

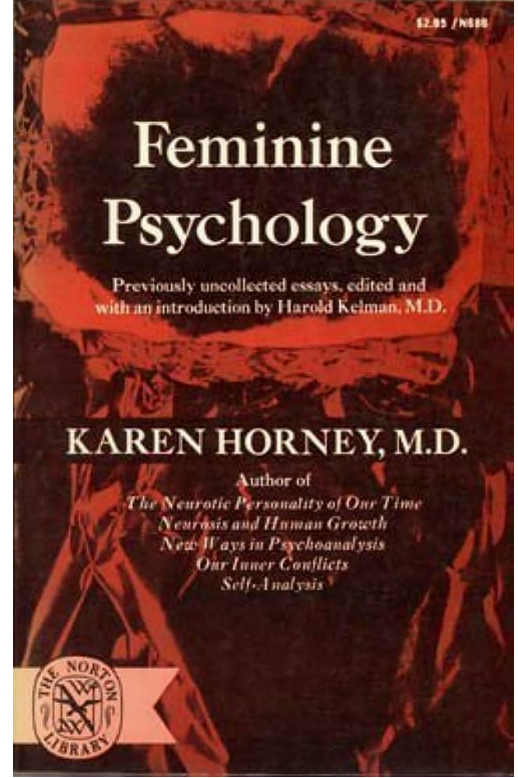
A Book Review On

Karen Horney: A Pioneer of Feminine Psychology

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Written by the American author Susan Tyler Hitchcock, the biographical book *Karen Horney: Pioneer of Feminine Psychology* was published by Chelsea House Publishing as the first one of biography series entitled Women in Medicine. The book is composed of eight main chapters along with a chronology, and a glossary provided at the end for readers who are not familiar with basic psychoanalytical terms. It starts with the chapter “The Cost of Having New Ideas” which serves as a general introduction to the life and brilliant career of Horney. The chapter begins with the speech Horney delivered for one of the monthly meetings of the New York Psychoanalytic Society in 1939. Even though what Horney suggested in her presentation was a reinterpretation of Freudian theories in the first place, a considerable tension mounted among the audience and colleagues. Orthodox Freudians regarded it rather as a scurrilous attack on his theories and reputation. The conservative then-president of the Society, Lawrence Kubie, thus, laid down strict rules at the Institute. Horney’s criticism of Freud cost her a lecture course open to all; she could only offer an elective course for a small number of students. For the meeting in the aftermath of Freud’s demise, Horney was invited to give a keynote address. In her talk, Horney was especially careful with her tone and attitude to avoid the possibility of misunderstanding concerning her critique of Freudian theory. Over and over, she praised Freud and his contributions to the field. Yet, at the end of her speech, there was a towering rage. The heated debate ended up with a vicious attack on her personality and academic knowledge. Particularly, the older male members of the Society were furious with her, accusing her of being a renegade. Just like every genius, Karen Horney, too, was not thoroughly understood, since she was ahead of her times.

The second chapter “Coming of Age” covers the years 1885-1909, and focuses on how Horney works her way through medical school. Born as Karen Clementina Theodora Danielsen into a wealthy family, she revealed her innate talent and remarkable skills from a very early age. She was always genuinely fond of writing, reading, thinking and telling stories to family members. She



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regularly kept a diary and achieved excellent grades in her school, earning the respect and admiration of all teachers. Her sole aim in life was to go to medical school since she was a child. To realize her biggest dream, she initially had to persuade her dictatorial father, who was traditionally conservative about the patriarchal ideal woman as a mother or housekeeper. Before she passed the test to attend university, her mother eventually had a divorce from her husband. Horney was able to enrol in medical school at University of Freiburg, one of the few institutions that provided education for women in that era, and took her degree in 1908. A year later, she married Oskar Horney and moved to Berlin.

