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# Criticizing Phallogentrism in Interwar Britain: Psychoanalyst Sylvia M. Payne’s Kleinian Challenge to Freud

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*Sylvia M. Payne was one of the first women to practice psychoanalysis in Britain. Though she became president of the British Psychoanalytical Society, not a single scholarly work is dedicated to Payne’s intellectual ideas—a substantial historical lacuna, especially when compared with the research on Ernest Jones, one of Sigmund Freud’s early disciples and the president who preceded her. This essay presents the first exploration of her early work. It focuses on her belonging to a group of British analysts who challenged Sigmund Freud’s thinking on sexual difference. The full scope of this challenge, I argue, as it emerged in interwar Britain, has remained unexamined until today. Adding to the scholarship on the prominent and lesser-known roles of women in psychoanalysis, the article shows that Payne made significant contributions to the field; she also developed the work of Melanie Klein, on whom we also need more research. The study describes the life and work of a woman who has been neglected in the historiography of twentieth-century intellectual history. It engages with broader methodological questions of how to define the political, historical role of female psychoanalysts of her generation.*

## Introduction

We often present the development of new intellectual ideas on femininity, the spread of modern psychological theories, and the growth of women’s professional roles after the Great War as separate historiographical narratives. Yet, in the work of Sylvia M. Payne (1880–1976), a British physician, psychiatrist, and psychoanalyst, and that of others like her, these narratives combine, effectively linking the historical, the biographical, and the intellectual. Despite the fact that Payne was one of the first women to practice psychoanalysis in Britain, eventually becoming president of the British Psychoanalytical Society (BPAS), not a single scholarly work is dedicated to her intellectual ideas—a substantial historical lacuna, especially when compared with the research on Ernest Jones, one of Sigmund Freud’s early disciples and the BPAS president who preceded Payne.<sup>1</sup> Payne was among the second generation

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<sup>1</sup>On Ernest Jones see, for example, Brenda Maddox, *Freud’s Wizard: The Enigma of Ernest Jones* (London, 2006); Ken Robinson, “A Portrait of the Psychoanalyst as a Bohemian: Ernest Jones and the ‘Lady from Styria,’” *Psychoanalysis & History* 15/2 (2013), 165–89.

of women able to access higher education as a medical doctor and to use this new privilege and extend it to the new field of psychoanalysis. Significant, and to date unexplored, is the fact that she also belonged to a group of British analysts who challenged Sigmund Freud's thinking on sexual difference.

This study is part of a broader project aimed at researching the work of women experts who have been ignored in the intellectual historiography of the early twentieth century, especially and importantly when their work challenged the ostensibly universal, neutral claims of their contemporary male colleagues. Such challenges are frequently associated with the writings of feminists from the 1960s onwards. Yet, in the case of psychoanalysis—a discipline that explicitly describes patriarchal patterns (which remain unarticulated in other fields) and the ways in which they contain female sexuality, thus making it the most strategically open to criticism<sup>2</sup>—women applied this critique in real time, during the conception of the discipline and before the second half of the twentieth century.<sup>3</sup> The full scope of this challenge, I argue, as it emerged in interwar Britain (that is, beyond the European continent) has remained unexamined.

Psychoanalysis in interwar Britain developed under unique circumstances: specialists were drawn to it from a range of professional, gender, religious, and class backgrounds—a multiplicity that continuously influenced its advancement as a more diverse alternative to the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society, which revolved around the central founding figure of Sigmund Freud. This, together with the circumstances of modern warfare and the emergence of a dialogue between heterogeneous medical and nonmedical ideas, allowed for a flourishing of distinct ideas and intellectual traditions and conventions in Britain.

Sylvia Payne's life and work exemplify and illuminate these trajectories. Her formal academic medical education undertaken early in the twentieth century and the wide spectrum of ideas circulating in the BPAS allowed her to act, think, and participate in expert discourse. This had previously been the privilege only of men, with women serving solely as objects of male scrutiny and theorization rather than as knowing subjects who could also "talk back."<sup>4</sup> Her status in the analytic intellectual environment that was relatively welcoming to women also allowed Payne to speak from her own experience and clinical work, and to challenge the assumptions of Freudian thinking while exposing its phallogocentric predisposition that presented as universal truth.<sup>5</sup> Her attempts to criticize phallogocentrism were the product of her own intellectually eclectic biography and her choice to write

<sup>2</sup>As suggested by Elizabeth Grosz, *Sexual Subversions: Three French Feminists* (New York, 1989), 104.

<sup>3</sup>See Michal Shapira, "A Case for a 'Middle-Way Career' in the History of Psychology: The Work of Pioneer Woman Psychoanalyst Marjorie Brierley in Early 20th Century Britain," *History of Psychology* 24/1 (2021), 55–76

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, *An Introduction* (New York, 1990), 101.

<sup>5</sup>As early as 1927, Ernest Jones coined the word "phallogocentrism" when he argued that Freud and other male analysts had adopted "a phallogocentric view," meaning that Freud focused his model on the importance of the penis. See Ernest Jones, "The Early Development of Female Sexuality," *International Journal of Psycho-analysis* 8 (1927), 459–72. Depending on the context, I am using the term "phallogocentrism" both in Jones's terms and more broadly as it was developed by later feminists to mean occurrences when women are represented as either opposite, similar or complementary to men. See my discussion in the conclusion.

from the perspective of what she saw as not being a male, and to provide an imminent critique “from inside the theory.”

Payne was one of the British experts who supported and developed the radical work of analyst Melanie Klein during the interwar period. It is well known that Klein greatly influenced the early course of psychoanalysis in Britain, and that London became an important Kleinian analytic center. Yet we need a more detailed history of the creation of this “Kleinian school” with a chronology of the work of those like Marjorie Brierley, Joan Riviere, and Payne herself who became Kleinians, or supported Klein in different ways.<sup>6</sup> In this sense, this article opens up the limited historical research on understanding the prominence of Kleinian thought in Britain’s intellectual and psychological history, and reveals the un-researched application of Kleinian thought to the debate on sexual difference.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, uncovering the front- and backstage roles of women in the “psy” professions, this article shows that Payne was an important developer of the field.<sup>8</sup> Payne started her career as a physician in general practice; she was awarded the CBE for her work with war casualties during the First World War, and on her death she was described by *The Times* as “a prominent and active member” of the BPAS, of which she was “duly elected President.”<sup>9</sup> This article begins the historical research on Payne.

### An educated English woman and psychoanalyst

The study of Payne’s biography reveals the interactions of the historical narratives mentioned above in her heterogeneous life trajectories and varied career development. Born in England as Sylvia May Moore on 6 November 1880 in Wimbledon, Surrey, one of nine siblings, she was the daughter of a clergyman, Reverend Edward William Moore, and his wife Letitia.<sup>10</sup> Sylvia was educated at Wimbledon High School. At thirteen, she took the entrance exams to a music college but, after her teacher died, Sylvia decided instead to study medicine.<sup>11</sup> She attended Westfield Women’s College (part of London University) and then the London (Royal Free Hospital) School of Medicine for Women, established in 1874 as the first medical school in Britain to train women doctors, graduating its

<sup>6</sup>Recent research has emerged on Riviere, for example: Marion Bower, *The Life and Work of Joan Riviere: Freud, Klein and Female Sexuality* (London, 2020). On Brierley see Shapira, “A Case for a ‘Middle-Way Career.’”

<sup>7</sup>Another example is Michal Shapira, “‘Speaking Kleinian’: Susan Isaacs as Ursula Wise and the Inter-war Popularisation of Psychoanalysis,” *Medical History* 61/4 (2017), 525–47. See also Meira Likierman, *Melanie Klein: Her Work in Context* (London, 2002); Lyndsey Stonebridge, *The Destructive Element: British Psychoanalysis and Modernism* (New York, 1998).

<sup>8</sup>Far beyond what a few analysts today sometimes remember about her, namely her organizational role during the Anna Freud–Klein Controversial Discussions.

<sup>9</sup>“Dr Sylvia Payne: Psychoanalysis Pioneer,” *The Times*, 3 Aug. 1976, 14.

<sup>10</sup>Pearl King, “Payne, Sylvia May,” in Alain de Mijolla, ed., *International Dictionary of Psychoanalysis* (Detroit, 2005), 1245–6. One of Payne’s brothers, Henry Monck-Mason Moore, was governor general of Sierra Leone, Kenya, and Ceylon in the 1930s and 1940s. Her father was part of a Christian, evangelical, theological tradition of the Higher Life movement, and one of the founders of the annual Keswick Convention in Cumbria, England.

