemingway illustrates is the power of this insistence when it is a man who is effectively doing the 'nagging' and, when the woman protests, how quickly the problem becomes located in her.

In an online forum for a community of practitioners in psychodynamic talking therapies, there was a discussion of a case study. The case study included material to do with how the male analyst had experienced, and what he felt about the female analysand. The subject of misogyny was raised by one participant and was not taken up by the group, until it was more forthrightly raised again by a different participant, questioning why it was not being discussed. A wider discussion of misogyny then took place, with a generative and open discussion of how misogyny may have played a part in the case study. Several people contributed to what became a very alive and thoughtful discussion. One member recounted a dream and gave an unusual pseudonym to its female main character who was described in far from favourable terms. He was apparently unaware that the name he chose for the woman in his dream was also the name of one of the female contributors who had spoken out several times against misogyny and questioned why it was not being addressed. When this, and the offence it might cause, were drawn to his attention, the member apologised for his mistake and gave reasons for why the name had come to mind, which he said had nothing to do with connecting the character in the dream with the person on the forum. Exchanges then took place about the mistake and the discussion came to a close.

What was intriguing was that following the discussion, in an almost perfect re-enactment of the original call for inclusion to

think about misogyny due to the lack of female voices, the male contributor decided to contact a large group of people from the forum, insisting on continuing the conversation about his part in the forum (including the person whose name he had inadvertently used in the dream). At this point it became clear that the people he had put in his group email were all Hemingway's 'girl', but what was interesting was that perhaps he also felt like the 'girl' and was needing to reclaim a safer position in which he had to be heard. The difference was in his ability as a man to insist, rather than be silenced, and feeling a right to do so (no one was asked if they wanted to be part of his separate group email). It was as though we had all been recruited to rid him of his own misogyny or any thought that he might be misogynistic. His response echoed that of the online forum: even allowing a thought that misogyny could be present in psychoanalysis had to be moved away from, ignored, so toxic that it should not even be uttered in case it infected us all, rather than reflecting the obvious fact that it's a virus present in all of us.

The exchange exemplified how painful it can be to feel the visceral responses to these exchanges and re-experience the trauma of being in the position of the one who is silenced without that being recognised. From ancient Greece to current times with the self-confessed misogynistic influencer Andrew Tate, boys and men have been and are taught to silence girls and women (Beard, 2018; Gilligan & Snider, 2018). The exchange illustrated the lack of awareness of misogyny in a community where it would seem to be obvious that such a concept should be at each practitioner's fingertips. Perhaps it also speaks to the unconscious force and discomfort when misogyny is highlighted; it had to be noted at least twice on the forum before it could be taken up and, when it was, an enactment happened whereby the female voice had to be clamped down and feelings of shame were amplified.

It is true of any organisation that addressing misogyny is particularly difficult and can feel overwhelming. However, in the case of psychoanalysis there might be a hope, given its primary task is to look at the unconscious and what drives us as human beings, that it might have a head start on tackling misogyny. Indeed, many female writers have written extensively about what it means to be a woman, mainly under the heading of 'feminist psychoanalysis' but less so about the misogyny littered through psychoanalytic thought and practice.

It is curious to even think what it is that we are actually referring to when we say 'feminist psychoanalysis'. Do we mean psychoanalysis that refers to women only, and interests specifically related to women, and what those 'interests' might be; or is it referring to psychoanalysis that is being seen through a different theoretical lens? It could be saying much more, but if it is referring to a psychoanalysis coming from a different theoretical perspective, then what is the perspective that we are implicitly accepting as the non-feminist one? What are we naming that perspective? Is it the non-feminist perspective that needs to be the 'niche' viewpoint rather than the other way round? Alongside this is the more important question of how and why a viewpoint that is not inclusive of a 'feminist' viewpoint came into being and continues to be substantiated without reflection or significant change. In short, alongside the papers, the books that are labelled 'feminist psychoanalysis', where are those that are, or should be, labelled patriarchal, misogynistic, colonial, racist, homophobic psychoanalysis?

To be able to begin to imagine a psychoanalysis free of misogyny, we would need first to name that misogyny and be able to remember and keep hold of what it looks like. Given that, as described by Bollas, as humans we have an extraordinary capacity to forget

the horrors we commit, even extreme ones such as genocide, the task of naming and keeping hold of something as ubiquitous as misogyny is not such a small undertaking.

