

# Madness as Feminism

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## Dawn Menken

All of the kids knew who Angela was and most of them kept their distance. I was afraid of her too. She was twice my size and the toughest girl in school, the only girl I knew who could beat up boys. She really commanded respect. Although we were the same age, Angela had been kept back a year, so I never saw her in any of my classes. I would notice her across the school yard, lingering alone in the bushes, beating someone up or holding court with a group gathered around her. I had my own group of girlfriends. Angela was someone to watch out for, to make sure I didn't cross her path.

In fourth grade we had our first personal encounter. We were in the schoolyard during lunch and the bell was just about to ring to call us back inside. Angela approached me to play "colors." Only a few of us girls collected baseball cards. The cards themselves weren't the point for me, but I loved the games we played with them. "Colors" was a game in which a pile was created by each player putting down a card on top of the previous card. The team name on each card had a color. When one of your cards matched the color of the previous card, you would win the entire pile of cards that had been put down.

I was afraid to begin playing right before the bell, knowing that once you started you couldn't stop until one person had no cards. Being late to school was not part of my identity. But Angela insisted and I felt scared. We hunkered down next to the cool brick building and got serious. The more I won the more terrified I became. Not only was I going to be late to school, but I was beating the toughest girl in the whole world. I was convinced she was going to kill me. Since this game depended on luck, I couldn't even throw the game. There were other games which had to do with flipping and knocking down cards that were

propped up against a wall; at least with these games I could lose on purpose and save my life. The next thing I remember was running wildly back to class with a stack of cards in my pocket.

Weeks later I somehow found myself standing in the bushes with Angela and her gang. I obviously didn't belong. I wasn't Italian and I wasn't Catholic and I was about to get the shit beat out of me. To my surprise, Angela stood in front of me. Alone, she prevented a whole group from tearing me apart. From an early age Angela was pressed to stand up against collective powers. This myth would later culminate in her tragic encounter with the psychiatric system.

My next meeting with Angela didn't occur until years later in Junior High School. We sat next to each other in chorus, enjoying the same songs. Carole King's album "Tapestry" had just come out and we would walk outside screeching, "I feel the earth move under my feet..." These moments of friendship were few. We came from different worlds, with some unspoken rule that our paths should never really cross.

Silver Lake had a reputation as a tough small town where first, second and third generation Italian Americans defended their turf and way of life. There were three Jewish kids in my grade besides me and a few kids who were Protestant. St. Anthony's was right down the street and all social life was organized through the church and local Catholic organizations. I was not merely an outsider. By the time I was twelve I was fighting daily for my survival against blatant anti-Semitism.

Angela must have had her own troubles. Although a key figure in the higher echelons of the Silver Lake gangs, she seemed awfully alone. Everyone knew and respected her, but no one seemed really close to her. Angela was tough,

loud, physically imposing and heavysset, not the kind of conventionally attractive girl who drew others to her. She was abrasive, always ready for a fight and often getting in trouble with authorities. Later her family and the doctors at St. Vincent's hospital crushed that spirit, leaving her unable to defend herself.

Music really brought us together, crossing cultural and ethnic boundaries, but that didn't happen until years later in high school. We would strum out simple chords and sing beautiful harmonies to the introspective and political tunes of the early 1970s. High school was larger and a little more diverse. We benefited from some of the liberal curriculum changes of the time. Humanities classes included social issues, women's studies, political movements and history. These put us in closer contact with the spirit of the songs we sang, expanding our views of ourselves and the confining town in which we lived.

Angela began to attend my humanities and women's studies classes. She was a grade behind me and tracked in different classes. Most of her educational history had been spent going to as few classes as possible, so it was quite a shock to see her going to classes she was not registered for. We'd pass each other in the halls. She'd yell, "see you in class," and I knew which class she meant. This class was team taught. We had never met teachers who invited us to call them by their first names, cursed, and spoke openly about sexuality. They challenged the way we saw the world by their own behavior and brought in ideas from outside the borders of Silver Lake. The radical zeitgeist of the early 1970s was seeping into the schools of small town U.S.A.

Something was happening to Angela. I had never seen her excited about learning. The old Silver Lake gang began to keep their distance and told her she should stop hanging out with her "Jew friends," hippies and freaks. She brushed off hurtful comments and held strongly to her new interests and friendships. I think I only saw the inside of her home a couple of times. She only came to my house a few more times. Bridging our worlds in high school was no less difficult than in junior high. My parents looked down on her and hers did the same to me. Our friendship blossomed in school, in the streets, in cars and in the woods.