<sup>11</sup>King, “Payne, Sylvia May,” 1245.

first cohort in 1880.<sup>12</sup> She was awarded a joint bachelor of science and medicine degree in 1906. In her final year at the hospital, she served as house surgeon and assistant anesthetist until 1908, when she married the surgeon John Ernest Payne.<sup>13</sup> For the next twelve years, while raising their three sons (John, Kenneth, and Anthony),<sup>14</sup> motherhood came before career—as was commonly accepted of middle-class women at the time—and Sylvia Payne held no official professional positions.<sup>15</sup>

When World War I broke out, Payne became commandant and medical officer in charge of the Torquay Auxiliary Red Cross Hospital for wounded soldiers, a position she held throughout the war. For that work, she was included in the 1918 Birthday Honours List and made Commander of the British Empire (CBE) by King George V on his official birthday, 3 June.<sup>16</sup> Like others in Britain, Payne became interested in psychoanalysis during the war in light of the traumas of the trenches. “The First World War exposed man’s susceptibility to physical symptoms of psychogenic origin, which could no longer be denied owing to the very large numbers of soldiers who succumbed to so-called ‘shell-shock,’” she wrote in a manner typical of some of the young generation of psychologically oriented doctors of the time who argued against traditional Edwardian views of manliness, acknowledging that even the bravest of men could break down psychologically in the face of modern artillery.<sup>17</sup> It was while working with shell-shocked patients that she first heard about Sigmund Freud’s work. After the war ended, Payne decided to embark on psychoanalysis in London in 1919. She began her analytic training at the Medico-psychological Clinic on Brunswick Square, London, later known as the Brunswick Square Clinic. The clinic was founded in 1913 by the feminists Jessie Murray and Julia Turner, who in 1915 initiated a pioneering, eclectic, psychoanalytic training program. The clinic helped low-income female patients and

<sup>12</sup>See UCL Bloomsbury Project, at [ucl.ac.uk/bloomsbury-project/institutions/london\\_school\\_medicine\\_women.htm](http://ucl.ac.uk/bloomsbury-project/institutions/london_school_medicine_women.htm).

<sup>13</sup>He was a clinical assistant at the East London Hospital for Children and senior resident medical officer at the Royal Free Hospital. He then settled in practice at Torquay, and became surgeon at the Torbay Hospital and medical officer to the Post Office. During the Great War, he was a surgical specialist in command of No 1 War Hospital at Exeter. He died in 1956. See “Editorial,” *British Medical Journal* 1 (3 March 1956), 530.

<sup>14</sup>One of their sons, Dr A. M.-M. Payne, born 1911, also worked at the Royal Free Hospital before 1939, eventually taking up a permanent post in 1952. He joined the Endemo-epidemic Diseases Unit of the World Health Organization, eventually becoming assistant director general. He died prematurely in 1970. See “Editorial,” A.M.-M. Payne, M.D., F.R.C.P., *British Medical Journal* 4 (31 Oct. 1970), 309.

<sup>15</sup>Obituary Notices, “Sylvia M. Payne, CBE, MB, BS,” *British Medical Journal* 2/6032 (14 Aug. 1976), 428; Marilyn Bailey Ogilvie and Joy Dorothy Harvey, eds., *The Biographical Dictionary of Women in Science* (London and New York, 2000), 994.

<sup>16</sup>“The Great European War,” *The Sphere: An Illustrated Newspaper for the Home*, Oct. 1915, 5; “Gifts to Torquay and Exeter Red Cross Hospitals,” *Western Times*, 12 July 1918, 11; “An Award Op,” *Western Morning News*, 25 Jan. 1919, 4; “London Amusements,” *Daily Mirror*, 28 Jan. 1919, 11.

<sup>17</sup>Sylvia Payne, “Dr. Ernest Jones,” *International Journal of Psycho-analysis* 39 (1958), 308. On the larger context for such statements see Michael Roper, “Between Manliness and Masculinity: The ‘War Generation’ and the Psychology of Fear in Britain, 1914–1950,” *Journal of British Studies* 44 (2005), 343–62; Michal Shapira, “The Psychological Study of Anxiety in the Era of the Second World War,” *Twentieth Century British History* 24/1 (2013), 31–57.

shell-shocked soldiers.<sup>18</sup> Other professionals who were drawn to psychology due to the experience of industrial total war became future psychoanalysts at the clinic, too. They included medical and lay experts Susan Isaacs, Marjorie Brierley, Nina Searl, James Glover, Mary Chadwick, and Ella Freeman Sharpe, who all acquired their initial training there before moving to the BPAS after the clinic closed in 1922. The psychoanalytic therapy offered at the Brunswick Square Clinic was diverse and improvisational, and was led by lay women directors. The influx of trainees from the clinic to the BPAS influenced the character of the BPAS and explains why it had many lay and medical women from such an early stage.<sup>19</sup> The BPAS itself was founded by the Welsh neurologist Ernest Jones in 1919, and the London Clinic of Psycho-analysis and the Institute of Psycho-analysis were set up in 1924.<sup>20</sup>

As was common at the time for professionals attracted to Freud's theories, Payne traveled to Europe to gain further experience in psychoanalytic treatment. Most of her colleagues in the BPAS, including Ella Freeman Sharpe, Joan Riviere, Susan Isaacs, Alix and James Strachey, Barbara Low, Ernest Jones, John Rickman, and Edward Glover, traveled to Vienna, Berlin, or Budapest to undertake analysis with Freud, Otto Rank, Hanns Sachs, Karl Abraham, and Sándor Ferenczi. Indeed, Jones and John Carl Flügel were the only training analysts in London and formal training at the institute began only in 1926.<sup>21</sup> As early as 1920, Payne went to Berlin to undertake analysis with Hanns Sachs. Payne even learned enough German to read Freud's "The Ego and the Id" for herself. She returned to London and was elected an associate member of the BPAS in June 1922.<sup>22</sup> In short, Payne was one of the pioneers of established psychoanalysis in London. She later wrote that, in her view, being a physician studying the body was not enough. During this early period, she found in psychoanalysis a field that emphasized the necessity "for exploring the region of the mind characterized by unconscious mental activity as an essential part of the human organism, on which physical as well as mental health depend," as well as the solution to the need to explore what she perceived as interiority.<sup>23</sup> Invested in this belief, Payne was elected a full member of the BPAS in October 1924.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>18</sup>On the spread of psychoanalysis at the time in Britain see Dean Rapp, "The Early Discovery of Freud by the British General Educated Public, 1912–1919," *Social History of Medicine* 3/2 (1990), 217–43; Graham Richards, "Britain on the Couch: The Popularization of Psychoanalysis in Britain, 1918–1940," *Science in Context* 13 (2000), 183–230.

<sup>19</sup>Shapira, "A Case for a 'Middle-Way Career'"; Andrea Huppke, "Marjorie Brierley: Ein Blick in die Frühzeit der Londoner Middle Group," *Luzifer-Amor* 27/53 (2014), 52–70, at 54; Suzanne Raitt, "Early British Psychoanalysis and the Medico-psychological Clinic," *History Workshop Journal* 58 (2004), 63–85, at 82.

<sup>20</sup>Pearl King and Riccardo Steiner eds., *The Freud–Klein Controversies, 1941–45* (New York, 1991), 10–11.

<sup>21</sup>Huppke, "Marjorie Brierley," 56.

<sup>22</sup>King, "Payne, Sylvia May."

<sup>23</sup>Sylvia Payne, "Dr. Ernest Jones," *International Journal of Psycho-analysis* 39 (1958), 308.

<sup>24</sup>In writing about the career of Dr Ethilda Budgett-Meakin Herford, another pioneer psychoanalyst and a medical doctor who started her work at the London Royal Free Hospital, moved to the Brunswick Clinic, and then to the BPAS, Payne observed her in terms she may also have applied to herself: "Her decision to study medicine was made when this was not yet regarded as a desirable career for women, and she joined the psycho-analytical group without waiting to see if it was accepted by the medical profession as a whole,

Payne became a psychoanalyst in the early years of the growth of the discipline in Britain. As mentioned, members of the society came from diverse professional disciplines—a characteristic of the British branch of psychoanalysis. Work done by the child-study pioneers Melanie Klein in Berlin and Anna Freud in Vienna promoted the growing attention paid to theories on early life in the interwar era. Once Klein moved to London from the Continent in the mid-1920s, psychoanalysts there shaped the BPAS to forge a particular interest in engaging with her theories, and Payne contributed to this endeavor. Klein's innovative work made the deepest impact on analysts in mostly positive ways, at least until the mid-1930s when criticism of her grew as well. The theoretical disputes between Klein and Anna Freud reached a climax when the latter fled from the Nazis to Britain in 1938, and during World War II, in what became known as the Controversial Discussions.<sup>25</sup> Like most other psychoanalysts in the society in the late 1920s and during the 1930s, Payne was drawn to Klein's ideas. In the 1940s, Payne remained on the Kleinian side but she also became a key moderator in the debates.

A lecture delivered to the Medical Section of the British Psychological Society on 22 January 1936 shed light on how Payne conceptualized her own early turn to psychoanalysis during and after the Great War. The postwar period saw the rise of interest in the study of the mind and particularly in psychoanalysis; in Payne's terms this meant that "the human race is waking up to the need of knowledge of a new kind."<sup>26</sup> According to her, there were two reasons for the increased interest in psychical matters following the war. One was the change in physicians' attitudes to diseases of psychogenic origin owing to the experience of mental illness amongst combatants. These showed the medical profession that "the mind was far more responsible for health and illness than was conceived possible, and that this applied to men as well as to women."<sup>27</sup> The second reason for this interest resulted from the inability of many to accept the loss of husbands or sons in the war. This denial led to a heightened belief in spiritualistic and allied psychic phenomena. Thereafter, the curiosity of "an unimportant minority" developed into the demand of a large and better-educated portion of the community, leading the medical profession, educationalists, industrialists, and the church to turn to psychology to find a solution to these immediate problems.<sup>28</sup> With Sigmund Freud's work, Payne argued, a wide field of psychological interest had been opened up, which was "not confined to the therapeutic treatment of a sick individual, but impinges on problems concerned with normal development, human interests in general and the maintenance of

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and made sacrifices to obtain psycho-analytical training with those best equipped to give it." Sylvia Payne, "Dr. Ethilda Budgett-Meakin Herford," *International Journal of Psycho-analysis* 38 (1957), 276–7, at 276.

