



# Clio's Psyche

Understanding the "Why" of Culture,  
Current Events, History, and Society

**Awakening from the Nightmare of the  
Subjugation and Violation of Women**

**The Psychology and History of  
Sexual Violation and Its Condemnation**

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which women think for themselves without feeling compelled to accept the dictates of institutionalized Christianity (Kenneth D. Wald and Allison Calhoun-Brown, *Religion and Politics in the United States*, 2014, 5). In the process, perhaps these women are now more inclined to condemn the type of male power and privilege that has so long been sanctioned by Christian dogma.

*Mark I. West, PhD, is Professor of English and Chair of the Department of English at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, where he has taught since 1984. In addition to performing administrative duties, he regularly teaches courses on children's and young adult literature. He has written or edited 15 books, most of which deal with children's culture and the history of childhood. Before entering academia, he worked as an early childhood educator and professional puppeteer. His email address is miwest@uncc.edu. □*

## **The #MeToo Movement, the Repression of Rape, and Otto Gross**

**Philip Højme**—Polish Academy of Sciences (Warsaw)

*Abstract: This paper briefly describes the life of Otto Gross and his thoughts on sexuality, society, and repression. This provides the basis to interpret the #MeToo movement as functioning in the same way as a repressed memory that breaks through to consciousness. Gross' suggestion that society "rapes" individuals and his assertion of a primordial matriarchal society are useful insights in understanding the #MeToo movement.*

*Keywords: matriarchy, #MeToo-movement, Otto Gross, patriarchy, rape, repression, sexuality, Sigmund Freud, society*

Otto Hans Adolf Gross (1877-1920) was an Austrian-born psychoanalyst. He was a contemporary of Sigmund Freud, and came to influence both the works and life of Carl Gustav Jung. In his writings, Gross broke with central concepts proposed by Freud, most notably with Freud's claim that psychological repression serves a necessary function in the civilizing of individuals. In David Cronenberg's 2011 film *A Dangerous Method*, Gross is portrayed as a maverick who advocates sexual relations between patients and doctors, and he was written out of psychoanalytic history because of his nonconformity with the practices of the day, such as his treatment of patients, as depicted by Cronenberg, and his politi-

cal opinions.

Concerning his nonconformity, Gottfried M. Heuer writes that: "Freud reprimanded Gross for his political activism...and referred him to Jung for treatment of his drug addiction" (*Freud's 'Outstanding' colleague/Jung's 'Twin Brother'*, 2017, 165-166). This treatment had an important effect on Jung, as it was as much a mutual analysis as it was Jung's analysis of Gross. It has been posited that the profound effect Gross had on Jung eventually led Jung to embark on his affair with (or abuse of) his patient Sabina Spielrein (48). This alleged relationship might have accounted, in part, for Gross' disappearance from the history of psychoanalysis. The repression of Gross within psychoanalytic historiography is hence connected with a discussion about the proper treatment of patients, and possible misuses of the power structures in patient-therapist relations in analytic settings.

Gross, following Freud's insistence on the dialectics of individual and society, posits that everyone must at some point in their life choose between individuality and becoming civilized (in other words, society). Choosing society simply means to give up (some) individuality in exchange for sociality. Gross came to view this as a form of "rape" because society is forced on individuals without their consent. The family, for Gross, is a good example of such a societal structure, which one is forced to be part of. Hence, since civilizations developed from family ties, Gross came to regard many daily aspects of the family as a "rape" of individuals—as a matter of choosing between individuality or society. Gross' insistence on the forced-upon aspect of civilization came to be paramount in the solutions he offered to psychological issues.

Rejecting Freud's conception of psychoanalysis as a way to teach patients how to conform to society's norms, Gross instead proposed freeing individuals from the constraints of such norms. This included advocating free sexual relations and claiming that society, prior to original sin, was in fact matriarchal. This argument reaches its conclusion in *The Basic Concept of Communism in Paradisiacal Symbolism* (1919). In this text Gross reinterprets Genesis as positing that original sin is the patriarchal notion of shaming female sexuality. Before continuing along these lines, it is necessary to clarify how Gross' and Freud's understandings of repression differ.

