

**LESBIANISM : A POST-STRUCTURALIST/POST-MODERNIST CRITIQUE OF
SELECTED THEORIES RELEVANT TO CLINICAL PRACTICE.**

KARIN ENSINK

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**Faculty of Social Science and Humanities
Department of Psychology
University of Cape Town
Rondebosch, Cape Town, 7700**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION.....1

SECTION 1 : PSYCHIATRY, HOMOSEXUALITY AND LESBIAN DISCOURSE -
A BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND.....2

SECTION 2 : PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORIES OF HOMOSEXUALITY,
INCLUDING FEMALE HOMOSEXUALITY11

SECTION 3 : LACANIAN AND SOCIAL INTERACTIONIST THEORIES
OF FEMALE HOMOSEXUALITY.....21

SECTION 4 : FEMALE HOMOSEXUALITY - FOUCAULT'S THEORY OF
SEXUALITY AND A POST-MODERNIST/POST-STRUCTURALIST
ANALYSIS.....27

REFERENCES.....41

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to provide a critical framework from which to review the major trends in psychiatry and psychoanalysis pertaining to lesbianism and relevant to clinical practice. The post-structuralist/post-modernist framework employed considers lesbianism as a category constructed in a particular socio-historical context and involving particular power relations. The role of psychiatry and psychoanalysis in this process of categorisation and the production and reproduction of lesbianism as pathology relative to a heterosexual norm will also be examined. On the other hand, challenges to the lesbianism as pathology thesis, drawing on more radical psychoanalytic concepts, influencing and also influenced by post-structuralist/post-modernist theories will be discussed. Various suggestions flowing from a post-structuralist/post-modernist analysis and which may be useful in a clinical context will also be presented.

INTRODUCTION

The clinician, especially the inexperienced or trainee clinician searching for a framework from which to approach lesbianism is confronted with a confusing diversity of contradictory theorising. In this study, post-structuralist/post-modernist theory will be used to provide a critical framework from which to examine the various trends in the theorising of lesbianism within psychiatry and psychoanalysis.

In section 1, a historical contextualisation of the production of sexuality as a discourse in the late 19th century will be briefly presented. It is a discourse with regulatory concern, establishing norms, imposing categories on the flux of desire, prescribing what is natural and perverse, normal and pathological. In this section, psychiatry and psychoanalysis will emerge as key definers in the pathologising of homosexuality. The challenges to this discourse and subsequent developments from within psychiatry as well as the attempt to develop a gay and lesbian epistemology will be presented here.

In section 2 Freud's and some clinically based psychoanalytic theories, mostly from the object relations school, will be examined. These theories reject Freud's notion of polymorphous perversion and fundamental bisexuality and are currently the producers of the homosexuality, including lesbianism, as pathology thesis.

In section 3 the Lacanian school's notion of sexual categorisation as imposed by societal rules and regulations will be presented as well as their consideration of lesbianism as a refusal to conform to a societal law, an insistence on uniqueness and potentially offering a creative position. The possibilities of early as well as later life experiences leading to the assumption of lesbianism as one of the various societal 'accounts' of sexual identity as proposed by the social interactionists will also be considered here.

In the final section, section 4, Foucault's theory of the history of sexuality as a discursive construct as well as post-structuralist/post-modernist theories will be briefly presented. The notions of language, power, discourse, knowledge and subjectivity contributed by this framework will emerge as useful in providing a critical perspective from which to examine the developments in psychiatric and psychoanalytic theories pertaining to 'lesbianism'. Lastly some recommendations will be suggested for clinicians and researchers working in this area.

SECTION ONE :

PSYCHIATRY, HOMOSEXUALITY AND LESBIAN DISCOURSE - A BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

"There is no question that the appearance in nineteenth century psychiatry, jurisprudence, and literature of a whole series of discourses on the species and subspecies of homosexuality, inversion, pederasty, and 'psychic hermaphroditism' made possible a strong advance of social controls into this area of 'perversity'; but it also made possible the formation of a 'reverse' discourse: homosexuality began to speak on its own behalf, to demand that its legitimacy or 'naturalness', be acknowledged, often in the same vocabulary, using the same categories by which it was radically disqualified." (Foucault 1979, p.101).

In this section an attempt will be made firstly to provide a historical contextualisation for the formation of the contradictory category of homosexuality. Secondly the development of a psychiatric discourse pertaining to this category, which has been influential in shaping it, but has also changed in response to challenges from other discourses will be presented. Thirdly, an attempt will be made to contextualise the discourses about women's relationships and situate the usage of the category lesbian. Finally, the 'reverse' discourses as well as other discursive challenges will be briefly explored.

A brief history of homosexuality as a category :

In so far as it has come to be regarded as a phenomenon, calling to mind a distinct species of being, an essence, homosexuality clearly designates more than a same sex experience. To speak thus of the history of homosexuality is to speak of the history of a process of categorisation, specification and creation of meaning, the history of a societal discourse on homosexuality.

It is in the late 19th century that Weeks situates the

"conceptualisation of homosexuality as the distinguishing characteristic of a particular type of person, the 'invert' or 'homosexual', and the corresponding development of a new awareness of self amongst some 'homosexuals'." (Weeks 1981, p.82).

Benkert (referred to in Weeks 1981) introduced the term homosexuality in 1869 but Weeks (1981) points to the work of Ellis around 1890 as having been instrumental in its absorption into popular use.

Following Weeks (1981), three phases can be distinguished in the construction of homosexuality:

- 1) The "...labelling categorizing taxonomic zeal..." (Weeks 1981, p.77) of the early sexologists such as Bloch (1938), Ellis (1936) and Hirschfeld (1938). Their cross cultural studies, search for parameters, aetiology, distinguishing features and also their documentation of different and changing social values have been "...profoundly constructing of modern concepts of homosexuality." (Weeks 1981, p.77)
- 2) The second phase involves a detailing of the categories previously created and now accepted as having a real existence. Situated in this phase are the Kinsey statistical surveys which reveal a much more varied and changing picture of the sex of sex partners than would fit into the categories homo or heterosexual. (Kinsey et al 1948, 1953). This reflects rather a continuum of experiences and a complex picture where identification as hetero- or homosexual may not necessarily exclude sexual relationships which would appear to transgress the category.

Also included in this period is the ethnographic work of Hooker (1968) which "...demonstrates through her pioneering psychological studies of nonpatient homosexual men, that assumptions about the association of homosexuality and global psychopathology were groundless." (Bayer 1990, p.12).

A further influential contribution during this period is that of Ford and Beach (1952) with their anthropological studies which found same sex relationships very differently valued in different cultural settings.

- 3) In the third phase, there is the development of a radical gay movement and an associated discourse; the 'reverse' discourse in Foucault's terms. Here we have an interesting, but complicated response of identification with and attempted redefinition of 'homosexuality'. The emphasis is as Weeks puts it

"...on reassembling the values of a lost experience, stressing the positive value of homosexuality and locating the sources of its social oppression. A major early emphasis was on recovering the prehistory of the gay movement itself... Stretching beyond this was a search for what one might term 'ethnicity', the lineaments and validation of a minority experience which history has denied." (Weeks 1981, pp.78-79).

Although this certainly is descriptive of much of the radical gay discourse, Weeks omits to mention what can be considered the emergence of a fourth phase of writing which reflects the absorption of deconstructionist analyses. This writing emphasises the contradictory currents of a diversity which threatens to explode categorisation and on the other hand certain commonalities associated with the position of those who society defines and who may identify themselves as homosexual. Brown's work, which will be returned to later, is an example of this emerging theorisation which is more than a reactive, 'reverse' discourse, and incorporates knowledge of the construction of discourse. (Brown 1989).

If the emphasis has been on the history of the category of homosexuality it is not implied that subcultural formations around same sex experiences are contingent upon the creation of the category. Indeed there appears to be a subcultural formation around male same sex experiences associated with certain monarchs and the theatre dating back centuries, as well as in certain major cities (in London for example) from the late 17th century.

Psychiatric discourse and homosexuality :

Concurrent with the growing discourse concerning 'homosexuality', from the late 19th century a number of developments in the legal arena concerning same sex experiences took place (see Bristow 1977, Smith 1976, Weeks 1981 for a more comprehensive discussion). This is of relevance here because it is in the context of problems arising from the prosecution of cases without precedent and the pressure created by a confusion around definition, that a medical legal discourse arose. The main concern underlying the inception of this discourse is in Karlen's cynical opinion

"...whether the disgusting breed of perverts could be physically identified for the courts, and whether they should be held legally responsible for their acts." (Karlen 1971, p.185).

The medical and later psychiatric discourse developing out of this context was to produce the notion of homosexuality as sickness or mental illness, a notion which was to become profoundly influential and taken up in popular discourse to an extent that it replaced the conception of homosexuality as sin. (Weeks 1981).

Although the notion of homosexuality as illness remained the dominant psychiatric perspective until the 1970's, it did not remain unchallenged. Szasz (1971) used homosexuality as an example of the 'pseudo scientific pretensions' of psychiatry. Theoretical and empirical challenges included the findings of Kinsey et al, Ford and Beach, and Hooker, referred to earlier. However, as Bayer points out

"...despite such findings, it was not until a changed social climate emerged out of the political struggles of the 1960's that psychiatry was prepared to 'hear' such evidence." (Bayer 1990, p.12).

The gay movement was also bringing considerable pressure to bear on psychiatry and psychoanalysis. Weideman refers to the "...vituperative attacks against psychoanalysis and psychiatry..." (Weideman 1974, p.652) by militant gay liberationists from the sixties onwards, in some instances actively disrupting discussions on homosexuality.

In the 1968 edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) of the American Psychiatric Association (APA), homosexuality is categorised together with unspecified personality disorders. Finally, in December 1973 the decision was made by the APA trustees to reserve listing in the DSM3 for homosexuals distressed by their orientation under 'Sexual Orientation Disturbance'. (Hite 1974a). This decision was voted in by a 58% majority (Hite 1974b) reflecting fierce disagreement and debate. Spitzer (1974), who prepared the background article for this decision, argued that a psychiatric condition by definition needs to be associated with subjective distress or impairment in social effectiveness or functioning.

This decision is not necessarily widely accepted. In the words of Herron, Kinter, Sollinger and Trubowitz, "...the majority psychoanalytic position remains at variance with the APA decision." (1982, p.179). Weideman (1974) regards these changes as political and as detracting from the scientific standards of the Association. Homosexuality is also still included in the International Classification of Diseases (ICD 9).

