

Psyche & Muse: Creative Entanglements with the Science of the Soul
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Mixed Narratives and the Problem of Language: Homosexuality and the search for a “cure”

Checklist and Descriptions

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Competing narratives and the problem of language: Homosexuality and the search for a “cure”.

If sexuality is one of the key areas of investigation for psychoanalysis, then the question of homosexuality has been the focus of much theorization. Though Freud’s early attempts to posit homosexuality in the range of human sexual expression were championed by early colleagues and followers, by the 1950s, mainstream psychiatry defined homosexuality as an illness and principally sought to “cure” gay men and lesbians.

The debates over the reasons for variant sexual object-choice can be read as a problem of language as much as a problem of psychology. At issue are definitions of behavior and the self; the control of discourse; and the vocabulary used by professionals, analysts, patients, and laypersons – all of which contribute to the debate over whether homosexuality is a true pathology.

On view are books documenting the investigation of homosexuality from the early years of psychoanalysis through the tumultuous middle decades of the 20th century when a number of psychoanalysts, especially in the United States, promoted the view that the basis of same-sex desire was a mental illness. The views of professional analysts that reached a wide reading public were countered by gay and lesbian writers who argued for a more balanced, humanist view of sexual identity. These documents constitute an evolving narrative of the changing definition of a category of human experience. Included in this narrative are books written by professionals in the field of psychiatry; articles by gay and lesbian activists writing in the early years of the modern rights movement, and popular publications - including pulp fiction novels.

This narrative can also be found in works by poets and in original papers of authors who went through analysis. Such personal and private reflections point out the troubled state of psychiatric affairs for gay men and lesbians that only began to be resolved in the 1970s, as homosexuality was reintegrated into the “well” spectrum of sexuality.

Section 1: Basis of understanding of Homosexuality in Psychoanalytic theory

Freudian Homosexuality

Psychiatry grew up concurrent with the rise of sexology, new discoveries and amended understandings in biology and anthropology, and an important era in the quest for civil rights for under-represented segments of society. Up through the 19th century, the causes of same-sex desire had been explained in many ways: nervous exhaustion, insanity, stunted mental development, psychic hermaphroditism, and organic aberrations.

A watershed event for modern psychiatry occurred in the late 19th century when a word, *homosexual* (established firmly by Richard von Krafft-Ebbing in 1886 in his work *Psychopathia Sexualis*) began to be widely used to designate a category of person - or an identity - as contrasted to a set of behaviors.

Sigmund Freud drew on and frequently referenced the work of sexologists and writers such as Otto Weininger, Havelock Ellis, Iwan Bloch, and Magnus Hirschfeld. He posited in his writings on sexuality that all human beings start off polymorphously perverse – or with equal bisexual possibility. He wrote that one of the basic deviations from the organic and normative sexual instinct is *inversion* – when the sexual object for a person is of the same sex.

Freud arrived at an explanation for inversion as being a narcissistic fixation on one's own sex deriving from an intense connection to a parent. However, he was clear to point out that heterosexual instincts are also “a problem that needs elucidating” because one goal of psychiatry is to investigate how and why a sexual instinct fixes on a sexual object – whatever the final combination.

This was restated in a more humorous fashion by the psychotherapist Ernest van den Haag: “I am reminded of a colleague who reiterated ‘all my homosexual patients are quite sick’ - to which I finally replied ‘so are all my heterosexual patients.’”

Freud focused on the issue of homosexuality in several key works, including:

Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality (1905)

In which he defined inversion.

“The Psychogenesis of a Case of Female Homosexuality” (1920)

In which he attempted to treat a young woman referred by her family for psychoanalysis – his only documented treatment of a lesbian. His experience led him to rethink his analytic approach to women's issues. A biography of the young woman described in this case was published in 2000 (the title translates as *Secret Desire: The Story of Sidonie C. Franz*)

“Certain Neurotic Mechanisms in Jealousy, Paranoia, and Homosexuality” (1922)

In which he dissected the mental state of jealousy, finding at the core homosexual impulses born of rivalry.

