



Fucking with the Psychoanalytic Ancestors: Epistemological Insubordination and Failed Fabulation as Queer Pedagogies in Psychoanalytic Training

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Abstract

This article responds to Paul B. Preciado's call for the 'depatriarchalization, deheterosexualization and decolonization' (2021, 76) of psychoanalysis by developing a method of epistemological insubordination for reading the psychoanalytic archive. Historic texts, still taught in contemporary trainings, mobilise powerful affective responses in trainees yet remain largely unexamined as transferential objects within training institutions. Situating psychoanalytic writing as a Derridean archive, I perform a queer phenomenological historiographic reading of Helene Deutsch's writings on female homosexuality for "straight lines," "straightening devices," and "queer angles", tracing shifts in psychoanalytic attitudes between 1930s Vienna and 1940s Boston. I then extend this method by working with my own fabulative responses to these difficult texts, developing a technique of failed fabulation that mobilises the rigid, mythosymbolic structures of the ego through playfully fucking with the psychoanalytic ancestors. Finally, I consider how these methods might support pedagogy in psychoanalytic training courses, while attending to the unevenly distributed risks of this approach. The article contributes to debates within queer medical humanities about how clinical education can reckon with its colonial, cis-heteronormative legacies.

Keywords Psychoanalysis · Queer theory · Trans theory · Queer pedagogy · Critical fabulation · Helene Deutsch · Erotic transference

Introduction: Paul B. Preciado's call for the transformation of psychoanalysis

Philosopher Paul B. Preciado, who was himself a patient in psychoanalysis for 17 years, reports that he provoked 'panic in the lecture hall' when, in a 2019 lecture to French Lacanian analysts, he asked whether any of them identified as 'psychoanalysts and homosexuals'

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(2021, 52). No-one answered affirmatively. Preciado's provocative call for 'a process of depatriarchalization, deheterosexualization and decolonization of psychoanalysis as discourse, as narrative, as institution and as clinical practice', and his suggestion that psychoanalysts 'abandon...the techniques of violence' and instead 'agree to submit to a process of study, questioning and experimentation' (2021, 76) have reverberated through the halls of psychoanalytic institutions in the years since his lecture (Gherovici 2026). In her thoughtful response to Preciado, American psychoanalyst Jamieson Webster argues that 'Preciado's address to the École de la Cause Freudienne, France's largest and most provincial of Lacanian academies – doesn't feel addressed to me, to my psychoanalysis' (Webster 2023, 125). At the same time, she highlights the ambivalence in Preciado's writing about psychoanalysis, affectionately calling him 'the secret psychoanalyst, for whom dreams are 'an integral part of life' and for whom 'life begins and ends in the unconscious' (Preciado 2020, 29; Webster 2023, 126). Nevertheless, as analyst-in-training Hannah Baer observes, Preciado's speech 'plays out the tropes of oppositionality between marginalized queer people and the psychoanalytic establishment without taking on more deeply the issue of what transformation could look like' (Baer 2022, 40). One trope mobilised by Preciado is that psychoanalysis has a history of harming queer and trans people through conversion therapy and the gatekeeping of gender-affirming medical care. This is, sadly, true. However, textual analysis of Freud's early writing on sexuality has emphasised its queer potential (Van Haute and Westerink 2020), and re-assessments of Freud's clinical work with queer and gender non-conforming patients has emphasised that 'psychoanalysis has from the beginning been a site of queer and trans* creation and resistance' (Sinclair et al. 2024, 1). A trope often mobilised in defence of psychoanalysis is that institutions have addressed psychoanalysis' historic issues with queer expressions of gender and sexuality and with racism; Jamieson's demurral – not *my* psychoanalysis – could be read in this way. But although Baer observes that leaders in the psychoanalytic institutions in New York where she is training 'generally seem committed to engaging with the brutal history of their own discipline' (2022, 41), at the same time, queer and trans psychotherapists in the UK report that they continue to experience the 'sapping poisons of institutional life' that 'left us working to stitch together our queer and psychoanalytic selves' (Kentridge and Robinson 2025, 280). And both American and British psychoanalytic institutions are still systematically and structurally racist (Davids et al. 2022; Holmes et al. 2024).

In this paper, I take up Baer's challenge to complexify these tropes about the antagonistic relationship between queer and trans people and psychoanalysis, as well as to examine more deeply what a transformation of institutional psychoanalysis in response to Preciado's call might look like. I will interrogate one particular challenge facing psychoanalytic institutions when they attempt to "queer" and "decolonise" their training: the continued role that the archive of psychoanalytic writing – some of it 130 years old – plays in the formation of psychoanalysts today. In Section One below, I provide a pedagogical history of this archive. In Section Two, I suggest and demonstrate a framework for reading historic psychoanalytic texts that invokes Preciado's call for 'epistemological insubordination' (2021, 74) and mobilises vocabulary from Sara Ahmed's *Queer Phenomenology* (Ahmed 2006a). I perform queer phenomenological readings of two clinical texts from 1933 and 1944 by the Polish-born, Viennese-trained psychoanalyst Helene Deutsch that describe her analytic work with lesbian patients. I introduce this method of epistemological insubordination as a way of playfully and pleasurably fucking with the psychoanalytic ancestors. In Section Three, I further work with the fantasies, fabulations and affects mobilised in my white, queer body by these historic texts, bringing Saidiya Hartman's profound work on archival silences (2019) into contact with psychosocial thinking about traumatophilic encounters

with archival wounds to develop a method of failed fabulation that deliberately unsettles the normative structures of the ego. In Section Four, I return to psychoanalytic pedagogy to explore how epistemological insubordination and failed fabulation might support a psychoanalytic pedagogy that equips future analysts to dream queerly with their patients.