In a South African introductory text book to psychiatry (Gillis 1986), homosexuality is presented as often associated with psychological immaturity if not psychological disturbance or psychiatric illness. Although it is stated that homosexuality is viewed as a normal variation, the picture presented of homosexuality is certainly not neutral or of equal standing to heterosexuality. No attempt is made to caution against the perpetuation of homophobic attitudes in dealing with gay/lesbian patients.

On the other hand there is a growing body of work reflecting a concern with lesbian and gay issues in a therapeutic context, without regarding their orientation as pathology or deviation. (Gonsiorek 1982, Hall 1985). Anthony (1982) addresses the challenges lesbian therapists face in working with lesbian clients thus acknowledging the existence of lesbians not only in the client, but also in the therapist role. Hall (1985) in his 'consumer's guide to psychotherapy for lesbians and gay men' recognises that homophobia amongst therapists is not unusual. Thus we see two trends: the one a continuation of the conservative view of homosexuality as pathology and, on the other hand, a trend towards the 'demedicalisation' (Plummer 1981) of homosexuality from within the professions.

Further issues related to this discussion will be raised later in this section under 'Towards a Gay/Lesbian epistemology and psychology'.

Women's Relationships, Lesbians: A Historical Perspective :

"Emotional bonds between women, whether or not they included overt physical expression, have tended to remain invisible and insignificant to historians and sociologists alike; it is essential that

notions of the 'lesbian' are reconceptualized within the context of her oppressed social position as woman and not as female homosexual." (Faraday, 1981 p.113).

Faraday raises a number of important points in this paragraph which deserve further comment. Although there has been a resurgence of interest in the production of a history of lesbian and women's relationships as suggested by a perusal of the Lesbian History Group's (1989) bibliography, it remains an obscure history and is associated with a general paucity of material pertaining to this area (Faraday 1981; Gagnon and Simon 1973). The reasons for this may be manifold: until relatively recently few women have had access to the role of writer and historian. Also, in cases where documentation has been available, male historians have often been either disinterested or have actively disregarded information. Some feminist historians include the witch hunts of earlier times as examples of repressive action forcing women into a tradition of secrecy. (Hester 1990). Other factors will also emerge in the course of the discussion.

There has been considerable disagreement amongst certain historians as to whether the term 'lesbian' should be used to denote a sexual meaning. (Lesbian History Group 1989; Faderman 1985). While acknowledging the problems around definition which will be returned to later in this section, 'lesbian' will not be retrospectively applied to an era when this was not part of the available definitions and discourse.

The term lesbian has its root meaning in the Greek word Lesbios meaning of the island of Lesbos, home of the 3rd century BC Greek poetess Sappho. (Weisen and Cook 1979, Ettore 1985). This term was first unambiguously used to refer to sexual relationships between women as early as the 17th century in French texts, but only in 1870 in English texts. (Dynes 1985). Brown (1986) and Faderman (1985) refer to archival material suggestive of passionate bonds between women in Italy and France dating to this period.

Most feminist historians include the 'romantic friendships' so well preserved in the letters of women from the 18th century onwards. (Lesbian History Group 1989, Smith-Rosenberg 1975, Faderman 1985). The openly expressed jealousies, passionate feelings and kisses appear to have been generally accepted within society (see for example Oxenham's Abbey stories, Auchmuty 1989) as long as they eventually submitted to marriage and heterosexuality.

It is not surprising considering the changes described in the previous section that the discursive trend changes quite markedly from the late 19th century onwards (Lesbian History Group 1989). The writing produced by women during this period reflects an identification with the newly created categories. In some cases it plays a role in the dissemination of sexologists' notions of lesbian, (for example through Radclyffe Hall's *Well of Loneliness*). In this way Kraft-Ebing's views remained productive in the popular construction of lesbian long after these theories were discarded at another level. (Faraday 1981).

At the same time the writing produced also reflects that the role of writer and a greater independence has become available to women. This is presumably associated with the feminist struggles of the 1970's, women having a room and more or less, a voice, of their own. (Faraday 1981).

This independence and a sexuality which clearly did not submit willingly to heterosexuality was by no means readily accepted. If no laws were passed to prosecute lesbians, this was not out of tolerance or indifference, but reflects, as Auchmuty convincingly argues, a silence strategically decided upon. She concluded by saying

"... the attempt in 1921 to bring lesbian acts within the Criminal Law was defeated because of a consensus that silence was a better deterrent." (Lesbian History Group 1989, p.134).

In 1928, *The Well of Loneliness* was banned, suggesting not only a silence about, but also a silencing or taking away of lesbian discourse. The repression of a discourse through denial and silencing is effective because it leaves no history. It creates the impression that

"... society seems less interested in the repression of homosexuality among females than among males." (Gagnon and Simon 1973, p.175).

This encourages explanations which resort to simplistic notions of 'an essential femininity' which confines lesbians to having a "...conformity greater than deviance..." (Ibid), a static definition that stands outside of history and does not accommodate any creative potential for change.

The question of definition :

One obvious problem is that of definition, how is homosexuality defined? It becomes apparent that 'lesbian' designates a less well defined role than 'male homosexual'. It has been suggested that fewer women than men engage in homosexual activity. McIntosh (1983) proposes that the tighter control of women's sexuality through matrimony is implicated here. For Faraday (1981) this appears linked to the internalisation of femininity. At the same time there is no substantiation that fewer women engage in homosexual behaviour than men.

Gagnon and Simon assume that

"...there is less pressure to conceive of {lesbian} behaviour as narrowly, nor is there much need to protect the self against fantasies generated by thinking about the behaviour." (1973, p.177).

This statement reflects no attempt to understand the mechanisms through which the status quo is reproduced, or an awareness of challenges to it and the strategies for control. Tripp (1977) has proposed that the greater

visibility of male homosexuality can be linked to the public and legal transgressions often associated with male homosexual activity.

Faraday (1981) has criticised the co-categorisation with male homosexuals (as for example in Saghir and Robins 1973, Tripp 1977, Bell and Weinberg 1978) for employing behaviourist considerations of same sex experiences as well as male models of sexuality. She cautions against writings which

"... present a definition of 'lesbian' in sexual terms without examining the socially constructed and male defined nature of 'sexual' meanings." (Faraday 1981, p.113).

Ironically most sociological research has defined lesbian in this way (for example Hedblom 1973, Masters and Johnson 1966, Saghir and Robins 1973).

Critique of Psychiatry's definition of lesbian :

Littlewood and Lipsedge both writing from within medical psychiatric discourse maintain that

"The modern psychiatrist is descendant of the 19th century mental asylum keeper.....He was a paternalistic figure whose popular image has been described as both divine because of his power over the sick and satanic because of his demonic knowledge." (Littlewood and Lipsedge 1982, p.22).

Ettore (1985) regards psychiatry as a functionary of patriarchy and "...agents of social control" (p.426). She takes Rich's (1976) view of patriarchal domination in the socio-political arena, although no coherent argument as to the power base of patriarchy is proposed.

Johnston (1973) critiques psychiatry as being a practice which fosters adjustment rather than encouraging challenges to the agents of oppression. Daly (1979) sees psychiatry as instrumental in women's oppression/degradation which she refers to as psychatrophy. She sees psychiatrists as invaders of women's souls rather than as having the potential to heal. This position becomes particularly problematic when we consider that not all psychiatrists are male.

Redefinition or 'Reverse' Discourse :

In the writing of Hamer (1990) we see an attempt at the re-appropriation of the category of lesbian, she defines the lesbian woman as more acting than categorised or, we can say, acted upon. For Hamer lesbianism is the "...repudiation of the category of 'woman'...", in particular "...the refusal to accept women's castration on a

psychic level..." and a "...healthy response to the contradictory positioning of women in our culture." (Hamer 1990 p.144).

This view is also expressed by Weitz (1984) who sees lesbianism as a choice and response to a sexist society.

A further development is lesbian feminist theory which problematises what Ettore refers to as 'compulsory heterosexuality' (Ettore 1985, Bunch 1978, Rich 1980) is summarised by Arnup

"...we must see heterosexuality itself as a political institution which has been maintained through a whole cluster of forces within which women have been convinced that marriage and a sexual orientation towards men are inevitable if unsatisfying or oppressive components of their lives." (1983, p.54).

In this context, lesbianism can be seen

"... not as a blind refusal of an object, the penis, or a person, the father, nor as a disavowal of genital difference but as an attempt to contest or displace the meanings they carry, i.e. castration, its fantasies of mastery loss, possession, subjugation and an avoidance of the destructive feelings they unleash, hostility, envy, shame, etc. lesbianism can be seen as a restorative strategy which seeks to repair the losses, denigrations, thwartings that a patriarchal culture inflicts on the girl in her primary relation to the mother..." (Fletcher 1989, p.105).

In contrast to the growing trend to define the 'essential' lesbian Hamer (1990), Brown (1989) and McIntosh (1983) have emphasised the diversity of lesbians. Brown in particular sees this complexity and the absence of a single lesbian reality as a strength.

In spite of the overriding diversity Brown sees a number of common denominators; biculturism, marginality and normative creativity. She sees biculturism (see also Nestle 1987) which refers to the experience of belonging to more than one 'culture' as encouraging the owning of the 'other' in the self. This may "...create a propensity to view things as continua rather than in a polarised form." (Brown 1989, p.448). It is a way of seeing that is paid tribute to in other cultures where those who occupy the position between the sexes are recognised as shamans or seers (William 1986). The 'marginal' position of 'lesbians' also potentially provides an opportunity to "...know what is forbidden to know because they are not sanctified as knowers...". (Daly 1979). Brown also stresses the creative potential of the 'lesbian' position in accommodating difference and from which the category can be further invented.

Towards a lesbian/gay epistemology and psychology :

Various points and guidelines have been suggested towards a lesbian/gay epistemology and psychology, some of which reflects the influence of post-structuralist/post-modernist theories which will be presented in section 4. This is particularly pertinent in the case of Brown (1989) who emphasises that a lesbian/gay psychology would be one of many truths. It would also involve the re-evaluation of 'taken for granted' concepts within psychology and psychiatry. For example Green (1988) has argued that notions of what constitute emotional health in close relationships, i.e. autonomy and distance, may reflect a heterosexist bias. She proposes that the merger relationships of lesbian couples may have more merit for intimate pairs.