The third chapter “Rebellious Wife, Rebellious Psychiatrist” is about the period from 1909 to 1927 in the life of Horney and centres around her career as a wife, mother and psychiatrist. Following the deaths of her parents, Horney gave birth to three daughters Brigitte, Marianne and Renate, respectively. Utterly dedicated to her medical studies, she chose psychiatry as her field of expertise. At the turn of the twentieth century, psychiatry was a totally new branch of medicine, so she had to keep her studies quiet to avoid harsh criticism of her professors who ignored Freud’s ideas, claiming they were quite groundless. Hence, she immersed herself in traditional medical studies during the day while she read everything about Freud, Jung and Adler during the evening. She accordingly attended therapy sessions with Karl Abraham, visiting his office regularly as a patient and being psychoanalyzed by him. While she was extremely busy learning about psychoanalysis, she hired nursemaids and governesses to look after and educate her daughters. As a wife, she already lost her interest in her marriage, and in 1927 she filed for divorce from her husband. In short, she was never a traditional wife and mother, and she adopted this liberal attitude to her profession as well. She began with being the only woman among the founders of the Berlin Institute and the first and only woman who taught there. Her attitude towards students of the institute was correspondingly unconventional. Unlike the male colleagues who adopted authoritative tone, Horney was always friendly, compassionate and affectionate, and even invited them to her home. Her quite unconventional approach to psychoanalysis came with her refusal of Freudian penis envy, underlining the fact that all psychoanalysts were male along with its chief founder. Hence, they developed a thoroughly masculine understanding of psychoanalysis.

The fourth chapter “Into the Heart of American Psychoanalysis” starts with the year 1928 and ends with 1934. With the Nazi regime coming to power, life became increasingly difficult for Jewish intellectuals in Germany. Regarding psychoanalysis as the Jewish invention owing to the fact that its founder, Freud and his followers were all Jews, the Nazis burned down all the books of Freud in public and then Hitler shut down the Berlin Psychoanalytic Institute. At the invitation of one of her former students, Franz Alexander, Horney moved to Chicago with her youngest daughter, Renata. She started teaching at the Chicago Institute for Psychoanalysis with her new position as associate director. She formed her own coterie of likeminded intellectuals, such as Karl Menninger, Margaret Mead and Erich Fromm. In the meantime, she kept on publishing articles related with feminine psychology. Unlike Freud and her predecessors, Horney emphasized the significance of cultural factors on human psychology, particularly on the formation of neurosis. She then moved to New York, and became affiliated with the New York Psychoanalytic Institute. She soon formed a group

called the Zodiac Club, whose members were Harry Stack Sullivan, Clara Thompson and William Silverberg. The Zodiac Four made psychoanalysis rise to a new level on a direct intersection with different branches of social sciences, such as anthropology, cultural studies and sociology.

The focus of the fifth chapter "Daring to Put It in Writing" (1935-1937) is on the lecture series Horney delivers about culture and neurosis. Unlike Freud's pansexual conceptualization of neurosis, she emphasizes the presence of the feelings of superiority and rivalry at the core of individual neurosis. Experiencing conflicting tendencies within conflicting situations, the neurotic subject might sense that the therapeutic solutions are actually accusations or rejections. Hence, paying attention to present issues might be much more beneficial for the patient. Having a great number of followers among the students at the Institute, Horney decided to compile all these lectures into a whole book. Her first book *The Neurotic Personality of Our Time* was published in 1937 when Horney was 52 years old. As expected, orthodox Freudians responded aggressively to the book, finding fault with her theories regarding neurosis. As Freud was suffering from the last phase of cancer that signified his impending death, his followers became more and more sensitive to any kind of critiques.

The sixth chapter "Out and On Her Own" is about the years between 1938 and 1940 in the life of Horney. As the Nazi regime under Hitler was growing more inhumane and hostile towards the Jewish people, thousands of them had to move from Germany to other countries to survive. The New York Psychoanalytic Institute created a committee to help Jewish refugees and asked Horney to join, but as she was personally helping them already, she refused the invitation. She was accused of being insensitive and equally unsympathetic by her colleagues. With the new professional members, the New York Psychoanalytic Institute was getting more conservative and proved to be increasingly intolerable to Horney's unorthodox views. In the meantime, she kept on teaching at schools and delivering lectures while she was accordingly writing her second book, *New Ways in Psychoanalysis*. She presented her paper "The Emphasis of Genesis in Freud's Thinking" for the Institute, and sparks flew at the meeting. Discussion and criticism concerning her presentation were this time replaced by insults and humiliations in a way that Horney was seen bursting into tears for the first time. As she was falsely accused of rejecting the fundamentals of psychoanalysis, the institute felt the need to take cautions against her. In the first instance, she was denied her right to offer a course. Students associated with Horney begun to be treated unfairly by her colleagues. Ultimately, she was initially demoted by the institute and then she resigned along with a few other colleagues.

