BOOK REVIEWS

FEMININE SEXUALITY: Jacques Lacan and the Ecole Freudienne. Edited by Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose. 1982. London: Macmillan Press £4.94 ISBN 0 333 34255 4.

One of the most crucial debates for modern feminism has concerned the extent to which it is possible for psychoanalysis to act as a force for or against women's liberation. There are those, such as the philosopher Mary Daly, who argue that psychoanalysis has been nothing but another, more subtle, form of oppression, against whose influence women should be constantly alert. Certainly in its practice, or malpractice, psychotherapy in its many forms has frequently reinforced women in their traditional masochistic, dependent and passive positions. Many men therapists, and the women colleagues that identify with them, have been guilty of insufficiently controlling their own sexism, and of treating their women clients as abusively as they do their daughters, mothers or lovers. Yet some psychoanalysts, particularly in their theoretical writing, have been a source of profound insight and intellectual liberation for feminism. Recently, the work of the object relations school has been the basis of both a flourishing theoretical critique of women's central experiences as mothers and daughters, and perhaps more importantly has inspired a network of women therapists who are working with their women clients in a new and productive manner. An earlier influence, coming this time from France, has been the powerful and complex work of Jacques Lacan.

In this volume, Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose have selected and translated some examples of his writing concerning the psychodynamic origins of female sexuality, which was for Lacan a central theme. Many of these articles have been previously unavailable in English, which makes this book particularly interesting. However, even in translations meticulously provided by Jacqueline Rose, the prose is dense and illusive. The editors begin by each presenting a useful introductory chapter, setting Lacan within the psychoanalytic tradition and explaining his overriding aim to return to the insights of Freud. He continually insisted in purging interpretations of Freud's work of their impurities and revisionisms, and in extending or projecting them into the clinical observations of the mid-20th century. In particular, Freud's major dilemma over the nature of women, and his self-imposed questioning of what it is that they (we) want, continued to tax and elude Lacan and his followers. He berates women analysts for not providing him with the answers he seeks, and later rejects those presented by his ex-colleagues (such as the remarkable 'Ce sexe qui n'est pas une' by Luce Irigaray). He is malicious also in his attack on Ernest Jones, who tried harder than many others to understand his women clients,

but who is accused by Lacan of misunderstanding the nature of the so-called castration complex in women. Here, Lacan's return to Freudian purism, attenuated as it is by his extension of the interpretation of the phallus as a linguistic sign, is less meaningful than the insights of Helene Deutsch and other members of the cultural school. However, Lacan does make a major contribution in his discussion of female 'jouissance'. The editors avoid giving an English translation of this word that means not only orgasm but also implies 'going over the top', a sort of out-of-control excess. Lacan is remarkably sensitive to this elusive aspect of women's sexuality, and his attempts to make sense of women's desires reverberates throughout these chapters.

Sadly, despite their introductions, footnotes, and opening remarks at the beginning of each paper, the editors provide few references and explanations to guide the reader through the later, more elliptical works of Lacan. It is almost as if they had become exhausted by the hammering to their senses that Lacan's writing imposes. His arrogance and intolerance are deplorable, yet his structural comments are fascinating and need to be read and re-read in the context of new clinical problems. Hopefully Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose will be encouraged to make use of their scholarship and produce more thoughts of their own concerning the integration of Lacanian and post-Lacanian insights into the psychodynamics of women's lives.

Kate Osborne

FORMS OF FEELING: The heart of psychotherapy by Robert F. Hobson. Tavistock Publications 1985 pp.318 pb. £8.50

This is an ambitious book. It tries to give a full account of one form of psychotherapy, which the author calls the Conversational Model.

It is divided into three parts. The first part is called **The true voice of feeling**, and it tries to give a basic outline of the approach which is being offered.

> *In summary I have argued that psychotherapy is a creative process of personal problem-solving. Pre-conceptual experiencing gives rise to more discrete experiences which are owned as actions and acts (Chapter 3) in diverse languages, forms of life (Chapter 4). Fantasy-thinking is elaborated in two forms of symbolism, discursive and presentational, which are characteristic of discursive and imaginative thinking (Chapter 5). Feeling is a special instance of imaginative thinking within personal relationships (Chapter 6). All three types of thinking are features of creative problem-solving, a process of imagination which leads to a unity of the whole person in relation to the outer world and to other person. A central feature in*

imagination is the adoption of a symbolical attitude and an experience of living symbols (Chapter 7) especially in the use of figurative language and moving metaphors (Chapter 4).

