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**Alexander Etkind**. *Eros of the Impossible. The History of Psychoanalysis In Russia.* Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 1997. vii + 408 pp. $34.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8133-2712-9.

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**Freud vs. Marx: The Rise and Fall of Psychoanalysis in the SovietUnion**

Russian, Soviet and intellectual historians are extremely fortunate in the almost simultaneous appearance of two books on the topic of Freud and psychoanalysis in Russia and the Soviet Union. They afford a rare opportunity to evaluate these subjects from a comparative perspective and to investigate in more detail one of the twentieth century's most intriguing sagas of the politicization of ideas. Moreover, aside from David Joravsky's more general *Russian Psychology: A Critical History* and the work of Julie Y. Brown on pre-revolutionary Russian psychiatry, this is a field in which good secondary studies are few[1].

>From a stylistic standpoint, Miller's *Freud and the Bolsheviks* and the English language translation of Etkind's earlier (1993) *Eros of the Impossible*, also reward readers by their interesting contrasts in comparative methodology, conceptualization and relative treatment of themes, framing of narrative, and depth of analysis. For example, Miller's tightly written monograph devotes only twenty percent to both Russian psychiatry and the influence of Freudian psychoanalsis in pre-Revolutionary Russia. Etkind by contrast, casts his net more broadly. He devotes fully a third of his book to the period before 1917, and includes under the rubric of Russian psychiatry and the Freudian experience there two notable Russians relatively absent from Miller's discussion: Lou Andreas-Salome and Sergei Pankeev–Freud's famous "Wolf Man." The latter is absolutely central to the whole of the Freudian construct, while the former was a central figure in the early European Freudian movement in general through her close association with both Freud and Jung. The subject of several monographs, her total absence from Miller's work is as puzzling as the brief mention of Pankeev.

In fact, Miller's focus is almost wholly on the travails of psychoanalysis in the early Soviet period with its interaction and clash of Freudian and Communist world views and the former's eventual crushing by the latter inside the Soviet Union. To be sure, Miller points out the existence of an indigenous Russian analytic tradition through the works of Nikolai Osipov, Tatiana Rosenthal, and Sabina Spielrein–all three of whom became active Freudians in the early Soviet period. Indeed, the latter met Freud in 1911-12 and became not only a frequent participant in the Viennese and European psychoanalytic circles, but also a go-between for Freud and Jung, an intimate of the latter, and the creator of the concept of the "death wish" (for which Freud later took credit).

Miller notes too that the experimental nature of the early Soviet experience led not to the disappearance of Freudian analysis after the October Revolution, but in fact its toleration so long as it was nominally supportive of the revolution and its goals. The Russian psychoanalytic community thus faced the reality that its survival was impossible without the approval and tolerance of a party that wanted all groups to tackle the problems which it defined as worthwhile. In this situation the Russian Freudians struck a Faustian bargain: in return for their official recognition by the State (thus making them, as Miller notes, the only officially state-sanctioned psychoanalytic group in the world), they lost control over their ability to determine their own agenda. It would not, therefore be too much of an exaggeration to say that the remainder of Miller's study is an expansion on the consequences of that bargain.

Delving deeply into the published materials, writings and stenographic records which detail the work of such Russian Freudians as Moshe Wulff, Sabina Spielrein, and Ivan Ermakov among others, he records the formation of the state-approved Institute for Psychoanalysis. With its many activities–including establishment of a clinic for disturbed children in which psychoanalytic principles could be used in their treatment in an attempt to socialize them for the benefit of the State–this institution, Miller notes, attempted to find a link "between the collectivist ethos of a society committed to Communist

principles…and the radical 'bourgeois individualism' inherent in Freud's psychoanalytic principles…" (p. 360).

An even more notorious example of attempting to make Freudian psychoanalysis socially useful was the involvement of a number of Russian Freudians in the experiment with Pedology, but Miller mentions it only cursorily. Yet they were never able to square this circle and thus, and thus, Miller notes, the position of Freudian psychoanalysis began to erode in the mid-1920s and even more rapidly thereafter under Stalin's cultural offensive. Limning the essential points of the growing volume of anti-Freudian criticism, he pointedly notes the growing favoritism shown by authorities to the Pavlovian school of reflex physiology, stressing the initially benign distinction which was made beween the "rationalist and scientific" approach of the Pavlovian paradigm of the origins of mental functions and the "idealistic" paradigm of the Freudians.