Brown (1989) encourages women to reclaim their own experience. In response to Lorde's (1984) comment that "...the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house...", Brown implies that speaking from experience can provide the tools to dismantle the 'house' of psychiatry/psychology. The question here remains whether there is any essential experience outside of and uncontaminated by language. Grahn (1984) has posed the need to develop "...another mother tongue...". This raises the related issues of whether there is something outside of language which could provide the basis for a new language and if not how 'other' this new language can be. These issues will emerge again in section 3 and will also be addressed in section 4.

In this section the development of the categories 'homosexual' and 'lesbian' has been presented as produced at a particular point in history with psychiatry and psychology instrumental in the definition but challenged by a reverse or gay liberationist discourse. Both the movement of psychiatric discourse in response to this challenge as well as the attempt to develop a lesbian/gay epistemology and psychology have been briefly examined. There exists dialogue between these 'camps' as is evident by the APA invitation to Brown to present a paper at their 1986 symposium.

In the following section, the psychoanalytic theories pertaining to homosexuality and lesbianism will be examined.

SECTION TWO :

PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORIES OF HOMOSEXUALITY, INCLUDING FEMALE HOMOSEXUALITY

In the previous section an attempt was made to explore briefly the major developments within the psychiatric discourse of female homosexuality. By comparison the psychoanalytic school appears insular in their refusal or failure to respond in a changing social climate to discourses challenging their assumptions about homosexuality being pathological per se. As Bayer so succinctly puts it

"Building on the ambiguous legacy of Freud, the analytic orthodoxy, whatever its theoretical underpinnings, has continued to characterize homosexuality as pathological - as evidence of arrested psychosexual development or as a reparative attempt to cope with overwhelming anxiety." (Bayer 1990, p.12).

Although this certainly appears to be the case for what Bayer refers to as the 'analytic orthodoxy', it would not be correct to conclude that there has been no impetus within the psychoanalytic movement towards a critical consideration of sexuality. Lacan's reading of Freud, as will be presented in Section 3, is a case in point.

In this section we will return to Freud in an attempt to locate the ambiguity he is charged with, thereafter considering the theories relevant to a discussion of female homosexuality of 3 authoritative theorists working within the psychoanalytic tradition.

Freud's theory of polymorphous perversion, infantile sexuality, homosexuality, and the Dora case :

The main focus here will be those sections of Freud's writing where he directly addresses the issue of homosexuality. This may bring some clarity to the divergent readings of Freud concerning this issue. Mitchell's (1984) critical commentary of the development of Freud's notion of the Oedipus complex from one which implicitly assumed heterosexuality will also be presented before moving on to examine Freud's writing specifically pertaining to the area of homosexuality.

Freud developed his theory of sexuality at a time when all other major contributors to the field proposed explanations of sexual difference in terms of biological predisposition. (Mitchell 1974). Freud's theory develops more and more towards a social construction of sexuality. This conceptualises homosexuality not as pathology, but as deviation from a cultural norm. However, at other points Freud slips back into assuming heterosexuality as normality, with homosexuality resulting from a certain arrest of development, a certain degree of infantilism. This point will be returned to later in this section.

Up to 1916, Freud's notion of the Oedipus complex assumes heterosexuality

"At the root of Freud's assigning parallel Oedipal role to girls and boys lies a notion of a natural and normative heterosexual attraction, a notion which was to be assumed by many psychoanalysts later.

Hence Freud's position is a conventional one : boys will be boys and love women, girls will be girls and love men." (Mitchell 1984, p.259).

Mitchell draws attention to this contradiction between Freud's notion of polymorphous perverse infantile sexuality proposed in *Three Essays* (to become the basis of his later views on sexuality) and the heterosexuality implicit in Freud's conceptualisation of the Oedipus at this stage; "Three essays bear the mark of this contradiction by the confusing statements they contain". (Mitchell 1984, p.262).

On the two occasions where Freud directly addresses the subject of homosexuality his position seems quite unambiguous and clear. His views as expressed in the often quoted 'letter to a grateful mother' can leave little doubt in the reader's mind that while Freud assumes normal development to be heterosexual he does not consider homosexuality an illness :

"Homosexuality is assuredly no advantage, but it is nothing to be ashamed of, no vice, no degradation, it cannot be classified as an illness; we consider it to be a variation of the sexual function produced by a certain arrest of sexual development." (Freud 1935, p.786).

If any doubt is left in the reader's mind after 'a letter to a grateful mother' perhaps that Freud was considering the feelings of a parent and not being as ruthless and direct as he might have been towards a colleague, his

discussion of inversion can be referred to. This is the term he prefers in his departure from the dominant perspective at the time of homosexuality as a sign of degeneracy. In his 'Three Essays on Sexuality' he makes the following points:

- "1. Inversion is found in people who exhibit no other serious deviations from the normal
2. It is similarly found in people whose efficiency is unimpaired and who are indeed distinguished by specially high intellectual development and ethical culture." (1905, pp.138-139).

The issue of terminology and categorisation deserves careful consideration as it has been the site of considerable confusion in subsequent readings such as that of Socarides (1979). Firstly it is important to clarify that Freud uses the term inversion specifically to refer to homosexuality. He includes inversion in the broader category of perversion. This he conceptualises of not as polarised in relation to normality but as a continuum existing alongside the normal in 'healthy people' to instances which are

"so far removed from the normal in their content that we cannot avoid pronouncing them 'pathological'. This is especially so when (as for instance, in cases of licking excrement or of intercourse with dead bodies) the sexual instinct goes to astonishing lengths in successfully overriding the resistances of shame, disgust horror or pain." (Freud 1905, p.160). (Quotation A).

In this context Freud, in his strikingly cautious fashion, states that if perversion displaces the normal sexual aim and direction and

"...takes place in all circumstances if, in short, a perversion has the characteristic of exclusiveness and fixation then we shall usually be justified in regarding it as a pathological symptom." (Freud 1905, p.160). (Quotation B).

The most common error that careless readers and/or perhaps readers assuming the pathological nature of homosexuality have made has been the equation of homosexuality with perversion as in the case of Socarides (1979), while at the same time disregarding Freud's writings on inversion. It is clear that Freud uses the term perversion firstly in a much broader sense, subsuming homosexuality as an instance. Secondly, while Freud explicitly states that he does not regard all perversion as pathological, he appears reluctant to state a clear cut off point, but his examples may serve as an orientation point for the reader i.e. 'the licking of excrement or having intercourse with dead bodies' (in quotation A). The problem is in slippages of association - reading such phrases seems (to many) to equate 'unnatural' homosexual behaviour with these practices. Also, of course

Freud's opus slips around between social constructionist discourses and biologically determined ones, thus providing an unbounded playing field for subsequent psychoanalytic authors and practitioners.

Quotation B leaves itself even more open to misinterpretation; it is very easy for the reader not considering this paragraph in the context of Freud's other writings to assume that Freud is saying here that if sexuality is not heterosexual and if homosexuality displaces heterosexuality it is pathological. However, if read in the context of Freud's work on sexuality and specific writing on homosexuality, it is more conceivable that Freud has in mind a genital aim and human object when he uses the term 'normal'.

A less than careful reading of quotation B can lead to misinterpretation. However, what is surprising is that Freud's avoidance of the use of terms such as perversion as an absolute category and his reluctance to pronounce pathological much other than what is generally considered as extreme cases of deviance seems to be inexplicably lost on many readers (such as Socarides 1979).

Of further interest is Freud's acknowledgment of the role societal convention plays in designating what is considered perversion. (Freud's comments on oral sex 1905, p.160).

Now that it has been established that homosexuality is not an illness for Freud, a second reading may allow for an exploration of what Freud considers homosexuality to be. Returning to the 'Letter' we see that for Freud inversion is a variation of the sexual function. However, it is not merely a variation for him, it is one which he attributes to a "...certain arrest in psychosexual development..." and also "...sexual infantilism...". (Freud 1905).

On this level the normality of the heterosexual development path appears to be assumed as something more than a condition imposed by society. Thus although Freud acknowledges the societal construction of 'normality', he also slips into assuming this normality.

However, a charge of infantilism, dramatic as it may sound, coming from Freud is not necessarily a serious threat to health and indeed exists in one form or another in most healthy individuals. It is still hardly an acknowledgment of homosexuality as a deviation only from societal norms.

Freud's analysis of the Dora case is also relevant to our discussion. Krohn and Krohn (1982) point out that Freud does not recognise the importance of Dora's "...homosexual phallic wishes ... towards mother and mother substitutes..." (1982, p.575) and does not use these in his analysis. He interprets the case in terms of Dora's thwarted Oedipal longings for her father when he woos Frau K. However, later, in a footnote and postscript he intimates at the centrality of homosexual currents in Dora's unconscious and in relation to Frau K. In this context Freud comments that "... behind the almost limitless series of displacements which were thus brought to light it was possible to derive the operation of a single simple factor - Dora's deep-rooted homosexual love for Frau K." (Freud 1900, p.105n). In section 3 we will return to the Dora case from the perspective of writers in the Lacanian and feminist tradition.

Socarides - a theory of homosexuality as pathology :

Socarides whose work is considered seminal in the psychoanalytic literature on homosexuality, rejects Freud's notion of constitutional bisexuality and reintroduces the sharp distinction between what he considers as normal, heterosexual and the pathological, perverse homosexual. This reintroduction of polarised categories of normal and pathological runs counter to one of the major contributions of psychoanalytic thinking; the de-emphasis of clear cut categories and the introduction of important conceptualisations of multiple continua of psychological phenomena in the field of human existence.

Socarides takes for granted the "...standard male female design..." except when "...massive childhood fears have damaged it." (1979, p. 247). He distinguishes between an obligatory pre Oedipal and a more flexible Oedipal type of homosexuality. In the first type the girl makes an identification with a 'hateful and hated' mother. She

rejects the mother and fears rejection from her, but also from the father because she is female. In the 'Oedipal type', the female identifies with the father and takes on this role to her mother and later lover.

Socarides uses an altered reading of Freud, substituting the more general category of perversion in Freud's original text presented earlier with that of homosexuality in order to lend authority to his thesis that homosexuality is pathological:

"In cases where exclusiveness of fixation (obligatoriness) was present, we are justified in calling homosexuality a pathological symptom." (Socarides 1979, p.244).