Where psychoanalysis excels is in the describing of the unconscious and intrapsychic causes for why a person may behave or act in a certain way or feel the need to hold on to certain beliefs. The precise description or practical meaning of a behaviour is often where psychoanalysis falls down, such as in Winnicott's description of the good enough mother, which gives a very high-level view of what 'good enough' might mean, or Bowlby's description of a 'secure base', which again holds to an overarching theoretical standpoint but falls down somewhat on what that might mean in concrete terms. The secure base does not give practical guidance on such issues as resolving sleeping problems with infants or young children, how to wean a breastfeeding baby, or how to resolve a child being distressed at going to school each day when they would prefer to be at home without reducing this to the single story of 'separation anxiety' (Bowlby, 1973).

When mothers present these difficulties to clinicians, the psychoanalytic gaze quickly moves from the child to the mother and the difficulty quickly becomes the mother. It is in these moves that what Bollas describes as the fascist state of mind is called into action; but in the case of mothers specifically, it is the fascist, misogynistic state of mind that can reign freely.

Bollas (1993) describes a fascist state of mind as 'a warrant for the extermination of human beings', a state that is brought about when all the constituent parts of the self that act like a parliament with 'instincts, memories, needs, anxieties and object responses finding representatives in the psyche for mental processing' are put under stress, resulting in a collapse of the functioning parliament and, through the processes of projection, the mind

becomes 'denuded of its representative constituents'. The cause of these stressors, which he lists as 'intense drive (such as greed), or force (such as envy) or anxiety (such as the fear of mutilation)', could easily be seen as the mind that would reach for hatred of a woman as a response.

When we witness a mother who is solely focused on her child's well-being, we are also confronted with our own desire or greed for that level of attention and thought, as well as our envy of a child who is on the receiving end of that attention. This can also create anxiety about our lack of such attention, either in the present or if we ever received that attention as a baby; and if we did not, did that lack of such attention cause us severe harm or a mutilation of self? All these feelings can be reduced, or the focus narrowed, onto our own experiences of being mothered and the inherent vulnerability of being an infant or small child in the face of a mother on whom we are dependent for our survival. The overriding sensation is one of contact with dependency, vulnerability, and fear in the face of such need.

Bollas quotes Rosenfeld's description of the development of the 'narcissistic self-state' and the ease with which 'killing off' and murder are taken as givens of intrapsychic life, 'killing their loving dependent self and identifying themselves almost entirely with the destructive narcissistic parts of the self which provides them with a sense of superiority and self admiration' (ibid., p. 198). What also needs to be added to this formulation of narcissism, is how this retreat into hate is driven and fuelled by fear of the other. As so transparently and succinctly described by one American man in later life, as he reflected on his time as a young soldier in Vietnam and remembering the effects of the first time he killed his 'enemy', a Vietnamese soldier: 'From that day they weren't people anymore. I hated them because I was terrified of them, and the more I feared

them, the more I hated them' (Burns, 2017). His fear was based in the fact that his life was dependent on not being killed by his enemy; in fact his life was dependent on his enemy full stop.

In simple terms, misogyny can be seen as a phobia of being left out. It is the trauma of not being able to be merged with what we want and having to cope with loss, the initial loss of the primary carer and those who nurture us, who in the most part are women. In the early stages of life, the mother is idealised as the person on whom we are dependent, the giver and also the withholder of what we need, but who has a magical capacity to read our minds. Being with such a powerful and special mother reinforces our own sense and need to be 'special' too—who could not feel special when receiving such dedicated attention? But when the realisation sets in that your mother is human and not magical, it can become unbearable, as we have to confront that we might not be so magically special either; our specialness is brought into question and we have to cope with that, hopefully with enough good feelings about ourselves that it is survivable. In misogyny, rather than cope with the good enough and not so good enough parts of oneself, the anger is turned towards the woman, as though you have been tricked by her into feeling you are special. But more importantly you become left out from being that idealised 'special' self you thought you were and the loss of that becomes unbearable.

The overwhelming anxiety is of a presumption that says that how it felt to be a child with the undivided attention of a mother and female carers is the best it is ever going to get; as though one is ruined at birth because it'll never be as good again and one will always be missing out for the rest of one's life. Misogyny is a collapse in thinking and feeling.

There are difficulties we all have with the everyday disillusionment of the capacity of others, of our mothers/carers not

continuing to fulfil the role of the idealised mother, but the bigger disillusionment is with ourselves. We have to be able to accept our desire, dependency on others, and that as children, of course, we do this with little discernment. This means that we cling on to whichever adult will care for us, sometimes at the cost of missing out on the development of an inner world or authentic self as we develop false selves to cope with the limitations of the adult.