Section one: A pedagogical history of the psychoanalytic archive

Analysts call on the psychoanalytic archive when working clinically with patients; it is not uncommon for an analyst to read a text written in 1926 when considering how to formulate an intervention with a patient in 2026. This is perhaps unique in the clinical professions; few doctors or surgeons would refer to a 100-year-old text when deciding what drugs to prescribe or which organ to remove. Training today generally follows the three-part “Eitington” model approved by the International Psychoanalytical Association: training analysis, supervision, and theoretical teaching. Theoretical teaching draws heavily on psychoanalytic writing from 1896 onwards; trainees may have to read a significant volume of work by Freud, Jung, Klein, Winnicott or Lacan, depending on which school of psychoanalysis their institution subscribes to. This contact with the archive can be violent. When I first read Freud’s *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* in preparation for a foundation course in psychoanalysis in 2017, I found his description of homosexuals as ‘inverts’ with a ‘fatal deviation’ (1917, 303) very painful; my shock was compounded by the difficulty I encountered in discussing this with my mostly cis, heterosexual tutors and fellow students (Mossop 2022). Many historic texts are either overtly racist or include un-analysed use of racial tropes. As Katherine McKittrick says about university teaching, ‘only someone with racial privilege would assume that the classroom could be a site of safety’ (Hudson and McKittrick 2014, 238, cited by Khan, A 2022). Since Freud’s early work with hysterical patients, ‘sexuality has always been central to psychoanalysis, and always subject to repression, theoretically and clinically’ (Mossop 2026, 67). This repression, which is structured by colonial systems of racial capitalism, has been especially harmful to queer, trans and racially minoritised patients who directly encounter ‘the surreptitious presence of the psychoanalytic heritage and its intrusion into the formative process of the analysand’s psyche’ (Sauer 2024, 47). The ‘psychoanalytic heritage’ that Sauer refers to also intrudes surreptitiously into the formative process of analytic candidates, as has been recognised in recent work by Black, queer and trans psychoanalysts (Davids et al. 2022; Holmes et al. 2024; Merson 2024b; Wiggins 2024).

I consider psychoanalytic publications from 1896 until today as an archive in the Derridean sense: ‘The archivization of psychoanalysis itself, of its “life”... of its “acts”, of its private and public procedures... the archivization of its institutional and clinical practice’ (Derrida 1995, 16–17). This archive is encountered today, at least in the UK, in the online format of the Psychoanalytic Electronic Publishing Web, commonly known as “PEP Web”, a key online source of theoretical and clinical writing for psychoanalysts and psychosocial scholars. PEP Web provides an extraordinary wealth of writing by psychoanalysts about their patients and their clinical technique; it contains 158,000 articles at the time of writing. In his 1994 talk at the Freud Museum that was later published as *Archive Fever*, Derrida comments on the ‘retrospective science fiction’ (1995, 17) of what psychoanalysis might have been, had E-mail existed in Freud’s time. I do not think it is too much of a stretch, therefore, to consider PEP-Web as an example of a Derridean archive of psychoanalytic writing. The archons who control what is virtually deposited in PEP Web

are, and have been throughout psychoanalytic history, the psychoanalysts who act as editors and peer reviewers of psychoanalytic books and journals. Like all archives, it is subject to the aggression, destruction and repetition compulsion of the Freudian death drive which ‘destroys in advance its own archive’ (Derrida 1995, 14). Even the most seemingly apolitical psychoanalysts made unconscious political calculations in what they included and excluded in their clinical work and writing. However, there are many instances where social structures around race, gender, sexuality, class, and disability appear symptomatically, in slips, unanalysed moments, and silences in this writing (Laubender 2024). No wonder that encounters with the archive of psychoanalysis can be experienced as violent by some trainees and analytic candidates.

Contemporary psychoanalytic trainings are developing ways of dealing with the problem of the gaps, silences and slips in the psychoanalytic archive by including theoretical papers that engage with the ‘historical, political, theoretical, and clinical developments of psychoanalysis’ in their syllabus (The SITE for Contemporary Psychoanalysis 2025); drawing on feminist pedagogy and including playlists, facilitated reflective space, and discussion of the impact of systematic oppression (Merson 2024a); introducing contemporary psychosocial and clinical writing into their programme (British Psychotherapy Foundation 2020); and using cultural objects as non-clinical case studies to set complex countertransference reactions in motion (Giffney 2021, 2023). One further solution might be to move away entirely from using historic texts in training syllabuses and, indeed, in clinical work. However, beyond the loss of clinical usefulness of these texts, there is a danger that, in recoiling from violent language, trainees project their own homophobia, transphobia and racism into the past, making it more difficult to perceive in the present. As I will demonstrate, movements between receptiveness and rigidity in respect of queer sexuality have taken place in different times and places over the last 130 years of psychoanalytic history. I therefore think that it is worth finding ways to continue to read historic and sometimes problematic texts, provided that they have clinical value.

Section two: Epistemological insubordination, or, playfully fucking with the psychoanalytic ancestors

Mutations in the epistemology of sex, gender and sexual difference

Preciado calls for the epistemological insubordination of psychoanalysis in the third section of *Can the Monster Speak*. He starts by naming societal and technological changes which, he argues, are causing mutations in the epistemology of sex, gender and sexual difference: the gradual emancipation of heterosexual women starting in 1950; battles for intersex rights; the emergence of the term ‘cis’ to describe people who identify with the sex assigned to them at birth; and new reproductive biotechnology. He grandly and hopefully suggests that the epistemic crisis brought about by these changes will lead to the abandonment of the global capitalist regime. And he calls on Lacanian psychoanalysts to respond to this epistemic crisis by stopping their absurd systematic appeals to texts by Freud and Lacan and, instead, to listen to:

‘the once monstrous bodies produced by the patriarchal-colonial regime of sex, gender and sexual difference [who today can] speak for themselves and produce knowledge about themselves.... We do not simply reject the patriarchal and sexual practices of kinship and binary heterocentric socialization. We reject your epistemology, and

we must do forcefully. Our position is one of epistemological insubordination...’ (Preciado 2021, 73–74)

Preciado goes on to explain that epistemological insubordination requires psychoanalysts to give up their unique right to examine and question their patients; to let themselves be examined by their patients, especially those whose subjectivities are ‘dissident to the norm’ (2021, 77):

‘A transition in clinical practice would entail a shift in position: the object of study becomes the subject, while the person who, until now, has been the subject agrees to submit to a process of study, questioning and experimentation....Perhaps this process of transformation alone, terrible and devastating as it may seem to you, now deserves the name of psychoanalysis’ (2021, 76–77).