Socarides thus treats perversion as an absolute homogeneous category and attributes to homosexuality a pathology Freud cautiously reserves for, as Freud says in the same paragraph "... cases where it displaces the normal sexual aim and function" and Freud gives examples i.e. 'licking of excrement' etc. In his reading of Freud it is clear that Socarides disregards Freud's placing of perversion alongside normality as well as his clear statement that he does not regard homosexuality an illness.

Although the above quotation states 'exclusiveness' as a condition for considering homosexuality as pathology, Socarides clearly cannot conceptualise of homosexuality as anything but pathology. Although he associates a more flexible pattern of homosexuality with the relatively benign disturbance at an Oedipal level, he assumes that this must be ego alien. Socarides can thus not conceive of relatively healthy individuals engaging in ego syntonic homosexuality. As was suggested by the Kinsey studies (1948; 1953), most homosexuals have had or will have a wide variety of sexual/ erotic experiences.

His out of hand rejection of the possibility that homosexuality may be a matter of sexual 'preference' and a variation of normal sexuality is illustrated by the following comment regarding clinical practice

"One of the major resistances continues to be the patient's misconception that his disorder may be in some strange way of hereditary or biological origin or in modern parlance, a matter of sexual 'preference' or 'orientation', that is, a normal form of sexuality." (Socarides 1979, p.264).

Socarides attributes exclusive or obligatory homosexuality along with others like Arlow (1952), Bychowski (1945), Fleischman (1960), Gillespie (1956) and Van der Leeuw (1958) to a core disturbance at a pre-Oedipal level. (Socarides 1979). According to this theory of causation

"... there has been an inability to make the progression from the mother child unity of earliest infancy to individuation." (Socarides 1979, p.247).

In this view, this type of homosexuality acts in adulthood as a defence against regression which would involve a loss of identity and ego boundaries. Psychodynamically speaking, failure to individuate is a serious charge associated with severe character pathology. Socarides states that he considers the ego-structure of homosexuals to be weak (1979, p.270), placing them alongside the narcissistic personality disorders. However, together with Kohut (1974), he does distinguish this from the greater level of disturbance of the borderline and psychotic disorders.

McDougall's account and representation of female homosexuality :

McDougall on the basis of four homosexual as well as three other, although not exclusively homosexual, women she has seen in therapy, claims that she has observed a specific form of Oedipal construction: The father is detested, regarded as impotent and a failure in his parental role of breaking the symbiosis with the overpowering mother. However, identification with him takes place as a defence against a psychotic merging with the mother. The mother emerges, although initially described in idealised terms, as cold and controlling. The daughter feels imprisoned by the mother, she "...feels controlled by mother as a fecal object...", but on another level "...regards herself as her mother's 'phallus' functioning to gratify and enhance the maternal ego." (McDougall 1970, p.198). In addition the analysands felt they had been "...emptied out and robbed by the mother" and "the possibility of having any good or valuable thing in oneself has been refused them." (McDougall 1970, p.201).

McDougall raises the important question about areas of overlap between normal, psychotic, overt homosexual women and masculine women. Although she raises these questions and states that 'perversion' can also be associated with neurotic personality structures, she presents her observations regarding the handful of homosexual female patients she has seen as if she is speaking about female homosexuality per se.

It is indeed interesting that she refers to an Oedipal constellation although the picture McDougall develops of mother and her enmeshed relationship with her daughter, bears a sharp resemblance to what Socarides has referred to as separation individuation problems located firmly in the pre-Oedipal phase.

The image of lesbian women and lesbian relationships that emerges in McDougall's work is rather a grim one. 'The lesbian' is a woman who has been deprived of her sense of entitlement to pleasure from the world, destined to live in the service of the lover as a substitute for the mother's ego. She is a woman with thinly disguised aggression and extreme ego fragility so that she uses her homosexual identification as a defence against depression or psychotic dissociation. (McDougall 1970).

Khan's theory of precocious masturbation and female homosexuality:

Khan (1979) bases his contribution "Towards an understanding of the nature and function of female homosexuality" on an extremely detailed but confusing documentation of the analytic material of a case "...not of true and fixed homosexual perversion...", but in whose analysis "... intense and overt homosexual attachment played a very significant and dynamic part." (Khan 1979, p.61). Khan initially suggests that homosexuality is not a "...simple fixation on the mother as the first love object, but rather a complicated process of returning." (1979, p.64). This return is in response to the father's rejection of the daughter.

Khan pursues another theory when he observes that in general there is a special closeness between mother and daughter (leaving the daughter specially vulnerable to the effects of maternal depression). He also proposes

that little girls have an extended period of pre-Oedipal attachment which incorporates the phallic phase and continues into the fourth and fifth year. A latent depression in the mother or overt depression and lack of true affection in the mother is, Khan argues, one type of maternal pathology which predisposes a female child to perversions, particularly of the homosexual type. (Khan 1979, p.94).

The little girl responds to the mother's depression with precocious mental ego development. However, the body ego remains undeveloped because of the lack of maternal body love and responsiveness. In an attempt to console herself, the little girl engages in a type of precocious masturbation. This increases the conflict with the mother, but presents itself as a way of provoking a response from her.

Khan also observed precocious vaginal sensations in his analysee which she displaced to phallic activity in an attempt to bring it under ego control. For Khan, "...precocious vaginal sensations are pathological phenomena in the development of a girl and beget her ego with severe problems with which she deals through regressive techniques on the one hand and an intensification of her penis envy and masculinity complex on the other." (Khan 1979, p.78). This development, says Khan, is associated with a terror of being penetrated.

Khan also argues that the precocious mental ego reaches out at an early stage to the father. If the father fails to rescue her and prove his love to her, her fear of abandonment drives her back to her mother. This regression presents a severe threat to the developing ego's active phallic strivings with it resorting to submissiveness and affective deadness as protective measures.

Khan comments on the acute ambivalence towards her parents in his analysee and other homosexually predisposed females. This ambivalence, Khan argues, is associated with excessive guilt for some reason, especially as regards masturbation. Khan views this as motivating an escape into a "...homosexual relationship which sanctions such impulses and mitigates guilt." The assumption that all lesbians masturbate and the view of lesbian sex as mutual masturbation rather than love making is implicit here.

He sees the homosexual relationship of his patient while in analysis as a building up of impoverished body ego through shared auto erotic exploration. Khan emphasises the aspects of the lover's interaction which mimicked the nursing couple and the immense value to his patient of "...an excitable and exciting 'good mother' to whom she could come, to whom she could relate herself with emotional aliveness." (Khan 1979, p.90). He stresses also that she did not love or relate to her lover as a whole person (did not want to fall in love), but was manically attached to parts of her lover's body.

Many questions remain unanswered: To what extent does Khan's analysis contribute to an understanding of homosexual women who do not display the character pathology that led his patient into analysis initially? One is left feeling that perhaps the homosexual component is over analysed to an extent that a heterosexual interaction would not be and that the vicissitudes revealed in the process are over attributed to the homosexual nature of the relationship when in fact they may equally apply to heterosexual interactions.

In all of the psychoanalytic theories presented in this section, including that of Freud with his notions of polymorphous perversion and fundamental bisexuality, there is an implicit equation of sexual maturity and heterosexuality. While Freud regards homosexuality as resulting from an arrest in sexual development which may be present in people of distinguished intellectual and ethical development, the picture of homosexuality that emerges in the work of Khan, McDougall and Socarides is of homosexuality as associated with character pathology. The normative assumptions of sexuality present in these theories, will be challenged by the Lacanian theories presented in the next section.

SECTION THREE :

LACANIAN, AND SOCIAL INTERACTIONIST THEORIES OF FEMALE HOMOSEXUALITY

In the previous two sections, the histories of the categories of homosexuality and lesbianism have been explored. The conditions around the inception of the terms as well as the powerful role of psychiatry and psychoanalysis in the definitional process have been traced, as has the formation of a reverse discourse. The picture that has emerged up to this point is of what can be termed a discursive battle in which psychiatry has responded to the pressure of the reverse discourse on some levels. By comparison post-Freudian psychoanalytic theories presented thus far appear insular in their insistence on pathologising homosexuality.

Also in the psychoanalytic tradition, Lacan develops a theory of sexed subjectivity potentially useful to an approach to sexuality in general; one that has been taken up by feminist theorists and which has also been used to explore the relationship between 'lesbianism', the mother and society.

The social interactionist approach as developed by Plummer (1981) will also be briefly considered as it contributes a useful critical framework on the subject.

Lacanian theory of the construction of sexed subjectivity :

Lacan develops a theory of the construction of sexed subjectivity from a synthesis of his interpretation of Freud, structural linguistics, and Levi-Strauss' (1972) structural anthropology.

Central to Lacan's work is the distinction he makes between three different orders : the 'real', the 'imaginary' and the 'symbolic'. For Lacan, the 'real' is essentially inaccessible in so far as it is always constructed in and seen through the screen of language. Lacan uses the notion of the 'imaginary' to characterise the mother infant relationship of early infancy. During this period the infant enjoys an illusory unity with the mother who meets its every need. On the basis of this illusory relationship and what Lacan refers to as the 'look' of the mother, the 'I' is constituted in an imaginary moment. Lacan stresses that this sense of 'I' and identity is essentially based on illusion, a reflection, and is essentially alienated in so far as it always stands in relation to another, at this stage the mother. Here the infant desires the mother and imagines that it is the mother's only desire. Lacan emphasises that this relationship is by no means of equivalent status to, or independent of, the symbolic.

Lacan conceives of language as an arbitrary chain of signifiers which derive meaning in terms of their positioning relative to other signifiers and not through connection to some external, real referent, except by

association. In this signifying system the phallus, the privileged signifier, is the anchor which keeps meaning from endlessly slipping. The law of the Father or Phallic Law of this order (organised around the incest taboo) demands that the desire for the mother be suppressed in the process of becoming a speaking subject. In this reading, the resolution of the Oedipus Complex involves the constitution of the unconscious to which the desire for the mother is relegated. In so far as patriarchal society is fundamentally organised around the division between the sexes, this moment of the constitution of the subject also involves lining up on either side of the phallic divide, according to the possession or non possession of the penis.

Lacan's writing portrays a tension between his emphasis on the continual challenge from the unconscious of something which will not submit to the structuring of phallic rule of the patriarchal symbolic order (a desire for something beyond the phallus) and his insistence that there can be no experience outside of the symbolic order. (Mitchell and Rose 1982).