The early 70s was an exciting time for an adolescent young woman. The women's move-

ment was in full force and Title IV was passed, demanding equality in schools for girls' activities and sports programs. Female sexuality was shedding its shackles, pushing out of its culturally defined limitations. Many women from my generation lost our virginity without thinking of ourselves as "whores," "sluts" or "loose." Many of us dared to conflict with the beauty myth, wore our jeans and flannel shirts proudly, threw our bras to the winds and let our body hair be.

We all pushed limits with our parents, but Angela's struggle seemed more burdened than my own. I knew I would get out of this town. I knew my new ideas and impulses had a future. I knew there was a world where I could live all that I was learning and fighting for. I knew I would leave home and go to college. I think for a time Angela actually felt maybe she could get out. She refused to serve her father and brothers and began to stand for her dreams of living a life outside Silver Lake. She even thought she might attend college. In her traditional Italian family the roles of daughters and sons were laid in stone. No one left the family; no one even left the town. Even though Silver Lake was a 35 minute train ride to New York City, no one ventured out.

Angela's troubles became more severe. The higher her spirits, the more oppression this constellated at home. I wanted to save her, and I knew that according to her mother I was part of the problem. I thought in my teenage naïvete I could help her. I thought if I loved her enough, encouraged her enough, helped her find scholarships and financial aid, she just might have a chance. My own privileges blinded me to the complexities of the social issues she was dealing with. I sensed my privileges in my own embarrassment and discomfort about the future. I felt shy to admit that I would go to college, that my parents could afford to help me with tuition, and that I had the freedom to dream of other life-styles. It is a privilege to know that you can leave home and that your parents want you to. My parents saw the times changing and knew that I would go my own way regardless of how much they protested. Angela's parents kept to their old world views and enforced them with physical abuse. I could see the jealousy of generations of women holding her back, not allowing her to do things that they could never dream of. As a matter of fact, I saw that happen to many of the girls in my town, girls who had hope, vision and intelligence. I watched

them gradually trade in their independence and self-determination for the security of collective approval. And I watched Angela, a shining warrior blazing new paths and fighting impossible powers, but even all her years of toughness couldn't help her in the end.

In early Spring during our junior year, Angela hadn't attended school for a couple of days, so I called her up. "My father died," she said quite lightly. "Will you be at the funeral?" St. Anthony's was crowded and the Latin chants and heavy incense transported me to another world. Angela seemed strangely detached, waiting for it all to end. Some family and friends commended her for her strength and others attacked her for her lack of feeling. At last alone, she confided to me. She wouldn't miss him. At times she had wished him dead, wanting to free herself from the senseless brutality of a disturbed man.

Angela was not mourning and her mother didn't like it. Her newfound excitement flourished and we talked for hours about our latest ideas and discoveries. Angela's mother thought this sacrilegious and blamed Angela for her new interests. I became more frightened to call her home and never went inside when I would go pick her up. Angela became zealous about losing weight. Amphetamines helped her to curtail her appetite and gave her lots of energy to exercise. Her enthusiasm for learning and new relationships continued. One of those relationships was with Ms. B., a teacher Angela was fond of and who encouraged her learning.

One day after school we went to Angela's house. No one else was home. I felt uncomfortable, knowing I wasn't really welcome. My uneasiness grew when the lights went out suddenly. We were in the basement and Angela had turned the lights out. She searched for me in the dark. My heart beat rapidly and I yelled for her to put the lights back on. Something really strange was happening and I began to search for the door. I told her to cut it out, that she was scaring me and I wanted to leave. She said she wanted to kiss me and she'd turn on the lights if I let her. I followed the walls in the dark, dank room, hoping to feel a doorknob. Suddenly Angela was upon me, kissing me. I struggled to get out from under her. "Okay, now let me go!" I screamed, scrambling to my feet. She turned on the lights and I fled outside.

I needed to go home where I was expected for dinner. I had just gotten my driver's license and

had my parent's car. I walked to the car and realized my jacket and keys remained inside Angela's house. As I walked back Angela sauntered out, dangling the keys before me. She closed them in her fist, saying she wouldn't give them to me unless I kissed her. I became furious with her, screaming at her to give me the keys and let me go home. I was already late. It was getting dark, and my parents were going to be angry. She came after me, pinned me against the fence, pressed herself against me and tried to kiss my neck. I thrashed out wildly, trying to get away. She slapped me across the face. In the struggle the keys fell to the ground and I grabbed them. I ran desperately to the car. She followed. Each time I attempted to open the door she pushed herself in the car with me. It seemed to take forever to get myself in the car with the doors locked. Finally, I could go home.