There are a couple more chapters in this first part, including one which admits the notion of subpersonalities. I liked this, especially when he quoted me.

The second part is called **The minute particulars**, and it starts off very well with a fully analysed account of the first five minutes with one particular client. This is very well done, and he makes some interesting points about diagnosis, including this:

> *Diagnosis emerges in a conversation between persons. Diagnosis is always treatment. Diagnosis embodies a statement about fundamental values.*

The next chapter is about the model of psychotherapy adopted here, and again it makes some interesting points:

> *First and foremost, a therapist's job is to listen and to go on learning how to listen. He needs to be open to register cues and patterns of cues. Much of this perception occurs beyond his awareness, as shapes and forms arise and are bodied forth in intuition. He needs to become more and more able to listen to himself as well as to his client.*
>
> *Much of the therapist's receptive activity calls for a relatively unfocused awareness but he also needs to 'notice'. This means a concentrated attentiveness to minute particulars and, at the same time, a readiness to see these anew in a freshening of the familiar. The combination of these two attitudes is difficult to convey, and even more difficult to maintain. It is an ideal which we can aspire to but seldom attain.*

He has something interesting to say about the persecutory therapist, and there are some very interesting points about his model of training, as for example this:

> *I ask a trainee (or, if I have the chance, an experienced analyst), to record an interview on videotape and to write down, either during or after the interview, an account of the session noting what was important. Later she or he watches the tape first alone; then together with a small group of colleagues; and finally together with the patient.*

Later in this section there is some psychological theory which I did not find particularly helpful; but the last chapter of it again gives a very interesting case example in some detail.

The third and final part of the book is a personal statement called **The heart of a psychotherapist.** It is the shortest part of the book and deals mainly with loneliness. It seems that the author is something of a connoisseur of loneliness, and has a lot to say about it, including the rather alarming statement that "this disintegrating anxiety is the basic problem in all psychotherapy"! But in a way the Conversational Model can be seen as an answer to loneliness, and that is perhaps its appeal for the author.

Although there are some good things in this book, I did not warm to it very much. There is something very tedious about the repetition of the same points again and again, and about the lists which occur so often. I would recommend the chapter on the first five minutes, but that is about all.

John Rowan

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF NUCLEAR CONFLICT edited by Ian Fenton, 1986, Coventure, 187 pages, £5.95

This book considers the issues surrounding the nuclear bomb from the psychological point of view.

Thirteen different authors contributed, most writing one chapter. They include five psychiatrists and two psychologists; so it can be assumed that their points of view are well-informed as far as the psychological content is concerned.

The psychology of the nuclear bomb is dealt with on all levels, ranging from the individual level, through the group, national and international levels, to the collective unconscious. The historical reasons for the development of the bomb are explored, and projections made into the future.

Even though they do not all use Jungian terminology, most of the authors blame our plight on the collective Shadow, aided and abetted by the Shadow in each individual. The familiar mechanism of projection is frequently mentioned - the projection onto the 'enemy' of our own aggression and guilt.

Two writers look to our evolutionary past for the origins of aggression, e.g. Anthony Stevens: 'Conflict is co-operation's shadow', and 'The origins of conflict lie . . . rooted in the biology of our species'. The need for territory is seen as a major factor. However Frank Wilson takes a different view, arguing that biologically the human species is naturally benevolent, and that aggressive characteristics have been learned by the species due to adverse environmental conditions.

Few of the writers offer a solution; but those who do, suggest that it can only be found in an increased understanding of our own natures, an increased awareness of our psychological mechanisms on both the group and individual levels, and a willingness on the part of all humanity to embrace the higher values of the spirit, brotherhood and compassion.

Some specific issues are also addressed, for example drug abuse in the US services. The extent of this particular problem is startling, especially when considered in the context of possible human error in the chain of command for a nuclear missile launch.

After the introduction by Ian Fenton, the ten chapters are: 'The Archetypes of War' by Anthony Stevens, 'How Can We Stand By?' by Jim Dyer, Uncertainty and Nuclear Threat' by Christopher de B. White, 'Drug Abuse in the Military and Its Contribution to Accidents' by Margaret Ballard, 'Pre-Nuclear Age Leaders and the Nuclear Arms Race' by Jerome Frank, 'The Psychology of Nuclear Disarmament' by Jeremy Homes, 'The Prevention of Nuclear War' by Robert Jay Lifton, 'A critique of Cliches' by D.M.A. Legget and C.M. Waterlow, 'A Cosmology of Conflict and Harmony' by Frank A. Wilson, and 'Time and the Bomb' by John-Francis Phipps. Each chapter ends with a useful list of references.

