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Author(s): Jane Gerhard

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REVISITING "THE MYTH OF THE VAGINAL ORGASM": THE FEMALE ORGASM IN AMERICAN SEXUAL THOUGHT AND SECOND WAVE FEMINISM

JANE GERHARD

In 1968, Anne Koedt published "The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm" in *Notes from the First Year*, a twenty-nine-page typed journal put out by New York Radical Women.¹ By the time an expanded version appeared in *Notes from the Second Year*, Koedt's article had become a feminist classic.² Koedt set out what would become major concerns of the emergent movement—the meaning of sexual freedom, the political significance of sexual pleasure, and the psychological roots of male domination and female subordination.³ The vaginal orgasm, attained exclusively through intercourse, had long been a keynote in the clamor of expert ideas about female sexual health and normality. When Koedt attacked it as a myth, or more pointedly, as a fraudulent misinformation campaign that created a host of psychological problems for women, she appeared to challenge the very foundation of heterosexuality as it was understood in psychoanalytic, medical, and popular discourse.

Although Koedt's article became one of the more widely disseminated and well-known pieces on the political significance of sexuality, hers was not the only one that addressed the issue of orgasm. In fact, a number of feminists wrote about the meaning of sexual pleasure for women in a patriarchal society and their articles filled anthologies and journals from 1968 to the mid-1970s. Ti-Grace Atkinson, Dana Densmore, Roxanne Dunbar, Germaine Greer, Rita Mae Brown, and Martha Shelley, among others, in groups like Boston's Cell 16, New York's Redstockings and The Feminists, or Washington, D.C.'s the Furies, wrote polemical articles exploring the relationship between female sexuality and male domination.

The loosely affiliated groups that made up the movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s generated new accounts of female sexuality by challenging and reworking the terms of American sexual thought. They did so not through an orchestrated and coherent critique but through a range of writings from different and, at times, antithetical points of view. During these early years of women's liberation, when feminists came of age in and through the rhetoric of sexual liberation, the female orgasm came to signify the political power of women's sexual self-determination. Seeds of what would later flower into the antisex/prosex divide are clearly visible in early feminist discussions of orgasm, yet at the time these neither functioned as labels nor as an organizing rubric.⁴ Rather than being the divisive issue it would become in the 1980s, sexual pleasure in the late 1960s provided feminists with a productive issue that helped generate foundational principles of modern feminism.

Using Koedt's article as a window into one moment of feminist sexual thought is important for a number of reasons. Koedt's piece clearly outlined a gender analysis of the historic discourse on female heterosexuality and articulated the stakes for feminists in it. Starting with Freud in 1905, the vagina had carried the double mission in expert discourse of naturalizing heterosexuality and essentializing the erotic underpinnings of reproduction. Psychoanalysts, physicians, and marriage experts who followed Freud used the diagnosis of frigidity, defined as the absence of an orgasm during intercourse, to establish the parameters of normal female heterosexuality. If psychoanalytic experts had made the vagina into a *synecdoche* for mature and healthy femininity, feminists in the late 1960s sought to make the clitoris the marker of the liberated and autonomous woman. To break out of male-defined notions of female pleasure, Koedt and others embraced the clitoris as a potentially unsituated site of sexual expression in women. Koedt was one of the first feminists to theorize clitoral sexuality as a form of sexual expression tied neither solely to heterosexuality nor homosexuality but to a kind of female sexuality that lay beyond or beneath social designations. The "discovery" of the clitoris as potentially unaligned to any specific sexual identity proved enormously useful to feminist sexual theories and constituted a major break in American sexual thought.

Feminists like Koedt found themselves in the late 1960s facing

two constructions of female heterosexuality that they found particularly loathsome. The first was the sexually passive woman of American Freudianism. The second was the liberated woman of the counterculture. Although the liberated woman, whose most significant trait was her sexual expressiveness, appeared to have nothing to do with the neo-Victorian woman of psychoanalysis, both visions shared an essential heterosexuality that feminists challenged. Feminists did so not to prove that all women were lesbians, although some groups like the Furies did come to believe in women's essential lesbianism. Rather, feminists like Koedt attacked the role sexual practice played in upholding what they deemed as an oppressive gender ideology. Koedt and others attempted to disrupt the chain of significance that linked sexed bodies, proper gender roles, and sexual desire together under the rubric of innate heterosexuality. By doing so, they hoped to liberate women into a fuller sense of sexual empowerment and social agency.

THE WOMAN AS VAGINAL: THE PSYCHOANALYTIC MEANING OF FEMALE SEXUALITY, 1905-1945

As historians of the 1910s and 1920s have noted, the New Woman as a social type emerged in response to the suffrage movement, the advent of Freudian psychoanalysis, and the rise of an impulse-centered, consumer-based economy.⁵ Along with the New Woman came a new style of heterosexuality. The companionate marriage, with its emphasis on romance and sexual pleasure, displaced the Victorian model of marriage oriented to children and family. In this moment of sexual modernism, experts—primarily Freudian psychoanalysts—established new parameters of "normal" female heterosexuality.

Twentieth-century sex experts reinvented female heterosexuality through their theories about the female orgasm and genitals and through their treatment for female sexual dysfunction such as frigidity, nymphomania, and hysteria. However, medical experts had long debated the significance of the clitoris and women's orgasms. These debates centered on a number of themes, including whether women required orgasm to be fertile; if women suffered unhealthy pelvic congestion from sexual stimulation, thus making orgasm a crucial element of a woman's physical and

mental well-being; and the social ramifications of "excessive" female desire on marriage and the family. Nineteenth-century experts, such as C. Bigelow, William Goodell, G. Kolischer, and Richard von Krafft-Ebing, agreed that intercourse was healthy for women but disagreed about whether women required orgasm to reap its full rewards.⁶ Experts also debated the role the clitoris should or could play in healthy female sexuality. Most worried that manipulation of the clitoris by the partner or by the woman herself would lead directly to compulsive masturbation, nymphomania, or an outright rejection of intercourse.⁷ Anxiety about the clitoris and its potential to unsettle heterosexual hierarchies also permeated medical representations of the organ itself. Early-nineteenth-century anatomy textbooks noted the existence of the clitoris but believed that, unlike the supposedly analogous penis, the clitoris was passive and unimportant to female sexual expression. By the twentieth century, most, including the industry standard *Gray's Anatomy*, did not label the clitoris or discuss its function.⁸ Thus, when Freud entered into the debate about the nature of female sexual desire in 1905, he did so at a moment when information about the female orgasm and the clitoris were at best discussed as extraneous components of women's essential heterosexual identity.

In *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905), Freud set the terms for the psychoanalytic understanding of female sexuality, specifically the opposition between clitoral and vaginal sexuality as "immature" and "mature" forms of female development.⁹ In his third essay, "The Transformations of Puberty," Freud argued that the adolescent girl transferred her leading genital zone from the clitoris to the vagina. She, who had previously (if unconsciously) enjoyed the clitoris as the center of her fledgling libidinous pleasures, no longer did so. This shift constituted a profound change. Up to this point in her development, the girl had been, for all intents and purposes, "a little man." Like her brother, the girl was motivated by what Freud characterized as a "masculine" libido which was attached to her original love object, her mother. However, the girl's state of pre-Oedipal, libidinal attachment to her mother was short-lived. She quickly came to realize that her clitoris was inadequate in size and function to the penis. Freud postulated that at this point the girl gave up her mother in favor of her father and a powerful wave of repression carried her into her

latency period. He suggested that when the girl emerged from latency, her erotic "transfer" would have been completed and she would find her vagina fully eroticized. The clitoris, in this context, would no longer be the woman's dominant sexual organ.