But all these difficult feelings can easily be collapsed in one fell swoop by hating the female figures who are seen as being the source of all the conflict. The function of the mother as described by Bion, of being the metaboliser of the baby's feelings, or as described by Winnicott as the container of the baby's feelings, is once again called into action; in a well-worn and trodden path, these difficult feelings are again projected into the female figure and it is taken for granted that they will be accepted; more so, that these difficult feelings belong to them, thereby also re-establishing a deep connection with the mother figure, albeit in a corrupted form.

The obvious question that is never posed by the misogynist is what they might be missing out on by being 'in with the men' or what might men be lacking; instead, the lack is always in the woman; in the misogynist's mind something is to be gained by being without women. As pointed out by Adam Phillips, 'We are always left out, especially when we seem to be included' (2024, p. 74), but in the feelings of inclusion with other men who hate women, the balm for the misogynist is that they have finally found their 'family', united by a sense of exclusion. Finally they are 'in' and merged with the group's reductive thinking and, more importantly, 'revenge makes exclusion permanent'; but at least the misogynist feels as though this is on their terms: better to be the rejector rather that the rejectee. In many ways it is the ultimate act of domination, with the somewhat significant caveat that they

are also dominating and obliterating the part of them that is half their mother, female, feminine, or whatever may be the parts of themselves the person attributes as being feminine or like the mother. The misogynist via their hate of women has also created an intimately tied relationship to women, constantly thinking about them; but instead of this being through love, the bond is one that will never let them down as the expectation is one of constant disappointment and hate.

If one sees misogyny as a fascist state of mind, then it is important to note the symptoms of the 'intellectual genocide' that is part of this mind coming into being. For Bollas, 'intellectual genocide' comes about through everyday acts that we take for granted, such as distorting the other's viewpoint, attacking credibility and denigrating and caricaturing the opposition's point of view (1993, p. 208). Bollas argues that the first step to remedying these symptoms would be a simple one: talking about them and raising it into consciousness. It is extraordinary, given that we live in a patriarchal structure, that we still have to argue that misogyny is present in the theoretical and institutional structures of psychoanalysis and psychotherapy. Many of those institutions have not even reached the developmental milestone of acknowledging at the very least an ambivalence towards women and that this needs to be addressed. This would seem to be a symptom of intellectual genocide, particularly 'omittive genocide', whereby 'the life, work or culture of an individual or group is intentionally not referred to' (ibid., p. 209), and the place of women in psychoanalysis is not actively discussed or is referred to as something from a bygone era.

There is a dilemma in imaging a misogyny-free psychoanalysis as it is often only in what Freud described as *Nachträglichkeit* ('afterwardness') that the full complexity and nuance of an event or trauma can be engaged with, and an understanding arrived at.

Given that we are still only at the stage of debating whether or not misogyny exists in psychoanalysis, we are losing the perspective of afterwardness as we are still very much under its grip. There can be an interesting response when talking about misogyny in psychoanalysis, that goes along the lines of it being something from the 1970s, as though it could not be current. It is almost as though misogyny were a disease that is extinct, something frozen in time which, in its own terms, points to the paralysis in thinking about its impact, with the greater significance of misogyny itself being split off and cut off in the self, the risk being that this leaves no defence against the fascist state of mind.

Even if one were to deny the presence of misogyny in psychoanalysis, then where are the trainings that address misogyny in society? Or are we saying that psychotherapists' consulting rooms are spaces exempt from the influences of events such as the #MeToo movement, the overturning of Roe vs Wade, the multiple rape case of Gisèle Pelicot, gender apartheid in Afghanistan, the attacks on women in Iran, institutionalised misogyny being named within the London Met police force, rape being effectively decriminalised in the UK (Johnson, 2022), the rise of incel culture in the West, and the popularity of self-proclaimed misogynist influencer Andrew Tate with over 7 million followers on X and his videos on TikTok having been viewed billions of times. Furthermore, are we saying that psychotherapists are immune from these events when we sit down to speak to someone and consider on a fundamental level what it means to be human? I am not sure what further evidence is needed of a fascist misogynistic state of mind in psychoanalysis or that an intellectual genocide has occurred when it comes to women.