And in a letter that came to light after his death:

“Letter to an American Mother” (1935)

Sigmund Freud, *Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex: Authorized Translation by A. A. Brill* (New York: Nervous and Mental Disease Publ.Co, 1930).

Freud, Sigmund. “The Psychogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman”
International Journal of Psycho-Analysis, vol I, no. 2, 1920.

Ines Rieder and Diana Voigt. *Heimliches Begehren: Die Geschichte Der Sidonie C. Wien: Deuticke, 2000*

Sigmund Freud, “Certain Neurotic Mechanisms in Jealousy, Paranoia, and Homosexuality”

International Journal of Psycho-Analysis, vol. IV, Jan-Feb 1923.

Sigmund Freud, “Letter to an American Mother”, 1935 transcribed in Ronald Bayer, *Homosexuality and American Psychiatry: The Politics of Diagnosis*. New York: Basic Books, 1981.

The Austrian-born psychoanalyst Abraham Arden Brill was essential in bringing Freud’s works to an English-speaking audience. Brill was the first to translate Freud’s writings and the first to set up a psychoanalysis practice in the United States. Brill published *Psychoanalysis, Its Theories and Practical Application* in 1913, a work that communicated the basics of the new science of psychiatry to American readers. The third edition of the book, issued in 1923, contained a new chapter based on an article Brill had first published in the Journal of the American Medical Association on August 2, 1913. “The Conception of Homosexuality” was a watershed piece of writing, in which the author overcomes the abhorrence he commonly sees as a primary reaction to homosexuality so that he can examine and discuss it with some compassion. Brill posits same-sex behavior desire as a mental state that can be treated through psychoanalysis. However, he gives equal consideration to personal opinions of homosexuals, including one “inverted clergyman” seeking Brill’s counsel who wrote “I would not for the world have anybody interfere with my personality ; I just wish to consult you about a *modus vivendi* for myself.”

Brill, A. A. – “The Conception of Homosexuality” In: *Psychoanalysis: Its Theories and Practical Application*. Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders, 1923.

Wilhelm Stekel, as early compatriot of Freud, became well known for his many writings about “paraphilias” – a term he coined to replace the negatively-weighted term “perversions”. He wrote about sexual fetishes, sadism and masochism, impotence, and frigidity. He published one of the earliest book-length examinations of homosexuality. *The Homosexual Neurosis*, an English translation of the major part of his original German language book *Onanie und Homosexualität*,

appeared in 1922. (On display is a revised edition from 1934.) In this work, Stekel recounts a number of therapeutic cases that involved identification of homosexual behavior or impulses. His diagnoses range from hatred of the father to fear of the sister to feelings of inadequacy. In conclusion, Stekel advocates a process of psychoanalysis to uncover the causes of same-sex desire, but one that allows the patient to make their own willing steps toward change – which is only achievable by learning to “love in an adult manner”.

Wilhelm Stekel, *The Homosexual Neurosis*: authorized translation by James S. Van Teslaar. Revised ed. (Brooklyn : Physicians and Surgeons Book Co., 1934).

Section 2: Psychoanalysis in action in the 1920s and 1930s

The French perspective

The reception of psychoanalytic theory in France was strongly colored by an examination of Freud’s theories, *La Psychoanalyse des Névroses et des Psychoses. Applications médicales et extra-médicales* by Emmanuel Régis and Angélo Hesnard, first published in 1914. Hesnard, who went on to hold leadership roles in a number of French psychoanalytic societies, but who broke with Freud over several core concepts, published an early book-length treatise on homosexuality and psychiatry: *Psychologie homosexuelle* (1929). In the book, Hesnard examines the reasons for same-sex attraction and, in a departure from Freud’s theories, states that confirmed homosexuality is not accessible to psychoanalysis.

Hesnard, Angelo L. M. *Psychologie Homosexuelle*. Paris: Stock, 1929.