Then there are three appendices, namely 'The Invisible Event' by Stewart Britten, 'Facts and Figures' by D.M.A. Legget and C.M. Waterlow, and 'Are Nuclear Weapons Illegal?'.

This is a readable book, presenting a well-researched overview of the psychological factors involved in the nuclear bomb threat.

Hazel Guest

Single Fathers by Geoffrey L. Grief, Lexington Books, 194 p. November 1985. £22.50

This book is based on 1100 replies from single fathers to a questionnaire published in **The Single Parent**, an American Magazine read by about 200,000 people, one-third of whom are men. It also contains material from 100 interviews with single fathers and, so as to make comparisons, 150 questionnaires from single mothers.

The book is meticulous in an academic way. Facts are documented, comments are cautious, explanations are tentative Potential criticism is acknowledged and warded off by, for example, admitting that the sampling procedure was biased towards the rich. (Average income in this study was $28,000 a year whereas the average single father in U.S.A. gets less: $21,000). All the actuarial and demographic variables are described: racial

composition, occupation, education, age, religion. Conclusions are listed: Single fathers usually have an easier time if they are richer, wanted custody, do housework, are less blaming and where the mother sees the children frequently; society stereotypes single fathers in an unhelpful way, parenting is no harder for men than women, roles are changing and recognition of this could make arrangements easier for divorced parents in the future. This is a well laid out, dispassionate account of a formal study which will be useful for people who want to know these sorts of facts and conclusions. I doubt if it will give direct help to parents involved in divorce and single-handed parenting and even less to therapists attempting to help with the anger, fear and despair which the book briefly states is experienced at some time or another by single fathers.

A. David Jones

GODDESSES IN EVERY WOMAN: A new psychology of women, by Jean Shinoda Bolen. Harper Colophon, New York. 1985. pp334 £6 approx.

There is an Introduction to this book by Gloria Steinem, who says in part - *"At a minimum, these archetypal goddesses are a useful shorthand for describing and thus analysing many behaviour patterns and personality traits. At a maximum, they are ways of envisioning and thus calling up needed strengths and qualities within ourselves".*

What Bolen is saying is basically that we as women can come under the influence of at least seven different Ancient Greek goddesses. Under each one we act differently, think differently, feel differently and relate to other people differently. She is a Jungian analyst, and sees these goddesses as archetypes who are always there, always active, always available.

The seven goddesses she deals with in details are the three virgin goddesses (Artemis, Athena and Hestia), the three vulnerable goddesses (Hera, Demeter and Persephone) and the alchemical goddess Aphrodite. Artemis, goddess of the hunt and the moon, personifies the independent, achievement-oriented feminine spirit; Athena, goddess of wisdom and craft, represents the logical, self-assured woman who is ruled by her head rather than her heart; Hestia, goddess of the hearth, embodies the patient and steady woman who finds comfort in solitude and exudes a sense of intactness and wholeness.

Hera, goddess of marriage, stands for the woman who considers her roles as student, professional or mother secondary to her essential goal of finding a husband and being married; Demeter, goddess of grain and the maternal archetype, represents a woman's drive to provide physical and spiritual sustenance for her children; Persephone, maiden and queen of the

underworld, expresses a woman's tendency toward compliancy, passivity and a need to please and be wanted by others. Aphrodite, goddess of love and beauty, governs a woman's enjoyment of love and beauty, sexuality and sensuality, and impels women to fulfil both creative and procreative functions.

Each of these goddesses is examined in detail, and case histories given of how they have shown themselves in the work of clients of Jungian analysts. They are related to parents, adolescence and young adulthood, work, relationships to women and men, sexuality, marriage, children, middle years and later years. The psychological difficulties associated with each archetype are gone into in some detail, and ways to grow are suggested for each one.

There are also some very interesting and helpful ideas out of the story of Psyche, giving four valuable lessons for women.

All in all, this is a most exciting and ground-breaking book, which gave me a lot of insight into myself and other women I know. It would be nice to see a book which brought in the goddesses of Africa.

Lucy Biko