ABSTRACT

From One Period to the Next…

Menstruation and the Psychoanalytic Process of Working through to the Feminine

by

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This dissertation will delve into the theoretical treatment and place of menstruation in psychoanalysis. Beginning in Chapter I with a broad and varied overview of menstruation with a primary focus on Western culture, some of the persistent ideas and themes, as well as their effects, will be illustrated to help pose core questions about menstruation, including how to think about its simultaneous presence and absence within the social discourse and its relationship to psychoanalysis. Chapter II will explore the appearances of menstruation in Freud’s body of work, including its relationship to the burgeoning field of psychoanalysis and the fixed place it holds in a constellation of signifiers throughout the development of the Freudian myth of female sexuality. Chapter III will examine the place of menstruation in the psychoanalytic debates of the 1920s and 30s on female sexuality, exploring various contributions by Freud’s contemporaries and the sexual difference stalemate that years of prolific writing could not transcend. Chapter IV will outline some of the key ideas and interventions of Lacan’s thinking to work through the psychoanalytic treatment of menstruation, female sexuality, and the feminine, while offering a clinical vignette that draws on the theory. Chapter V will explore the work and transformations of psychoanalytic theory by a selection of writers and artists who define and reform Lacan’s notion of the feminine, while considering specifically the place and effects of menstruation in this discourse as it relates to the subject and acts of creation.