Freud's transfer theory acknowledged the clitoris as a sexual organ on entirely new, psychoanalytic terms. At the very same moment, however, he also pathologized it as being out of step with mature femininity. The clitoris had a moment where it reigned supreme and uncontested. But the imperatives of femininity dictated that its reign would be short. Ideally, Freud wrote, the clitoris would come to function like "a pine shaving" to help "set a log of harder wood on fire." As he explained, women's monumental transfer of erotic zones and shift in their libidinal organization put them at greater risk of psychological ailments than men. If the transfer was not complete and the clitoris remained the center of a woman's sexuality, she ran the risk of suffering from such psychological problems as penis envy, hostility toward men, hysteria, and neurotic discontent.¹⁰

The transfer theory introduced an unstated yet pervasive problem in Freud's conception of female sexuality. As a story of development, the transfer theory created a moment where the young girl stood outside of sexual categories.¹¹ Her heterosexual identity would be consolidated only when the girl shifted her libido away from the mother and the clitoris and on to the father and the vagina. Ironically, this very Freudian moment inadvertently established a liminal space into the girl's development of her (hetero-) sexual identity. Within the terms of psychoanalysis, the girl, for a brief moment, existed between sexual identities, she was neither purely masculine nor feminine, neither simply homosexual nor purely heterosexual, but somehow all of these at once. The outcome of such liminality, of temporarily existing between genders and sexualities, was an instability at the heart of the girl's heterosexual identity.

Freudians in the 1930s and 1940s tried to solve this problem by rooting an essential heterosexual identity in the female body. Toward this end, the vaginal orgasm and its shadow, vaginal frigidity, became two central components of Freudian femininity. Karl Abraham, Edmund Bergler, Marie Bonaparte, Helene Deutsch, Karen Horney, Eduard Hitschmann, and Clara Thompson, among others, selectively developed Freud's legacy for the psychoanalytic

meaning of female sexuality for Americans in the interwar years.¹² These experts first assumed and then detailed, among other things, the masculine character of the clitoris and its association with infancy, the shift from clitoral to vaginal sexuality as part of a biological imperative toward reproduction, and the association between women's psychological makeup and their entry into or rejection of heterosexuality. Thus while Koedt correctly pointed to Freud as a "father of the vaginal orgasm," he alone was not responsible for the volumes of medical, psychiatric, and popular writings which she and other feminists in the Second Wave rejected as oppressive to women.¹³ Rather it was this widely circulating discourse about female sexuality, generated by Freudians, contributed to by medical experts and popularizers, that elevated the twin notions of the vaginal orgasm and frigidity to the heights they enjoyed from the 1920s through the 1960s.

Psychoanalyst Helene Deutsch and the team of Eduard Hitschmann and Edmund Bergler most directly addressed the problem of frigidity and the ideal of the vaginal orgasm in the 1930s and 1940s. Deutsch was the first to use the vaginal orgasm as the metaphor for the healthy woman. As one of Freud's favorite students, Deutsch enjoyed his "blessings" on her work on femininity.¹⁴ Deutsch, like her fellow analyst Karen Horney, actively discussed and debated with Freud throughout the 1920s his theories of female development. Both disagreed with the masculine assumptions underwriting much of his work on women. Unlike Horney who broke away from Freud, Deutsch found a way to reconcile her notions of women's difference with Freudian orthodoxy. She did so by accepting the transfer theory, dismissing penis envy, and adding a view of the vagina and its sensations as producing an essential female heterosexuality.¹⁵ In this way, Deutsch positively situated the origin of women's sexual and gender identity in their bodies. Deutsch's *The Psychology of Women* (1944), which built on her earlier work in the 1920s and 1930s, constituted her most comprehensive statement on the subjects of motherhood, female masochism and narcissism, and the vicissitudes of female sexuality. By the 1950s, *The Psychology of Women* had become a classic in the psychological literature on women: volume two on the psychoanalytic meaning of motherhood was reprinted eleven times by 1960.¹⁶

In *The Psychology of Women*, Deutsch theorized a female sex

drive rooted in the vagina. As did other Freudians, Deutsch infused female sexuality with the values of "healthy" subordination, passivity, dependency, and maternity. In her work, the vagina symbolically brought together women's reproductive and sexual identities, two aspects of women's psychology that psychoanalysis sought to harmonize under the rubric of innate heterosexuality. Like the master, Deutsch too cast the clitoris as the discarded lover in the sexual drama of healthy womanhood. Extending Freud's theories, Deutsch wrote that the young girl's body, quite simply, frustrated her active, clitoral sexuality. Without a penis, the pre-Oedipal girl had no outlet for her aggressive sexuality. This drove her to unconsciously repress and convert her clitoral sexuality into passive and silent "readiness" for vaginal heterosexuality.

Unlike Freud, however, Deutsch used the vagina as a synecdoche for mature femininity. In her work, the healthy woman was herself as "passive" and "masochistic" as the vagina that signified her femininity.¹⁷ Deutsch laced her account of feminine passivity with a deep sense of women's innocence and child like naiveté in all sexual matters. Drawing on the romance of the Sleeping Beauty story, Deutsch explained that the innocent woman and the "silent" vagina passively waited to be "awoken" to heterosexual desire by the penis in a first experience of intercourse, ideally after a period of wooing and reassurances of love. "Just as in pre-historic times, women are more gratified when they grant sexual intimacy only after a long wooing . . . woman wants to be fought for and conquered and awaits her 'defeat' in joyful excitation. . . ." Deutsch explained that women's innocence in matters sexual was indeed so great that "the 'undiscovered' vagina is—in favorable instances—eroticized by an act of rape. . . . This process manifests itself in man's aggressive penetration on the one hand and in the 'overpowering' of the vagina and its transformation into an erogenous sexual zone on the other." Normal women, she went on, come to find what they first experienced as "an act of violence" as "an act of pleasure." Vaginal sexuality, at once mysterious and overpowering, transformed a girl into a woman through its capacity to bring sexual pleasure and reproduction together. The passive girl and the productive proto-mother became one in the face of full heterosexual pleasure. She wrote: "In the ecstasy of the orgasm, the woman experiences herself as a helpless child aban-

doned to her love partner—a deep experience in which her ego becomes the child that she conceives in her fantasy and with which she will continue to identify herself when her fantasies come true."¹⁸

The vaginal orgasm both created and reflected what Deutsch glowingly referred to as "the feminine woman." Feminine women, she wrote, "adapt themselves to their partners and understand them. They are the loveliest and most unaggressive of helpmates and they want to remain in that role. . . . Sexually they are easily excited and rarely frigid . . . they demand love and ardent desire, finding in these a satisfying compensation for the renunciation of their own active desires."¹⁹ In short, women who loved their husbands, embraced motherhood, and accepted their position also enjoyed vaginal orgasms. This chain of association worked backwards as well: women who learned to have vaginal orgasms would also learn to accept their position, come to embrace motherhood, and fall more in love with their husbands. Such conflation between orgasm and femininity, or sexuality and social role, was endemic to the psychoanalytic discourse on vaginal sexuality.