There is much to critique in Preciado’s rather selective, white European-focused history of changes in social attitudes to gender and sexuality: 1950 seems like a particularly odd starting point for a liberatory history since this was the period when institutional psychoanalysis was most strongly oppressing queer and trans people within American and European state structures. However, despite these misgivings – which others have also expressed in respect of his much longer work *Dysphoria Mundi* (Proctor 2025) – I find his call for epistemological insubordination of historic psychoanalytic texts productive. We need to turn the tables on Freud, Lacan, Klein and the rest of the canon, and look to knowledge produced by dissident bodies as ‘an exercise in cognitive emancipation’ (Preciado 2025, 50). This process was well under way when Preciado gave his lecture in 2019 – although he doesn’t speak of this – and has continued rapidly since. There is now a rich field of psychoanalytic writing by analysts who identify as queer, trans and people of colour and who are not afraid to challenge institutional structures; see, for example, the faculty of the Psychoanalytic Hub for Online Liberatory Education (‘About P-HOLE | A Liberatory Approach to Psychoanalysis’, 2025). I also want to complexify Preciado’s call for psychoanalysts to abandon their systematic appeals to Freud and Lacan. Whilst I agree that analysts should stop ‘hold[ing] up Freud and Lacan as law’ (2021, 73), I don’t believe that analysts should stop reading Freud, Lacan, and the rest of the psychoanalytic canon. Instead, I think we can usefully deploy Preciado’s second call to turn the tables on these historic texts, submitting them (and their authors) to a ‘process of study, questioning and experimentation’ (2021, 76). As Preciado says, this can at times be a forceful process. The sexual element of this aggression, of our playful fucking with the psychoanalytic ancestors, can, like any other erotic activity, have risks. However, it is also a creative, imaginative process. Preciado thinks with Donna Haraway’s technique of speculative fabulation (2016) to seek counter-narratives, new questions: ‘[t]o recover the imagination as a force for political transformation’ (2025, 50). So epistemological insubordination also involves fantasy and has strong links to the imaginative political work encouraged by Black feminists such as Haraway and Saidiya Hartman. I will return to this in Section Three.

Queer phenomenological historiography as a method for reading the psychoanalytic archive

My approach to working with historic psychoanalytic texts has emerged over several years of engagement with psychoanalysis in the United Kingdom: as a student in a psychoanalytic foundation course, the facilitator of a group of queer women and non-binary people based in London who read psychoanalytic texts together over a period of four

years, a teacher of Freud to university undergraduates, a patient in psychoanalytic and psychodynamic psychotherapy, a researcher using the psychoanalytic archive in creative, queer research methods, and an occasional trainer of psychotherapists. When reading these texts, I feel my way through a dense cloud of affects. I am taken aback by the strength of my white, queer body's reactions to words on a page. I have been drawing on the simple but powerful spatial vocabulary of Sara Ahmed's *Queer Phenomenology* to put these experiences into words. Phenomenology, Ahmed writes, 'means apprehending the object as if it were unfamiliar, so that we can attend to the flow of perception itself' (2006a, 37). To approach the archive of psychoanalytic writing as unfamiliar, we first need to disorient ourselves, to approach from a queer angle. Ahmed examines sexual orientation as the orientation of bodies in space, making visible the way that 'compulsory heterosexuality operates as a straightening device, which rereads signs of queer desires as deviations from the straight line' (2006a, 23), and considering 'racism as an ongoing and unfinished history, which orientates bodies in specific directions, affecting how they "take up" space' (2006a, 111). For Ahmed, 'things seem "straight" (on the vertical axis), when they are "in line", which means that they are aligned with other lines' (2006a, 66). The habitual movements of bodies along a "straight line" defines normativity and deviation; anything that does not follow the straight line is deviant, queer, twisted, even perverted.

Following both Ahmed and Preciado, I set out below a queer reading of two historic texts by Helene Deutsch (1933, 1944a) about her analytic work with lesbian patients. I turn the tables on these historic texts and their author, submitting them to a process of studying, questioning, and experimentation. I am not looking to "queer" these texts, to somehow realign them to a contemporary queer perspective. Rather, I seek to pay attention to the analysts' flow of perception: how they orientate themselves towards heterosexuality, queer gender and sexuality, looking for straight lines and family lines within the traditions of psychoanalytic history, attentive to the reproduction of psychoanalytic theory between generations of analysts. I look for deviation from these family lines, moments of disorientation, and queer potential, as well as straightening devices that act to bring analysts and their patients back "into line". The question of what it means to be "on a straight line" changes – sometimes subtly and sometimes dramatically – over time as societal attitudes affect psychoanalytic practice (and vice versa). This means that some historical analysis is necessary to identify what "seemed straight" – aligned with psychoanalytic practice – and what might have been read as "deviant" at particular times and places in psychoanalytic history. However, the temporality that I necessarily introduce is not linear; rather, it operates in a 'jagged, queer line' (Saketopoulou and Hansbury 2024, 151), as will become clear from my reading.

Dialogues with wild desires and mistaken identities from thirty years ago

In my queer reading of Helene Deutsch's writing about lesbians, I am in dialogue with Noreen O'Connor and Joanna Ryan's seminal book *Wild Desires and Mistaken Identities: Lesbianism and Psychoanalysis* (1993). Writing more than thirty years ago, at a time when '[p]sychoanalysis, as a body of theory and practice, [had] not been able to integrate homosexuality into itself' (1993, 9), analysts O'Connor and Ryan submitted psychoanalysis to a Foucauldian discourse analysis, examining its 'metapsychological underpinnings, which determine what can and cannot be said or thought about, and in what form' (1993, 10). In their deconstruction of psychoanalytic texts about lesbians from 1920 to 1993, they

point out ‘the *a priori* theorising based on normative notions of innate heterosexuality; the obliviousness to countertransference problems stemming from the personal and theoretical position of the practitioner’ (1993, 12–13). John Forrester has described the psychoanalytic case as ‘the privileged means for attempting to convey the unique psychoanalytic experience of *both* patient and analyst’ in which there is a ‘repetition – or at least a remobilization of the original relations of transference and countertransference evident in the relation between patient and analyst...[P]sychoanalysis is incessantly revealing the phenomena its literary and conversational technology endeavours to produce’ (2017, 65). In examining individual cases and vignettes, I use the inherently revealing nature of the psychoanalytic case, building on O’Connor and Ryan’s analysis. I draw out the submerged anger in their writing, connecting it to Preciado’s – and my own. I wonder: why do I still need to write this paper? Thirty years later, psychoanalysis may have integrated homosexuality into itself – in tentative, patchy form – but transness still remains largely split off (Gherovici 2011; Osserman 2024; Saketopoulou 2022). My engagement with the queer history of psychoanalysis therefore echoes Heather Love’s suggestion that the: ‘cross-historical touch that Foucault feels in the archive may be as much a mauling as a caress.... What happens in the archive is an encounter with historical violence, which includes both physical injury and the violence of obscurity, or annihilation from memory’ (2009, 48–49). The violence that Preciado and Love point to is palpable in the vignettes of queer female erotic transference that I examine in this paper.

