

Book Review

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Sexual Revolutions: Psychoanalysis, History and the Father. Edited by Gottfried Heuer. London, UK: Routledge, 2011. 309 pp.

This book is a *magnum opus*, a big work, in the true sense of the phrase. In it, the editor, Gottfried Heuer, an Associate Editor of this journal, has brought together leading academics and practitioners who singularly and together represent a remarkable breadth and depth of scholarship. The book is described as “a major interdisciplinary enquiry into the history, nature and plausibility of the idea of a ‘sexual revolution’” (p. i) – and indeed it is.

Heuer is an exponent and proponent of the life, work and influence of Otto Gross (1877–1920), and, in a chapter that sits symbolically at the heart or half-way point of the book, elaborates Gross’s life history and his influence on the development of analytic theory and clinical practice. In it, Heuer reminds us of the esteem in which Gross was originally held: as “capable of making an original contribution” (Freud); in terms of Freud’s followers, “the most significant” (Ferenczi); “brilliant” (Adler); “highly gifted” (Stekel); and “the romantic ideal of a genius” (Jones). Gross’s contributions included the identification of a dialectical interdependence between individual inner change and collective political change; character types; the mutual interrelationship between analyst and patient (with which Gross and Jung experimented together); countertransference; conflict as core *relational* conflict; the impact of patriarchal society; the centrality of the capacity to relate; and the role of language. In this Gross was both prefigurative and prescient. That his influence is widely unknown, ignored, and undervalued is due to a number of factors, including his split with Jung, and Jung’s subsequent deletion of acknowledgements and references to Gross; Gross’s early death; and the fact that much of his work has not been translated into English – and, indeed, we have Heuer to thank for his own translations of Gross’s work. That this volume reclaims and represents (re-presents) Gross’s work is sufficient reason to welcome its publication.

The book is divided into four parts, on history; fathers and sons; psychoanalysis, literature and sociology; and sexual revolutions. The second and fourth parts bring together the proceedings of symposia that followed a series of exhibitions and events. These began with an exhibition on the theme of “The Laws of the Father: Hans and Otto Gross, Sigmund Freud, and Franz Kafka” which was first curated in Graz, Austria, in 2003. This was followed by other events in Prague, Trieste, Zagreb and other European cities, including an exhibition on “FatherSate–MotherSon” in Rijeka, Croatia. Finally, another event – an exhibition, with presentations and symposia – was held at the Freud Museum, London, in January 2009. This background is significant in that it gives some

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sense of the broad interest there is in the work of Gross and his contemporaries, and interdisciplinary themes to which it – and they – contribute.

The first part of the book – on History – comprises one chapter by Kevin Lu on a post-Jungian approach to psychoanalytic history, and one by David Bennett on a brief history of sexual revolutions. While I appreciated the scholarship of Lu's chapter, I found it a quite complex and, as by far the longest chapter in the volume, not the most inviting start to the book. By contrast, Bennett's chapter was more accessible, and I enjoyed his discussion of sexual revolutions, from millenarians, through sexual liberationists, to sexologist; of celibacy and sublimation, "complex (open) marriage" and free love; and appreciated his point that "experiments in collectivising desire suggest that there is no such thing as a 'free' or un-rule-bound sexual desire, merely different regimes of sexuality by which desire is defined and generated" (p. 47).

The second part – on Fathers and Sons – comprises four chapters by Thomas Mülbacher on criminology (Hans Gross and Arthur Conan Doyle); by Sander Gilman on sex (and Franz Kafka); by Gerhard Dienes on the father–son relationship (Hans and Otto Gross); and by Albrecht Götz von Olenhuden on the sexual revolution (Sigmund Freud and Max Weber). While these chapters are very different in content and style, each explores the theme of fathers and sons in a detail that retains the interest of the reader and with an extrapolation that stimulates and furthers this specific theme across a number of disciplines: literature, psychology, and sociology – thereby providing a good link to the next part.

In a number of ways, the third part – on Literature and Sociology – is the heart of this book. In six chapters, including Heuer's own central chapter, Alfred Springer discusses Freud, Gross and sexual revolution; Nick Totton compares and contrasts Wilhelm Reich's theory of sexuality with that of Gross's; Jennifer Michaels examines Gross's influence on German language writers; John Turner reflects on the influence of Gross on Frieda Weekley and D. H. Lawrence; and Sam Whimster draws attention to the expressionistic tendencies in what he refers to as Gross's "doctrine". Again, each chapter in this part is well written and full of fascinating detail. Totton's chapter is particularly well written and reflects his detailed knowledge of the field. As someone who studied D. H. Lawrence at school and shares a certain geographical affinity with him, I was especially drawn to this particular chapter in which personal politics and ways of relating were – and are – part of "making history".

The fourth and concluding part – on sexual revolutions – comprises five chapters: the first, a write-up of a conversation between Susie Orbach and Brett Kahr on the engagement of psychoanalysis with sexual liberation; the second, by Andrew Samuels on promiscuity, politics, imagination, spirituality, and hypocrisy; the third, by Amanda Hon on a post-Jungian reframing of virginity; the fourth, by Birgit Heuer on forgiveness; and the fifth and final chapter of the book, by Gottfried Heuer on Gross's concepts of relationship. As someone who had already read Samuels's and Heuer's chapters as articles in *PPI*, I was more drawn to the other three chapters, especially Orbach's which, apart from its interesting historical content, offers a change of voice and pace, with some humour; and Birgit Heuer's chapter, which addresses a diversity of approaches to this complex concept that is not simply private, but also public and political.

Overall the book is well constructed and well presented, with beautiful front and back cover images, and interesting illustrations, including a lovely graphic design by Heuer of Gross as psycho-analyst and psycho-anarchist! I have some criticisms: given its content and length I would have placed Chapter 1 – and possibly the first part – later in the book; a number of chapters have

no headings or subheadings, which would have been helpful in giving some structure to their argument; there is some unevenness in the editing (or copyediting) between chapters; some inconsistency in spelling; and occasional changes in typefaces – all of which are a little distracting on a first reading of the book. They do not, however, detract from what is, overall, an excellent, important, and significant contribution to the literature on the history of psychoanalysis. It is a testament to the range and richness of the volume that I continue to re-read it; and the fact that it remains one of only a few books on my bedside table is perhaps the highest and most personal recommendation!