The ideal of women's essential dependency on men solved a major problem for Deutsch and Freudian psychoanalysis in the 1930s and 1940s. A troublesome problem had persisted in orthodox Freudianism: how the young girl, clitoral in her sexual orientation and focused on her original love object, the mother, would come to be heterosexual and, more specifically, vaginal in orientation. Given the conflation between heterosexuality, the vagina, and women's mental health in Freudianism, practitioners had to theorize a developmental path through which the young girl would learn to give up earlier pleasures, pleasures that appeared to indicate women's capacity to desire either or both father and mother. The transfer theory, where women "abandoned" the clitoris for the vagina, provided the only known passage from the girl's earlier masculine orientation to "healthy" feminine heterosexuality.

However, under the best of circumstances, Freudians acknowledged that women's transition into heterosexuality was rife with potential dangers. A woman might succeed in transferring her libido from the clitoris to the vagina but she still ran the risk of frigidity if her original attachment to her mother and identification with her father were not fully resolved. Out of this concern,

psychoanalysts sought to understand and treat women who were trapped, quite literally, in the no-man's land of frigidity.

The diagnosis of frigidity dramatized the conflation between identity and behavior in Freudianism and embodied, quite literally, its profound ambivalence about female sexual expression. Rather than identifying a specific problem, frigidity in the 1930s and 1940s became a highly productive, loosely associated set of ideas that helped to define the normal and abnormal woman. Technically, psychoanalysts labeled a woman frigid if she was unable to reach vaginal orgasm through intercourse. But as a diagnosis, frigidity also contained other related concerns about what constituted normal female sexuality. For instance, if a woman was too sexual or too aggressive, she was labeled frigid. Similarly, if a woman did not enjoy intercourse but did enjoy other forms of sexual exchange, she too was "frigid." At the same time, frigid women also included those deemed to be "neurotically undersexual" or who cared nothing for sexual pleasure. Frigidity thus became a label and a diagnosis that defined how much sexual desire a woman must have and in what kinds of sexual behavior she must engage to be "healthy."

One of the key indicators of an abnormal woman was the incapacity to renounce her clitoris as her dominant sexual organ. Freudians devoted much time and effort to discrediting the clitoris as a pathological site of female sexual feeling and none did so more doggedly than the team of Hirschmann and Bergler. Both had had psychoanalytic training in Europe, near Freud and his circle of analysts, and had emigrated to the United States in the late 1930s. Hirschmann and Deutsch had worked closely in Vienna for a number of years.²⁰ Hirschmann and Bergler's 1936 monograph, *Frigidity in Women: Its Characteristics and Treatment*, translated and published in English in 1948, was the first to focus exclusively on the role of the clitoris in heterosexual women's neurosis.²¹ In this landmark text, they attempted to clarify the diagnostic criteria by which a woman could be called frigid and to set out a treatment plan for curing what they viewed as a burgeoning class of frigid women. Hirschmann and Bergler offered their readers a simple criterion: "It is of no matter whether the woman is aroused during coitus or remains cold, whether the excitement is weak or strong, whether it breaks off at the beginning or the end, slowly or suddenly, whether it is dissipated in preliminary acts,

or has been lacking from the beginning. The sole criterion of frigidity is the absence of the vaginal orgasm."²²

Whereas Deutsch based her work on the power of the vagina, Hitschmann and Bergler based theirs on the potential of the clitoris to undermine healthy femininity. The pathology they detailed resonated with social catastrophe. Hitschmann and Bergler took Freud quite literally when they argued that the clitoris embodied women's refusal to accept their feminine roles. The clitoris represented to them the chaos of women behaving like men, or worse, of overpowering men. The social cost of frigidity, warned the authors, was nothing short of family destruction. Hitschmann and Bergler linked feminism and frigidity as related forms of sexual disorder. They concluded that frigid women, like feminists and lesbians, could not tolerate men being the leader in sexual matters and so instead they harbored neurotic fantasies about their own powers. The authors went so far as to declare that as psychoanalysis cured sexually dissatisfied women, "ridiculous manifestations of the woman's movement would [also] disappear."²³ For Hitschmann and Bergler, the clitoris represented a point of convergence between pathological behaviors and abnormal identities. Implicitly, the vagina functioned as the productive counterpoint that made women feminine and heterosexual.

Such conflation between gender and sexuality helped to make psychoanalysis useful for social commentators and antifeminists in the post-World War II period who insisted that healthy, normal women were sexually passive, essentially maternal, and happily devoted to home and hearth.²⁴ Few helped more in the mainstreaming of Freudianism than Marynia Farnham and Ferdinand Lundberg, whose best-seller *Modern Woman: The Lost Sex*, published in 1947, elaborated on the symbolism of the vaginal orgasm and the implicit antifeminism in psychoanalytic ideas about normal womanhood.²⁵ Translating the complicated language of Freudian psychoanalysis, particularly the work of Deutsch, into popular vernacular, *Modern Woman* attacked feminism as a gender disorder rooted in sexual dysfunction. The authors' analysis of frigidity and feminism contributed to the growing place of vaginal sexuality in dominant narratives of female sexuality in the 1940s and 1950s. Popular Freudianism reached its high-water mark of cultural influence at the same time "an overt antifeminism emerged as a central theme."²⁶

Farnham and Lundberg argued that women's sexual satisfaction required an acceptance of their feminine roles of wife and mother. They again conflated frigidity and feminism, sexuality and gender, viewing feminism as a product of women's sexual dissatisfaction. Feminists rejected motherhood and in so doing, moved women ever-farther from their "normal" sexuality. "For the sexual act to be fully satisfactory to a woman she must, in the depths of her mind, desire, deeply and utterly, to be a mother. . . . The rule is: the less a woman's desire to have children and the greater her desire to emulate the male . . . the less will be her enjoyment of the sex act." Returning to Freud's comparison of the clitoris to a pine shaving, the authors explained the utter passivity of womanhood: "For the male, sex involves an object act of his doing but for the female it does not. . . . Her role is passive. It is not as easy as rolling a log for her. Its easier. It is as easy as being the log itself."²⁷ By linking sexual pleasure to motherhood and passivity, the authors endowed vaginal sexuality with tremendous significance and further extended the view of the vagina as a woman's only normal sexual organ and motherhood as her only normal role.

Koedt's assault on the concept of the vaginal orgasm, then, came out of the ways in which, as a paradigm, it worked to police a specific set of gender traits—sexual dependency, passivity, maternal feelings—as normal, healthy, and essential. The meanings Freudians attached to female sexuality, particularly that of women's subordination to men, made it particularly important for feminists to challenge. Feminists like Koedt set out to reclaim the clitoris—and its association with autonomy, aggression, and feminism—from the jaws of Freudian pathologizing and use it for themselves to re-imagine a new kind of female sexuality.

CLITORAL VISIONS: SEXOLOGY IMAGINES SEXUAL EQUALITY, 1953-1966

According to Koedt, the psychoanalytic diagnosis of frigidity did not merely perpetuate an outdated view of women but had direct effects on the way many women viewed themselves. "The worst damage was done to the mental health of women," wrote Koedt, "who either suffered silently with self-blame, or flocked to psychiatrists looking desperately for the hidden and terrible repression that had kept from them their vaginal destiny." This situation left

women feeling "sexually deprived" and inadequate. "Looking for a cure to a problem that has none can lead a woman on an endless path of self-hatred and insecurity. For she is told by her analyst that not even in her one role allowed in a male society—the role of a woman—is she successful."²⁸ Nothing short of the mental health of women was at stake for Koedt and other feminists who rejected sexual expertise as poisoned by male chauvinism. Whether or not individual women faced an account of their "disordered" sexuality from a psychoanalyst or doctor, as a group, women encountered the messages of psychoanalysis in scholarly, literary, and popular writings, in parenting and marriage advice books, in Hollywood movies, and in mainstream magazines.²⁹

Koedt based her rejection of Freudian psychoanalysis on a new view of the sexually responsive female body generated by sexologists in the 1950s and 1960s. She drew on the sex studies of Alfred C. Kinsey (1953) and William Masters and Virginia Johnson (1966) for their "scientific" account of women's sexual physiology and behavior for her vision of women's sexual liberation.³⁰ Koedt asserted that in contrast to Freud, sexologists started from the "facts" of women's bodies rather than from ideas about proper womanhood.