The seventh chapter is "The Phoenix of Psychoanalysis" and covers the years between 1940 and 1944. Within a month, Horney and her friends established a new society called the Association for the Advancement of Psychoanalysis (AAP). They accordingly published a journal, *the American Journal of Psychoanalysis*. Her third book, *Self-Analysis*, was on its release in the same month, but the worst was yet to come. The American Psychological Association did not recognize Horney's new society as legitimate and the society began to scatter. After that, Horney stopped allowing Erich Fromm to offer courses for the students, stating that he was not a doctor of medicine. He was no longer regarded as a member of the society and as a result, a few others resigned over the issue.

Meanwhile, Horney offered courses at the institute, gave lectures and took patients for analysis. The society survived thanks to Horney and to dedication of a bunch of her followers.

The last chapter "Her Last Words" revolves around the last eight years (1944-1952) of Horney. The author draws attention to some interesting facts about her workplace and private life. For instance, she saw patients in her own apartment that she used as an office as well. She saw her patients three times a week, and the first appointment was at half past five in the morning. In her office, there were high piles of books and manuscripts everywhere. She was passionately devoted to reading and writing, but she was also fond of spending time and socializing with her circle of friends. She visited her daughter, Renata and her family in Mexico and stayed there during the summer. She penned three more books in the rest of her life. *Our Inner Conflicts* was published in 1945, *Are You Considering Psychoanalysis?* shortly afterward, and the final one, *Neurosis and Human Growth* in 1950. She got keenly interested in Zen Buddhism she often referred to in her later books, and planned to go to Japan on a tour of Zen monasteries at the invitation of Daisetz T. Suzuki, a Japanese Buddhist who authored many books about Zen Buddhism. Following a long struggle over renewing her passport due to some political issues, Horney set out her last journey to Japan with her eldest daughter, Brigitte. Mesmerized by this fantastic five-week trip and inspired by Japanese culture, she returned to America to learn that she was at the last stage of cancer. She died within less than two weeks after being admitted to a hospital. Karen Horney was 67 years old when she passed away.

Susan Tyler Hitchcock provides a realistic portrayal of Karen Horney with her flaws as a human, woman and mother. She does not create the impression that she was the living embodiment of perfection. Particularly, the complicated relationship between Horney and her middle daughter Marianne is of vital interest. Marianne, who retraced her mother's footsteps to pursue a career, attended her lectures and underwent psychoanalysis with Fromm, her both colleague and lover. She then felt a sudden outburst of anger towards her mother and verbalized it. Horney believed that Fromm projected his own anger onto her daughter. This might be the reason behind the disintegration of ties of friendship between Horney and Fromm later on. From the beginning to the end of the book, Hitchcock adopts a fluent and simple language for readers. She provides the definitions of psychoanalytic terms written in bold in the text with a glossary at the end of the book. Hitchcock presents striking images of her life, family members and the people or colleagues who contributed to development of her theories. These black-and-white images allow readers a fascinating glimpse at her childhood, adulthood and family life. Hitchcock accordingly attaches informative notes to the images of scholars, such as Sigmund Freud, Erich Fromm, Karl Menninger, Franz Alexander, Lawrence Kubie and Margaret Mead so that readers might become familiar with them, too. The most appealing aspect of this book is that from the third chapter on, Hitchcock supplies readers with theoretical knowledge of psychoanalysis, information about female psychoanalysts and other notable figures who made significant contributions to development of psychoanalysis. Hence, the book is quite simple to read even for readers who have no idea what psychoanalysis is.