These benign comparisons soon gave way to full-scale criticisms and open attacks on psychoanalysis; for example the charge that Freud's famous "talking cure" was based on verbal discourse and thus–similar to thoughts and desires–epiphenomenal. Miller thus takes the position that all facets of the numerous attacks launched against the Soviet Freudians once Lenin was dead and Trotsky was exiled (ranging from the hostile Congress on Human Behavior in 1930 to numerous articles in the pages of learned journals) were due primarily, if not exclusively, to the animus of the Communist regime.

Whatever the method, the regime succeeded, according to Miller, in establishing new guidelines for future inquiries into the nature of man and society–guidelines based on political rather than scientific or intellectual grounds. Two things are noteworthy here. First, this position of the Party's unmitigated responsibility for the demise of Russian psychoanalysis is not in agreement with Etkind's conclusions and, second, the attacks, whether launched by former Freudians, Party hacks, or the merely ambitious are, in the final analysis, both confusing and difficult to sort out.

Since Miller appears more interested in the politics and the political implications of the topic than the ideas themselves, it is, consequently, these, rather than methods of the clinical application of Freudian psychoanalysis in the Soviet Union that are his major focus. And although much of the literature involved in the resurrection of Freudian psychology after Stalin's death are advanced and discussed here, the emphasis still appears distinctly political rather than intellectual; institutional rather than focused on mentalite.

Stylistically Miller's monograph is a tightly written, focused, and almost clinically dispassionate in tone. His research is prodigious and impressive. Yet there are some problems–albeit not of the author's creation. Rather, they seem to be editorial in nature. For example, the editors claim that Miller's book is "the first comprehensive history of psychoanalysis in Russia from the last years of the tsars to the collapse of the Soviet Union. But Etkind's book appeared in Russian in 1993, a full five years before Miller's–and Miller graciously acknowledges Etkind's collegial assistance in the shaping of his own work through sharing parts of his own book while in manuscript.

The editors further claim that the book is based–at least in part–on "newly opened Soviet archives." But there is no section specifically referring to archives or archival materials in Miller's eighteen-page bibliography and there are no citations of any *fondy*, *opisi*, or *dela* in the thirty-five pages of endnotes. Finally, at least one chapter in Miller's book, Chapter Four ("Freud in the House of Lenin"), is curiously close to the title of Etkind's Chapter Six, ("Psychoanalysis in the Land of the Bolsheviks").

Etkind's book, on the other hand, is in the very broadest sense both a cultural and an intellectual history of psychoanalysis in Russia and the Soviet Union. In the introduction he contextualizes the role of Freudian ideas–indeed of any idea–within the tradition of what he terms Russian Romanticism by quoting Grigoriev's remarks on its tendency to take ideas, however odd or laughable, to their utmost limit and to attempt to put them into practice. Further, he notes that this tendency was accompanied by the belief expressed by Bogdanov in 1904 that man was only a means toward a more advanced, future creature.

This inherently transformative nature of Freud's ideas not only made their assimilation in Russia more rapid and without opposition than in the West, but also seemingly addressed problems central to the intelligentsia's quest for knowledge and eagerness to free itself from traditional constraints (p. 2). Etkind also more than implies that this maximalist approach recommended Marxism to Russian intellectuals. The dichotomy and conflict–as well as the essential similarity of goals between the two world views–are thus set up for readers very early.

Russian Symbolism represents the essence of this kind of Romanticism for Etkind. Personalities, ideas, and epochs and their interaction play a much greater role

in Etkind's history of psychoanalysis in Russia than in Miller's approach, leading him to frame his narrative as something of a discourse between Oedipus and Dionysus; between the intense individuality, non-confounding of feelings, and separation of love and hatred of the former and the alleviation of opposition between individual and universal, man and woman, parent and child through synthesis of the latter.

Etkind thus sees the *oeuvre* of the Russian Symbolists as prefiguring Freudian psychoanalytical concepts and contends that it filled the same roles and performed roughly the same sociocultural and psychological functions that psychoanalysis had come to fill in German-and in English-speaking countries at the time. It was, then, a movement that "transcended literature and was indissolubly connected with issues of religion, philosophy, and community" (p. 76). He backs up this assertion by a detailed comparison and contrast of the two that is at once highly allusive and potentially confusing to readers not already familiar with the figures and issues of Russia's "Silver Age."