Helene Deutsch’s eleven lesbians: Vienna in the 1920s and 1930s

Helene Deutsch was born in Poland in 1884 to Jewish parents and trained as a psychiatrist and psychoanalyst in Vienna. Sigmund Freud appointed her as head of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society’s training institute in 1924, a senior role that gave her influence over the training of Viennese analysts for more than ten years. She moved to Boston in 1935 with her husband, analyst Felix Deutsch, and quickly became an important figure in American psychoanalysis alongside other Jewish analysts who were forced by Nazi persecution to emigrate from Germany and Austria during the late 1930s. She wrote extensively on female psychology. Deutsch’s writing is frequently illuminated by detailed and vivid descriptions of clinical material collected during her extensive private practice; she saw eleven or twelve patients six times a week (Sayers 1991). The fine detail of Deutsch’s descriptions of the analyst’s and patient’s experience make her vignettes especially suitable for phenomenological examination.

Deutsch considered female homosexuality as part of female psychology; her important 1925 book *The Psychoanalysis of Sexual Functions of Women* (published in English in 2018) examined what analysts in the 1920s called the “masculinity complex” in women who did not conform to societal expectations of femininity. Deutsch theorised that a masculinity complex did not necessarily lead to neurosis; she was aware of her own desire to be ‘both a boy and a girl’ (Deutsch 1973, 132) from her analysis with Freud and, as a woman in a male-dominated profession, may have identified as a “masculine woman” herself. However, she identified a “pure” category of the masculinity complex as a woman who:

...has never completely abandoned identification with the father, clings to real possession of the penis, and compromises between reality and the pleasure principle by denying lack of the penis. The female genitals remain permanently undiscovered (frigidity), the clitoris retains its fully satisfying sexual role, and the penis is never exchanged for the desire for a child. This type tends to homosexual object-choice,

never attains the female attitude to the male, and is very masculine in its sublimatory trends. (Deutsch 2018, 26)

To my twenty-first century queer ears, this description of a woman who fails to resolve her Oedipus complex – therefore condemning her to a lifetime of neurosis – sounds very much like a stone butch lesbian who enjoys topping her partners with a strap-on dildo. Deutsch therefore makes a surprising amount of space for butch lesbians in her description of female psychology; however, her essentialising descriptions orient her towards the “family line” of psychoanalytic theory that saw lesbian desire as a failure in normative development. And, in common with her contemporaries, she situates a masculine identification as the source of lesbian desire.

1933: A positive libidinal relationship with a woman

Deutsch's clinical experience with several lesbian patients in the 1920s appears to have disrupted her view of the “straight lines” of normative female sexual development. She explains that her 1933 paper *Homosexuality in Women*, which was first presented as a paper to the International Psychoanalytic Congress in 1931, is based on ‘eleven cases which I have analysed more or less thoroughly’ (1933, 33). She describes these cases, in a somewhat surprised tone, as anatomically and physiologically feminine. The appearance of several lesbians with typical feminine attributes – whatever that meant to Deutsch at the time – has produced a queer angle, disorientating her. Deutsch's paper is conventionally constructed as two detailed individual cases, both involving erotic transference, followed by a theoretical discussion. The first patient has a marriage of convenience to a man, but loves women, although she has never had a sexual relationship with one. Deutsch is puzzled by this inhibition. She movingly describes her patient's relationship to her:

The transference to me was very strong and was of the type in which for a long time nothing appears in the patient's consciousness or behaviour but tenderness, admiration and a sense of security. She felt as happy as if at last she had found a loving, understanding mother who gave her all that her own mother had denied her... [T]he patient, oppressed by a conscious longing for death, constantly declared that, but for her relation with me and the confidence she had in me, no power on earth could prevent her from committing suicide. (Deutsch 1933, 35)

In her autobiography, Deutsch describes her own intense transference to Freud during her analysis: she once spent an hour standing in front of a men's clothing store in Vienna, ‘weeping bitterly’ because she thought that Freud was in love with her and would have to leave his wife (Deutsch 1973, 132). O'Connor and Ryan highlight Deutsch's ability to work with erotic transference; she was open to the disorientating effects of queer moments with her lesbian patients. Deutsch referred her patient onto a male analyst, in the hope that she would develop what she saw as a more appropriate heterosexual transference to him.¹ Deutsch reports that the patient did not develop a heterosexual transference with the male analyst; however, she was able to have:

...an extraordinarily blissful and uninhibited sexual relation with another woman... The result of the analysis [with me] was clear. All that had so plainly emerged in the analytic transference-situation had now been dissociated from the person of the woman-analyst and carried over to other women. Wishes frustrated in analysis could

be fulfilled in relation to these new objects....she was able to form a positive libidinal relation with a woman.... The analytic treatment had not led to a further and more favourable resolution of the mother-fixation, that is to say, to the renunciation of homosexuality and a turning towards men. (Deutsch 1933, 39–40)

Deutsch believed that the ‘very strong’ erotic transference enabled her patient to overcome the hostility towards her mother which had been blocking her ability to form sexual relationships with women. However, the analytic relationship with Deutsch did not produce what Deutsch saw as the ‘more favourable resolution’ of heterosexuality.

Deutsch’s second detailed vignette includes a description of several dreams relating to maternal wishes, and others that are distinctly queer. In one dream, the patient awakes with her hand between her legs, calling out, ‘My God, Frau Doctor’ (1933, 44). In another, the patient dreams that she is being analysed by Anna Freud, who is dressed in man’s clothing, and then dreams of Helene Deutsch holding Sigmund Freud’s cigar, a symbol of both the penis and Freud himself. In including these dreams in her cases, Deutsch orients herself towards queer female sexuality and non-normative gender expression. Deutsch could dream queerly with her patients, and felt able to write about these experiences in the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*.