<sup>25</sup>On the early roots of the dispute see Michal Shapira, "Interpersonal Rivalries, Gender and the Intellectual and Scientific Making of Psychoanalysis in 1940s Britain," *History of Psychology* 20/2 (2017), 172–94. In 1927 Anna Freud wrote a book on child analysis criticizing Klein. Klein and a group of her British colleagues (including Glover, Riviere, Searl, Sharpe, and Jones, but not Payne) responded with a strong critique of Anna Freud's book in a symposium in the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*.

<sup>26</sup>Sylvia Payne, "Post-war Activities and the Advance of Psychotherapy," *British Journal of Medical Psychology* (1936), 1–15, at 5.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 6. Historians have shown that the interest in spiritualism after the war was actually widespread and not confined to a minority. See, for example, Jay Winter, "Spiritualism and the 'Lost Generation,'" in Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning* (Cambridge, 2014), 54–77.



civilization.”<sup>29</sup> Payne was describing a direct, linear progression towards psychological triumph, rather than what, in fact, was a more complex and gradual process; but she was right to indicate the growth of interest in psychology in relation to the experiences of modern warfare, both among the public and among a still-limited, yet growing group of professionals.<sup>30</sup>

As noted, Payne was not the only woman medical doctor in a society that drew other highly educated women and lay women with more eclectic backgrounds, including from the humanities. In terms of her ethnic and class background, coming from a Christian, middle-class family, Payne was like most other women at the BPAS. This was a unique characteristic of the British society, as in such societies on the Continent Jews predominated. In London, up until 1933, with Hitler’s rise to power, the only Jewish analysts were Marjorie Franklin, David Eder, Barbara Low, and Klein.<sup>31</sup> Their numbers rose through the 1930s when Jewish refugee analysts fled from the Nazis and Continental anti-Semitism to Britain. Before the outbreak of World War II, London had become a center for the psychoanalytic intellectual diaspora that eventually also included Sigmund and Anna Freud who had fled there from Vienna in 1938.<sup>32</sup>

Unlike most psychoanalysts who lived in London, Payne commuted from Eastbourne, where her husband, then a local general practitioner, referred patients to her. Importantly, that made her independent of her male colleagues, Jones and his deputy Edward Glover, for referrals from the BPAS.<sup>33</sup> As her obituary in the *British Medical Journal* noted, Payne was a pioneer of British psychoanalysis who ended up contributing “greatly to its developing practice.”<sup>34</sup> Indeed, she took an active part in the administration of the BPAS, shaping the society and the Institute of Psycho-analysis and, over time, taking up all the offices available to their members.<sup>35</sup> In 1926, Payne joined the staff of the London Clinic of Psycho-analysis as a psychiatrist, where she enjoyed the “highest repute among students as well as among those in need of help.”<sup>36</sup> In 1927, she was elected to the Training Committee. She was honorary secretary of the society and institute for fifteen years from 1929, and honorary training secretary from 1939. As she replaced the analyst John Rickman as secretary of the Institute of Psycho-analysis in 1929, she was also elected business secretary of the society. In the same year, she held an organizational position as joint secretary, with Joan Riviere as her assistant, at

<sup>29</sup>Payne, “Post-war Activities,” 7.

<sup>30</sup>See Shapira, “The Psychological Study,” 31–57; Rapp, “The Early Discovery,” 217–43; Richards, “Britain on the Couch,” 183–230.

<sup>31</sup>See Gregorio Kohon, “Notes on the History of the Psychoanalytic Movement in Great Britain,” in Kohon, ed., *The British School of Psychoanalysis: The Independent Tradition* (New Haven, 1986), 24–50; Riccardo Steiner, “It is a New Kind of Diaspora,” *International Review of Psycho-analysis* 16 (1989), 35–72.

<sup>32</sup>See Steiner, “It is a New Kind of Diaspora”; Kohon, “Notes on the History of the Psychoanalytic Movement in Great Britain.”

<sup>33</sup>King, “Early Biographical Notes on the Main Participants in the Freud–Klein Controversies in the British Psycho-analytical Society, 1941–45,” in King and Steiner, *The Freud–Klein Controversies*, xvii–xviii.

<sup>34</sup>Obituary Notices, “Sylvia M. Payne, CBE, MB, BS,” 428.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

the International Congress in Oxford. She was also a fellow of the British Psychological Society and chair of its Medical Section in 1936.<sup>37</sup>

Throughout the 1930s in Britain, the second generation of psychoanalysts after Sigmund Freud was preoccupied with debates about childhood, the analysis of everyday life, the role of human aggression, and more. Payne provided original, though overlooked, theoretical contributions on the topic of sexual difference as she turned to Klein. During and after World War II, Payne took up the most senior positions within the society. Yet it was during the interwar period that she wrote her most substantial intellectual theories, to which we now turn.

## Interwar theoretical contributions

### *Challenging Freud on sexual difference*

Payne participated in what I view as a collaborative Kleinian writing process among women experts. This process allowed for the development of her important interwar intellectual critique of Freud's phallogocentric views on sexual difference. In what follows I situate Payne as a crucial decipherer and developer of Kleinian thought. Overall, Payne read fourteen papers to the BPAS, covering clinical problems and combining Freud's conceptual framework with her concern for training issues.<sup>38</sup> She periodically wrote reviews and obituaries. But her most worthy papers during the interwar period concerned sexuality, with a first paper in 1935 on sexual difference dealing with femininity, and a second in 1939 on fetishism dealing with masculinity.<sup>39</sup>

Payne's first (1935) article is valuable and perhaps one of the better-organized papers in the first psychoanalytic debate that developed on femininity in the 1920s–1930s.<sup>40</sup> In one of the only references to it, scholar Margaret Arden noted that despite the extensive writing on femininity, Payne's paper is hardly ever mentioned.<sup>41</sup> I agree with Arden that the paper "deserves to be read as a record of the dynamic thinking at that time which has been overshadowed by later developments in theory."<sup>42</sup> Indeed, the debate on the Continent between Freud, on one hand, and his most critical opponent, Karen Horney, on the other, is well documented. But the way this debate was developed in Britain by Klein, Jones, Riviere, Brierley, and indeed Payne has not been fully researched by historians.<sup>43</sup> In the 1930s, the

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.; Ogilvie and Harvey, *The Biographical Dictionary*, 994; King, "Payne, Sylvia May."

<sup>38</sup>King, "Payne, Sylvia May"; BPAS Archives: Annual Reports for the interwar years.

<sup>39</sup>Obituary Notices, "Sylvia M. Payne, CBE, MB, BS," 428. The second field to which she contributed in 1936 was the psychological understanding of reality by the individual. See Payne, "Post-war Activities," 1–15.

<sup>40</sup>Sylvia Payne, "A Concept of Femininity," *British Journal of Medical Psychology* 15 (1935), 18–33.

<sup>41</sup>Arden, who was an associate member of the Independent Group in the BPAS in the 1980s, thought that this was unfortunate "as Payne's attitude to femininity has been handed down in the Independent Group of the British Psycho-analytical Society. Although unrecognized, her influence is often implicit." Margaret Arden, "A Concept of Femininity: Sylvia Payne's 1935 Paper Reassessed," *International Review of Psycho-analysis* 14 (1987), 237–44, at 237.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

<sup>43</sup>Lisa Appignanesi and John Forrester, *Freud's Women* (London, 1992), 452–4. They note, but do not explore, that Klein was key in this debate. Zenia Fliegel did much to reconstruct the history of the debate. But she, and others after her, did not notice that in Britain there was a more extensive and separate reaction to the Freudian question of female sexuality. See Zenia Odes Fliegel, "Feminine Psychosexual Development



exchange of ideas in the BPAS was intense. The controversy on femininity was discussed in London more than is recognized, and was very much under the influence of Klein's new ideas. Even those who later thought of themselves as part of the independent group within the society, rather than strict adherents to Klein during most of the 1930s, such as Brierley and indeed eventually Payne herself, were developing their ideas in relation to Klein's.<sup>44</sup>

Payne's 1935 paper, therefore, was part of the under-explored British Kleinian response to the debate emerging on the Continent. We can also see how much it differs from the Freudian model of the central, singular, "male genius" author; among the women who worked with Klein's ideas there is more of a collective sense of authorship and creation of theory, rather than the work of subordinates supporting a female intellectual prodigy (perhaps a form of writing that differs from that of phallogocentric writers).<sup>45</sup>

It is important to remember that what Sigmund Freud himself suggested in the interwar period was no simple emphasis on anatomy as determining femininity or masculinity, but rather an emphasis on the importance of the psychological conceptualization that the child applied to observed bodily or genital differences.<sup>46</sup> The discovery of the penis and penis envy, Freud theorized in 1925, weakened the girl's relations with her mother as a love object and induced a belief in the inferiority of the clitoris (seen as a castrated penis). For Freud, the abolition of clitoral sexuality was a necessary precondition for mature femininity. Thus the girl's recognition of the distinction between the sexes forces her away from the 'masculine clitoris.' The girl becomes a woman when she gives up her wish for a penis and replaces it with the wish for a child, taking her father as a love object and her

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in Freudian Theory: A Historical Reconstruction," *Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 42 (1973), 385–408, at 386; Shapira, "A Case for a 'Middle-Way Career'."