A similar tension emerges in his conceptualisation of the mother on the one hand portrayed as very much placed by the symbolic order and on the other as a phallic mother who emerges behind the power of the phallus. Her power is in some senses more insidious in so far as it is less obvious than that of the phallic order. Lacan sees the symbolic realm and language as a potential escape from the realm of the mother. Failure to take up this route would mean psychosis. For Lacan then, patriarchy is essentially beyond questioning.

Lacan does not address the question of the power base of patriarchy: he contributes a theory of the reproduction of ideology on the individual level, in the family, through language. (Henriques, Hollway, Urwin, Venn and Walkerdine 1984). While Lacan does not address the subject of homosexuality, he regards the relationship between the sexes in the first place as a patriarchal myth. (Lacan 1972/73). He rejects the notion of any natural sexual given and considers that ideology is most successful when it *appears* most natural. Lacan's theory is thus in radical opposition to accounts which assume that sexual differences are biological; for Lacan sexual differences merely figure according to the meanings assigned in language (although in Lacan's system this structure is as difficult to challenge as the biological). Thus we see that although Lacan does not address the issue of homosexuality directly, he provides a radically different conceptual framework from which to approach issues in the sexual arena. If heterosexuality is assumed according to a phallic law, can homosexuality be thought of as a challenge to, a defiance of or an escape from this law? (Gallop 1982, Irigaray 1977, Kristeva 1977).

The debates of feminists using Lacanian theory to argue the relative merits of homo- and heterosexuality present a discourse which is in stark contrast to previous theoretical traditions. It is questioning rather than definitive, often irreverent, and exposes 'phallic' theory to present itself as definitive. It is not always clear when

the endless wordplays of the theorists such as Gallop (1982) and Irigaray (1977) are a brilliant exposure of the absurdity of absolute definition, or when it dissolves into meaningless word games.

Gallop (1982) argues that there is merit in theory that reflects an acknowledgement of itself as a definitional act. She asks whether we cannot accept the theatrical aspects of theory: "In fact, is theory not always theatrical, a theatrical performance as well as a quest for truth? The limits of theory remain to be tested." (Gallop 1982, p.157). Gallop introduces the notion of 'transference' into the realm of theory; the authority the text has for the reader depends on the extent to which the author appears as one who knows. The role of the critic then is to expose this myth and the extent to which the author too is castrated in language.

Irigaray (1977) argues for an approach to desire which accommodates diversity; she implies that heterosexuality is a state of mind not determined by the sexual relationship. Any approach which "... did not assimilate both {homo- and heterosexuality} to one fantasy would be heterosexual." (Gallop 1982, p.127). Whereas Irigaray has accused the intolerant insistence of heterosexuality in the past of a veiled homosexuality, Kristeva regards homosexuality, Gallop points out, as a "... rigid, fragile phallic stand on identity, a fearful refusal of the mother, the vagina and the semiotic." (Gallop 1982, p.128).

If love between women is a liberation from the father's law at some level, a more difficult obstacle to overcome is the "... daughters obligation to reproduce the mother, the mother's story..." (Gallop 1982, p.113) which necessarily intrudes into the space of women among themselves. The 'lesbian' writer Irigaray's writing reflects the resentment about and paralysis associated with her lack of separation from her mother. In *Quand nos lèvres se parlent* (When our lips speak to each other), this is suggested when she says "I love you, you who are neither mother (Excuse me mother, I prefer a woman to you) nor sister." (Irigaray 1977, p.208). "Et l'une ne bouge pas sans l'autre..." meaning "...and one cannot move without the other..." (Irigaray 1979) is evidence of her paralysis due to her lack of separation from mother; she speaks of her suffocation "...you put yourself in my mouth..." (Irigaray 1977, pp.9-10) and fear of engulfment. This of course ties in with the separation individuation issues focussed on by McDougall and Socarides (as presented in section 2) as central in the aetiology of lesbianism. However Irigaray, unlike McDougall and Socarides does not present her text as 'knowledge' and does not imply that we can generalise to all lesbians. Nor does she focus exclusively on the 'pathological', if that is what it can be called.

The French feminists' reading of Freud's Dora case suggests that Freud's love of papa (Mannoni 1978) blinded him to Dora's love for her governess (acknowledged by Freud in a footnote). There is in Dora, says Cixous

"... a beautiful, staggering, feminine homosexuality, what there is of love of woman." (Clement and Cixous 1975, p.282, quoted in Gallop 1982, p.148).

Cixous (*ibid*) sees the governess on a metaphorical level as an insistence on uniqueness, a refusal to be reduced to woman, an object of barter in what she sees as the economy of the symbolic order.

For Gallop, the governess is a seductress of another order, she comes from outside the family, threatening the kinship relations prescribed by and fundamental to the symbolic order and the law of the father. At the same time attempts are made to seduce and abandon her in the symbolic order. It is not clear in what direction the power balance lies; Gallop asks "...does she contest or conserve..." (1982, p.145) is she inscribed in the symbolic order? (Clement 1975). For Clement, inscription in the symbolic is a necessary condition for health although it involves a hierarchy which oppresses women, and the imaginary is equated with regression.

Gallop rejects Clement's position. She accuses Lacan of taking the position of father and suggests that his devaluation of the imaginary is related to a "...hatred of the flesh, of woman and of pleasure". (Gallop 1982, p.149). Whereas for Lacan the imaginary is merely a product of the symbolic, Gallop attributes much more importance to this reality. Gallop, as well as Laplanche (1976) and Montrelay (1978) situates a bodily reality, a realm of flesh in the 'imaginary'. This realm emerges in Gallop's writing as what appears to be an experiential realm which does not submit in its entirety to the symbolic. She sees as possible, and pleads for, a theory that accepts the necessary ambiguity of two realms; she advocates a 'bisexuality' which pursues, loves and accepts both the imaginary and the symbolic, both theory and flesh. (Gallop 1982, p.150). This implies that Gallop sees space within language for the representation of this realm which does not submit to the phallic law of the symbolic. This crucial issue of whether experience can have an independent existence outside of language will be returned to in section 4 and the implications for a conceptualisation of lesbianism examined further.

In this context the lesbian appears in a potentially privileged position in the creation of this new discourse in so far as she is not as tightly inscribed in the symbolic order. This was suggested in Brown's (1989) (presented in section 1) analysis of the perspective and potential creativity to be gained from the lesbian's biculturalism and marginal placing in society.

Another seminal point raised by the Lacanians concerns the lack of knowledge about 'femininity' or 'woman' in a patriarchal symbolic order which symbolises woman in terms of her difference from man, and thus always in relation to man. For Lacan the representation of woman or the feminine is an impossible quest, an impossibility acknowledged in his crossing out of 'femme', symbolising the crossing out of woman in the grid of the 'symbolic'. (Lacan 1972/1973). This difficulty or impossibility described by Lacan in representing 'woman' (not in relation to man) may be involved in the paucity of material addressed to 'love between women'.

However, the Lacanian approach leaves many questions unanswered; how prevalent is the suffocating relationship to mother as described by Irigaray for instance? While the Lacanian and feminists analyses

presented here appear in stark contrast to the theories of Khan, McDougall and Socarides, they do not attempt to address the issue of lesbianism on an individual level or the level of the family - why some women become lesbian and others do not.

Plummer (1981) also contributes useful points towards a broader critical perspective in which to place the traditional psychological/ psychoanalytic concern with childhood experiences as contributing to a lesbian orientation. His contribution warrants a brief discussion.

Some relevant issues raised by Plummer :

Plummer subverts the above concern with homosexuality and asks why society invents such a concern at all. He finds his answer in the anxiety generated by the challenge homosexuality poses to the societal meaning system and dominant set of symbols so that "...gay oppression.....is the unintended price that has to be paid for organising society in certain ways." (1981, p.67).

Plummer is further concerned with how "...people came to be categorized as homosexuals." Although for Plummer there is "...certainly political intent of regulation and control behind categorization..." (1981, p.66), what he regards as a "...more fundamental theoretical and empirical problem is self constructed, symbolic self labelling." (1981, p. 67).

Given that people may identify themselves differently (as hetero- or homosexual) at different times in their lives and that identification as one does not necessarily exclude other sexual attractions so that there is no easy fit, Plummer asks why some people identify themselves as homosexual. He sees this as a problem of building a heterosexual identity.

He considers both the sexual orientation model and the identity construct model : In the first model sexual orientation is thought to be fixed early whether genetically or through early childhood experiences, with identity developing from this. Identity construct theorists see this emphasis on childhood experiences as a 'reconstructed vocabulary of motive'. The identity construct view is taken up by the symbolic interactionist and

"...focuses upon the cognitive processes by which members of a society interpret their sexual selves by scanning their past lives (their bodies, group involvement, feelings and behaviours) and connecting these to 'accounts' available in their contemporary worlds (through friends, family, psychiatrists, media)." (Plummer 1981, p.69).

In terms of a model Plummer proposes a synthesis between the two models referred to above:

"...a synthesis which acknowledges the importance of childhood experiences in the restricting of our sexual possibilities and the importance of adult experience in moulding, further limiting and sometimes transcending this childhood base." (1981, p.71).

He points out that there may be discrepancies between orientation and identity, as well as activity and identity. Plummer also identifies and cautions against what he refers to as an 'essentializing' trend. He uses this term for the conflation of 'doing' and 'experiencing' into 'being' through labelling. Both homosexuals themselves, especially 'liberationists' and social scientists have engaged in this.

Plummer regards gay liberationists from the 1970's onwards as the main agents perpetuating the notion, instituted by clinicians, of gayness as a condition. Gay liberationists, he says, have

"...become the key definers of a homosexual role and hence ironically have started to become their own source of regulation." (1981, p.55).

He identifies another approach which

"...perpetually aims to subvert the idea that homosexuality is a condition or a type of person. It is an underground tradition, yet it is rooted in both classical thinking (which highlighted free will) and more recent sex research." (1981, p.75).

This approach stresses that "...homosexuality is a complex diffuse experience that anyone may have." (Ibid) It draws on Kinsey's findings suggesting a sexual continuum and Freud's notions of bisexuality and polymorphous perversity. Plummer views these notions of the continuum, polymorphous perversity as well as normalisation and pluralisation of identity as strategies employed in the reconstruction of homosexuality. The trend towards the subversion of the category is also present in psychiatry and psychology, initially key definers of homosexuality as a condition.