Koedt embraced sexology for providing what she saw as "neutral" evidence that feminists could use to deconstruct Freudian femininity. Although these sex studies did not attack psychoanalysts for being male chauvinists, they nonetheless challenged the existence of the vaginal orgasm and the interpretation of frigidity as a woman's unconscious rejection of her sex role. Most importantly for Second Wave feminists, sexologists rejected the psychoanalytic pathologizing of the clitoris as a deviant form of sexuality and, in a historic reversal, claimed it as the centerpiece of female sexual response. Sexologists based their new interpretation of female sexuality on the analogy between the clitoris and penis. Such an analogy was not unique to postwar sexologists. Yet unlike earlier sex experts, sexologists used the analogy to advance the importance of the clitoris, not to confirm its pathology. Modern sexology thus provided feminists with information through which they could construct a new view of female sexuality rooted neither in the vagina nor in reproduction but in pleasurable practice.

Sexologists and psychoanalysts approached the study of sexuality very differently. Foremost, modern sexologists saw sexuality

as rooted primarily in bodily sensation rather than in psychological development and the unconscious. As a result of their emphasis on bodily response, Kinsey and Masters and Johnson viewed orgasm as the sole indicator of sexual pleasure. The importance sexologists placed on orgasm, coupled with the positive analogy between the clitoris and the penis, enabled them to argue that female and male sexuality should be seen as more alike than different. For example, both Kinsey and Masters and Johnson dismissed the diagnosis of frigidity for the way in which it confirmed a view of women as less sexual than men. In the 1953 *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*, Kinsey and his colleagues explained that frigidity had popularly come to connote "either an unwillingness or an incapacity to function sexually," neither of which they viewed as accurate. In contrast, they argued that women and men shared the physiological capacity to respond to sexual stimulation.³¹ The researchers used a human-species model that framed a woman's sexual response to be analogous to a physiological system that was hardwired into her body like those required in breathing or digestion. In locating, if only hypothetically, the "naturally" orgasmic woman within every so-called frigid woman, Kinsey asserted that females' sexual responsiveness, like males', followed accurate and pleasurable sexual technique. Masters and Johnson's 1966 *Human Sexual Response* followed Kinsey's lead. They too viewed frigidity as a result of poor sexual technique between a couple, not of a woman's ambivalence about her social role.

Sexologists and psychoanalysts also held very different views of heterosexual intercourse and the vagina. Sexologists felt no special allegiance to heterosexual intercourse as a pinnacle of sexual expression, nor did they see the vagina as particularly responsive. In a potentially radical statement which feminists like Koedt utilized in their view of female sexual liberation, Kinsey et al. suggested that vaginal intercourse was not necessarily the most pleasurable form of sexual practice for women. With illustrations and diagrams, they explained that the vagina was "insensitive" to touch and did not have the endowment of nerves to make it the center of female sexual response. The authors went so far as to suggest that the vagina was "of minimum importance in contributing to the erotic responses of the female. . . . [and] may even contribute more to the sexual arousal of the male than it does to

the arousal of the female."³² This statement, buried on page 592 of the 800-plus *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*, had the potential to alter substantially not just the heterosexual practice of sex but also the deeply entrenched associations between a woman's sexuality and her gender identity.

Masters and Johnson continued sexology's remapping of women's erogenous zones. Like Kinsey et al., they too argued that the proper counterpart to the penis was not the vagina but the clitoris. Masters and Johnson went even further than their predecessor did in their efforts to refine the scientific understanding of the clitoris. Unlike Kinsey and co-researchers' sociological approach to sexual behavior, Masters and Johnson focused on sexual response by observing women and men engaged in masturbation and sexual intercourse. By charting changes in blood pressure, heart rate, tone of muscles, and color of skin during sexual arousal, the researchers concluded that clitoral stimulation (like stimulation of the penis for men) was by far the most pleasurable sexual technique for women and the one that offered the most consistent level of orgasm. Through their physiological findings, Masters and Johnson could finally and decisively dismiss the psychoanalytic distinction between the clitoral and vaginal orgasm. Rather than separate entities, the researchers showed the clitoris and vagina as connected through a network of nerves and musculature that together constituted female sexual response. Masters and Johnson were the first to monitor the retraction of clitoris under its hood during penetration, a movement which in some women sufficiently stimulated the clitoris to produce orgasm. This, they explained, created the mistaken view that there existed a distinct vaginal orgasm.

Modern sex researchers emphasized the similarities between female and male sexuality. Much of the shock that *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* generated came from the finding that women behaved sexually very much like men did: they masturbated, petted, had premarital sex and extramarital relations. Such behaviors flew in the face of years of expert accounts of women's disinterest in sexual matters. Masters and Johnson's research similarly challenged prevailing views of women's diminished sexuality. The researchers discovered that with proper stimulation of the clitoris, particularly during masturbation, women had the capacity for multiple orgasms. Significantly, women's capacity for multiple or-

gasms was something they did not share with men. In a passage remarkable for its departure from expert writings on female sexuality, the authors portrayed women as remarkably responsive. "The human female," they wrote in a now-famous quote, "frequently is not content with one orgasmic experience. . . . If there is no psychosocial distraction to repress sexual tension, many well-adjusted women enjoy a minimum of three or four orgasmic experiences before they reach apparent satiation."³³

Masters and Johnson crafted an account of female sexuality that inadvertently threw into question the pervasive understanding of heterosexuality as innate and fully satisfied through intercourse with a penis. They, like the Freudians before them, had "discovered" a female sexuality that existed independently from intercourse with men. Much like the way in which the pre-Oedipal girl functioned within psychoanalytic discourse, the new sexological data on the clitoris gave women the potential to exist both inside and outside the circuitry of historically constituted heterosexuality. However, modern sexologists were neither interested in making any claims about the "naturalness" of heterosexuality for women nor in questioning their own assumptions about the social organization of gender. Their goals were both more modest and more immediate. Modern sex researchers set out to reestablish a field and, ideally, to open human sexuality to the clarifying light of science. They sought to "modernize" marriage by improving women's experiences of marital sex. Reimagining a heterosexuality as neither compulsory nor tied to intercourse and situated in marriage was a vision that would come from feminists.