<sup>44</sup>Let me clarify further the Klein–Payne relationship: Payne was less of a close friend to Klein than Susan Isaacs or Joan Riviere—a fact that allowed Klein to undergo analysis with Payne for seven months in 1934 (and possibly before). Yet what is important here, beyond their personal as well as analyst–analysand connection, is that in the interwar period, Payne theoretically developed Klein's ideas in direct ways. Overall, we can see Payne as having been influenced by her work during this period. During the wartime Controversial Discussions, Payne helped in the clear introduction of Klein's theories and Klein saw her as "the only person who really was helpful and fair" in some of the meetings. At the end of 1942, the Kleinian position "was represented by Heimann, Riviere, and Isaacs and Sylvia Payne." Payne also "fully endorsed" Isaacs's Kleinian paper during the discussions. See quotes from Phyllis Grosskurth, *Melanie Klein: Her World and Her Work* (New York, 1986), 308, 316, 319; on Klein's analysis see *ibid.*, 219, 228. Yet during the war and after, Payne tried to maintain a more neutral position on the theoretical differences and came to be seen as part of the Independent Group at the society, namely those who were strict adherents neither of Klein nor of Anna Freud, and who sought compromise. To be precise, I share the understanding of Appignanesi and Forrester, who argued that Klein's interwar arguments concerning female sexuality were significant and far-reaching also because British theorists such as Brierley and others (some of who were among the Independent Group) were "profoundly influenced by her ideas whilst not necessarily being her followers," or indeed close friends. Payne should be counted among those developing her ideas in the interwar period. See Appignanesi and Forrester, *Freud's Women*, 453.

<sup>45</sup>And at times, Payne and others also helped the Jewish immigrant Klein present her ideas in English.

<sup>46</sup>For Freud's views see Sigmund Freud, "The Infantile Genital Organization (an Interpolation into the Theory of Sexuality)," *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (hereafter *SE*) 14 (1923), 139–46; Freud, "Some Psychical Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction between the Sexes," *SE* 19 (1925), 248–58; Freud, "Female Sexuality," *SE* 21 (1931), 221–43.

mother as the object of her jealousy.<sup>47</sup> The girl, Freud argued, develops her oedipal wishes and feminine attitude toward her father as a consequence of frustrated phallic jealousy, and by way of forced resignation to her castrated, inferior condition. Freud added the divisive idea that because the Oedipus complex may be slowly abandoned in girls, what is ethically normal for them is different for boys. The girl's superego is never as impersonal as it is ideally in boys.<sup>48</sup> In 1931, Freud developed his claim that, on the path towards mature femininity, girls shift from the clitoris to the vagina as the dominant erotogenic zone. The road to female adulthood, he argued, was more complex than for boys. Girls need to transfer their love from mother to father and engage in a psychological shift whereby as adult women they need to resign themselves to domesticity and, if they enjoy themselves sexually, they do so mainly through the vagina.<sup>49</sup>

In short, Freud presented a phallogocentric model in which he deduced from the wishes of the oedipalized male subject a model of femininity that complemented male development and thereafter men's needs. He developed a universal model of individuality that claimed to represent all human variations according to a singular, Western, Eurocentric, male model. Femininity was only represented in relation to this male model and the lack or absence of what was seen as masculine. Thus the male model was taken as the norm against which the female was measured negatively or positively.<sup>50</sup>

Payne developed her critique of Freud's phallogocentrism in close dialogue with the innovative ideas presented by Klein in 1928 and in collaboration with Marjorie Brierley, who also used Klein's innovations. I will first look at the ideas of Klein and then those of Brierley in order to explain Payne's work. Klein argued in her 1928 paper on childhood, which became important to the femininity debate, that the child's frustrations with weaning led to an intensification of sadism concentrated on taking imaginary possession of what children believed to be their mother's body and internal organs. Their already operative superego would forbid these sadistic attacks on the mother, and would create an identification with her. Such early identification constituted for Klein a "femininity phase" experienced by both girls and boys; the phase is labeled "feminine" because the mother's body was believed to contain children. Thus Klein innovatively concluded that, as in the castration complex of girls so too in the femininity complex of boys, there is a frustrated desire for a special organ. Furthermore, the femininity phase is accompanied by anxiety because the womb is imagined to contain not only babies but also the incorporated hostile penis of the father. In boys, this anxiety subjects them to the superego, which devours and castrates, and is formed upon the image of father and mother alike. In girls, the early maternal identification is also governed by a sadistic desire to rob the mother and her insides. Girls eventually turn away from the frustrations of the weaning experience with the mother to receptive oedipal wishes directed at the father. Thus, in contrast to Freud, Klein

<sup>47</sup>Freud, "Some Psychical Consequences," 256.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., 257.

<sup>49</sup>Freud, "Female Sexuality."

<sup>50</sup>See Grosz, *Sexual Subversions*, 105.

established a feminine identification in both sexes *prior* to the phallic phase, the castration complex, and penis envy. This identification is fully oedipal and therefore opposes Freud's timetable of development. She partially supported Karen Horney's idea that penis envy is superficial; but for Klein it was more of a cover for a deeper dread of injury to the girl's womanhood, her capacity for motherhood, and her internal organs. Moreover, importantly, Klein stressed her conviction that vaginal sensations existed early on.<sup>51</sup>

Developing Klein's ideas from 1928, Brierley presented an astute critique of Freud's views on sexual difference in 1932, revealing them to be nothing more than a male perspective on a diverse reality.<sup>52</sup> This eventually allowed Payne to use Brierley's arguments against Freud's suggestion that the male was the measure of the universal, and the girl was a failed, castrated boy. Thus, stating that vaginal awareness and activity begin very early in girls as a rule rather than an exception, Brierley made three substantial points against Freud's theories that situated femininity within descriptions of masculine sameness. The first suggests that there is a considerable middle range of clitoral activity compatible with vaginal normality, and that mature femininity does not entail repudiation of the clitoris, as Freud had suggested. The second point claims that in women there is no lack of drive towards the dissolution of the Oedipus complex; on the contrary, they have strong violation and revenge anxieties that start at the oral phase. Her third point is that superego development in women is frequently arrested at the pregenital stage, resulting in a very cruel, archaic superego with very little love that pushes women to seek protection from the outside. She proposed that we should think of integrated adult femininity as produced carefully via achieving and maintaining a balance among several drives.<sup>53</sup> Importantly, Brierley rejected Freud's phallocentric claim that girls attach a one-sided psychic interpretation to the clitoris as a castrated phallus. Instead, she crucially argued that girls and women may not interpret their clitoris as such, but rather see it as part and parcel of their unique bodies and pleasures; clitoral pleasure could last through adulthood and not be seen solely as inferior.

Melanie Klein's suggestions of early childhood vaginal awareness and activity made Brierley go further, drawing the crucial implication that the Freudian equation of the vagina with maturity is entirely questionable.<sup>54</sup> For Brierley, the early pregenital development of girls was the key to deciphering the controversy around femininity.<sup>55</sup> In this view, the girl's first impetus towards the father is supplied by

<sup>51</sup>Melanie Klein, "Early Stages of the Oedipus Conflict," *International Journal of Psycho-analysis* 9 (1928), 167–80; Appignanesi and Forrester, *Freud's Women*, 452–4.

<sup>52</sup>It is noteworthy that Brierley had followed a similar career path to Payne, and was also a medical doctor trained at Brunswick Square Clinic. Brierley moved to the BPAS around the same time as Payne; she supported Klein's ideas in the 1920s and 1930s, and became more independent in the 1940s.

<sup>53</sup>Nellie Thompson, "Early Women Psychoanalysts," *International Review of Psycho-analysis* 14 (1987), 391–406, at 399; Marjorie Brierley, "Some Problems of Integration in Women," *International Journal of Psycho-analysis* 13 (1932), 433–48; Klein, "Early Stages of the Oedipus Conflict."

<sup>54</sup>Brierley, "Some Problems of Integration in Women," 433; Melanie Klein, "Infant Analysis," *International Journal of Psycho-analysis* 7 (1926), 31–63.