In Freudian psychoanalysis, repression functions as a way

for a person to suppress a desire that creates a feeling of anxiety. In a nonpathological person, repression functions to compel adherence to societal norms, such as being anxious when jaywalking or skipping school, whereas repression in a pathological person comes to influence everyday situations through manifestations of phobias or compulsions. Opposing this, Gross came to understand the function of repression in a nonpathological person as to be constitutive of rapine structures.

In today's media culture, the #MeToo movement could be understood as a repressed (collective) memory breaking through into our social consciousness. But the current situation is unique in its globality. The #MeToo movement as a repressed part of our collective memory is best understood as such because of the anxiety with which many institutions, such as the Swedish Academy and the Oscars, have been overcome with in the light of these allegations. The predominantly masculine counter-reactions to the #MeToo movement, and single incidents such as the retirement of the Danish-born ballet master Peter Martins at the New York Ballet, can be seen as attempts to continue the repression of these memories by the established institutions. By doing this, society is not only protecting itself against the traumatic dissolution of its self-understanding, but it has also, willingly or unwillingly, once again attempted to hide its patriarchal ancestry from any further inquiry.

By revealing society's patriarchal ancestry, the #MeToo movement raises the possibility of a revolution—a move toward a more matriarchal, “feminine,” and humane society. Gross refers to “The true liberation of woman, [as] the dissolving of the existing patriarchal family” and states that “The groundwork for such a revolution must effect the liberation of each individual from the principle of authority that he carries inside...liberation from original sin” (*Selected Works 1901-1920*, trans. Lois L. Madison, 2012, 279). By exposing what has had to be repressed in order for society to function, the #MeToo movement provides an outlet for the repressed to surface, displacing the essential nature of patriarchal structures.

Gross insisted on an original matriarchal society, which he conceived as a state prior to the current patriarchal society, and while the notion of a matriarchal society has been dispelled by various strands of sociological theory, it is my opinion that it remains a useful conceptual tool to be used in formulating an alternative way for society to be structured. Here it should be pointed out that the

notion of a matriarchal society in Gross is a somewhat underdeveloped concept which is taken, by Gross, as needing no further discussion.

The function of the #MeToo movement as a repressed memory, which introduces an *Angst* in us (to use a Kierkegaardian term), might seem horrifying to some, while others hail it as having the potential to redeem many faults in our present society. It is my hope that by proposing this interpretation of the #MeToo movement, the insights into society which were developed by Otto Gross might reach a wider audience.

*Philip Højme, MA, is a PhD student at the Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw, Poland. His main topics of interest are psychoanalysis, culture, transhumanism, and gender and race. Some of his papers can be found on <https://uva.academia.edu/PhilipHojme>. Højme can be reached at [Phil.hoej@gmail.com](mailto:Phil.hoej@gmail.com). □*

## **Power in Sport: Social and Gendered Contexts of Harassment and Assault**

**Stephen Alomes**—Cultural Historian (Melbourne)

*Abstract: The author, a social-cultural and sport historian, reflects on bad behavior in sport and what this can add to the psychohistorical study of sexual harassment and assault.*

*Keywords: age, Australia, authoritarianism, bullying, gender, global-celebrity, male-entitlement, male-privilege, masculinity, power, social-class, social-context, social-mores, sociogenic-causes, sport, wealth*

Bad behavior in sport by coaches, players, and administrators toward young athletes, employees, and fans has been exposed on a significant scale. Once, it could result from the old and often violent masculinist culture of sport, derived from amateur traditions. Now, it is the product of sport's closed social, team, and corporate worlds and the culture of power, celebrity, and wealth in an era of overhyped sport. Once it was often unseen, unrecognized, or hidden. Today, it continues despite behavior training, while media excess worsens situations for victims and perpetrators.

What can a contemporary social-cultural historian offer to psychohistory students of sexual assault? Perhaps understanding of social contexts and social mores. I often write regarding hopes and fears in studies of nationalism (*A Nation at Last?*, 1988) and about