George Ives, a British writer who focused on penal reform and the early gay rights movement was a co-founder of the British Society for the Study of Sex Psychology. One of his life-long projects was collecting newspaper and magazine clippings that recorded mentions of criminal conduct, especially those that, in guarded and coded language, noted arrests of men engaging in same-sex acts. One incident from 1924 involved one Frank Amos Zealley of Worcestershire, who had been arrested on charge of “gross indeceny with a male person.” Ives’ clipping album from the period includes a newspaper column in which Dr. Gilbert Scott advocates psychoanalysis as a cure for this particular criminal mindset. A rebuttal was published soon after by Montagu Lomax, author of *The Experiences of an Asylum Doctor* (1921) in which he took to task the state of mental health practices in England.

George Ives clippings albums, Volume 16

An article by Ernst Bien in the January 1934 issue of *Medical Review of Reviews* (one of a four-issue series published under the name, “Anthropos”) explored his assessment of why

homosexuals had sought psychotherapy. Bien, a pupil of Wilhelm Stekel, wrote a number of essays on sexual-psychological issues. His findings in this essay were that the answer to his query, “Why Homosexuals Undergo Treatment”, was divided into four categories: homosexuals who seek consultation under compulsion by their families or partners, but not by their own free will; those who are under a more forceful compulsion, such as conflicts with the law; those who seek help with other neuroses, without a desire to cure their homosexuality; and the last and smallest group – those who seek to be “rid of their inversion”. Among this last group, the most prevalent reason given for seeking a change of sexual identity was the failure in finding an appropriate “object” – that is: a reciprocal, willing partner.

Ernst Bien, “Why Homosexuals Undergo Treatment” IN: *Medical Review of Reviews*, Anthropos series #1, 1934

A moment of public discourse on the causes of homosexuality occurred in the early 1930s, following the popularity of a pair of novels: *The Well of Loneliness* by Radclyffe Hall (1928) and *Strange Brother* by Blair Niles (1931). In both novels, the social worlds and the psychology of lesbians and gay men were detailed, leading, in the case of *The Well of Loneliness*, to censorship and obscenity trials.

A popular non-fiction work, La Forest Potter’s *Strange Loves* (1933), an overview of various sexual inversions, posited psychoanalysis as a cure, all the while arguing for a sympathetic treatment of gays and lesbians. (In a forthright editorial by Henry Gerber published in *The Modern Thinker and Author’s Review* in 1932, he declaimed both novels as grim “anti-homosexual propaganda” and rejected the idea of a psychoanalytic cure, accusing psychiatrists of creating a modern systems of taboos that were as harmful as outmoded historical and superstitious beliefs about homosexuality.)

Blair Niles, *Strange Brother*. New York : H. Liveright, inc., [c1931]

La Forest Potter, *Strange Loves : A Study in Sexual Abnormalities* (New York : National Library Press, [1938, c1933])

Radclyffe Hall, *The Well of Loneliness*. London, J. Cape [1928]

Section 3: The Years of Neuroses

The Mid-century shift in the United States

The direction of psychoanalysis in the United States and a number of other English-speaking countries, shifted strongly in the 1940s and 1950s due to the work of Sándor Radó, a Hungarian psychoanalyst, who had worked closely with Freud until breaking with him in the 1930s. Radó refuted Freud’s theory of innate bisexuality and espoused the idea of homosexuality arising from a fear of the opposite sex. A number of his followers and inheritors who did research focusing on this basic idea had their work compiled in the 1962 anthology edited by Irving Bieber,

Homosexuality: A Psychoanalytic Study of Male Homosexuals, an influential book that championed the sickness model. Bieber wrote that “all psychoanalytic theories assume that homosexuality is psychopathological” thus rejecting Freud’s view of sexuality and affirming that the goal of psychoanalysis in the United States was to cure homosexuality. His explanation for homosexuality (much simplified here) became a much-repeated (and satirized) trope:

domineering mother + distant father + timid child = homosexual.