<sup>55</sup>Brierley, "Some Problems of Integration in Women," 435.

the earliest maternal frustration: loss of the mother's nipple or breast, especially during the weaning process, drives the girl to search for the penis. Such a penis is imagined by the child as part of the much-desired internal contents of the mother's body; and the sadistic impulses connected with these phantasies give rise to what in Klein's opinion was the true, major, feminine anxiety comparable to the male fear of castration, namely fear of internal bodily injuries.<sup>56</sup> Castration here is only a partial threat. The fear of internal injury is bound up with fear of violation by the father's phallus and parturition. In connection to this, Brierley used an older argument that Sylvia Payne herself had developed in 1927 against Freud's contentious claims that what is ethically normal for women is different for men, and that their superego is weaker than men's.<sup>57</sup> Payne had suggested that the superego in women is, in fact, usually much more prohibitive than in men, and Brierley agreed. Both Payne, in 1927, and Brierley, in 1932, suggested that women were more, rather than less, ethical than men.<sup>58</sup>

Building on the cross-fertilization of ideas with Klein and Brierley, in her important paper of 1935, Payne's starting point was that bisexuality existed in both sexes. Payne directly supported Brierley's 1932 views on femininity as psychological integration, because of the necessity in each individual of coordinating masculine and feminine impulses. Brierley's suggestion, Payne argued, is one which carries with it a recognition of the complex character of the opposing drives in every woman.<sup>59</sup> Payne continued Brierley's critique of the phalliccentric contention of a singular and unified conceptual Freudian system of representation centered on one leading interpretation of the phallus, on the logic of exclusion and binary polarization of sexual difference, and on patriarchal systems of representation that submit and contain women to models defined by and for men.<sup>60</sup> Payne began her criticism by quoting analyst Joan Riviere, who, in a review of Freud's lectures, also wrote from London with outrage against his male views of female development:

Whether or not the facts are as he claims, which is at least not certain, it is a far step to propose that the woman's sexual character and sexual function remain

<sup>56</sup>Melanie Klein, "Infantile Anxiety Situations Reflected in a Work of Art and in the Creative Impulse," *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 10 (1929), 436–43; Brierley, "Some Problems of Integration in Women," 434; see also Jones, "The Early Development of Female Sexuality," 459–72.

<sup>57</sup>Sylvia Payne, "Observations on the Formation and Function of the Super-Ego in Normal and Abnormal Psychological States," *British Journal of Medical Psychology* 7/1 (1927), 73–87, at 77.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid. Indeed, in her second paper on femininity in 1936, Brierley expressed her own agreement with Payne. Marjorie Brierley, "Specific Determinants in Feminine Development," *International Journal of Psycho-analysis* 17 (1936), 163–80. Their work should be read together as developing new ideas about the psychoanalytic theory of female sexuality. Arden thought, "Payne and Brierley's awareness of the integrative aspect of feminine thinking is a landmark in the development of holistic thinking about psychoanalysis ... In holistic terms the Oedipus complex can be expanded to include multiple identifications with male and female aspects of both parents and with other significant figures such as grandparents and teachers. This kind of thinking seems to me to be taken for granted by many Independent Group writers who are not aware of Payne's influence or the existence of her paper." Arden, "A Concept of Femininity," 239–40.

<sup>59</sup>Payne, "A Concept of Femininity," 19.

<sup>60</sup>My formulations here are influenced by those of Grosz, *Sexual Subversions*, xix, xx.

completely latent and so to speak non-existent in her, exerting no influence on her, from birth until such time as the accidental trauma of discovering that she has no penis takes place!<sup>61</sup> ... It is not a credible view of women; nor have poets ever foreshadowed it; nor is it the ordinary judgment of mankind. Freud himself indeed has not always looked at women thus.<sup>62</sup>

Reveling in the extent to which she was not alone in her critique of Freud in London, Payne added, "Mrs Riviere's criticism is upheld by the observations of many analysts including Karen Horney abroad, and Jones, Melanie Klein and most of the English analysts."<sup>63</sup>

The first demand for adult femininity for Payne was receptivity in the sexual act, which she saw as different from the passivity that Freud had described. Payne wrote, "The receptive function of the vagina is identified with that of the mouth, and is exhibited in the sucking movements parallel to those which the mouth performs in infancy."<sup>64</sup> She then criticized what she saw as the limited nature of Freud's statement that the wish to have the father's penis equates to a wish to be male. Using Klein's argument, Payne contended that the girl's deepest fear is, first and foremost, that her insides may be robbed or destroyed. Every analysis with her patients confirmed to Payne the validity of Kleinian ideas on children and, by implication, on femininity. In particular, these treatments proved the existence of the infantile theory according to which the mother's body contains mysterious, dangerous, and valuable things, including what the father puts there, namely his penis. Thus, in her development, the young girl passes through the oral and early anal phases while developing an anxiety connected with the contents of her mother's and her own body. Payne also supported Klein's idea that genital impulses in girls, which appear much earlier than Freud thought, are connected to orality; a girl can displace receptive sucking tendencies from the mouth to the vagina. She finds it hard to think of the mother's body and so "she turns first to the real father, and demands his penis not only because of the direct drive of the impulse, but also as a protection against the terrifying mother."<sup>65</sup>

Whereas Freud found girls to be disadvantaged by comparison with boys, Payne thought the opposite, again producing new knowledge critical of Freud's ideas and pushing his theory beyond its limits. Freud emphasized that a girl has to change the sex of her love object before she can attain maturity, and must transfer erotism from the clitoris to the vagina; the boy, on the other hand, is not required to change the sex of his love object. In contrast, Payne stressed the point that the primary relation to the mother in both sexes is orally receptive and therefore, in comparing the development of the sexes, Payne reversed the Freudian picture. She wanted to take account of the fact that the boy has to change the character of his relation to the primary object from a relationship of oral receptive sucking to one of active

<sup>61</sup>Payne added the exclamation point here that was not in the original text, Payne, "A Concept of Femininity," 21; cf. Joan Riviere, "Review, New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-analysis: By Sigmund Freud, M.D., LL.D.," *International Journal of Psycho-analysis* 15 (1934), 321–39, at 336.

<sup>62</sup>Payne, "A Concept of Femininity," 21.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., 20.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., 25.

aggressive penetrating and discharging. Moreover, the girl, on the other hand, “can displace oral receptive sucking tendencies from the mouth to the vagina.”<sup>66</sup> For Payne, oral frustration diverts the girl’s love from the mother to the father. Her first wishes for the father take the form of oral desires for his penis.<sup>67</sup> In short, Freud regarded the wish for the penis, which is symbolic of the father, as a wish to be male, but in using and developing Klein’s ideas, Payne saw it instead as a wish to incorporate a part object of the penis.

Payne firmly supported Klein’s observations that vaginal activity starts in early childhood.<sup>68</sup> This helped Payne further criticize Freud’s idea that at puberty the main displacement of libido is from the clitoris to the vagina. She argued that, although this is true in many cases, the displacement of eroticism from the clitoris to the vagina is seldom complete. Payne revealed again the extent to which she was not alone in her thinking when she wrote, “In England, Jones, Glover, Ella Sharpe, Joan Riviere, Melanie Klein and others have brought forward evidence to support the argument that there is a close association between mouth and vaginal erotism, and the vagina may be temporarily libidinized in infancy.”<sup>69</sup>

Thus femininity was seen to develop in other ways than those described by Freud, and Klein’s radical ideas helped to advance a British school of thought in the debate on femininity. Brierley’s integration concept also helped Payne emphasize the flexibility required for mature femininity. Using Klein, Payne described femininity as a continual process of object relating that includes almost endless possible identifications with phantasies about the parents. The development towards adult femininity out of bisexuality includes negotiation with internal phantasies, but also awareness of environmental factors and the roles of the two sexes in society.<sup>70</sup> Girls, Payne reiterated, have early knowledge about the inside of their bodies, which constitutes the basic female identity, and defenses are concerned with protecting the inside from attacks. On this basis, Freud’s theory of penis envy was pushed into a secondary position.

A more independent aspect of the model of femininity that Payne tried to develop beyond that of Freud can be seen in her insistence that the road to adult femininity demands a capacity to tolerate and adapt to repeated periodical variations in her ego libido, in connection with changes associated with menstruation, conception, pregnancy, childbirth, and lactation.<sup>71</sup> For her, adult femininity also involved a process of constantly becoming something slightly new. At each stage, Payne described in Kleinian language the whole gamut of possible object relations

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., 22.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid.

<sup>68</sup>Melanie Klein, *The Psycho-analysis of Children* (London, 1932), 288; as well as Josine Müller, “A Contribution to the Problem of Libidinal Development of the Genital Phase in Girls,” *International Journal of Psycho-analysis* 13 (1932), 361–8; Karen Horney, “On the Genesis of the Castration Complex in Women,” *International Journal of Psycho-analysis* 5 (1924), 50–65; Horney, “The Denial of the Vagina—A Contribution to the Problem of the Genital Anxieties Specific to Women,” *International Journal of Psycho-analysis* 14 (1933), 57–70, at 61.

<sup>69</sup>Payne, “A Concept of Femininity,” 24. See also Jones, “The Early Development of Female Sexuality,” 459–72; Ernest Jones, “Early Female Sexuality,” *International Journal of Psycho-analysis* 16 (1935), 263–73; Joan Riviere, “Womanliness as a Masquerade,” *International Journal of Psycho-analysis* 10 (1929), 303–13.

<sup>70</sup>Arden, “A Concept of Femininity,” 239–40.