By virtue of living with a psychoanalysis imbued with misogyny we are limited in what might be imagined in a psychoanalysis free

of misogyny; it is perhaps easier to envision what psychoanalysis will look like if it continues as it is. There is the obvious fact that it would be a continuation of an absence of thought about women's lived experience, with individual names of new women theorists popping up every now and again and having to constantly reference back to previous female theorists who made inroads in bringing women's experience to the fore; women would continue to be exhausted by their subjectivity being limited and this limitation continuing to be unnamed. Eventually psychoanalysis would have to turn to auto cannibalism as it regenerates and reiterates its own theories, each time shoring itself up on its self-agreement with occasional forays of split-off groups, appeasing any anxiety about its flaws. In short, its fascist state of mind would continue. This of course would all be against a backdrop of increasing awareness of prejudice and the battles against restrictive and damaging thinking in the current and historic acts of 'othering'. Psychoanalysis' own 'death drive', if there is such a thing, would become apparent as it excludes more and more people.

Juliet Mitchell sees the ennui in interest in women and the waves of prominence of 'feminist thought' as symptomatic of something similar to a death drive in women:

> I think there still is this undertow … a sort of stasis, which we could liken to the notion of a 'death drive' in Freud's work. We want so much to go forward, to challenge and change the patriarchal world but there is something in the position of women, something in each of us as individuals and as a collectivity, that pulls us backwards all the time … That is not necessarily true of other movements, but it is deeply true of women. (Mitchell in Hollway, 2015)

If this is true, it seems that the death drive Mitchell is describing but which has not been acknowledged, would be the misogynistic

introject, the misogyny that we have all internalised through living in patriarchal societies. This internalised misogyny is reinforced by the backlashes and punishments meted out each time there is an upsurge against patriarchy such as the increase in control over women's bodies. In the case of psychoanalysis, the backlash is obvious in the claims that misogyny does not exist within the discipline's structures, without any reflection that this objection in its absolutism may be a very symptom of the misogyny to which I am speaking.

There may also be a more straightforward explanation for this 'death drive' or 'undertow' in women refusing misogyny. Jennifer Nash and Samantha Pinto (2023) describe a feeling of feminist exhaustion,

> how the everyday work of feminist care sucks out that life force. Erodes, wears down, and not just because or against capitalism, but because life, living, caring is exhausting, creating a space where one might be too tired to fuck, too tired to care about fucking, too tired to give any fucks at all.

This exhaustion would have little to do with an internal death drive but more that there are other jobs to be done and that the inherent multitasking is exhausting.

In a literal example of this 'undertow', I write this page now in an hour I have this morning after taking two children to school, coming home to prepare the evening meal while listening to a recording of an online lecture I was unable to attend. The irony of the lecture's title is not lost on me—'Feminist exhaustion'; just now I would identify with anyone's exhaustion, feminist or not. I feel myself pulled to say that 'I am lucky because my partner is very involved with the childcare,' but the male gaze already feels upon me that I should not be complaining about being able to write as this is 'supplementary', 'non-essential' to 'my' work of

looking after my children, even though I know my partner does not see it that way.

This afternoon, after collecting my children from school I shall then sit in my familiar chair and assume the role of a psychotherapist, which of course is still me and the same me that drove back and forth from school, and prepared a meal. I know from many of my other colleagues that my day is very unusual, I also know from my female colleagues that my day is very common except many do not have the time to write and that this is not spoken about or openly addressed. Among the multitude of conferences, where are the ones that discuss how to manage all the facets of being a woman and the demands of being a therapist?

What would it be like then to ease the exhaustion of being 'othered', of having omittive genocide committed against groups of people being recognised, 'to give a fuck' and not fear being left out? What would a manifesto of a psychoanalysis free of misogyny look like?

Any manifesto would have to hold three fundamental principles:

1. Representation of the vast majority of people who train and practise psychoanalysis being in positions of power within institutional structures and on the editorial boards of publications. For institutions to support people who have been marginalised from positions of power to share in that power and to remove the barriers to access to those positions.
2. Actively work with the misogynistic introject as a construct, engaging with its impact on all areas of psychoanalysis both historically and in the present.
3. Care is the overarching principle in all engagement with and within psychoanalysis. Hartman (2017) described care being the 'antidote to violence', so that there is care about how

> psychoanalysis is used and taught so that the violence of the trauma it has inflicted on the people it has marginalised can be addressed: using care as something that is not just given to others but also as a way of maintaining integrity of the self. In Audre Lorde's words, 'Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-protection, this is an act of political warfare' (2017).