Bieber’s volume was a reaction, in part, to Alfred Kinsey’s landmark study *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* from 1948. In the same way that sexology research of the turn of the 20th century urged forward the fields of psychology and psychiatry, Kinsey’s findings spurred energetic and often heated investigations into the nature of sexuality. Because Kinsey’s research showed that homosexual acts could be seen on a continuum of human sexual behavior – sympathetic to the core views of Freud – the book raised much dissent from psychiatrists who wanted to define homosexuality as an aberration that could only be seen as an illness.

Society of Medical Psychoanalysts. *Homosexuality; A Psychoanalytic Study* [by] Irving Bieber [and others] (New York, Basic Books [1962]).

In 1951, Edward Sagarin, using the pseudonym Donald Webster Cory, published *The Homosexual in America: A Subjective Approach*, a landmark book that examined the question of homosexuality from the perspective of a self-identified homosexual. Cory drew on the then-recent findings of Alfred Kinsey about sexual behavior in the human male, but expanded on them by making a case for identifying homosexuals as a sociological group, deserving of relief from centuries of persecution. In later publications, Sagarin argued for the decriminalization of homosexuality though he believed that the behavior was pathological and urged men to seek therapy to become heterosexual. In the section of the book titled “Adjustments”, Sagarin reviewed the various approaches to treating homosexuals and asserted strong views about the innate nature of same-sex desire.

Donald Webster Cory, *The Homosexual in America: A Subjective Approach* (New York, Greenberg [1951]).

A popular novel first published in England in 1953, *The Heart in Exile* tells the story of Dr. Anthony Page, an analyst, who after having undergone a course of psychoanalysis, himself, comes to accept his sexual identity in a guarded fashion. The novel unfolds as Page investigates the death of a former lover, leading the hero to canvass the gay underworld of 1950s London. In the beginning of Chapter 8, Page is approached by a young man who seeks a cure for his troubled condition.

Rodney Garland, *The Heart in Exile*. (New York, Coward-McCann, 1954).

Edmund Bergler and how America understood psychoanalysis and homosexuality.

Edmund Bergler, who had worked with Freud's Psychoanalytic Clinic and the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society, came to the United States in the late 1930s, setting up a professional practice in New York City. His specialty was treating homosexuals and authors with writer's block. Bergler published a series of books that reached a wide audience in the 1950s, making him a principal authority for many lay readers on psychological issues. While his dramatic dissections of analytic cases have been re-examined, he had a significant impact on some later theorists, including the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze.

His books, *Neurotic Counterfeit-Sex* (1951) and *Homosexuality: Disease or Way of Life?* (1957), informed a generation of readers about his take on the psychology of same-sex desire. As he had stated in an earlier work, *The Writer and Psycho-Analysis*, (1950) Bergler's basic thesis was that "psychic masochism" was the key neurosis that caused homosexuality (as well as writers' block and alcoholism). From this followed his assertion "it has recently been discovered that homosexuality is a curable illness." A section from *Homosexuality* recounts an interview with an effeminate male seeking help.

Carol Hayes, writing in an early issue of lesbian magazine *The Ladder*, issued a challenge to readers to counter Bergler's views by continuing the quest for gay rights and to "conduct themselves in daily life as to merit respect of both the homosexual and the heterosexual segments of our society." A compilation of critical opinions of the book was featured in a special issue of

***The Mattachine Review* in May 1957. "The Bergler Issue".**

Edmund Bergler, *The Writer and Psycho-Analysis*. Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday, 1950.

Edmund Bergler, *Neurotic Counterfeit-Sex; Impotence, Frigidity, "Mechanical" and Pseudo-Sexuality, Homosexuality*. New York: Grune & Stratton, 1951.

Edmund Bergler, *Homosexuality: Disease or Way of Life?* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1957).

Hales Carol, "Accept the Challenge," *The Ladder*, April, 1957

***Mattachine Review*. May 1957.**

Two case studies and a "psychodynamic study"

Richard Robertiello, a practicing psychoanalyst, garnered much attention in the late 1950s with *Voyage from Lesbos: The Psychoanalysis of a Female Homosexual*. In his account, which followed classic Freudian methods, his patient turned heterosexual after intense dream analysis and the identification of an Oedipal complex. A response printed in *The Ladder* in 1961 summarizes the book's basic themes.