<sup>71</sup>Payne, “A Concept of Femininity,” 22.



accompanied by different phantasies that could facilitate or hinder normal development.<sup>72</sup>

Another requirement for adult femininity, according to Payne, is the girl's ability to sublimate characteristics of the opposite sex due to bisexuality, without inhibiting or destroying her own sex. The woman must be able to sublimate the primary masculine elements in herself and this needs to be differentiated from the masculine complex, or from reactive early masculine identification with the father in a flight from femininity.<sup>73</sup> Interestingly, Payne's approach here implies that "a woman cannot organize her femininity in an adult way without a phallic symbol, and in the same way a man cannot achieve maturity without acceptance of his own femininity."<sup>74</sup> This exposes the limitation of her critical arguments as remaining largely within Freud's conceptional framework. Trying to create a descriptive egalitarianism between boys' and girls' development, it remains a question whether the prevailing patriarchal social organization allowed for such desired theoretical equality. Put differently, in Payne's terms if the girl needs to sublimate the primary masculine elements of her infancy, she is still subjected to the patriarchal—and Freudian—imperative that renders her sexually passive relative to the male's development.<sup>75</sup> At the same time, Payne innovatively insisted on speaking of the female body as changing and becoming different rather than remaining fixed and castrated as Freud implied.

The final point for Payne was that femininity demands "a willingness to receive and retain, coordinated with a wish to 'give out'."<sup>76</sup> This ability is needed for the change of attitude inherent in the pattern of the heterosexual and reproductive functions that demand coordination. For example, when discussing feminine orgasm, Payne believed that inhibitions to it reveal phantasies associated with the woman's fear of aggression, either her own or the man's. The woman could have, for example, biting phantasies in which the vagina is identified with a biting mouth, or she could project sadistic phantasies onto her sexual partner, leading to frigidity.<sup>77</sup> Throughout the paper, Payne stressed that she wanted to add to the discussion of the sexual function of women an analysis of the reproductive function that she felt was very much neglected in Freud's male account. Both Payne's and Brierley's integrative and flexible view of femininity can therefore be seen as a breakthrough in the advancement of thinking about femininity and sexual difference in psychoanalysis between the wars. They developed a specifically British answer to the other critiques on the Continent and advanced Klein's ideas in new ways.<sup>78</sup>

In short, Payne was trying to formulate a different model from the perspective of a woman's body. Nonetheless, she was constantly oscillating between, on the one hand, implying that sexual difference might mean there are indeed two different

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., 26–30.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., 30.

<sup>74</sup>Arden, "A Concept of Femininity," 240.

<sup>75</sup>See also Elizabeth Grosz, *Space, Time and Perversion* (New York, 1995), 158, 168.

<sup>76</sup>Payne, "A Concept of Femininity," 20.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., 31–3.

<sup>78</sup>See Brierley, "Specific Determinants in Feminine Development," 163–80; Thompson, "Early Women Psychoanalysts," 399–400.

types of bodies and therefore two different relations to subjectivity, sexuality, being, and knowing; and, on the other hand, remaining confined by Freud's existing male model and ideals, as was Klein eventually, too. Overall, she was challenging, critiquing, and struggling against Freud's patriarchal ideas while pointing to other possibilities within, and importantly beyond, his theory to strategically begin harnessing them for purposes for which they were not intended.<sup>79</sup> She continued doing so in her next (1939) paper on fetishism.

### *The macintosh fetishist*

If, in 1935, Payne was discussing sexual difference while focusing on girls and women, in 1939 she reversed her perspective to look at boys and men while making an astute contribution to the study of fetishism—again expanding Freud's ideas and further utilizing Klein's work.<sup>80</sup> In her discussion of sexual difference from the perspective of the boy/man, Payne again oscillated between remaining with Freud's overall model and transforming it using a Kleinian perspective, thus pushing the discussion of fetishism and castration anxiety to an earlier and less defined stage of development, and claiming that it concerned anxieties emerging earlier than castration anxiety.

Sigmund Freud first described the fetish as a substitute for an infantile sexual object, noting that the selection of the fetish object was influenced by attraction to a coprophilic smell. In later works, he developed his main argument that the fetish symbolized the penis and its presence relieved the male's fear of castration, which was aroused by the sight of the female genitals.<sup>81</sup> Payne noted that Freud had recognized that the presence of the fetish not only stimulated the man's sexual desires, but also relieved his castration anxiety. This helped her propose her argument, linked to Klein, which emphasized the relation of the fetish to the formation of earlier ego-defense mechanisms. Payne's main goal was to shift the development of fetishism back from the stage of phallic castration anxiety to an earlier, more ambiguous stage of ego development when part objects of the mother and father are introjected into the internal world of the child.<sup>82</sup> Her first argument was that the need to create a defense against an archaic sexual aim is one of the determinants of fetishism—the aim being to kill the love object. Her second claim was that analysts need to conduct an all-encompassing study of their patients in order to

<sup>79</sup>Cf. Elizabeth Grosz, *The Nick of Time: Politics, Evolution, and the Untimely* (Durham, NC and London, 2004), 255. To borrow from Grosz on Luce Irigaray, a later theorist of sexual difference, Payne is not able to create the alternative model that Grosz describes: "It is about making the categories of men and women and their relations—their realm of sexual difference—different from the ways they currently exist, giving them an open future, granting each the awe, and, as Irigaray describes it, the surprise of an encounter between two beings who may begin to know their difference." Grosz, *The Nick of Time*, 259. See also Grosz, *Space, Time and Perversion*, 142.

<sup>80</sup>Sylvia Payne, "Some Observations on the Ego Development of a Fetishist," *International Journal of Psycho-analysis* 20 (1939), 161–70.

<sup>81</sup>Sigmund Freud, "Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex," *SE* 7 (1905), 123–43; and later, Freud, "Fetishism," *SE* 21 (1927), 147–57; Freud, "Splitting of the Ego in the Process of Defence," *SE* 23 (1940 [1938]), 271–78; Payne, "Some Observations," 161.

<sup>82</sup>"Women Psychoanalysts in Great Britain: Sylvia Payne née Moore (1880–1976)," in *Psychoanalytikerinnen: Biografisches Lexikon*, at [psychoanalytikerinnen.de/greatbritain\\_biographies.html#Payne](http://psychoanalytikerinnen.de/greatbritain_biographies.html#Payne).

describe the type of past situations in which the fixation of this sexual aim had occurred. Her third claim in the article was to make some observations on the form of ego development that accompanies the adoption of this abnormal sexual behavior.<sup>83</sup>

The article focused on the treatment of an adult man, whom Payne called Mr. A., a patient whose fetish was—the perfect symbol perhaps—a mackintosh. The paper reveals Payne to be a fine practitioner, attuned to all aspects of her patient's life, both physical and emotional. Payne believed that the analysis of the mackintosh fetishist exposed the fact that the sexual behavior that demands the presence of a fetish is only one manifestation of a pathological mental state. Other manifestations may include depression, anxiety, and fears that could be tied to early childhood experiences.

Payne's description of Mr. A. is beautifully shrewd. She explained that he had a good intellectual ability and had enjoyed some professional success in life. His physical activities, especially in the form of games and dancing, were inhibited; occasionally, there were outbursts of walking or swimming, but on the whole the only sustained form of activity involving contact with other people was conversation, in which he took great pleasure. In terms of his attitude to his parents, he was not financially dependent on them, but he retained a strong sense of guilt and obligation towards them, which was not dictated by reality. He manifested a dependence that made him regard his aging parents with horror and anxiety.<sup>84</sup>

Overall, the paper represents Klein's influence on British colleagues such as Payne, who was using her novel ideas to explain Mr. A.'s behavior and fetishism. Payne turned to Klein's work on ego mechanisms in the early phases of the Oedipus complex to explain the relationships between internal and external situations that arise as a result of the interaction between introjection and projection, and the tendency to internalize anxiety situations.<sup>85</sup> Thus, when the mackintosh fetishist was confronted with an anxiety situation, which might be some rivalry at work or fear of the loss of an external good object, he battled the associated depression by eating (symbolically, usually sausages and eggs) or drinking to excess. He also isolated himself and became an "onlooker." Payne delved into his early history to describe the beginnings of his anxiety and found that Mr. A. had slept in his parents' room until the age of five. She concluded that he had a strong libidinal attachment to his parents, accompanied by an aggressive component that had come to dominate the unconscious situation. Importantly, the inhibitions and restrictions of the ego were bound up with an unconscious, sadistic aim to destroy the love objects or achieve his own castration.

The interrelations of dependency and aggression were key points for Payne in explaining fetishism beyond a simple castration anxiety. She turned again to Klein's work on children and to her claim of having revealed the importance of infantile sadistic aims towards the mother and the imagined parents, which include

<sup>83</sup>Payne, "Some Observations," 161.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid., 162.