1944: Deviant, regressive, hate-filled female homosexuals

Deutsch’s next significant writing on female homosexuality was published in 1944 as part of the second volume of her most well-known work, *The Psychology of Women* (Deutsch 1944b, 1944c). From her first visit to America in 1930, she was a prominent figure. As the first female analyst to visit America, she reports that the press greeted her ‘like a prima donna’ (1973, 173) at the port. She was well established professionally and financially by the time this two-volume work on female psychology was published. Despite experiencing some antisemitism, she appears to have enjoyed the positivity of American life (Roazen 1991). However, American society became increasingly homophobic during the Second World War as homosexuals were positioned as a threat to national security (Kunzel 2024) and psychoanalytic practice both reflected and supported this change (Lewes et al. 2008). This more homophobic orientation is reflected in Deutsch’s 1944 chapter on female homosexuality. ‘Two groups of homosexual women can be distinguished’ (1944a, 256), Deutsch proclaims, orienting herself and her patients immediately towards the straight lines of 1940s American sexologically and scientifically determined heterosexuality. The first, masculine group, have either ‘hermaphroditic’ sexual organs or ‘more or less prominent aberrations of the secondary sex characteristics’ and ‘present many psychologic problems’. Women in the second group show ‘no physical signs of abnormality... the causes of their inversion are obviously psychogenic’ (1944a, 256). Deutsch extrapolates to general categories based on five brief and two more extensive vignettes that are based on the same material as her 1933 paper. Deutsch’s writing style here is a combination of sexology and psychoanalysis (Linge 2023). She has encountered a fabulously queer collection of patients of varying biological sex, gender presentation, gender identity, and sexual orientation (in today’s language). These cases exceed the terms available to describe them, disorienting Deutsch’s attempts to place them into cis-heteronormative, racialised categories based on white, European and American expectations about women’s breast size, vocal tone, and facial hair. Deutsch argues, using the complexity of these cases, that when trying to understand the causes of homosexuality in “women” – a term that is stretched beyond

meaning, given the varying biological sex and gender identity of the people she describes – both psychological and physical causes must be considered. For Deutsch, any variance in gender presentation – especially physical difference – is likely to lead to homosexuality, following the straight lines of her thinking. However, she acknowledges that this is not completely pre-determined. The case of someone who might today be understood as a “trans fag” – a gay trans man – introduces a queer angle that cannot be straightened up by biological determinism. However, ultimately, Deutsch makes it clear that she understands female homosexuality as a psychological pathology born of ‘an excess of infantile regressive elements or hate components’ that distorts ‘the love for the mother into homosexuality’ and overwhelms the ‘biologic demand of heterosexuality’ (1944a, 278). In Deutsch’s new orientation, female homosexuality is now seen as deviant, regressive, and hate filled.

Deutsch includes two extensive cases in her 1944 chapter on female homosexuality based on the same material as the 1933 paper that I examine above. A comparison of the two texts further reveals how Deutsch’s orientation towards ideas about female homosexuality changed between 1933 and 1944. Some paragraphs of the vignette were reproduced verbatim; others were edited. The description of the patient’s transference was significantly edited:

[The patient’s] relation to her psychoanalyst was very pronounced, and over a long period of time revealed nothing except tenderness, respect, and a feeling of safety. She was very happy and felt as if she had at last found a kind and understanding mother who could give her all that her mother had denied her. (1944a, 270)

In 1933, Deutsch describes the transference in the first person as ‘to me’ (*‘auf mich’* in the original German version of the paper (1932, 221)). A decade later, Deutsch orients herself away from her patient’s love and desire for her, towards the safety of an impersonal third person ‘analyst’. The transference is described as ‘very pronounced’ instead of ‘very strong’ (*‘sehr stark’*) and her patient’s feelings of ‘admiration’ (*‘Verehrung’*, meaning admiration or even devotion) are replaced with a less personal ‘respect’. ‘Tenderness’ and ‘feelings of safety’ remain from the 1933 text. Later in the 1933 text, the patient was happy that she had found a ‘loving, understanding mother’ (*‘eine gute, verstehende Mutter’*); by 1944 this was replaced with a ‘kind and understanding mother’. These subtle changes in language, from first to third person, from admiration to respect, and from love to kindness, downplay the intensity of the patient’s feelings as well as the analyst’s personal involvement. We see the same depersonalising effect in Deutsch’s description of her patient’s suicidal feelings: in 1933, it was ‘her relation to me’ (1933, 35) that kept her patient from committing suicide; in 1944, it was ‘her confidence in psychoanalysis’ (1944, 271).

The description of the therapeutic effect of the erotic transference is similarly muted by 1944. Instead of claiming that the patient’s new-found happiness in a relationship with a woman were due to the ‘analytic-transference situation....with the person of the woman-analyst’ (1933, 35), Deutsch described the outcome as being ‘as a result of the treatment’ (1944a, 272), a much more general, less personal, claim, that makes the erotic transference between two women much less obvious. It appears that it was no longer possible to write explicitly about erotic transference to a female patient. The queer angles and moments of queer potentiality in Deutsch’s earlier writing have been toned down or omitted. The later paper also omits descriptions of erotically tinged dreams about the analyst, although it includes a description of dreams that Deutsch sees as representing maternal material.

There is also a subtle change in the way Deutsch describes her hopes for the outcome of her patient’s analysis. In 1933, Deutsch believed that her patient’s transference resulted in her being able to experience a full sexual relationship with another woman. Deutsch’s disappointment in this outcome is expressed even more fully in 1944:

It goes without saying that the experience fell far below what psychoanalysis demands of an adult personality; on the contrary, in such infantile substitutes for sexual gratifications analysis sees the danger of and not the cure for neurotic illness. But sometimes the therapeutic goal can be achieved only through a compromise. In this case, analytic treatment did not lead to the patient's renouncing homosexuality and turning toward men; thus its real task was not fulfilled. But it succeeded in bringing the unhappy woman who was constantly on the verge of suicide to a point where, by mastering her fear of her hostility toward her mother, she could achieve tenderness and sexual gratification. A better solution of the fatal mother tie proved impossible. (Deutsch 1944a, 273)

Here, Deutsch uses infantilising language in describing the outcome of the analysis as less than what is expected of an 'adult personality', her patient's lesbian relationship as an 'infantile substitute' for adult sexuality, and as a 'danger' that may produce more neurotic symptoms. In 1933, the result of the analysis was described as a resolution, if not as full as Deutsch would have liked; in 1944, the 'real task' of analysis is described as 'not fulfilled' at all. And the 'mother fixation' of 1933 is replaced by a 'fatal mother tie' in 1944. Deutsch also inserts a discussion into the 1944 text which is not present at all in the 1933 article, for the first time referring to the possibility of analysis as a 'cure' for homosexuality. Deutsch's former lover, Sándor Radó, was the first psychoanalyst to disagree with Sigmund Freud's view that it was not possible to change someone's sexual orientation (Kunzel 2024). Deutsch's revised text follows these straight lines, positioning psychoanalytic treatment as a straightening device which should produce a heterosexual orientation.