Over the years following the publication of *Voyage from Lesbos*, Robertiello softened his stance on homosexuality, eventually writing an essay for the *Journal of Sex Research* in 1973 in which he defended gay rights and clarified his position by stating “I do not feel a therapist should have a personal stake in changing the sexual behavior of a homosexual patient”.

Female Homosexuality: a Psychodynamic Study of Lesbianism (1954) by Frank S. Caprio, an influential book that preceded Robertiello’s work, was also widely read. The book was a compilation of much of the then-contemporary thinking in the psychiatric establishment. Though dedicated to Dr. Alfred Kinsey, the book strongly promoted psychoanalysis as a cure. On display alongside the first edition is a lurid reprint from 1970, retitled *The Lesbian*.

Man on a Pendulum concerned the case of a man who sought psychological counseling from a rabbi and who, while not precisely “cured” of his homosexuality, achieved a state of mind in which he keeps his desire in check – living a “normal” life, though realizing that he will never marry a woman. The epilogue served as a dialogue between the aims of religion and psychiatry about the question of homosexuality.

Richard C. Robertiello, *Voyage from Lesbos: The Psychoanalysis of a Female Homosexual* (New York: Avon Book Division, 1959).

Florence Conrad, “A Psychoanalytic Approach to the Female Homosexual.” (1961). *The Ladder*, April, 1961.

Frank S. Caprio, *Female Homosexuality; a Psychodynamic Study of Lesbianism*. (New York: Citadel Press, 1954.)

Frank S. Caprio, *The Lesbian* (Whyteleafe, Surrey : Gold Star Publications, 1970).

Israel Gerber, *Man on a Pendulum : A Case History of an Invert*. (New York : American Press, [c1955]).

Section 4: The Gay Rights Movement and Psychoanalysis

The gay rights movement engaged psychoanalysis in the 1950s in an effort to raise the level of discussion of homosexuality which, although still widely abhorred and demonized, was better seen at the time as an illness, rather than as a crime.

The 1960s saw gay rights groups move away from apologizing for homosexuality and calling for full acceptance of gay sexual identity. The Mattachine Society made this official in 1965 when it issued a position that homosexuality was not an illness. Increasingly, through the 1960s, psychiatry became a target of attack by gay rights groups determined to disprove the sickness theory and to strip the psychoanalytic profession of its power to act as a secular arbiter of social and moral normativity.

Although many therapists still recommended therapy, such as Robert Harper, who asserted in “Can Homosexuals be Changed” that social anxiety and “anti-sexual” attitudes open the door to homosexuality, gay rights activists countered such opinions, using not only evidence from new research in the field, but parody as well, as in a 1967 essay from *The Ladder*: “The Causes and Curses of Heterosexuality.”

Robert Harper, “Can Homosexuals be Changed?” IN: *Homosexuals Today*, edited by Isadore Rubin (New York : Health Publications, 1965).

“The Causes and Curses of Heterosexuality”, *The Ladder*, Sept. 1, 1967

Passion in the Pulps

The actions, motivations, and mental states of lesbians and gay men were communicated to many Americans in the 1950s and 1960s through sensational pulp novels and paperback originals – books that were widely marketed, sold cheaply, and were advertised with garish covers and descriptions. The only rule for their creation was that at the end of a novel (after hundreds of pages of titillating sex scenes), the principal characters had either to renounce their evil ways, get (heterosexually) married, or die.

Ed Wood Jr., the auteur of *Plan 9 from Outer Space* and *Glen or Glenda?* (and himself a renowned cross-dresser) published *Parisian Passions* which employed psychoanalysis to reveal the source of violent desires.

Jack Benjamin’s *Transvestite ‘69* concluded that no transsexual has ever been cured by psychoanalysis.