<sup>85</sup>Payne also noted Anna Freud's work in "Identification with the Aggressor," in Freud, *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defence* (London, 1993), 109–21. But overall Payne's paper is Kleinian. See Klein, "Early Stages of the Oedipus Conflict," 167–180; Melanie Klein, "Weaning," in Klein, *Love, Guilt, and Reparation, and Other Works 1921–1945* (New York, 1936), 290–305.

the wish to eat, burn, drown, soil with excreta, and penetrate destructively. Furthermore, Payne employed Klein to argue that the degree of aggression is proportionate to the helplessness of the ego in anxiety situations.<sup>86</sup>

Therefore, Payne argued, Mr. A.'s analysis showed that his sexuality was "bound up with his sadistic phantasies concerning the parental sexual relationship and that the introjection of a sadistic primal scene and the experiences in the parents' room formed the core of his neurosis."<sup>87</sup> Additionally, the actual relationship between his parents was bad and they separated when he was eleven years old. Thus Mr. A. was unable to establish adult genitality. This was due to his regression to a fixation in the oral and anal phases, and the persistence of an unconscious primitive sexual aim, which involved the death of the love object or his own castration. His solution to these inner predicaments was to develop a fetish. Payne's main argument was that Mr. A. had an ego weakness and an exaggerated dependence on his introjected objects, but no sustained identification with any particular one. Overall, his infantile sadism was unmanageable and overwhelmed him, thereby provoking neurotic defense mechanisms. In early life, the patient was bottle-fed. He was circumcised at six months and nearly died of bronchitis shortly afterwards. He was overweight and the doctor did not allow him to stand or walk until he was two years old. These experiences, she claimed, held up the integration and development of the body ego. In an attempt to deal with the helplessness, he adopted his eating habits and thereafter the fetish as a necessary accompaniment to sexuality after puberty.

Payne argued, "A study of what the fetish means to the fetishist reveals that it is possible to demonstrate that every component of the infantile sexual instinct has some connection with the fetish object, so that this object is associated with all the repressed infantile sexual experiences."<sup>88</sup> In the case of the mackintosh fetish, the smell was connected with scopophilic and coprophilic interests and activities, and with oral sadistic and oral erotic desires. The texture of the smooth or rough mackintosh was connected to the stimulation of skin erotism. She added that the relationship of a man to his fetish is the same as his relationship to his internalized parents. "Sometimes Mr. A. identified with the father, then he put on the mackintosh and would masturbate with a phantasy of intercourse with a woman ... Sometimes he placed it over his genitals as if to protect them."<sup>89</sup> The mackintosh fetish stood divisively in Payne's model for the father's penis or the woman's genitals, nipple, body, or anal tract, or the parents' feces.

In other words, in the Kleinian reading of Payne, the fetish was symbolic of part objects and also of a combined parent imago beyond the form of penis substitute envisaged by Freud. According to Klein, these imagos have special significance in connection with the earliest phase of ego development, before relationships to whole or real objects are established. Klein had also pointed out that the introjected part objects are identified with feces, and this identification emerges in the choice of fetish. Relying on Klein, Payne concluded that the fetish therefore stands for part objects which have been eaten and preserved. "The internalized objects may have

<sup>86</sup>Payne, "Some Observations," 163–4.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid., 164.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid., 166.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid., 167.

the significance of pre-genital super-ego formations and as we all know can be feared or loved by the ego. In the latter case the ego seeks protection and support from the super-ego and it may be said that the super-ego and loved object are identical.”<sup>90</sup> When this internalized object is projected into the fetish, the latter comes to represent the loved object and the superego. In the case of the mackintosh, its defensive and protective function rests on its capacity to defend against sadistic attacks, especially those connected with excretory activities.<sup>91</sup>

Payne argued against the tendency of some analysts to tie together fetishism, perversion, and neurosis. In her opinion, the fetish actually saves the individual from a perverse form of sexuality because the component impulse, which would prevail if not placed under special control, is the sadistic impulse. In contrast to common Freudian conviction, she believed that the fetishist has much more conscious anxiety and guilt than an individual with an established perversion. According to her, the influence of the fetish, from the point of view of both sexuality and ego defense, can be compared to that of a neurotic symptom. The projection that is part of fetishism serves the purposes of reassurance and provides a good external object. The fetish provides reassurance that the sadistic wishes have not destroyed the objects.<sup>92</sup> In conclusion, Payne stressed that the psychology of the fetishist is dominated by castration fear and that this fear can be traced to earlier infantile situations connected with an unusual tension of the aggressive impulses inseparably bound up with sexuality.<sup>93</sup>

## After 1939

This article opens up the research on Payne and therefore I have focused on her interwar ideas on sexual difference, femininity, and masculinity. But as the first to explore her, I would like to briefly outline the development of her career after 1939 and address her shift to a more independent position beyond Klein, noting that psychoanalysis in Britain was more open-ended and eclectic then, and during World War II, than had previously been assumed.

Like World War I, World War II also gave Payne an opportunity to further advance her career. At the beginning of the war, Jones, then president of the BPAS, decided not to stay in bombed-out London. Payne, who had already served in numerous administrative positions, was entrusted with the administration of the institute and the BPAS.<sup>94</sup> During the war, she took a more independent stand and, while remaining theoretically close to Klein,<sup>95</sup> she became an important mediator

<sup>90</sup>Ibid.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid., 167–8.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid., 169.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid., 170.

<sup>94</sup>In 1938 she contributed to helping refugees from the Continent; see “The Refugees Fund,” *The Times*, 10 Dec. 1938, 8.

<sup>95</sup>See, for example, Klein–Payne letters from 20 Nov. 1941 and 31 May 1942 in King and Steiner, *The Freud–Klein Controversies*, 196–7, 260, 263. Part of the letter from November (ibid., 196–7) illustrates their personal relationship as one of mutual respect and theoretical affinity, but not close friendship: “Dear Melanie, / Problems connected with the Society seem rather desperate. I feel the best thing I can do is to get a deeper and more *complete* [original emphasis] understanding of your work in connection with

in the theoretical debates and arguments taking place at the BPAS between Anna Freud and Melanie Klein that eventually became known as the Controversial Discussions.<sup>96</sup> Payne came to all except the first two extraordinary business meetings during the discussions. As business secretary of the society, she arranged for a stenographer to take minutes and type records of these meetings (thereby preserving the notes), while ensuring a less heated tone in the debates themselves. She attended all the special scientific discussions, chairing the last three, and she contributed four papers, the most important on varieties in treatment techniques at the BPAS.<sup>97</sup> Like other psychoanalysts, she was horrified at the highly personal and heated atmosphere that evolved in the society, which led some to attack Klein's work. Payne, in contrast, believed that psychoanalysis flourished in an even-tempered atmosphere, and though she remained sympathetic to Kleinian ideas, she valued contributions from colleagues from different theoretical orientations. Thanks also to her efforts at mediation, along with others, the BPAS did not split after the war.<sup>98</sup> Pearl King even claimed that it was largely due to Payne that there is now one rather than several psychoanalytic societies in Britain.<sup>99</sup>

Having gained the society's trust, Payne was eventually elected president of the BPAS in 1944, and served until 1947, replacing Jones in that capacity. As president, she continued to play an important role in facilitating the rapprochement between Anna Freud, Klein, and the British society, which resulted in a revised training program in 1946 that offered parallel training courses. Payne was in charge of discussions on training, chairing an ad hoc committee that included John Bowlby, Anna Freud, Willi Hoffer, Melanie Klein, Susan Isaacs, Adrian Stephen, and John Rickman.<sup>100</sup>

Payne was considered an effective administrator and was therefore elected president of the BPAS for a second term, from 1954 to 1956, and during the Freud centenary celebrations.<sup>101</sup> In the postwar period, Payne contributed to developing practice, technique, and the position of the Middle Group of "independent" psychoanalysts. After the war, Payne focused on practice and administration.<sup>102</sup> In

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the depressed [*sic*] position. I have already a considerable insight into it but I am aware of limitations and I should help the society most (quite apart from personal considerations) by being more certain about things. Is Dr Heimann going to have her research circle? I should like to join it if I am admissible." The letters are held in the Melanie Klein Archives at the Wellcome Institute, London.

<sup>96</sup>According to Ogilvie and Harvey, *The Biographical Dictionary*, 994, too, as tensions grew between the rival camps of Anna Freud and Melanie Klein, "Payne was seen as a moderate force, although she was sympathetic to Klein."

<sup>97</sup>King and Steiner, *The Freud-Klein Controversies*, xvii; Sylvia Payne, "Contribution to the Discussion of the Fundamentals of Technique," in King and Steiner, *The Freud-Klein Controversies*, 648–52. See her other post-1939 writings: Sylvia Payne, "The Principles and Methods of the Training of Child Psychoanalysts," *International Journal of Psycho-analysis* 24 (1943), 61–3; Payne, "Notes on the Theory of Psycho-analytical Therapy and Its Connection with the Theory of Technique," *International Journal of Psycho-analysis* 27 (1946), 12–19.

<sup>98</sup>"Women Psychoanalysts in Great Britain," in *Psychoanalytikerinnen: Biografisches Lexikon*.

<sup>99</sup>King, "Payne, Sylvia May."

<sup>100</sup>King and Steiner, *The Freud-Klein Controversies*, xvii.

<sup>101</sup>"Obituary Notices," 428; Ogilvie and Harvey, *The Biographical Dictionary*, 994. See also her article from the time: Sylvia Payne, "The Nonhuman Environment in Normal Development and in Schizophrenia," *International Journal of Psycho-analysis* 44 (1963), 236–8.

<sup>102</sup>Ogilvie and Harvey, *The Biographical Dictionary*, 994.



retirement, she lived near Tunbridge Wells, England. She was made an honorary member of the BPAS in 1962 at the age of eighty-two, until she died on 30 July 1976 at the age of ninety-five.<sup>103</sup> We need more research on these years as Payne is considered “an important member of the British Psychoanalytical Society along with Ernest Jones, Anna Freud, Melanie Klein, and Joan Riviere.”<sup>104</sup>

## Conclusion

The first psychoanalytic debate on femininity that took place during the interwar period, I argue, has not been fully reconstructed by intellectual historians as some key contributions to it produced in Britain were not included.<sup>105</sup> This article suggests that Sylvia Payne is worthy of full historical research that goes beyond passing mentions of her excellent organizational roles in the 1940s that do not do justice to her theoretical and administrative work. In outlining her biography, my main historical focus was on her significant intellectual contributions to the discussion of sexual difference before World War II, in the context of the development of Kleinian thought in Britain and reactions to Freud’s views on the Continent.