By comparison with the theories presented in section 2, both the Lacanian and social interactionist frameworks present homosexuality and lesbianism as a much more multifaceted position imbued with a radical potential together with a regressive pull, involving also later life experiences and 'accounts' of identity provided by societal sources. In the following section Foucault's theory of sexuality as well as the post-structuralist/ post-modernist frameworks will be presented and the theories thus far presented re examined in terms of this approach.

SECTION FOUR :

FEMALE HOMOSEXUALITY - FOUCAULT'S THEORY OF SEXUALITY AND A POST-MODERNIST/POST-STRUCTURALIST ANALYSIS

In this section, Foucault's theory of the construction of sexuality will be briefly considered before presenting the main tenets of post structuralism and post modernism and its application to the various discourses on homosexuality thus far outlined.

Foucault's Theory of sexuality :

Foucault contributes a methodology which approaches sexuality as a discursive construct, so that the history of sexuality becomes the history of the discourses about sexuality. For Foucault as for Lacan, the symbol is productive rather than referent so that "...language structures the real..." (Weeks 1981, p.93), or as Zinner puts it "...it is an act of violence imposed upon things." (Zinner 1978, p.219 quoted in Weeks).

In the area of sexuality, Foucault and the social interactionists (referred to in section 3) reject the notion of an essential sexuality with an independent form which is repressed or controlled by society. Rather they see sexuality as regulated through definition and categorisation. It is around issues of history and power that differences emerge. The focus of interactionism (typified by Plummer 1981, Gagnon and Simon 1973) is subjective and contingent and thus essentially ahistorical, without a theorisation of why sexuality has become a concern. Foucault (1979) on the other hand, has taken great care to provide a particular, very specific historical contextualisation for the interest in or rather the creation of the discourse of sexuality. Although interactionists have recognised inequalities of power and the power of those who label, their subjective focus has not allowed for an adequate analysis of the institutional reproduction of power. It is in this area that Foucault makes a major contribution.

Foucault rejects the notion of power as a mode of subjugation, or domination emanating from the state, institutions and groups of people. Foucault considers these as only the terminal forms power takes (1979, pp.92-93) and power must be understood

"...in the first instance as the multiplicity of force relations, immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organisation; as the process which, through ceaseless struggles and confrontations transforms, strengthens, or reverses them; as the support which these force relations find in one another, thus forming a chain or a system, or on the contrary, the disfunctions and contradictions which isolate them from one another; and lastly, as the strategies in which they take effect, whose general design or institutional crystallization is embodied in the state apparatus, in the formulation of the law, in the various social hegemonies." (Weeks 1981, p.99).

For Foucault, as Weeks (1981) points out, it is through discourse that power is articulated and, in the sexual arena, control is manifested through increasing definition and inscription in discourse. It is particularly through categorisation i.e. homosexual, transvestite, etc. that sexuality is regulated.

Foucault regards 'sexuality' as an historical apparatus (a 'technology' of the social, involved in regulation of populations) and locates its emergence in the 18th century. While he rejects a concern with causation, he sees the rise of capitalism as one of the conditions for the emergence of this discourse. During this period

"The old power of death that symbolized sovereign power was now carefully supplanted by the administration of bodies and the calculated management of life." (Foucault 1979, pp.139-40).

What took place was, as Foucault puts it "...the entry of life into history..." (1979, p.141), and as the emergence of 'bio-power' which characterises modern societies. He considers the "...deployment of sexuality..." (1979, p.107) as central here with sex providing "...a means of access both to the life of the body and the life of the species..." (1979, p.146) and thus becoming the means for the control and regulation of populations. Rather than regulation through the law, the more subtle control of the norm is favoured in bio-power.

Knowledge appears inextricably linked to power in the Foucaultian framework. Concerning the notion of sexuality and its relationship to knowledge and power, Foucault writes

"Sexuality must not be thought of as a kind of natural given which power tries to hold in check, or as an obscure domain which knowledge gradually tries to uncover. It is the name that can be given to a historical construct: not a furtive reality that is difficult to grasp, but a great surface network in which the stimulation of bodies, the intensification of pleasures, the incitement to discourse, the formation of special knowledges, the strengthening of controls and resistances, are linked to one another, in accordance with a few major strategies of knowledge and power." (Weeks 1981, p.91).

Weeks summarises the four broad strategies Foucault identifies in the 'Introduction' to *The History of Sexuality* as "...a hysterization of women's bodies, a pedagogization of children's sex, a socialization of procreative behaviour and a psychiatrization of perverse pleasures." (Weeks 1981, p.100). Each of these strategies has their own associated practices and objects of knowledge "...the hysterical woman, the masturbating child, the Malthusian couple and the perverse adult." (Ibid).

These objects of knowledge are both produced and regulated by institutions such as psychiatry, medicine and the prisons. The question is whether Foucault's conception of power can accommodate any notion of change. Other than through the great social upheavals which Foucault sees as heralding new ways of seeing, can discourses be successfully challenged? Although Foucault sees power as always and inevitably associated with resistance it is not "...in a position of exteriority in relation to power." (1979, p.95). Foucault refers to the

reverse discourse (1979), which in the case of homosexuality is produced by the gay liberationists. In so far as a reverse discourse is responding to and adopts the categories previously created, its definitional struggle is limited from the outset. However, Foucault does intimate that there is a possibility of 'disengaging' and 'surmounting' in the definitional struggle.

"I believe that the increments labelled 'sexual liberation' ought to be understood as increments of affirmation starting with sexuality. Which means two things : they are movements that start with sexuality, with the apparatus of sexuality in the midst of which we're caught, and which make it function to the limit; but, at the same time, they are in motion relative to it, disengaging themselves and surmounting it." (1977, p.155).

Zinner (1978, p.220) has critiqued Foucault's theory for what he regards as a 'philosophical monism', the assumption of power as always present. Implicit in this criticism is the assumption that power must have an origin outside of discourse i.e. in the will of the individual. Power can of course be regarded as a by product but not necessarily intentional aspect of social organisation. This view also seems implicit in the work of Plummer (1981).

In sum then, Foucault proposes a theory of sexuality as a discourse produced in a particular historical context through institutions for the purposes of controlling populations. He also draws attention to the examination of the conditions in which particular discourses emerge and the practices through which categorisation is perpetuated. This framework has proved useful in the placing of the category 'homosexuality' historically as well as approaching its viscidities and deconstruction.

Post-structuralist/modernist theory :

The theoretical developments that are loosely referred to as post-structuralist/modernist and also closely associated and overlapping with deconstructionist approaches can be regarded as a paradigm shift (Parker 1988) which offers significant advantages in social/psychological theorisation (Henriques et al 1984) in general, and for the theorisation of homosexuality in particular, as will be argued.

Although post-structuralism and post-modernism overlap significantly and share what can be regarded as certain key conceptualisations, their different lineages and paths through which they have arrived at these key concepts have resulted in slight differences in emphasis.

In order to aid in demystifying these approaches, which may appear inaccessible and requiring background in and command of obscure French and German texts, an attempt will be made 1)to briefly situate these developments historically and 2)to outline what can be regarded as the main tenets that this approach has to

offer. The historical situating of these frameworks is especially pertinent, considering the post-structuralist emphasis on the context within which discourses develop.

Theoretical background to the development of post-structuralism and post-modernism :

Very briefly, modernism, which forms the background to post-modernism, gives primacy to culture and is linked to critiques of the Marxist base/superstructure model. According to this model, superstructural phenomena such as culture are determined by the economic base. It assumes the rational individual of the Enlightenment (Hutcheon 1989) which will be questioned by the post-modernists.

Henriques et al see what they regard as structuralism's antihumanism as containing

"...reverberations running from the death of man announced by Nietzsche to and through Levi-Strauss's 'death of the subject'. The same rejection is echoed in Freud's decentring of the rational cogito on the one hand and, on the other, in Marx's critique of Feuerbach's foundation of the purpose of history in 'man'." (1984, p.93).

These authors take care to point out that the changes in the theorisation of subjectivity which are associated with post structuralism were not 'internal to theory' (1984, p.96), but that the interest in agency arose in a particular context: located in the 1960's, influenced by the failure of the Paris revolution and the growing recognition of the failure of class struggle at the time.

Parker (1988), strongly influenced by Derrida (1981), points out that the combination of language (the structuralist object of study) with its deployment or 'use' amounts to a deconstruction of structuralism to post-structuralism so that:

"Each person constructs an imperfect, fragmentary, idiosyncratic version of the structure which affects the relation between the word each time she or he communicates to another person. In addition, each act of interpretation requires the reproduction of the system of language and, crucially, the production of new metaphors which disrupt the system." (Parker 1988, p.187).

Harre (1983) and Shotter (1980) have also commented on the resurfacing of unresolved conflict between agency and structure within the new paradigm. Parker (1988) sees this as a debate between those who privilege the hermeneutic approach which sees the subject as able to challenge and construct new meanings and definitions and, on the other hand, those who emphasise the power of the structure in placing subjects.

Essential features of post-modernist/post-structuralist accounts:

The notion of a definition of post-structuralism is a problematic one as there is an avoidance of definition and a reluctance to identification "...presumably because such practices represent an attempt to pin down an essence which does not exist." (Gavey 1989, p.460). As Gavey cautions, an attempt to represent the main features of post-structuralism runs the risk

"...of fixing and oversimplifying the ideas, thus presenting them in a potentially stagnant and deradicalized form in which they may be adopted as a new orthodoxy." (1989, p.460).

While acknowledging these concerns, post-structuralism can tentatively be said to be a distinct mode of "...knowledge production..." in so far as it uses certain theories of "...language, subjectivity, social processes and institutions to understand existing power relations and to identify areas and strategies for change." (Weedon 1987, pp.40-41).

The post-structuralist approach incorporates theoretical contributions from theorists who have been previously discussed: Lacan, the French feminists and Foucault. It is also influenced by Marxism, in particular the work of Althusser (1971), and then also the post-Saussurean linguistics of Derrida (1981) and Barthes (1977).