THE POLITICS OF SEXUAL FREEDOM: FEMINISTS THEORIZE THE ORGASM, 1968-1973

Sexologists, particularly Masters and Johnson, found themselves at the epicenter of shifting ideas about sexual liberation in the mid-1960s. The world had changed between 1954, the year that Kinsey lost his Rockefeller Foundation funds, and 1966, when *Human Sexual Response* became an overnight sensation.³⁴ Most centrally, the consensus on keeping adult sexuality a marital affair had eroded. The postwar containment of sexuality in early marriages and through taboos against pre-marital and extramarital sex, which had been in place since the 1940s, no longer seemed

unshakable as a generation of teenagers and young adults questioned the sexual categories and mores of their parents.³⁵ Masters and Johnson's view of women as sexual athletes capable of multiple orgasms suddenly harmonized with the spirit of sexual freedom or, more accurately, sexual experimentation, sweeping the country.³⁶

Sexual liberationists reclaimed sex from the (rhetorical) confines of monogamous marriage and infused it with the symbolic values of authenticity, empowerment, and personal freedom. Radical psychoanalysts like Herbert Marcuse and Norman O. Brown infused sexuality with political significance when they pointed out the links between social and sexual repression.³⁷ Student activists took up Marcuse's political analysis of pleasure and its role in overturning the mind numbing effects of conformity. They promoted sexual expressiveness, unencumbered by the "hang ups" of romance and monogamy, as a key value of the new society.³⁸ Sexual liberationists also drew on the human potential movement led by Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers in the 1950s and early 1960s.³⁹ The "new psychology" saw humans as engaged in growth across a "life cycle." An important aspect of the new psychology was its tolerance of multiple routes to self-actualization.⁴⁰

Unlike Freudians, for whom sexuality marked the unconscious conflict between pleasure and reality, sixties' rebels infused sexuality with the values of autonomy, wholeness, and selfhood. The sexual revolution's emphasis on authenticity led to a powerful celebration of the body as integral to self-expression. The liberated body specifically came to symbolize the new citizen of the sixties' countercultural revolutions: it was a body freed from the effects of racism, classism, technology, and sexual repression. The utopianism of the moment held that the joining of authentic bodies in freedom and in pleasure would provide the glue for the beloved community. In short, sexual liberation had become political.

Anne Koedt's "Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm" appeared when the concern with sexual freedom as a weapon in the battle against repression had yet to be challenged as having gendered implications. Women learning to call themselves feminists found their immediate peer group of male student activists glibly linking social revolutions to sexual liberation without as much as a thought to its meaning for women. As historians of feminism have noted, many political women turned away from the New

Left feeling diminished and belittled by their experience of sexism and sexual objectification.⁴¹ The combination of a revolutionary rhetoric that emphasized sexual freedom, on the one hand, and political women's experience of being ignored, patronized and sexually exploited, on the other, proved toxic for many women. Feminists claimed that women were entitled to both social and sexual independence. Women's desires, be it for emotional intimacy or for extended foreplay, for sex with men or with women, must dictate sexual practice. In this context, feminists recast the historic link between orgasm and femininity. Within early feminism, the female orgasm came to stand in for women's sexual self-determination. Sexual self-determination, in turn, held the promise of full equality with men. Feminists in the late 1960s joined sexual liberation to women's liberation, claiming that one without the other would keep women second-class citizens.

Feminists argued that male experts had never understood women's authentic sexuality, yet they drew on and reworked the tradition of American sexual thought they so criticized. Foremost, feminists used Masters and Johnson's new research on the clitoris to overturn oppressive Freudian views of women's sexual dependency. Ironically, the research which Masters and Johnson and their popularizers utilized to prop up heterosexuality in 1966 was used by feminists a few years later to challenge the innateness of heterosexuality. According to feminists, women's innate sexuality was super-responsive and potentially autonomous from intercourse with a man. The sexological view of the clitoris enabled feminists to reclaim and politicize the sexual ambiguity first introduced by Freud in the 1920s and later pathologized by Freudians in the 1930s and 1940s. Feminists used the now inherent health of the clitoris to breathe new life into Freud's account of the instability of female heterosexuality. Rather than the problem it had been for Freudians, women's difficult passage into heterosexuality was recast by feminists as proof of its unnaturalness. By embracing the radical potential of liminality, radical feminists cast women's sexual self-determination as a way to transcend the problems of sexual classifications like lesbianism and heterosexuality and to overcome the problem of patriarchal control over female sexuality.

Koedt's attention to the female orgasm took place in tandem with other feminists who were similarly concerned with the status of female sexuality in a male-dominated society. Betty Frie-

dan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* (1970), and Shulamith Firestone's *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* (1970) had each adopted and transformed psychoanalysis in their analyses of the intersection between identity and sexuality for women.⁴² Koedt's contribution to this discourse was to elaborate the symbolic meaning of the vagina in constructions of normal womanhood. Further, she outlined the potential of the clitoris to undermine the century-long story experts had told about women's essential dependency on men and the penis for sexual and emotional fulfillment. Koedt and other feminists countered expert attention to the vagina with new accounts of the clitoris as enabling women's sexual self-determination. Thus, part of the impact of Koedt's essay came out of its connections to and expansion of other feminist writings on female sexuality.

In "The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm," Koedt objected to the damage done to women and rejected psychoanalytic explanations of frigidity that refused to see women's sexual dysfunction as related to the larger societal dysfunction of sexism, homophobia, and enforced heterosexuality. Psychoanalysis, she complained, had pathologized women instead of addressing the problem of male indifference to women's desires. "Rather than tracing female frigidity to the false assumptions about female anatomy," wrote Koedt, "our 'experts' have declared frigidity a psychological problem . . . diagnosed generally as a failure to adjust to their role as women." According to Koedt, women must become full sexual agents, responsible for claiming their own pleasure. She wrote: "We must discard 'normal' concepts of sex and create new guidelines which take into account mutual sexual enjoyment. . . . We must begin to demand that if certain sexual positions now defined as 'standard' are not mutually conducive to orgasm, they no longer be defined as standard."⁴³

In "The Institution of Sexual Intercourse," Ti-Grace Atkinson, former protégé of Betty Friedan, also critiqued the psychoanalytic ideal of the vaginal orgasm.⁴⁴ If women did not find heterosexual intercourse pleasurable, she reasoned, it was because, as an institution of patriarchal control, sexual intercourse was not suited to fully stimulate or satisfy women's (clitoral) sexuality. Like Friedan and Millett, Koedt and Atkinson argued that psychoanalysis understood female sexual "dysfunction" as a result of women's failure to adjust to their social roles. A feminist analysis, Atkinson

countered, reversed this view and insisted that women's social roles caused women's sexual "dysfunction." By freeing women from oppressive social roles, women would be freed to explore the true nature of their desires outside of patriarchal phallic intercourse.

Koedt and Atkinson further extended Millett's concept of sexual politics with their analysis of the *practice* of sexual intercourse as upholding men's social power over women. Male experts, according to radical feminists, denied the centrality of the clitoris to female sexuality because they felt threatened by the prospect of women as separate, desiring subjects. Koedt wrote: "It seems clear to me that men in fact fear the clitoris as a threat to their masculinity. . . . The establishment of clitoral orgasm as fact would threaten the heterosexual *institution*. For it would indicate that sexual pleasure was obtainable from either men or women, thus making heterosexuality not an absolute, but an option."⁴⁵ Koedt thus articulated the links between patriarchy, male experts, and accounts of normal heterosexuality. She argued that the specter of an independent female sexuality, signified through the clitoris, threatened to alter the meaning of gender itself.