Section three: Experimenting with queer fabulation in the psychoanalytic archive

I have a lot of fantasies about Helene Deutsch and her eleven lesbian patients. Although she refers to them impersonally as 'cases' that she has analysed 'more or less thoroughly', she provides detailed descriptions of her patients' sexual activities in terms that are familiar to any queer woman today. I imagine that her patients must have described their sex lives in some detail during analytic sessions. Did Deutsch enjoy these descriptions? Did she encourage them? Did her patients fantasise about her when they were having sex? The queer dreams, and the waking ejaculation 'My God, Frau Doctor!' would suggest so. Deutsch dates this clinical work as taking place between 1920 and 1931. I dream about how many lesbian patients might have been helped to have more fulfilling sex lives by Helene Deutsch. I imagine the gossip in Viennese lesbian salons: "Darling, you simply must be analysed by Helene, she's quite dreamy!" During most of the 1920s, Deutsch was practising as an analyst in Vienna, which had a small but distinct queer sub-culture (Bunzl 2004; Shapira 2023). As the head of the psychoanalytic training programme, Deutsch worked largely with analysts-in-training. I am excited by the thought that there could have been 11 lesbian analysts in Vienna in the 1920s. I wonder why we don't know who they are. She describes one lesbian patient as writing a technical book with her partner. Was this a psychoanalytic publication written by two lesbians? If so, which one? I am drawn to stories about Deutsch's early relationship with the socialist and Zionist politician Herman Lieberman, who was married to another woman, her marriage to Felix Deutsch – whom she believed had a sexual relationship with a close male friend – and her later affair with

Sándor Radó. I fantasise that Deutsch was able to work with erotic transference with her female patients because she was in a queer, polyamorous relationship. In her autobiography, she describes herself as being ‘of liberal social principles...[but] no fanatic believer in free love’ (1973, 115) and explains that she married her husband for conventional and practical reasons. I imagine her as a sexually liberated, passionate woman, someone who has the gender flexibility to be “both a boy and a girl”.

These queer fantasies are abruptly shattered by reading the 1944 chapter. I become dizzy, light-headed. I feel compelled to get up from my desk, physically reorientating myself away from the text. I feel betrayed by Deutsch. The queer angles and moments of disorientation in her 1930s clinical writing from Vienna have been straightened up by the process of writing and publishing in Boston in the 1940s. I become curious about how this happened. Was it an editorial demand? Friendly “advice” from a colleague about the queer elements of her earlier paper? Or something even more subtle, an internal censor imposed after a decade of living as a Jewish, immigrant psychoanalyst in puritan Boston, or the re-emergence of internalised homophobia? Tellingly, Deutsch doesn’t provide any new clinical material from queer female patients, only recycling – in modified form – her cases from 1920s Vienna and using “cyborg-like” cases from sexological literature. Did she work with queer female patients in Boston? Would a Bostonian lesbian have thought to approach her as a possible analyst, perhaps after reading her earlier papers, and if so, how would Deutsch have responded? I don’t know. I try to find out; I order a selection of papers from Deutsch’s extensive archive at the Radcliffe Archive and read some of them, but give up, daunted by the task. What difference would it make, if the censorship happened internally or externally? The result is the same. I begin to doubt my own reading of the texts, wondering if I am making too much of a fuss about small wording changes or the omission of some details. Maybe I’m imagining it? Maybe I’m just being a paranoid homosexual, after all?

Failed fabulation as an extension of epistemological insubordination

These fantasies, queer as they are, should be able to find a place in a psychoanalytic training; fantasies, after all, are the stuff of analysis. However, I think it is significant that I have developed them outside of an institutional psychoanalytic setting, drawing alternative inspiration from the Black feminist and queer tradition of fabulation. “Fabulation” refers to a family of methods including speculative fabulation, critical fabulation, afro-fabulation, and feminist fabulation. Preciado refers to Haraway’s speculative fabulation, which uses the imaginative worlds of Black feminist speculative fiction to think different futures. In contrast, I draw on Hartman’s archival orientations to do epistemic work with violent archives. Hartman has developed the technique of critical fabulation through her work with the violent archive of transatlantic slavery (1997, 2008) and the remnants of the lives of Black queer women (2019). Dionne Brand, in a conversation with Hartman about re-reading colonial fiction, argues that we need to excavate ourselves through imaginative acts from colonial relations that ‘constantly occlude, bind, bury, or actively or violently prevent a certain kind of living’ (Hartman 2024). Hartman recognises that ‘we are bruised and held in this looking’ in an interview with Zakiyyah Iman Jackson; Jackson notes ‘how entrenched the proprietary is and how difficult it is to imagine and desire outside of its logics and economies of value’ (Jackson 2022).

My conscious excavations of queer fabulations about Helene Deutsch and her eleven lesbians in Vienna are a necessary addition to the method of epistemological insubordination

that I am suggesting as a way of engaging with these problematic psychoanalytic texts. My fabulations about Viennese lesbians have a distinct erotic charge; they are a form of erotohistoriography (Freeman 2010) through their pleasurable engagement with the past. They are also a traumatophilic engagement with the wounds of the archive, a conscious effort to stay in touch with historic and ongoing violence. Epistemological insubordination of the analysts who wrote these texts – my playful fucking with their subjectivities – mobilises mythosymbolically inflected unconscious material from the texts. I take my embodied responses as psychosocial data, refusing splits between psyche/soma and psyche/social. I also attend to how institutional structures inhabit my individual psyche. During my initial readings of Deutsch's texts, I make a note of my affective responses: excitement, hurt, shock, disgust, dizziness. I am very surprised by the change in tone between 1933 and 1944 and feel compelled to understand this. Reading about psychoanalysis is an intimate experience, creating affective contact between different temporalities, touching queerly across time (Soreanu 2023). I try to understand something about Deutsch's life, social world, and her relationships with her lovers, friends, colleagues and family from her biography and autobiography. This historical situatedness is key to the next stage of my process: an intentional, queer phenomenological reading, to look for straight lines, straightening devices, queer angles, deviation and moments of disorientation compared to the society, culture and intimate relationships of Deutsch's time. I read the text again in depth, noticing my affective responses to particular phrases, words, and assumptions, and how these relate to the straight lines and queer angles that I perceive. I bring the clinical material to life in my mind: I imagine Deutsch seated behind her patient, lying on the couch. The patient's dreams conjure vivid visualisations: a woman with her hand between her legs, Anna Freud in man's clothing. I write down my fantasies about Deutsch's life and clinical work in Vienna and Boston. I allow myself to dream queerly, to fabulate. Sometimes, I find pleasure in these fantasies (Freeman 2010); at other moments, they are painful, melancholic (Love 2009); they invoke longing (Hartman 2008). The different orientations in Deutsch's writing from 1933 and 1944 provoke strongly different affects, helping me to tune into the different fantasies and fabulations provoked by the texts.