Despite this, by the end of the first two chapters the reader is fully aware that Etkind's arena is a much broader one than Miller's. It is only after a detailed investigation of Pankeev's typicality as a neurotic Russian turn-of-the-century intellectual that the author turns to psychoanalytic activity in Russia before World War I. Here the names and figures noted by Miller are revisited, but, in addition, the reader is introduced to figures absent from or only briefly mentioned in the latter's work–e. g., A. Pevnitsky, Nikolai Bernstein, Iurii Kannabikh, and Aron Zalkind. However–again–Etkind notes where Miller has not, that in Russian practice, psychoanalytic concepts often were applied in the general cultural context of art and politics before finding a direct application on the analyst's couch (p. 121).

Moreover, the real area of comparison between Etkind's and Miller's works is their relative treatment of one of the seminal figures of Russian psychoanalysis: Sabina Spielrein. Whereas Miller devotes a dozen pages to her and to her work, Etkind makes much more of her centrality as a pioneer of Freudian analysis in Russia and as a transition figure from pre-revolutionary to Bolshevik Russia. He does this, moreover, in a lengthy chapter of almost fifty pages, one based extensively on Spielrein's correspondence found in Carotenuto's *A Secret Symetry: Sabina Spielrein Between Jung and Freud*, the *Freud-Jung Correspondence* itself, and materials from the Central State Archives of Russia, whereas Miller has obviously used only the first two. The background and bona fides of this remarkable woman are thus thoroughly established–as is her theory of the death wish, her chief contribution to the Freudian canon[2].

It is only after this that Etkind turns to the fate of Russian psychoanalysis in the Soviet period, noting explicitly–where Miller only strongly implies it–that the "Marxist-leaning" and "Marxist-agitating" segments of the non-Party intelligentsia were particularly attracted to it in the days immediately following October 1917 (p. 179). Yet Etkind also notes (as does Miller), the growing preoccupation of the *political* elite with an "alteration of man" that implied a deep-rooted transformation of human nature within the socialist mold. This preoccupation he stresses, caused that elite to look for new ideas to complete such a process, and Freudian psychoanalysis was one such idea. In this way the new political masters of Russia sought to achieve the political and economic structural changes it had theretofore failed to attain, relying instead on psychoanalysis and educational experimentation, at least temporarily. In any case, it was to be an alteration of mankind through a reformation of its consciousness with the assistance of Freudian analysis (pp. 183-185).

Etkind is unambiguous in his assertion that the master architect of this Faustian bargain for Russian Freudians was Leon Trotsky. The political link between the latter and Russian psychoanalysis has, in Etkind's view, been consistently underestimated in Western literature on the history of psychoanalysis. He thus strives to set right this lack of appreciation–devoting over forty pages to Trotsky, a dozen of which specifically deal with his intellectual enthusiasm and continued political support for both psychoanalysis and its educational offshoot, pedology. The latter, a unique Soviet approach stressing the transformation of human nature through childhood, was founded by people who had gone through relatively serious training in psychoanalysis (p. 5).

Hence, Etkind forcefully argues that the apogee of the strength of both movements came at a time–the early 1920s–when Trotsky was exerting maximal influence, and their stagnation and fall coincided with his political fall (p. 241). He insists that, despite support from Krupskaia, Radek, and even Stalin for the activities of the Moscow Psychoanalytic Society and its orphanage, the Trotsky link was its major strength (and, ultimately, drawback), since even its vice-president, Viktor Kopp was a conspicuous figure in the Trotskyist Opposition. What evidence Etkind possesses of Stalin's early support for the Moscow Psychoanalytic Society aside from his son Vasilii's attendance at its Psychoanalytic Orphanage

we are not vouchsafed, however. But he is unambiguous in his judgement that its members were fully aware of the political nature of its activity, and that portrayers of its leaders as dissidents bravely opposing the system, or as "autistic intellectuals" who paid no heed to the political process are inaccurate. Miller, as noted above, appears to be closer to this latter position than the former.

The remaining chapters of Etkind's book are devoted to a number of matters, including a detailed analysis of the pedology phenomenon and to subjects that are interesting but, in the main, highly speculative and connected by only a thin tissue of inference. The first of these is his viewpoint that the international psychoanalytical movement was financed indirectly by the Soviets through monies supplied to Max Eitington by a relative highly placed in Stalin's NKVD from the mid- to the late-1920s. If true, how then does one account for the heightened attacks on psychoanalysis and its eventual demise in the 1930s? Of course, Stalin's pursuit of one policy abroad and a totally different one at home is not unheard of.