A now-rare book, *Hot Pants Homo* followed perhaps the wildest plotline of them all: the hero is cured when he sleeps with his female analyst – a contrivance ridiculed in a review in the gay magazine *Trim*.

Edward D. Wood, Jr., *Parisian passions* (San Diego, Calif. : Corinth Publications, Inc., c1966.)

Jack Benjamin, *Transvestite ‘69* (North Hollywood, Calif. : Barclay House, c1969.)

***Trim*. Washington, D.C. : TRIM Enterprises. no.41 (1964:Dec.)**

The Situation in the United Kingdom

In the United Kingdom, the Wolfenden Report (full name: Report of the Departmental Committee on Homosexual Offences and Prostitution), issued in 1957 stated that “homosexuality cannot legitimately be regarded as a disease, because in many cases it is the only symptom and is compatible with full mental health in other respects” and recommended decriminalization of homosexuality by the British legal system - a change that didn't occur until 1967.

In the wake of the Wolfenden Report, The Homosexual Law Reform Society and the Albany Trust were founded. The Albany Trust published a number of pamphlets arguing the reasons behind the causes of and treatments for homosexuality. The publication *The Homosexual Offender by A Psychiatrist* (ca. 1966) lists treatments for homosexuals, including glandular injections, but notes that “one must be content with modest results”.

Dr. Ernest White's 1963 booklet *The Homosexual Condition*, describes his interaction with patients in therapy and he provides a table (similar to that given by Ernst Bien in 1934) showing the reasons patients sought treatment. In the end, White argued for the view that homosexuality was a treatable illness – as this was more humane than classifying it as a crime.

The Albany Trust's “talking points” pamphlet *Homosexuality and the Sickness Theory* compiled statements from prominent thinkers who opposed the label of homosexuality as a sickness (in the face of a UK survey in 1965 in which 93% of respondents said that homosexuals needed medical or psychological treatment.)

***The Homosexual Offender by a Psychiatrist.* (London : Albany Trust, [1966?])
Ernest White, *The Homosexual Condition : A Study of Fifty Cases in Men* (Derby, England : P. Smith, 1963).**

Louis Crompton, *Homosexuality and the Sickness Theory : A Critique.* (London: Albany Trust, 1969).

DSM: Classification and conflict.

In 1952, in the first edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM), the manual issued by the American Psychiatric Association for the classification of mental disorders, homosexuality was included under the category “sociopathic personality disturbances” – not as a true pathology or disease. The second edition of the DSM, issued in 1968, re-classed homosexuality as a “non-psychotic mental disorder”, effectively making it a disease.

Gay rights groups eventually latched onto this change and argued strongly against the psychiatric establishment, aided by many professionals, such as Evelyn Hooker, a psychologist whose work had shown normal social adjustment in groups of male homosexuals. The third edition of the DSM, issued in 1973, removed homosexuality from the category of mental disorders, following a very heated and vocal period of fighting inside and outside the professional field of psychiatry – a change that owed as much to political will as to changing attitudes about sexual identity. Furthermore, the decision was not just an act of clinical redefinition, but a culminative moment of the discourse among psychiatry, popular culture, rights movements in general, and the assertion of sexual individualism – the view that sex is not intended exclusively for procreation.

Many dissenting voices in the field of psychiatry, such as Charles Socarides and Joseph Nicolosi continued to refute the official de-pathologization of homosexuality and maintained practices aimed at curing sexual inversion. The DSM was amended in 1980 to include “ego-dystonic homosexuality” – providing a diagnosis for persons wishing to change their orientation.

***Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.* [Washington: American Psychiatric Association]:**

First edition, Twelfth printing, October 1958

Second edition, Sixth printing, October 1973

Second edition, Eighth printing, May 1975

Third edition, Third printing, September 1980

The Gay Poet Counters Psychoanalysis

Poetry and psychoanalysis are aligned because both function as systems of vocabularies, rhetorics and semantics and are involved with the unmasking and/or explanation of meaning. Gay poets have written about their experiences with psychoanalysis and its effects.