In the space remaining here, I pose the broader methodological question: how are we to characterize the challenge that Payne posed to Freud’s account of female sexuality? And how do we define the political, historical role of the female psychoanalysts of her generation in the interwar period? The different work of later feminists on parallel issues, especially that of the philosopher Elizabeth Grosz, is helpful in clarifying the nature of Payne’s project.

In her theoretical writing, Payne presented a direct criticism of Freud’s overemphasis of the primacy of the penis in his theories of sexual difference, which came at the expense and exclusion of any positive description of female sexuality and genitalia, including the clitoris, or any active status for femininity. Along with this critical contestation she protested against the idea that Freud’s model adequately represented female sexuality and all the options open to girls’ and thereafter women’s development. In the words of Riviere, Payne was proposing that Freud’s model was “not a credible view of women.”<sup>106</sup> In addition, Payne and those developing Klein’s ideas in Britain could be seen to be pushing the Freudian conceptual framework, which refused to acknowledge its own male limitations and interests vis-à-vis sexual difference, beyond its limits. This was not to reject psychoanalysis, but rather to explore how it might better contain femininity within its framework. Payne herself was not a feminist in terms of active engagement with protest against the social, political, and cultural roles open to women of the time—though her life as a working woman and a doctor was certainly built on the achievements of previous generations of feminists and the openness of psychoanalysis to women. It was in her essays, not labeled “feminist” as such, that she tried

<sup>103</sup>Ibid.; King, “Payne, Sylvia May.”

<sup>104</sup>Ogilvie and Harvey, *The Biographical Dictionary*, 994.

<sup>105</sup>Or alternatively they were read in theoretical isolation rather than as part of a broader British response. See the better-known paper by Joan Riviere, “Womanliness as a Masquerade.”

<sup>106</sup>Riviere, “Review, New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-analysis: By Sigmund Freud,” 336.

to devise new and more appropriate descriptions of women in order to highlight and discuss critical gaps in the account provided by Freud.

Importantly, Payne was able to question and expose Freudian thinking that posed as universal to be phallogentric and privileging a certain view of masculinity. In this vein, she could have more seriously undermined the very legitimacy of Freud's model but, as stated, her goal was not to abandon psychoanalysis altogether, rather to amend it to accommodate women's particularities. Her solution was not to analyze the uneven social position of men and women in interwar European society, but to create a theoretical parallel emphasis to Freud's account of the boy, assigning positive and productive value to both the clitoris and the vagina for the girl. There is no direct reference to the prevailing social constraints on female development in Payne's work. But—and this is no small matter—there is the act of critically pointing out to Freud the contribution that psychoanalysis makes to phallogentrism more broadly socially and culturally defined if its orthodox theories will remain phallogentric in the narrow sense of the word; that is, as focusing on the primacy of the penis, seeing women as lacking a phallus and being unable to view women beyond those terms relevant to men.

Yet how far did Payne's interwar critique of Freudian phallogentrism actually go? To what extent was she able to open up radically alternative ways of thinking about sexual difference? As I have implied throughout the article, Payne's suggestions fluctuated between developing an important critique of Freudian theory at the time of its conception and simultaneously remaining partly within Freud's model of sexual difference. Such fluctuation, characteristic of other early female analysts critical of Freud, raises another open question—to what extent is such a corrective amendment possible within a psychoanalytic framework where the primacy of the penis, castration anxiety, and oedipalization are constitutive of this very theory?<sup>107</sup>

The three forms of phallogentrism offered by Grosz are helpful in thinking about Payne's interwar project as a female analyst. They are: "[1] whenever women are represented as the opposites or negatives of men; [2] whenever they are represented in terms the same or similar to men; [3] and whenever they are represented as men's complements."<sup>108</sup> According to Grosz's formulation, Payne was challenging the second form of phallogentrism inherent in Freud's contention that women should be represented in the same or similar terms as men. In her 1935 article on femininity, in particular, Payne insisted on understanding women's bodies and pleasures beyond the Freudian viewpoint, and attempted to conceptualize experiences of female and male corporality differently. She was beginning to think about assigning descriptions of femininity that did not reduce female sexuality and genitality to the status of castration, and to look at how the two sexes would have different perspectives if their bodies were indeed different and functioned

<sup>107</sup>In another context, Grosz's answer to this question is that attempts to fit women into a framework built on a necessary blind spot towards femininity are intellectually profitable yet impossible; they carry too high a cost both for psychoanalysis and for female sexuality. Grosz, *Space, Time and Perversion*, 158, 168.

<sup>108</sup>Grosz adds, "In all three cases, women are seen as variations or versions of masculinity—either through negation, identity or unification into a greater whole. When this occurs, two sexual symmetries (each representing the point of view of one sex regarding itself and the other) are reduced to one (male), which takes it upon itself to adequately represent the other." Grosz, *Sexual Subversions*, xx.

differently in the social and cultural context of the time; and further, how subjectivities that function differently emerge from this distinction.

Payne's ideas also partly challenge Grosz's first and third common forms of phallogentrism. In her Kleinian system of representation, women were still viewed as opposite or standing in relation to men as their heterosexual complements. Yet Payne offered a more subtle model. The one central universal sexual organ of Freudianism, the penis, was still relevant to both sexes in her thinking, but the pre-oedipal early phase mattered immensely, as did the early Kleinian "femininity phase" in which the mother's body and its contents were key and vaginal awareness was omnipresent. In short, she did not adhere to Freudian orthodoxy, expounding instead a position that was familiar with the details of his theory yet sufficiently distanced from them to develop a critical and partly independent view. She used Freud's model, but simultaneously exposed those phallogentric presuppositions that assumed the male as the model by which all others are defined.

In her work with Mr. A., Payne seemed closer to Freud vis-à-vis sexual difference, measuring superiority and inferiority in terms of having or not having a penis. But here, too, she stressed the pre-oedipal dynamics and anxieties beyond simple castration anxiety. Payne did not fully develop a new representational system from the perspective of women, but she sought understanding from an alternative perspective and with a multiplicity of interests. Her theories gave rise to the idea that there are two ways of being and knowing. Grosz writes, "Phallogentrism is explicitly *not* the refusal of an identity for women ... but rather, the containment of that identity by other definitions and other identities."<sup>109</sup> It was from this trap that Payne began to think of alternatives to the dominant Freudian representation system based on what had been omitted from his model. Importantly, she was not trying to think and write as a woman, *per se*, but to think in more complex and nuanced ways of how a man or a woman might address concepts innovatively. She took the stance of a knowing woman whereby "knowing" could be achieved differently, through a different frame of reference, and with a proliferation of different questions.<sup>110</sup> Nonetheless, as noted, overall, she remained within Freud's model because ambivalence towards women was embedded in the very structure of psychoanalysis. In sum, she contested Freud's thinking as universally relevant and pushed the theory to its limit, revealing its unacknowledged implications for limiting women without managing or wanting to create a new alternative or move entirely beyond it.

The first psychoanalytic femininity debate of the interwar period was a high point of intellectual experimentation (that still retains its ability to shock and astonish readers today). Chronologically, it was followed by a second analytic debate on motherhood in the 1940s and by more radical and more explicitly feminist political discussions in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. We should note that there is no simple linear development between these debates (the second debate of the 1940s, for example, was certainly more conservative than the first); nor can they be seen as building upon one another. It was only in the latter part of the twentieth century

<sup>109</sup>Elizabeth Grosz, *Time Travels: Feminism, Nature, Power* (Durham, NC, 2005), 174, also 183.

<sup>110</sup>All taken from Grosz's different discussions on what Irigaray was attempting in her work. See Grosz, *Time Travels*, 175; and Grosz, *Sexual Subversions*, 107.

that female analysts, for example Luce Irigaray, considered whether or not to abandon psychoanalysis, or to seek different ways to subvert it, or produce alternative ways to portray women that eschewed the privileged position accorded to men and masculinity. Many feminists in the 1970s–1980s viewed psychoanalysis less as a theory of sexual difference and more as a rationalization and legitimation of already existing social roles, and they took penis envy as a veiled expression of envy of men's social privileges.<sup>111</sup>

It would, of course, be anachronistic to judge the achievements of the first debate on femininity in light of the debates that followed. Nonetheless, the formulations of later feminists help us answer the methodological questions I have posed. They assisted in articulating what Payne and the work of the early female analysts were and were not doing during the interwar period. In sum, they expanded its framework, looked to emphasize different elements, and brought to light hidden potentials in the structure of Freudian psychoanalysis. Their work can be seen as an interesting stage in the development of what was, in essence, feminist theory. More scholarship comparing the different femininity debates could help provide more precise answers to the continuities and discontinuities between these controversies.

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<sup>111</sup>See Appignanesi and Forrester, *Freud's Women*, 457–8.