Whereas "...structuralists are convinced that systematic knowledge is possible; post-structuralists claim to know only the impossibility of this knowledge." (Weedon 1987, p.22). Post-structuralists reject traditional assumptions of knowledge as constituting a collection of universal truths revealed through an objective mode of enquiry. Rather they propose a view of knowledge as "...socially constructed..., transient and inherently unstable." (Gavey 1989, p.462). It is seen as constructed through "...a specific kind of production with definite relations to the social and material world" (Venn 1984, p.150) inextricably bound up with power, as outlined in the previous discussion of Foucault's theory.

It is through language and other signifying practices (Gavey 1989; Belsey 1980; Weedon 1987) that knowledge and meaning is constructed. But contrary to the traditional, for the "...liberal humanist view of language as transparent and expressive, merely reflecting and describing (pre-existing) subjectivity and experience in the world..." (Gavey 1989, p.462), post-structuralism regards language as "...not innocent and neutral but riddled with the presuppositions of Western metaphysics." (Coward and Ellis 1977, p.123).

As Levett (1989) points out, the realisation that the language or mode of inquiry affects the reality perceived is not specific to the social sciences. These concerns are apparent in Husserl's doubts about 'reality' after exposure to non-Euclidian geometry (Heritage 1984) and underly Wittgenstein's turning towards a study of language.

The concept of discourse is central to post-structuralist theory. Hollway describes discourse as a

"...system of statements which cohere around common meanings and values ... {that} are a product of social factors, of powers and practices, rather than an individual's set of ideas." (1983, p.31).

Power is expressed through discourse, as Gavey puts it

"It is through discourse that material power is exercised and that power relations are established and perpetuated." (1989, p.464).

There is a multiplicity of discourses, each "...inscribed in relation to other practices of production of discourse." (Henriques et al 1984, p.106). Different discourses often offer conflicting meaning systems (Gavey 1989) and different 'subject positions' (Hollway 1984, Weedon 1987) so that subjective 'consciousness' is seen as produced in a discursive battle. Discourse is thus produced and reproduced through social institutions and modes of thought but it also produces or shapes individual subjectivity. (Weedon 1987).

Some discourses are more powerful than others, as Gavey puts it, they "...vary in authority...". Furthermore

"Dominant discourses appear 'natural', denying their own partiality and gaining their authority by appealing to common sense. These discourses, which support and perpetuate existing power relations, tend to constitute the subjectivity of most people most of the time (in a given place and time)." (Gavey 1989, p.464).

Post-structuralists reject the notion of a unified Cartesian subject, with an essential nature and rational 'self' as is assumed in western psychology. The post-structuralist subject is essentially 'decentred' and fragmented and thus no longer the origin or guarantor of meaning. (Henriques et al 1984).

Post-structuralism/post-modernism and current development in psychology :

Post-structuralist or the closely associated post-modernist approaches are increasingly evident in psychological theorising (e.g. Antaki 1988; Gergen 1985, 1988; Hare-Mustin and Marecek 1988; Henriques et al 1984; Sampson 1985, Shotter and Gergen 1989; Walkerdine 1986). These approaches are in opposition to the positivist, empiricist and liberal humanist assumptions of mainstream psychology. The notions of value free research and objectivity and the mystification of scientific 'expertise', have been critiqued by Kitzinger (1987).

Linde (1987), referring to scientific discourse generally and Keesing (1987), referring to psychological discourse in particular have pointed out the extent to which these discourses rely on and incorporate common sense or

folk models. As Levett puts it

"The language and models of explanation which were evolved in psychology and psychiatry which originated among lay people, have spread in particular forms through formal education and other processes to widening circles of the lay public." (1989, p.183).

In the process folk models achieve the status and power of professional knowledge and through its appearance of being natural reproduce and entrench social systems invisibly.

Feminism, post-structuralism and post-modernism :

While much of post-modernism has displayed a disinterest in gender issues, recent feminist theorising has adopted what Hutcheon (1989) calls the 'detoxifying' concern of post-modernism. In spite of sharing post-modernist/structuralist critiques of humanism and positivism (Hutcheon 1989) the authority that feminist psychologists give to women's experience (reflecting humanist assumptions of female experience as essential, pure and universal) has also been challenged by post-structuralist critiques. Brown (1989), referred to in section 1, is a case in point.

Weedon expresses the post-structuralist position where she says "...in so far as it is meaningful, experience is constituted in language..." (1987, p.85) and "...experience has no inherent essential meaning...". (Weedon 1987, p.34). Wetherall (1986) and Belsey (1980) also hold this position. Although the feminist privileging of women's experience can be seen and appreciated as a political strategy, Weedon points out that it deradicalises its challenge by moving "... parallel to hegemonic discourse...". (Weedon 1987, p.110). This criticism would equally apply to lesbian writing attempting to document a 'lesbian' experience or reality. To treat experience as if a universal experiencing subject is present is tantamount to reintroducing the humanist subject.

Like Gallop (1982), Lather (1988) also is concerned with the tendency to adopt a singular account (as is present in the attempt to present the essential lesbian): "... we need to wrestle with the post-modern questioning of the lust for authoritative accounts if we are not to remain as much part of the problem as the solution ourselves." (Lather 1988, p.577).

Post-Modernism :

Although the above account has covered many of the central notions post-structuralism and post-modernism have in common, there is a slight difference in emphasis which deserves attention.

Post-modernist discourses share with post-structuralism a deconstructive impulse in so far as they demand distance, reflection and questioning of 'taken for granted' concepts such as knowledge, language, power and subjectivity. Eco sees as post-modern

"...the orientation of anyone who has learned the lesson of Foucault, i.e. that power is not something unitary that exists outside us." (in Rosso 1983, p.4).

For Hutcheon, post-modernism "...takes the form of self-conscious, self-contradictory, self-undermining statement..." and its "...distinctive character lies in this kind of wholesale 'nudging' commitment to doubleness, or duplicity...". (1989, pp.1-2).

Post-modernism clearly "...raises important questions about the possible nature and status of theorizing itself." (Flax 1987, p.624). The post-modernist understanding of knowledge and language demands that it

"...acknowledges that it cannot escape implication in that which it nevertheless still wants to analyze and maybe undermine." (Hutcheon 1989, p.4).

Post-modernists' deconstructive commitment cannot accommodate any ultimate unchallenged 'metanarrative', instead they encourage multiple narratives (Lyotard 1984) which seek no primacy. Jameson links this emphasis on multiple discourses with post French revolution (1789) thought and contrasts it with the Germanic Hegelian tradition which favours consensus.

In this section Foucault's analysis of sexuality as a discursive construction and mode of regulation of populations with its inception in a particular historical and social milieu, the rise of capitalism in the 18th century, has been briefly presented. The psychiatrisation of perverse pleasures has emerged as one of the four key strategies of social regulation and involved in the reproduction of particular knowledge/power relations.

Foucault's concepts are also evident in the post-structuralist/ post-modernist frameworks which were introduced. While a clear deconstructive emphasis has emerged and the key concepts of these frameworks can be considered as deconstructive strategies, these frameworks can also be said to be a distinct mode of knowledge production which potentially identifies strategies for change.

The question now emerges whether accepting Foucault's view of the psychiatrisation of perverse pleasures as a regulatory strategy means that the psychiatric enterprise should be jeopardised per se? Would the same apply to psychological and psychoanalytical discourses? The central question is whether these discourses can be regarded as unified single discourses which have nothing to offer beyond regulation. For the progressive/feminist clinician, to whom this paper is mainly addressed, clinical practice undoubtedly is intended to empower as much as facilitate adaptation. Foucault specifically locates this regulatory discourse in a

particular socio-historical context with subsequent challenges or reverse discourses, associated with a changed political climate and pressure from the gay and feminist movements, discourses which are more subversive than regulatory. Foucault's work is a case in point.

Summary and conclusions :

In the psychoanalytic theories, in section 2 the more clinically based trends and in section 3 Lacan and the French feminists' contribution towards an analysis of sexed subjectivity, both a regulatory tendency and a subversive tendency are apparent. A theoretical framework which can analyse the manifestations of particular power relations in knowledge and discourses provides a tool and power to challenge existing power/knowledge relations. The post-structuralist/post-modernist framework, indebted to developments from within psychoanalysis, provides useful strategies for a discriminating reading of psychiatric, psychoanalytical and psychological discourses concerning homosexuality.

In section 1 the historical contextualisation, as well as the treatment of homosexuality and lesbianism in terms of their discursive construction has allowed for the deconstruction of these categories which the reader at the outset may have assumed as designating an essence or given reality. The body of knowledge in which these categories are inscribed, and in the production of which psychiatry has been central, cannot be assumed within a post-structuralist/post-modernist framework as a collection of universal truths arrived at through an objective mode of enquiry. In the first place, a post-structuralist/post-modernist analysis has deconstructed the 'object' of this body of knowledge as constructed and not essential. Furthermore, rather than focusing on content, the post-structuralist/post-modernist framework's emphasis on knowledge as being the expression of power relations, demands an examination and an acknowledgement of the benefits and in this case the costs of knowledge. In this framework, psychiatry's pathologisation of those it designates as homosexual or lesbian can be deconstructed by its analysis as a regulatory concern (an expression of bio power) which originates in the late 19th century.

The body of knowledge associated with the pathological construction of homosexuals and lesbians clearly does not benefit those categorised, but these categories have also provided a potential point of entry into discourse, the potential access to power and thus a point of departure for resistance. Strategies employed in this claim to power have included the notion of the continuum, as suggested by Kinsey's (1948; 1953) findings, which was used to challenge the polarisation of homo and heterosexuality, as well as Freud's notion of polymorphous perversity which challenges the polarisation of normality and perversion, a polarisation also challenged by Hooker's (1968) findings. That these discourses were not incorporated into or achieved the status of knowledge accepted by the American Psychiatric Association (APA) before a changed social climate associated with

growing pressure from the gay movement, illustrates the political aspect of the construction of 'knowledge'. As a result the APA no longer officially reproduces the discourse of homosexuality as psychopathology. This reflects a development within a particular socio-historical context due to particular pressures; in the United Kingdom the widely used ICD 9 still classifies homosexuality as a disease entity. While psychiatric discourses can no longer be regarded as a unified discourse which pathologises homosexuality, this discourse is still perpetuated, especially amongst practising clinicians.

On the other hand, a post-structuralist/post-modernist analysis would also point out that the potential cost of the tendency in gay liberationist discourses to prescribe and essentialise 'gay' needs to be considered.