To liberate women from the Freudian view that women were naturally maternal, feminists emphasized women's capacity for orgasm and enjoyment of sex. Psychiatrist Mary Jane Sherfey argued in 1970 that "coital frigidity" was due to the absence of "frequent prolonged coitus" which women needed to satiate their intense and biological drive for multiple orgasms. She proposed that modern patriarchal civilization required the repression of "women's inordinate sexual demands."⁴⁶ Martha Shelley, in her 1970 "Notes of a Radical Lesbian" viewed a liberated female body as a resource for feminism. She wrote from the standpoint of a lesbian for whom sex with women strengthened her self-esteem and sense of personal agency.⁴⁷ Germaine Greer wrote as a sex-positive heterosexual feminist in her 1970 best-seller *The Female Eunuch*. An Australian-born sex radical, Greer was committed to both sexual freedom and women's liberation. In contrast to other feminists who emphasized the clitoris, Greer infused the vagina with the symbolism of full bodily pleasure and sexual agency. Unlike Koedt who cited Freud, Kinsey, Masters and Johnson and their popularizers in her essay, Greer revisited Helene Deutsch and her conception of the "vaginal woman." Greer complained

that although Deutsch rightly embraced the vagina as important to women, the cultural messages Deutsch attached to the vagina were misguided. According to Greer, the "lovely helpmate" described by Deutsch was "a vain, demanding, servile bore . . . a woman born to be abandoned by her ungrateful husband."⁴⁸ Greer's message in *The Female Eunuch* was simple: women must harness the power of sexual pleasure to feminism.

Yet as many women discovered, celebrating sexual pleasure as key to women's liberation did not necessarily eradicate what many women felt to be the sexism of the sexual revolution.⁴⁹ Dana Densmore of Boston's Cell 16 complained that women were as oppressed by sexual liberation as they were by sexual repression. She wrote in 1971 that instead of being intimidated by psychiatrists for their lack of vaginal sexuality, women now found themselves oppressed by an "orgasm frenzy." "Our 'right' to enjoy our own bodies has not only been bestowed upon us," wrote Densmore, "it is almost a duty. . . . Everywhere we are sexual objects, and our own enjoyment just enhances our attractiveness. We are wanton. We wear miniskirts and see-through tops. We're sexy. We're free. We run around and hop into bed whenever we please . . . and people seem to believe that sexual freedom (even when it is only the freedom to actively offer oneself as a willing object) is freedom."⁵⁰ Another writer explained that in the eyes of their male peers, women were "too sick to appreciate the benefits of free love" and needed enlightenment. "Suddenly men became concerned with my hang-ups and insistent that I accept their offers of instant liberation. Sexual exploitation was now disguised as participating in the new society."⁵¹ Roxanne Dunbar, also of Cell 16, complained that sexual liberation had come to mean "the 'freedom' to 'make it' with anyone, anytime." Women's liberation, she argued, could not simply be equated with sexual freedom because many women experienced sex not just as an arena of pleasure but as "brutalization, rape, submission, [and] someone having power over them."⁵²

Some feminists leery of the revolutionary potential of sexual pleasure reintroduced the idea that what women really wanted from sex was not orgasm but intimacy and love. Reworking a tradition of American sexual thought that emphasized romance over orgasm for women, elevated and celebrated by Deutsch in the 1940s, these feminists theorized psychological intimacy as a

unique and unappreciated form of female sexuality. Rejecting traditional concepts of sexual pleasure, radical feminists sought to open up all feelings as sexual for women. Their vision of liminality cast the desire for intimacy as authentically female and the desire for something as tangible as orgasm an oppressive feature of male-dominated society.

Feminists like Dunbar and Densmore symbolically attributed autonomy to the clitoris and then used it to reinvent sexual freedom for women. Once again, the clitoris helped produce a place between heterosexuality and homosexuality, a place occupied by the sexually autonomous "feminist." For example, Densmore made a case that physical pleasure was not the most important feature of sex for women. Citing Masters and Johnson's research, she wrote, "an orgasm for a woman isn't a release in the same sense that it is for a man, since we are capable of an indefinite number, remaining aroused the whole time, limited only by exhaustion. The release we feel, therefore, is psychological. . . . Without denying that sex can be pleasurable, I suggest that the real thing we seek is closeness, merging, perhaps a kind of oblivion of self. . . ."53

The feminist analysis of women's sexual self-determination, forged through their symbolic reworking of the clitoris, also revolutionized the meaning of lesbianism. This new version of lesbianism emerged out of the unmooring of female sexuality from heterosexual phallic sex. Once feminists had reintroduced the idea that psychological intimacy was the true origin of female sexual pleasure, the line demarcating heterosexual and lesbian women blurred. If sexual intercourse was an instrument of patriarchal control and orgasm a male myth, then emotional closeness became the basis for all sexuality. In this light, lesbianism became a form of resistance to male oppression, not an "illness." The Lavender Menace, which later became the Radicalesbians, offered in "The Woman-Identified Woman" an important challenge to the homophobia circulating in some feminists circles.⁵⁴ This paper theorized lesbianism as an emotional and political choice rather than a (deviant) sexual object choice. A woman-identified woman, the paper explained, did not place hetero- or homosexuality at the center of her identity; rather she put her emotional relationships with other women first. "Only women can give to each other a new sense of self. That identity we have to develop with reference to ourselves, and not in relation to men."⁵⁵

Feminists who claimed intimacy and not orgasm as the centerpiece of female sexuality again reworked sex expert discourse. They radicalized what on the surface seemed like the return of the asexual Victorian woman. Yet unlike sex experts, feminists explained that emotional closeness was sexuality for women, or was as much a part of sexuality as the orgasm. Unlike other groups of radical feminists, these feminists minimized the clitoris as part of a sexual system obsessively concerned with orgasm and narrowly focused on the genitals. The feminist analysis of psychological intimacy as sexual, then, was a gesture towards liberating women from the confines of an expert discourse that many women-identified feminists believed had deliberately misunderstood female sexuality for most of the century.

The discussion within Second Wave feminism over the nature of women's sexuality and the significance of the female orgasm created a radical body of writing that both intervened into American understandings of sexuality and generated new accounts of the female body. The productivity of this extended moment in early feminism, between 1968 and 1973, lay in feminists' unwillingness to become entangled in what they viewed as the artificial divide between lesbianism and heterosexuality. In claiming sexual self-definition as key to women's sexual and social empowerment, early sixties' feminists chose to move beyond experts with their accounts of the pathology of lesbianism and the neurotic hysteria of female heterosexuality. They opted instead to use ambiguity to unsettle the links between gender and sexuality, specifically those made between healthy women and vaginal orgasms by Freudian experts earlier in the century and those forged by sixties' counter-cultural rebels between modern women and liberated sex. Staged against both models, feminists recast the clitoris and its pleasures as the symbol of women's sexual self-determination.

Radical feminist sexual theory both drew on and opposed earlier discourses in which female sexuality had been cast as a defining metaphor that justified women's social subordination. Freudians in the interwar years distilled into their theories of sexuality a view of women as fundamentally dependent on men, emotionally passive and naive, and essentially maternal. Armed with the postwar sex studies of Kinsey et al. and Masters and

Johnson, feminists set out to unravel the symbolic ties between women's social and sexual subordination. Drawing as well on countercultural critiques of Freudianism and its new symbolic investments in the idea of sexual liberation, feminists offered a counterdiscursive model of female sexuality by infusing it with the new values of self-determination, autonomy, and equality.