As a form of epistemological insubordination, queer phenomenological analysis is a way of submitting the figure of a historic analyst to the 'process of study, questioning and experimentation' (2021, 76) that Preciado asks for in his call for the transformation of psychoanalysis. In the analytic clinic, the analyst examines the patient; the patient cannot normally see the analyst, who speaks little to preserve the analytic frame. In reading a historic analytic text queerly, I turn the tables on the analyst, enquiring after their orientations, deviations, and disorientations towards normative social structures. This method does not aim to produce any historical truth about the orientation of the figure of the historic analyst. It is also not a "wild analysis" of either the analyst or the patient. Certainly, some history and personal insight is useful to situate the text. But the history of psychoanalysis is incomplete, especially as it relates to queer, liminally queer, or racially minoritised figures (Mossop 2025). It also suffers from gaps and elisions caused by frequent traumatic splits in the field of psychoanalysis (Young-Bruehl and Schwartz 2012). Due to its incompleteness, this history has an enigmatic function that stimulates and provides fuel for my fantasies and fabulations (Mossop 2026). I intentionally 'trespass...the boundaries of the archive' (Hartman 2008, 9): when, where? It doesn't really matter. The line between text, fact, fantasy and fabulation is impossible to discern. In this sense, my interaction with the text is a queer failure (Halberstam 2011), a failed fabulation.

I will stay with this productive and important failure for a moment. The archive produces a resonance between my own wounds as a white, queer embodied person in the

twenty-first century and the structures that produced archival wounds, some of which are still powerful today. This failed fabulation touches on my implication in structural violence, as well as the effects of this violence on me today. My discomfort, failure, blank spots, and unconscious resistance to certain material are part of the data, places where the normative structures of my ego rub against or are set in motion by pleasure and pain. And here I return to Forrester's reading of psychoanalytic cases as a remobilisation of the original transference relationship between patient and analyst. Deutsch's clinical writing is, of course, also partly a fabulation in which fact and fiction are mixed. Asif Noor (2025) describes this blend as 'factional writing' in her rich reading of Masud Khan's late and often deeply troubling clinical writing. Noor suggests that Khan's vignettes blend his subjectivity with his patient's. In Khan's case, which might be seen as a limit case of factional writing, this includes his hate for his patients, his well-known sexual boundary violations, and his over-cited antisemitism. In imagining Helene Deutsch dreaming queerly with her eleven Viennese lesbians and then abandoning them for a normatively structured life in Boston, I am fabulating against an archive that pretends to be factual, but that is itself a fabulation whose status has been institutionally legitimised as clinical knowledge. Practicing failed fabulation acknowledges that Preciado's call for a new epistemological regime is a fantasy. It refuses the consolation of the fantasy of resolution, and stays with the impossibility of that transition while still doing the important work of insubordination.

Section four: Epistemological insubordination and failed fabulation as queer pedagogy in psychoanalysis

Queer pedagogy in the transference bathtub of psychoanalytic training

How, then, might epistemological insubordination and failed fabulation support psychoanalytic pedagogy? I was once told by the head of a psychoanalytic institution's training committee that, in a clinical training, it is necessary to read Freudian texts as a simple conversation between two people in a room, leaving psychosocial theory outside the room. I fundamentally disagree with this. As a Jewish man from an upwardly mobile family that migrated to Vienna in the late nineteenth century, Freud was very aware of the role that social factors played in shaping the psyche. He also knew education can be repressive, acting as 'an incitement to the conquest of the pleasure principle' (Freud 1911, 223). It follows that psychosocial theory and methods inspired by queer and Black feminist writers can play a useful role in psychoanalytic training. Noreen Giffney suggests that it is necessary to introduce social questions into clinical cases and the development of a trainee's analytic attitude (2021, 2023). Furthermore, psychosocial thinking takes the psychoanalytic institution itself as a psychosocial scene, in a move that has further potential for epistemological insubordination of institutional structures. I am not sure – it is impossible for me to know, as someone on the fringes of psychoanalytic institutions – exactly how the methods I am proposing could be useful. Perhaps they will not be. I outline below the ways in which, in hopeful moments, I imagine that they might be.

Firstly, this queer pedagogical method provides a scaffolding for contemporary analytic trainees – especially those who identify as queer, trans, or people of colour – to engage with texts that pathologise aspects of their subjectivity. The queer and queer of colour company provided by Ahmed, Freeman, Love, Hartman and others provides a form of

solidarity, infiltrating the psychoanalytic institution with different epistemologies, intensifying vibrations with the “unruly therapeutic” (Taylor 2023) bodies that already inhabit it. Instead of recoiling, it might become possible for trainees to work with these difficult historic texts. For example, the moment of vulnerability when I start to wonder whether I am behaving like a paranoid homosexual in my reading of the different versions of Deutsch’s texts can be put into context with decades of work by other avowedly “paranoid homosexuals” and their rich examination of the different uses of paranoid and reparative readings (Edelman 2004; Sedgwick 1997). This solidarity might reduce the isolation many trainee analysts feel when encountering difficult texts, surrounded by people who don’t share vital aspects of their subjectivity.