“In Memory of Sigmund Freud”, W. H. Auden’s response to the death of the doctor in September 1939 uses the elegy form to consider what the father of psychoanalysis had given the world:

“. . . if often he was wrong and, at times, absurd,
to us he is no more a person
now but a whole climate of opinion
under whom we conduct our different lives . . . “

Auden, who was a long-term admirer of Freud’s work, ends the poem by invoking two facets of love:

“One rational voice is dumb; over a grave
The household of impulse mourns one dearly loved:
Sad is Eros, builder of cities,
And weeping anarchic Aphrodite.”

Jack Spicer’s “Psychoanalysis: An Elegy” (written in 1949, but which only appeared in *The Evergreen Review* in 1957 - in the same issue as Allen Ginsberg’s “Howl”), uses the analyst/analysand dialogue format to explore the quest for meaning that engages both therapists and poets.

Judy Grahn, who would later become known for her landmark *Another Mother Tongue: Gay Words, Gay Worlds* (1984) published Edward the Dyke in 1971 which begins with the

eponymous poem, originally written in 1964, in which the hero(ine) is subjected to shock aversion treatment.

W. H. Auden “In Memory of Sigmund Freud” IN: *Horizon* 1.3 (March 1940).

Jack Spicer, "Psychoanalysis: An Elegy" IN: *Evergreen Review* (1957).

Judy Grahn, *Edward the Dyke : and other poems* (Oakland, Calif. : Women’s Press Collective, 1971).

Photograph of Jack Spicer, 1954, by Robert Berg, courtesy of the estate of Jack Spicer

Photograph of Judy Grahn, 1988, by Robert Giard, from the Robert Giard Papers

Section 5: Case studies of entanglements with Psychoanalysis

Personal histories

Autobiographies of a number of gay men and women who came of age in the mid-20th century include accounts of their entanglements with psychoanalysis and related therapies. James Merrill’s *A Different Person* includes a recurring topic – his visits with the psychoanalyst Dr. Thomas Detre. Their first session starts one chapter of the book.

Equally focused on the quest for an answer to the puzzle of homosexuality is Martin Duberman’s *Cures*, - a memoir with an unambiguous title - about the primary conflict in the historian’s young life. A section from the book describes Duberman’s experience with a therapist in 1957 just after he had arrived as an instructor in History at Yale, his alma mater.

James Merrill, *A Different Person: A Memoir* (New York : Knopf, 1993.)

Martin Duberman, *Cures: A Gay Man’s Odyssey* (New York : Dutton Book, 1991.)

Photograph of Martin Duberman, 1987, by Robert Giard, from the Robert Giard Papers

Two literary archives in Beinecke Library’s collection provide more in-depth documentation about personal interactions with therapy. Contrasting stories are provided by Glenway Wescott and Edmund White.

Glenway Wescott

Journal pages and notes document a period in the life of Glenway Wescott, prize-winning author of fiction and essays. While he did not seek help to salve discomfort about his sexual identity, he

did agree to see an analyst after repeated requests by his sister-in-law, Barbara Harrison - in order to maintain family peace and to insure his own livelihood.

Harrison, who had been close to Wescott and his long-time partner Monroe Wheeler since the 1920s (partnering with Wheeler to run the press Harrison of Paris), married Wescott's brother, Lloyd in 1935 and eventually settled on a farm in New Jersey. Glenway Wescott lived in on the farm as well, supported by an allowance from the couple. Barbara endured a series of psychological breaks in the 1940s, then, after seeing a number of different psychoanalysts, ending up devoted to Karen Horney, a German-born practitioner who had broken with traditional Freudian teaching to develop a model that more directly addressed the needs of women.

After continued urging by his sister-in-law, Wescott agreed to see a therapist, a Dr. Lovell, "as an act of faith and to improve my manners", though he railed against psychotherapy in many of his journal entries. In the end, he found value in the consultation, when he discovered that his analyst was not invested in having him change his sexual orientation. The therapy focused instead on Wescott's writer's block, his self-pity about relationships, and a very practical matter that he noted in his journal: "considerations of self-interest" – meaning his ongoing financial support from his sister-in-law, who effectively held the checkbook that paid for his life of leisure and its accompanying neuroses.