However, the emphasis on sexual freedom and the counter-hegemonic possibilities of a liberated female sexuality was not uniformly adopted by all radical feminists. For radical women of color, the emphasis on sexuality was problematic. Francis M. Beal, for example, argued in 1969 that white women's groups must define overlapping structural forms of racial and sexual oppression and not conceptualize oppression only as the "vicarious pleasure" men derive from "'consuming [women's] bodies for exploitative reasons.'"⁵⁶ Other radical Black women dismissed the revolutionary possibility of white feminism precisely because of its reliance on the fiction of the "universal" woman. Facing sexism and homophobia from their male colleagues in the civil rights and Black power movements, on the one hand, and racism from white feminists, on the other, by the mid-1970s Black radical women found themselves in an undeniable paradox where "all the men are black, all the women are white."⁵⁷ Although Black feminists claimed sexual pleasure as a right and as important to female empowerment, they did so in and through the experiences of sexual exploitation and violently racist denial of their privacy and bodily integrity. This history shaped Black feminism as it emerged in the 1980s.⁵⁸

In the years between 1967 and 1973, many radical feminists sought to engage with women other than the white middle-class women who comprised most of the groups. But they met with limited success. Part of their inability to create more racially diverse women's groups lay in the very methodology they utilized to revolutionize the category "woman." Basing the new feminist expertise on lived experiences, on consciousness-raising stories which tended to be filtered through an emphasis on sexuality, was itself unintentionally exclusionary. Not all women felt comfortable openly discussing sex, nor did all women feel articulate in the same ways the predominately university-trained white women prioritized. Differences based on class, race, and sexual orientation divided women within the movement as radical

women of all sorts sought out groups of like-minded women who shared similar world views and political agendas. This created from the very beginnings of radical feminism different groups with different trajectories, but all which claimed the mantle of feminism.

Debates between feminists on the meaning of sexual freedom for women in the years between 1968 and 1973 foreshadowed tensions between radical and "cultural" feminists in the late 1970s and the battle lines between sex radicals and antipornography feminists in the early 1980s. The rise of cultural feminism, denoted by the antipornography movement in the mid-1970s, new psychological theories of women's essential differences, and lesbian feminism fundamentally changed the direction of feminist sexual theories. The historic critiques of sexual violence by cultural feminists left behind the earlier concern with orgasm.⁵⁹ By the late 1970s, the vision of female sexuality as decidedly unlike male sexuality came to be ascendant: instead of pleasure, women pursued connection; instead of orgasm, women focused on intimacy; instead of phallic, sex became touching, looking, and kissing. This description of authentic female sexuality was not shared by all feminists in the late 1970s and 1980s. In reaction to what some dismissed as "politically correct sex," sex radicals, anticensorship feminists and those claiming the legacy of radical feminism's celebration of sexual expression mobilized in the early 1980s to revisit the radical possibility of sexual freedom for women. Tensions between competing groups of feminists broke out at the "The Scholar and the Feminist" conference on female sexuality held at Barnard College in 1982, which came to be known as "the Sex Wars."⁶⁰

However divisive and painful, the prosex/antisex labels bequeathed from the feminist sex wars should not be used as historical paradigms for reading radical feminism. To do so is to misremember that multiple analyses of sexuality existed simultaneously in radical feminism. The celebration of sexual freedom and the critique of sexual liberation, sex as pleasure and as danger, as liberation and exploitation, existed side by side in the years between 1968 and 1973. Cultural and radical feminists, antipornography and anticensorship feminists, lesbian separatists and sex radicals who battled in the late 1970s and the 1980s all derived a large part of their political vitality from this moment of sexual radicalism in early feminism where women dared to reinvent female sexuality.

Our histories must remember that the radicalism of Second Wave feminism emerged, to no small degree, from the state of not knowing the boundaries of female sexual pleasure. After dismantling what they viewed as oppressive constructs reigning in female sexuality, feminists in the late 1960s took the radical position of questioning everything, trusting women's desires wherever they might lead, and sabotaging any theory that proposed to secure, at last, the true nature of female sexual pleasure.

NOTES

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1. Anne Koedt, "The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm," *Notes from the First Year* (New York: New York Radical Feminists, 1968), 11.
2. Anne Koedt, "The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm," *Notes from the Second Year* (New York: New York Radical Feminists, 1970), 37-41. Koedt's article also appeared in *Radical Feminism*, ed. Anne Koedt, Ellen Levine, and Anita Rapone (New York: Quadrangle Books, 1973), 198-207. All citations that follow come from the version in *Radical Feminism*.
3. Histories of the Second Wave of feminism include Flora Davis, *Moving the Mountain: The Women's Movement in America since 1960* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991); Judith Grant, *Fundamental Feminism: Contesting the Core Concepts of Feminist Theory* (New York: Routledge, 1993); Alice Echols, *Daring to Be Bad: Radical Feminism in America, 1968-1975* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988); Sara Evans, *Personal Politics: The Roots of the Women's Liberation Movement in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left* (New York: Vintage, 1979); Barbara Ryan, *Feminism and the Women's Movement: Dynamics of Change in Social Movement Ideology and Activism* (New York: Routledge, 1992); Lauri Umansky, *Motherhood Reconceived: Feminism and the Legacy of the Sixties* (New York: New York University Press, 1996); and Winifred Wandersee, *On the Move: American Women in the 1970s* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1988).
4. The pro- and anti-sex divide in feminism can be traced to the 1982 Barnard Conference, "The Scholar and the Feminist." Papers from that conference are collected in *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality*, ed. Carole S. Vance (London: Pandora, 1984).
5. Nancy Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987); Johnathan Ned Katz, *The Invention of Heterosexuality* (New York: Dutton, 1995); Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986); Christina Simmons, "Companionate Marriage and the Lesbian Threat," *Frontiers* 4, no. 3 (1979): 54-59; June Sochen, *The New Woman in Greenwich Village, 1910-1920* (New York: Quadrangle Books, 1972); Ellen Kay Trimberger, "Feminism, Men, and Modern Love: Greenwich Village, 1900-1925," in *The Powers of Desire*, ed. Anne Snitow, Christine Stansell, and Sharon Thompson (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983), 131-15; and Kevin White, *The First Sexual Revolution: The Emergence of Male Heterosexuality in Modern America* (New York: New York University Press, 1993).
6. Rachel P. Maines, *The Technology of Orgasm: "Hysteria," the Vibrator, and Women's Sex-*

ual Satisfaction (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 50-53. For a discussion of nymphomania, see Elizabeth Lunbeck, *The Psychiatric Persuasion: Knowledge, Gender, and Power in Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

7. Maines, 53.

8. Lisa Jean Moore and Adele E. Clarke, "Clitoral Conventions and Transgressions: Graphic Representations in Anatomy Texts, c. 1900-1991," *Feminist Studies* 21 (summer 1995): 255-301.

9. Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905), *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. and trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1953-1974): 7, 73-109.

10. *Ibid.*, 87.

11. Nancy Chodorow proposes that this pre-Oedipal moment of psychological and libidinal focus on the mother, which both girls and boys experience, is best called "gyne-sexuality" or "matrisexuality" for its exclusive focus on the mother, specifically, not on a classification of persons. See *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 95.