Secondly, psychoanalytic authors’ heteronormativity, cisnormativity, racism, and other orientations towards straight lines can be deliberately called into consciousness and named. These orientations are set in motion within the transference field of the training programme as a continuation of the transference between the analyst and their patient (Forrester 2017), producing queer angles and disorientating moments. The subtle movements in societal and individual orientations over time – as I have illuminated in Deutsch’s writing from 1933 and 1944 – can be brought into focus in the context of historic societal changes. This epistemological insubordination is not intended as either a triumphalist recognition of earlier analyst’s problematic belief structures – Gail Lewis points out that triumphalism is a manic defence linked to ‘phantasies of omniscience and omnipotence’ (2014, 36) – or an entirely reparative gesture – I share Avgi Saketopoulou’s concerns about reparative processes that ‘involve...the *imposition* of the reparative process on the harmed object’ (Saketopoulou 2025). Rather, my hope is that it will offer what Abeera Khan calls, following José Esteban Muñoz, a ‘historical consciousness that can be put towards an “educated hope”’ (2022, 333). Once set in motion, these orientations can be freely associated to in group discussions and in individual analysis. They become part of the affective, embodied, conscious and unconscious process of the training group. They don’t replace teaching of useful clinical moments from the text – in this example, Deutsch’s facility in tuning into her patients’ transference desires – but supplement them. As Noreen Giffney suggests in her discussion of her “Cultural Encounters Case Study Method”: ‘thinking clinically with the psychosocial facilitates us becoming more open and available to what is happening in our consulting rooms, which in turn will facilitate us working in increased analytic depth with our patients’ (2021, 52). This process can be part of what Raluca Soreanu and Ana Minozzo have termed the “commoning” of psychoanalysis, ‘an act in which the therapist is situated and embedded in their own time and space, in the territory’ (Minozzo and Soreanu 2026, 6).

And finally, practicing failed fabulation may help trainees and analytic candidates to learn something about structural and personal normative unconscious structures (Layton 2020). Queer failure is a resistance to normative notions of success, of what it means to be a good analyst, a refusal of the programme. At the risk of taming queer failure as part of institutional structures, I am suggesting trainees might keep failed fabulation in mind as they work with difficult historic psychoanalytic texts. For example, I can read my fantasies and fabulations to identify my own orientations. I notice that, although I can easily imagine Deutsch’s orientation towards queer female sexuality from the text because I have been a queer woman in psychoanalysis, her orientations towards other “straight lines” – for example, in respect of class or race – are less easy for me to conjure. It’s harder for me to see how coloniality and racial capitalism operate as straightening devices within psychoanalytic theory. I don’t immediately think about how Deutsch’s whiteness, and her experience of being a Jewish woman, might have shaped her clinical expectations about her patients’ femininity. And I am slow to notice the class implications of Deutsch’s patient’s difficulty in dealing with her household

employees, her entanglements with Zionism. In reading my own failed fabulations queerly, I can catch a glimpse of my own straightening devices and straight lines. This suggests that trainees might follow the same process of producing first a queer phenomenological analysis, then individual fabulations, and then finally reading all this psychosocial material queerly, to catch sight of their straightening devices and straight lines; the places where their normative unconscious (Layton 2020) reveals itself. This is not just about making heteronormativity, cisnormativity and whiteness visible in what Sara Ahmed (2006b) calls a “nonperformative” way that doesn’t achieve any change, but about intentionally mobilising these forces within the clinical, transferential field to increase future clinicians’ ability to work analytically with the way that their patients’ lives are affected by structures of power.

These processes of reading and over-reading are usefully intensified in a group setting where the tutors and trainees have different orientations towards the straight lines of various normative societal structures. Psychoanalytic training inevitably reproduces the societal forces that surround them: patriarchal, heteronormative, cisnormative and racist colonial structures. These social structures also permeate the psyche of the individuals in training: in a queer-inflected Laplanchean model, the mythosymbolic is “swirled through” the structures of the ego (Saketopoulou 2023). Historic texts can summon these structures, mobilising them in the murky waters of the transferential bathtub of the training institution, both because of the different temporality in which they were written, and because of the enigmatic nature of the messages that they transmit through time (Mossop 2026). They affect trainees according to how the mythosymbolic is “swirled through” each individual ego. These mobilising experiences can be powerful and, if not acknowledged by tutors and fellow candidates, potentially very harmful to minoritised trainees. As Abeera Khan writes, ‘precarity is not just inevitable within the academy but inherent to the functioning of the “Academic Industrial Complex”’ (2022, 323) – within which psychoanalytic trainings are more or less entangled. Trainees and tutors will not be able to predict what is mobilised by consciously fucking with the psychoanalytic ancestors; the dismantling of rigid structures of the ego related to whiteness and normative gender and sexuality inevitably results in overwhelm in which violent material can be unpredictably released (Saketopoulou 2023, 2026). I have been experimenting recently with creative, queer methods such as collective ‘zine making to mobilise and crystallise these forces in ways that a group of people can more easily make use of. But there is still risk for everyone involved, and this risk is distributed unevenly amongst trainees and tutors according to their intersections with historic and current social power structures (Kerr et al. 2025). This risk is not a by-product of epistemological insubordination and failed fabulation; it is an integral and unavoidable part of the method.

This method of epistemological insubordination is, therefore, a deliberate act of disorientation; even, provocation. To read historic psychoanalytic texts queerly is to trespass the archive’s boundaries, to refuse the straight lines of institutional knowledge, and to embrace failure as a generative force.² Such reading mobilises affect – shame, rage, desire – not as obstacles but as analytic tools. It invites trainees, especially those who are queer, trans, or racially minoritised, to inhabit psychoanalysis without erasure, to work with texts that wound rather than recoil from them, to fuck with their psychoanalytic ancestors. In this sense, epistemological insubordination and failed fabulations become pedagogies of resistance and of hope. They do not aim to reconcile psychoanalysis with queer, trans and decolonial theory, but to follow psychosocial, queer and Black feminist scholars in staging their encounter within queer psychoanalysis as a site of erotic pleasure, friction, fabulation, and possibility. By tracing straightening devices and queer angles in the archive, by reading their own failed fabulations, trainees might just catch sight of their own normative

unconscious, the lines along which their clinical imagination runs. In this way, queer pedagogy can create conditions for queer and trans dreams in the clinic – dreams that psychoanalysis has too often foreclosed.

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Declarations

Competing interests The authors declare no competing interests.

Endnotes

¹ As I was finalising this article, I learned that Deutsch also referred Margaret Mahler, who did a training analysis with her in Vienna in the 1920s, onto a male analyst, telling Mahler that she could not complete the analysis herself. Mahler believes this was because of Deutsch's difficulty in dealing with a "homosexual" dream about her (Stepansky 1988). Mahler went on to have an affair with her next (male) analyst, August Aichhorn, so it seems unlikely that she is the (only) patient on which this vignette is based. Many thanks to George Taxis for telling me about this parallel.

² There is a developing field of queer readings of historic psychoanalytic texts that can be drawn on in psychoanalytic trainings when experimenting with epistemological insubordination, see, for example, Ahmed 2006a; DeLire 2024; Laubender 2024; O'Connor and Ryan 1993; Punzi 2024; Sauer 2024; Soreanu 2023.

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