His summation of the experience is included in *Continual Lessons*, a published selection of journal entries.

Selections from the Glenway Wescott Papers: Journals from late 1940s with loose pages and notes.

Glenway Wescott, *Continual Lessons : The Journals of Glenway Wescott, 1937-1955*, edited by Robert Phelps with Jerry Rosco. (New York : Farrar Straus Giroux, 1990.)

Photograph of Glenway Wescott with Somerset Maugham and Monroe Wheeler, circa late 1940s, from the Glenway Wescott Papers.

Edmund White

Edmund White has written about psychotherapy openly, both in his memoir "My Lives" and in his fiction, most notably as a theme in his breakthrough novel "A Boy's Own Story". When White was a student at the Cranbrook School in Michigan in the late 1950s, he began seeing a therapist, Dr. James Clark Moloney, in an attempt to be freed of his sexual desires, a goal that was never achieved, due to the therapist's unwillingness to concentrate on the problem despite White's insistence on being cured. Moloney served as the model for Dr. Reilly, who treats the hero of "A Boy's Own Story".

A page from a diary kept by White in 1959 notes his anxiety at not seeing Dr. Moloney for a period of time while typescript pages from a draft of *A Boy's Own Story* show an ambivalence towards psychotherapy.

A paper by Moloney, inscribed to White who notes the connection between the fictional therapist and the real one, discusses the relationship between the analyst and patient, especially in regards to the concept of artistic enlightenment or satori.

In *My Lives*, White recounted a fuller version of his interaction with his first (of several) therapists,

“When I reflect upon my life, which has been touched by psychotherapy in every decade, I realise that during my youth, Freudianism was my main form of intellectuality, a severe, engrossing discipline too devoid of comforting to serve as a substitute for religion. Freudianism developed in me an interest in the individual and his or her sexual development and a strong sense that the progression from one stage to another could go in only one direction in someone healthy.

The 'residue' of this indoctrination was a narrow, normative view of humanity. But when I came to reject Freudianism in my late twenties, I replaced it with its opposite - an interest in groups rather than individuals, a morality that was situationist rather than absolute, and a rejection of every urge to 'totalise,' if that means to submit experience to one master theory. Psychoanalysis did leave me with a few beliefs, including the conviction that everyone is worthy of years and years of intense scrutiny, not a bad credo for a novelist.”

And the effect on his writing: “Now I'd say the worst consequence of my years in psychoanalysis was the way it undermined my instinct. Self-doubt, which is a cousin to self-hatred, became my constant companion. If today I have so few convictions and conceive of myself as merely an anthology of opinions, interchangeable and equally valid, I owe this uncertainty to psychoanalysis. Fiction is my ideal form because a character, even a stand-in for me, occupies a dramatic moment, wants one thing rather than another, serves the master narration. The novel is a story rather than an assertion. A development in time rather than a statement in the eternal present of truth. Fiction suggests that no one is ever disinterested. It does not ask the author to adjudicate among his characters. It is the ultimate arena of situationist ethics.”

Original Youth, a biography of White written by his nephew, Keith Fleming, whom White raised in New York in the 1970s, gives another perspective on the author's attitudes towards psychoanalysis.

Selection from the Edmund White Papers: Diary pages, article by James Moloney, “The Emotional Convictions of the Analyst” offprint from: *Diseases of the Nervous System*. 1957 Dec; Setting typescript for *A Boy's Own Story*.

Edmund White, *A Boy's Own Story* (New York : Dutton, 1982).

Edmund White, *My Lives* (New York : Ecco, 2006.)

Keith Fleming, *Original Youth : The Real Story of Edmund White's Boyhood* : with an introduction by David Leavitt. ([San Francisco, Calif.] : Green Candy Press, 2003.)

Photograph of Edmund White, circa 1985, by Robert Giard from the Robert Giard Papers.