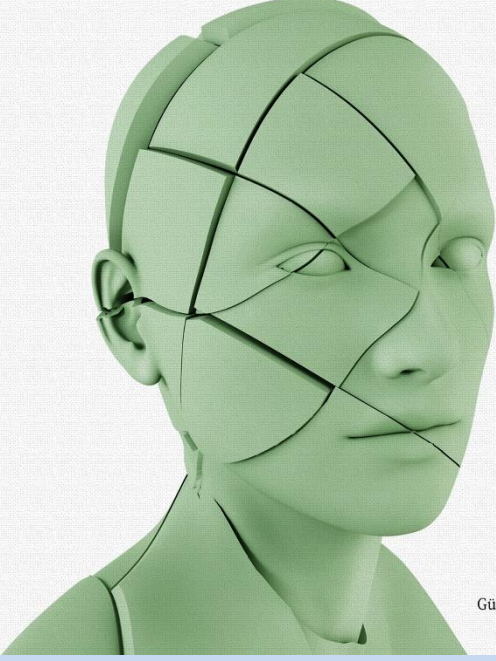
As for the author, Susan Tyler Hitchcock holds a bachelor and master degree in English from the University of Michigan. She has a philosophical degree from The University of Virginia. She is married with two children and leads her life in Charlottesville, Virginia. She has authored many books, such as *Gather Ye Wild Things: A Forager's Year*, *Coming About: Family Passage at Sea*, *The University of Virginia: A Pictorial History* and *Mad Mary Lamb: Lunacy and Murder in Literary London*.

REFERENCE

Hitchcock, Susan Tyler (2005). *Karen Horney: Pioneer of Feminine Psychology*. Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers.

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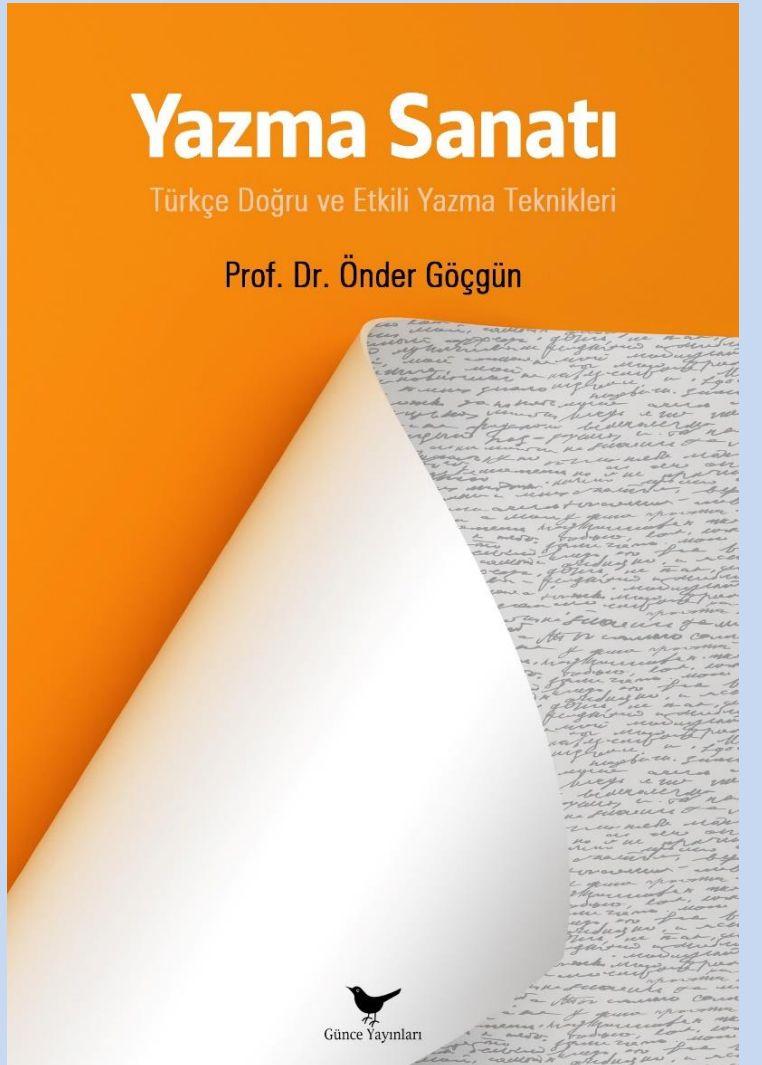


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