At the moment of birth, we are literally delivered by and into someone else's care. That care is indicative of the culture in which we are living, but it is also by the birth itself that that culture and what is possible is communicated. Going into labour with my first child I had a very vague idea of what to expect and was fortunate to have the guidance of two midwives who prioritised my needs and comfort and privileged my physical responses as a reliable guide whether they should actively intervene, asking me what I felt my body needed to do before giving guidance. Similarly with my second child, despite this not being my first birth, the midwives were able to engage with my vulnerability and to give me confidence to move my body and respond to my body's needs to make the birth as comfortable as possible and I in turn trusted them to know how to help me and for us to deliver the baby together.

Three weeks prior to my due date I went into labour with my third baby. I was told that I would need to be monitored and would have to lie on a bed so that machines could be attached to me. My partner, a white middle-class man with experience of the entitlement that those characteristics allow, was able to insist when I needed him to, for me to be moved from the maternity triage area to a birthing room and for mats to be placed on the floor so that I could kneel to give birth. Despite the doctor's protestations that I would need to be on a bed, the doctor compromised with my partner that the mats could be there while I was

in labour but ordered that I would need to be lying on the bed for the birth.

As I got up from having to lie on a bed to be monitored and in more pain than I had ever experienced in my previous births, I walked down the corridor from the triage bay into the birthing room with my partner and told him to get a nurse as I needed to push. As I knelt on the mat, a nurse rushed in, shouting at me to get on the bed, my body began to push as she pressed the emergency button, and I heard the alarm ring in the corridor. Another nurse arrived to tell me she was there to help me and to breathe so she could deliver my baby. The pain was different to my other births, as was the sense of panic and my recurring thought that I was living through what the scene looks like when a baby dies during birth.

Fortunately, my baby didn't die, indeed, due to the push of the emergency button, he arrived moments later surrounded by a roomful of clinicians with a crash cart ready for him, which thankfully was not needed. In fact, if I had been allowed to go to a birthing room on any of the several times I had requested this during the previous two hours, none of that additional support would have been needed. But the medical team, who were giving me the best support possible according to their training and protocols which prioritised medical experience rather than the mother's, were used to not responding to women. The triage nurse later apologised to my partner, explaining that because I was not shouting or screaming, it had not looked to her that my labour was that far progressed.

The birth the medical training and protocols were insisting on was the one that was decided upon when birth literally became the domain of men. The move from the use of birthing stools or kneeling to lying on beds happened with the medicalisation of birth,

when doctors began delivering babies, those doctors at that point only being men and the move to lying on a bed being required so it was easier for the doctors to examine the women. Babies were literally being born into a man's world, where the woman is put at a disadvantage from being effective in the partnership of birth, to the detriment of all involved, as against the work of collaboration that can take place, as it had during my first two births.

But the rub in all of this is that I would never have known what it was like to give birth in an environment that felt like a dream-like bubble, where the midwives on both occasions thanked me for them being there while my babies were born. I felt nothing but deep gratitude for the midwives who had literally and emotionally held me throughout. There was nothing dreamlike about my third birth—nightmarish perhaps—but the overriding sense was of it being 'real'. It met with my expectations of care of my body and mind in medical settings and how I had experienced being a mother so far, that in some ways being a mother I was 'dumbed down' and could be taken charge of, sometimes with a very passive nod to consent being sought during the takeover.

Of course, if I had been giving birth a generation earlier, I would have been unaware that there was an alternative to lying on a bed, being told to not move and being given a variety of medication and my emotional needs being ignored; that would be normal. It is only in the lifting of the imposition of a unilateral view that many more views can come into sight, be experienced, and given more opportunity for finding out what might feel right.

Eichenbaum and Orbach in their book *What Do Women Want?* (1983), in the foreword in the revised edition of 2014, assert that 'Men certainly continue to be baffled and even women themselves continue to be perplexed when faced with the question, What do women want?' They suggest that the answer to the question

is primarily to be interdependent with men and to have their emotional needs met. This may well be part of it, but perhaps the bigger part is for women to not have to define what they want and for the 'want' to be a fluid exploration that at some times may be about interdependency, at other times much more, but for that experience to not be foreclosed and reduced. This would seem to be a basic need for people of all genders and one that also needs to be applied in psychoanalysis so that what it is or needs to be can evolve and develop and not be limited by a phallocentric psychoanalysis or indeed a feminist one and the impoverishment of a misogynistic fascist state of mind can be refused.

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