Recent reverse discourses that challenge not only psychiatry's pathologising of homosexuality but propose a gay/lesbian epistemology and psychology, develop in the context of an established body of feminist theorising. The gay and lesbian epistemologies developed by feminists such as Brown (1989) reflect and may have been influenced by post-structuralist/post-modernist concerns as is suggested in her emphasis on diversity rather than the 'essential' lesbian. The commonalities she refers to do not originate in a shared 'essence' but from the *position* of 'lesbians' in society. She identifies the creative potential in this positioning, producing knowledge and providing a representation which lesbians can use for empowerment.

The strategy that Brown proposes for the challenging and replacement of 'psychiatric' knowledge, that women speak from experience, can be critiqued on a number of levels. A post-structuralist/post-modernist analysis would question the assumption of an essential experience which can be accessed and presented uncontaminated by language.

Freud's views presented in section 2 reflects the orthodoxy at the time where homosexuality is seen as immaturity of the sexual drive relative to a heterosexual norm. While in Freud's scheme this is a minor charge, his categorisation of homosexuality with perversion has been quoted out of context by many to present the 'homosexuality as pathology' thesis as supported by the 'Father of Psychoanalysis'. At the same time Freud contributes strategies such as polymorphous perversion, concepts which have been used to subvert notions of normative sexuality. This is further developed by Lacan and the French feminists.

Freud's minimisation of the pathological 'aspects' of homosexuality is not reflected in the theories of the clinically based writers such as Socarides, McDougall and Khan. These theorists all to a greater or lesser degree reproduce the 'homosexuality as pathology thesis' and assumptions which have been deconstructed earlier. For the clinically based reader, these theories with their clinical orientation, especially the work of McDougall and Khan may have been of particular interest. They are amongst the few theorists who extensively address 'female homosexuality' from a clinical and broadly object relations perspective, a perspective which is

influential amongst clinicians. McDougall and Khan's position within this tradition clearly lends authority to their theorisations. Their employment of notions from these traditions e.g. where McDougall refers to her patient as being the mother's phallus or faecal object achieves the elevation of their views to psychoanalytic 'knowledge'.

To the outsider, object relations terminology may appear an obscure discourse, but many clinicians have found it a useful tool in the therapeutic setting. While post-structuralist/post-modernist analysis would be sceptical of its claims to authority, knowledge and truth, it also offers a strategy for change in the personal realm. Given its clinical application, it is of particular concern that notions of homosexuality as pathology are being reproduced within this paradigm. It is an enterprise resistant to change with the rules of entry into the elitist inner circle tightly regulating challenges from reverse and other discourses.

The object relations discourses presented clearly perpetuate assumptions about perverse pleasure and impose a heterosexual norm, which post-structuralist/post-modernist analysis deconstructs. The question emerges whether this discourse and practice also potentially have something to recommend it to lesbians? The centrality of the assumption of a heterosexual norm to the object relations theory would need to be investigated in order to establish whether it is feasible to construct and practice an object relations paradigm which does not impose a pathologising power relation. While the urgency of such a project is acknowledged, it is clearly beyond the scope of this thesis to undertake this.

The theory of Lacan and the French feminists was also briefly addressed. Lacan's theory of the subject, decentred in its encounter with social laws which impose sexual categories under the threat of castration, certainly have been employed in the subversion of categories that have come to appear 'natural'. Lacan's notion of the decentred subject and his rejection of the notion that experience exists outside of language are clearly recognisable in the post-structuralist/post-modernist concern. However, within this framework Lacan's assumption of patriarchy as transhistorical is problematic given the emphasis on the historical siting of discourses. The post-structuralist/post-modernist analysis also shares the French feminist rejection of Lacan's theory as a metanarrative. Gallop (1982) furthermore sees Lacanian theory as reflecting Lacan's own patriarchal position as 'father'.

The French feminists' mode of enquiry, deconstructive, questioning and ironical, as well as their acknowledgement of theory as a definitional act certainly can be regarded as post-modernist. One of the central concerns here is the development of a theory which can accommodate diversity of desire. In the French feminist framework 'lesbian' is an ambiguous category; she is defined by the symbolic order, but also represents a refusal to be reduced to woman.

For Gallop (1982), Laplanche (1976) and Montrelay (1978) the body is not completely inscribed by the structural so that there is an 'experiential realm' which does not submit to discourse. In this context, the lesbian is seen as in a privileged position as she is not so tightly inscribed in language. This ties in with Brown's (1989) notion of the potential creativity to be gained from the marginal and bicultural position of lesbians. It raises the same concern regarding whether there is something in experience that escapes discourse and from which a challenge to dominant discourses can be developed. Is this compatible with a post-structuralist/post-modernist framework which cautions against the re-assumption of an essential rational subject? Lacan's notion of the unconscious and its constant challenge to symbolic ordering has been compatible with the decentred subject of post-structuralism/post-modernism, but, for Lacan, this challenge can never present a radical threat, nor transcend the status quo. We then reach the impasse in a resurfacing of the debate between agency and structure on which Parker (1988) has commented. The consequences of a rejection of 'agency' is that change is seen as dependent on extra-discursive events e.g. major social upheavals.

To come back to the central question of agency and 'experience'; experience as presenting an extra discursive realm with a radical potential from which to speak (assuming language could accommodate what would need to be spoken), comes problematically close to assuming a rational essential subject. Foucault has suggested that, although most challenges to dominant discourses stand in relation to, rather than transcend the terms of these discourses, the latter possibility exists. Foucault's and post-structuralist/post-modernist's notion of a multiplicity of discourses may be useful in addressing the theoretical impasse reached earlier. It is when a single dominant discursive structure, i.e. *the* symbolic order is assumed, that the only option for challenge seems to be an experiential realm outside of language. The notion of a multiplicity of discourses presents the contradictions within and between discourses as potential points from which to construct further discourses. In this scheme the 'lesbian's' marginal and bicultural position in society can be seen as placing her in contradictory discourses which, if she rises to the challenge, can be used against one another so that a further discourse is constructed.

Objections to post-structuralist/post-modernist analysis have concerned the notion of the multiplicity of discourses as well as the deconstructive emphasis, on the basis that it produces a relativist impasse and is negativistic and destructive. A number of points can be made in reply. Certain discourses, including the pathologising of homosexuality and lesbianism in psychiatric and psychoanalytic discourse, have certainly been destructive to those so defined and thus a deconstruction is long overdue. It is potentially empowering for those defined as pathological to have access to an analysis which can disempower the knowledge which defines them.

The process of deconstruction also constructs and is productive of knowledge. While some post-structuralist/post-modernist analyses have been negativistic, deconstructions and analysis of power relations expressed in 'knowledge' certainly are 'positive' in so far as they can inform strategies and the focus for change.

When post-structuralist/ post-modernist strategies are employed to analyse power relations with the aim of challenging discourses and practices through which these relations are perpetuated, they need not be regarded as relativist. While this analysis rejects conventional appeals (e.g. to scientificity) for regarding one theory as superior to another, relativism is not the only alternative. Post-structuralism/post-modernism evaluates discourses in terms of their contradictions and power relations. This analysis is a case in point, the psychiatric 'knowledge' of homosexuality and lesbianism as pathology is not regarded as merely one of many views, it is challenged and deconstructed. Post-structuralism/ post-modernism has certain identifiable codes and evaluates discourses in terms of a specific history of knowledge. There is also a definite tradition in post-structuralist/post-modernist frameworks that is concerned with those who are disadvantaged in dominant discourses and knowledge.

Recommendations for clinicians and researchers :

A number of important points emerge from the arguments presented above which can serve as guidelines for therapists concerned not to reproduce pathologising power relations in their practice in relation to 'lesbianism'. Post-structuralism/post-modernism advocates a questioning approach which involves an examination of terms and assumptions while using them, and a rejection of knowledge presented as truth.

From the preceding discussion it is clear that 'lesbian' cannot be considered as an essential category or species of being; it has to be seen as a category developed in a particular historical context and linked to regulatory concerns. Psychiatric and psychoanalytic knowledge cannot be taken at face value when its historical role in the pathologising of homosexuality, including lesbianism, is considered. This is a particularly pertinent concern when it comes to the object relations school of psychoanalysis with its history of refusal to consider challenges to their assumptions regarding homosexuality and lesbianism. Gallop's (1982) notion of transference in relation to theory where the author speaks from the position of one 'presumed to know' may be useful for the clinician confronted with the authoritative representation of lesbianism as pathology in object relations theory. This would involve a resistance to some aspects of knowledge that presents itself with the full force of the object relations tradition.

This does not mean that object relations theory cannot be cautiously used to assist lesbians in dealing with early childhood issues they may have. However, the clinician is cautioned not to accept normative notions of sexuality in terms of which lesbianism is seen as pathology. If 'lesbian' has been a pathologised position in the past, clinicians need to remind themselves of the positive potential of this position, the potential creativity a marginal and bicultural position may offer as suggested by Brown (1989) and the Lacanians. Apart from early childhood experiences, other sources and experiences suggested by social constructionist theorists as contributing to sexual

identity may also be usefully considered. The clinician is thus challenged to become involved in the questioning of theories and traditional 'knowledge'.

In sum then, a post-structuralist/post-modernist analysis offers a strategy for deconstructing the 'homosexuality/lesbianism as pathology' thesis, which is particularly productive within psychiatry and psychoanalysis. It places the inception and development of the categories homosexuality and lesbianism in a particular historical context expressing a regulatory concern. This in effect contributes to the deconstruction of these categories as describing essential realities. Such a deconstruction clearly would benefit and can be applied to empower rather than pathologise those involved. Both the work of the Lacanian feminists and that of the social interactionists suggests a much more complicated picture with childhood as well as later experience involved in the assumption of a homosexual identity and lesbianism seen also in positive terms, with a creative potential and as a refusal to accept societal categories and with a creative potential. 'Therapy' clearly provides a potential context in which 'patients' can explore the vicissitudes of their sexuality and problems related to their sexual identity. What remains to be seen is whether an object relations framework can accommodate a removal of a heterosexist norm and whether it can accommodate a diversity of desire. The application of post-structuralist/post-modernist theory to clinical practice is a new area which needs to be further developed. While the post-structuralist/post-modernist framework's deconstruction of pathologising power relations may provide useful guidelines for the clinician, it does not provide a comprehensive theoretical framework which can inform clinical practice with lesbian clients. It may provide useful guidelines from which to undertake a systematic attempt to integrate a non normative conceptualisation of sexuality into an object relations framework.

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