12. Karl Abraham, "Manifestations of the Female Castration Complex," *The Selected Papers on Psycho-Analysis* (London: The Hogarth Press Ltd., 1927); Marie Bonaparte, *Female Sexuality* (New York: Grove Press, 1953); Helene Deutsch, *The Psychology of Women: A Psychoanalytic Interpretation*, vols. 1 and 2 (New York: Grune & Stratton, 1944 and 1945); Karen Horney, "The Flight from Womanhood: The Masculinity Complex in Women as Viewed by Men and by Women," *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 7 (1926): 324-39, and "The Problem of Feminine Masochism," *Psychoanalytic Review* 12, no. 3 (1935): 241-57; Eduard Hitschmann and Edmund Bergler, *Frigidity in Women: Its Characteristics and Treatment* (New York: Nervous and Mental Disease Monographs, 1936, trans. 1948); Clara Thompson, "'Penis Envy' in Women," *Psychiatry* 6 (1943): 123-25, and "Some Effects of the Derogatory Attitude toward Female Sexuality," *Psychiatry* 13 (1950): 349-54.

13. Thomas Laqueur similarly views Freud as the inventor of the "cultural myth of the vaginal orgasm," in *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 243.

14. Paul Roazen, *Helene Deutsch: A Psychoanalyst's Life* (New York: Doubleday, 1985), chap. 10; Edith Kurzweil, *Freudians and Feminists* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995), 26-29, 40-44.

15. Mari Jo Buhle, *Feminism and Its Discontents: A Century of Struggle with Psychoanalysis* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 80-81.

16. Helene Deutsch, *The Psychology of Women: A Psychoanalytic Interpretation*, vols. 1 and 2 (New York: Grune & Stratton, 1944 and 1945). Earlier writings by Deutsch include *Psychoanalysis of the Sexual Functions of Women* (Vienna, 1925); "The Psychology of Women in Relation to the Functions of Reproduction," *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 6 (1926); and "The Significance of Masochism in the Mental Life of Women," *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 11 (1930).

17. Laqueur and Emily Martin, *The Woman in the Body: A Cultural Analysis of Reproduction* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987), explain, in very different ways, the fallacies of reading the vagina as passive.

18. Deutsch, *Psychology of Women*, 195, 79-80, 92.

19. *Ibid.*, 192.

20. Roazen, 158.

21. Hitschmann and Bergler. Other writings include Edmund Bergler, "Frigidity in the Female—Misconceptions and Facts," *Marriage Hygiene* 1 (August 1947): 16-21; Hitschmann and Bergler, "Frigidity in Women: Restatement and Renewed Experiences," *Psychoanalytic Review* 36 (1949): 51-55.

22. Hitschmann and Bergler, "Frigidity in Women," 20.

23. *Ibid.*, 5.
24. Elaine May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988).
25. Marynia Farnham and Ferdinand Lundberg, *Modern Woman: The Lost Sex* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1947).
26. Buhle, 171.
27. Farnham and Lundberg, 173, 265, 275.
28. Koedt, 201, 204.
29. Buhle; Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: Basic Books, 1963); Nathan Hale, *The Rise and Crisis of Psychoanalysis in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Ellen Herman, *The Romance of American Psychology: Political Culture in the Age of Experts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Lunbeck; Janet Walker, *Couching Resistance: Women, Film, and Psychoanalytic Psychiatry* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).
30. Alfred C. Kinsey et al., *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders Co., 1953); William Masters and Virginia Johnson, *Human Sexual Response* (Boston: Little, Brown, & Co., 1966).
31. Kinsey et al., 373, 374.
32. *Ibid.*, 592.
33. *Ibid.*, 286, 65.
34. The first printing (15,000) of *Human Sexual Response* sold out the day it went on sale and it spent six months on the *New York Times* best-seller list. More than 300,000 copies of the book sold in hardback and 500,000 in paperback. Self-help books popularized their techniques to mainstream readers and helped to extend Masters and Johnson's influence on American understandings of sexuality and sex. See David Rubin, M.D., *Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Sex, but Were Afraid to Ask* (New York: Bantam, 1969); Helen Singer Kaplan, *The New Sex Therapy* (New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1972); and Seymour Fisher, *The Female Orgasm: Psychology, Physiology, Fantasy* (New York: Basic Books, 1973). See also the Committee on Human Sexuality, *Human Sexuality* (American Medical Association, 1972) for an example of the acceptance of *Human Sexual Response* by mainstream American medicine.
35. May.
36. John D'Emilio and Estelle Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 301-26.
37. Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955, 1966); Norman O. Brown, *Life against Death: The Psychoanalytic Meaning of History* (Middletown, Conn: Wesleyan University Press, 1959).
38. Umansky, 16-52.
39. Abraham Maslow, *Towards a Psychology of Being* (New York: Van Nostrand, 1968); Carl Rogers, *On Becoming a Person: A Therapist's View of Psychotherapy* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1961). For the human potential movement's place in American psychology, see Herman, 264-80. For the new psychology's impact on ideas of masculinity, see Barbara Ehrenreich, *The Hearts of Men: American Dreams and the Flight from Commitment* (New York: Anchor, 1983), 88-99.
40. Ehrenreich, 89-91.
41. Evans, Echols.
42. Friedan; Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1970); Sulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* (New York: Bantam, 1970).
43. Koedt, 38
44. Ti-Grace Atkinson, "The Institution of Sexual Intercourse," in *Notes from the Second Year*, 42. This article can also be found in Atkinson's collected essays, *Amazon Odyssey* (New York: Links Books, 1974). See Echols, 167-69.
45. Koedt, 41.

46. Mary Jane Sherfey, "A Theory on Female Sexuality," in *Sisterhood Is Powerful: An Anthology of Writings from the Women's Liberation Movement*, ed. Robin Morgan (New York: Vintage, 1970), 249. Sherfey published a longer version of this article in 1966 in the *Journal of American Psychoanalytic Association*, entitled "The Evolution and Nature of Female Sexuality in Relation to Psychoanalytic Theory." She subsequently published it as a book, *The Nature and Evolution of Female Sexuality* (New York: Vintage Press, 1972).
47. Martha Shelley, "Notes of a Radical Lesbian," originally appeared in *Come Out* (1969) and was reprinted in *Sisterhood Is Powerful*, 306-11.
48. Germaine Greer, *The Female Eunuch* (New York: Bantam, 1970), 97.
49. For feminist critiques of the sexual revolution, see Dana Densmore, "Independence from the Sexual Revolution," in *No More Fun and Games: A Journal of Female Liberation*, reprinted in *Radical Feminism*, 107-18; Barbara Seaman, "The Liberated Orgasm," *Ms.* 1 (August 1972): 55-59; Anselma Dell'Olio, "The Sexual Revolution Wasn't Our War," *Ms.* 1 (spring 1972): 104-9.
50. Densmore, 110.
51. "Brainwashing and Women," in *Radical Therapist* 1 (August-September 1970): 5.
52. Roxanne Dunbar, "Sexual Liberation: More of the Same Thing," *No More Fun and Games* 3 (November 1969): 49-56, quotation on 49, 56.
53. Densmore, 114.
54. Radicalesbians, "The Woman-Identified Woman," in *Notes from the Third Year: Women's Liberation* (New York: New York Radical Feminists, 1971), reprinted in *Radical Feminism*, 243. See Echols, 214-15.
55. Radicalesbians, 224.
56. Francis M. Beal, "Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female," in *Sisterhood Is Powerful*, 351.
57. Gloria Hull, Patricia Bell Scott, and Barbara Smith, eds., *All the Men Are Black, All the Women Are White, but Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women's Studies* (New York: Feminist Press, 1982).
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59. Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1975); Susan Griffin, *Rape: The Politics of Consciousness* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979); Andrea Dworkin, "Pornography and Grief," in *Take Back the Night: Women on Pornography*, ed. Laura Lederer (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1980), 286-91.
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