The second issue is encompassed by the penultimate chapter, "The Ambassador and Satan." With Mikhail Bulgakov, former U.S. Ambassador to the Soviet Union William Bullitt, and Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita* as pivotal elements, the common denominator of this section is, again, Freud. Bullitt was both an analysand and collaborator on a biography of Woodrow Wilson with the founder of psychoanalysis. As ambassador to the Soviet Union at the very time when psychoanalitic concepts were under increasing attack from officials, Bullitt exercised–Etkind would have us know–a hypnotic influence on Bulgakov, because of the former's worldliness, sophistication and association with all that was exotic and strange in a world increasingly denied Soviet writers and intellectuals. This combination resulted, Etkind further contends, in the incorporation of much of Bullitt's personality in the character of Woland and the tranferral of many of the soires and get-togethers at Spasso House into the wild and orgiastic scenes in the novel.

Etkind thus sees this work as both a cry for help (emigration) and an attempt to come to grips with the question of whether Russians could be–and, indeed, had been–transformed into the *homo sovieticus* so intensely desired by Stalin and his associates. It is precisely this concern which serves as a coda in the final chapter, one which is a consideration of the impact on and internalization of elements of the Freudian paradigm by Russian intellectuals as diverse as Mikhail Zoshchenko, Sergei Eisenstein, and Mikhail Bakhtin.

It is also the concern of Etkind's Conclusion. Indeed, the latter is a brilliant piece of summary and analysis, a section which not only draws together the many strands of the subject, but one which inevitably invites final comparisons with Miller's work. Etkind makes explicit his belief–again, one shared with Miller–that the history of psychoanalysis in Russia testifies to the penetrability of national borders by ideas (p. 347). Similarly, both authors note the incredible complexity of such transnational penetrations. But, unlike Miller, Etkind lays greater stress on the deadliness of the perverse results of such a process both in the case of psychoanalysis and Marxism. Etkind notes too that in the former case, the places occupied by sexuality in Freudian psychoanalytic theory and by transference in Freudian analytic practice were usurped in Russian theory and practice by questions of power and consciouness (p. 348).

Consequently, he argues that the wound to the Russian psychoanalytical community was largely self-inflicted. It was the practitioners themselves who abandoned these two staples of Western psychoanalysis in their eagerness to discover other forces motivating the human psyche. Other traditions in early psychoanalysis were similarly abandoned or forgotten because they had no direct bearing on the problem of power. Thus the Faustian bargain and subsequent ruin, which Miller suggests as something of partnership between Soviet Russia's political leaders and the leaders of Russian psychoanalysis and in which the former "turned" on the latter, is seen by Etkind as wholly or at least largely the intellectual responsibility of the Russian practitioners of psychoanalysis who struggled for political dominance rather than merely the ill-will of the authorities. Their fault, then, was their ultimate pursuit of power in the service of death–the eros of the impossible.

Etkind's is a powerful, learned and stimulating book; one that will certainly intrigue and inform Russian, Soviet and intellectual historians alike. Professor Miller's book is similarly stimulating and informative, but it lacks the scope and richness of Etkind's work. This should in no fashion be construed as a failing on Miller's part for he duly acknowledges the assistance Etkind has rendered him in his own research. Rather, it is a sad commentary on an age when university presses seek to economize by reducing complex issues to as few pages as possible.

Notes

[1]. Julie Y. Brown, "Peasant Survival Strategies in Later Imperial Russia: The Social Uses of the Mental Hospital," *Social Problems* 34 (4), 1987, pp. 311-329; Idem., "Revolution and Psychoanalysis: The Mixing of Science

and Politics in Russian Psychiatric Medicine, 1905-1913," *Russian Review* 46 (3) 1987, pp. 283-302; and David Joravsky, *Russian Psychology. A Critical History* (New York, 1989).

[2]. Aldo Carotunato, *A Secret Symmetry: Sabina Spielrein Between Jung and Freud* (New York, 1982); and *The Freud/Jung Letters: The Correspondence Between Sigmund Freud and C. G. Jung*. Edited by William McGuire, translated by R. F. C. Hull. Bollingen Series XCIV, (Princeton, New Jersey, 1974).

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