But Angela became more desperate and more reckless. She jumped on top of my parents' car and pounded on the roof. Then she took a huge stone, smashed it down on top of the roof, glued herself to the windshield and dared me to drive. By this time I was hysterical. Tears of hurt, anger and desperation rolled down my face. Something had flipped in Angela. I felt like a trapped animal willing to do anything for my survival. I slowly began to back the car out of her driveway, hoping she would jump off, but she clung to the windshield wipers. I opened the window and told her to get off the car. She refused and again I felt cornered.

I drove up her street to the stop sign, all the while honking my horn and yelling for her to get off. She didn't move and pleaded with me to let her in the car. I felt terrified, praying for her to get off the hood before I turned onto the main road. She wouldn't move, and in my own panic and desperation, I turned left on Lake street with Angela hanging on the hood. I honked my horn hoping someone would come out and help. After driving about a third of a mile I realized she would not move and could really get hurt. I pulled into a local Italian restaurant and leaned down on my horn. The waiters came out and laughed at the sight of Angela hanging on my car. I pleaded with them to get her off, but Angela knew everyone. She addressed them all by name, telling them to go inside, that everything was all right. I was shocked and incredulous that they did nothing despite the fact that I was crying and screaming. Finally, a police car drove up and Angela jumped

off the car. They sent me home while Angela pleaded with me to take her home too. The police asked about the damage to the car and I told them to forget it, that Angela should go home too.

I was crying and shaking when I arrived home, terrified by having to explain the damage to the car and consequently reveal the whole story. The next day at school I felt dazed and tried to keep a safe distance from Angela who searched for me throughout the day. At the end of Ms. B's class, she found me and lunged towards me. She chased me through the maze of chairs and desks until Ms. B. came between us. Ms. B. talked to us each separately. I broke down and confided in her. She told Angela to give me some time and space. I felt afraid of Angela, but I also wanted to maintain our friendship and didn't want to reject her.

Angela's extreme state unfolded in the following days. She was found naked and disoriented in a deserted lot close to her house. At home she shocked her family by sprawling naked on the living room couch, publicly removing her tampon and throwing it in the air. She then threw used tampons and sanitary napkins all over the house and refused to put her clothes on. Another day she was found jogging naked on a busy highway. The next thing I knew she had been institutionalized and I was fighting the authorities to allow me to bring her guitar to her.

I visited her regularly despite the negative vibes from my parents and her mother. For some strange reason I remained oddly detached from our incident. I saw it as part of a larger process that she was involved in. It felt strangely impersonal to me. I missed her friendship and spent many hours wondering what had happened to her. Although I knew nothing about extreme states, I developed my own theory. My teenage brain concluded that the world of her conventional family had no room for all of her dreams and passion. She couldn't deal with the tension between the two worlds and she cracked.

Even back then I knew culture and extreme states were somehow connected, although I couldn't have said how until I studied Process Work. I was convinced that if Angela had had support for her deepest nature she wouldn't have gone "crazy." What I didn't see at that time was the meaningfulness of her extreme behavior, not only for herself but for the collective around her.

Angela was one of many women trying to become herself in the midst of cultural oppres-

sion. Even with a trend towards women's liberation and progressive education, Silver Lake remained as conventional as old Italy. One reason I am telling this story is because it reflects the stories of many women who have had to become extreme in order to break out of terribly oppressive conventions. Often when women have dared to do this, they have been institutionalized.

### Women and "mental illness"

Statistically, more women than men have been institutionalized for mental illness (see Chesler 1972).<sup>1</sup> In her book *Women's Madness: Misogyny or Mental Illness?* (1992) Ussher asserts that such statistics are not due to the female gender being more prone to mental illness, but result from a world cultural history that oppresses women. She says:

...misogynistic practices are construed as analogous to the discourse of madness, in that they act to contain us, and as a part of the constrictions which lead to madness itself because they create a culture of incarceration and oppression within which madness is the inevitable outcome for women. (20)

Angela dared to venture out of her role as a daughter, whose sole purpose was to be subservient, find a husband and have a family. The history of marriage is not based on the dream of romantic love and partnership, but on ownership; women as property, owned by men (Chesler 1972; Ussher 1992). Chesler postulates that many women have gone "insane" to avoid marriage and the conventional life-style expected of them. Therefore, the following statistics come as no surprise:

- ▶ Women who rejected the domestic role have a higher chance of rehospitalization (Chesler).
- ▶ Female schizophrenics conformed the least to social roles, even as children (Chesler).
- ▶ A 1958 study confirms that when people act outside of their gender roles they are more subject to hospitalization (Chesler). Ussher's more recent research confirms these findings as well.
- ▶ Lesbians are committed at earlier ages than heterosexual women and are kept three times as long in institutions (Chesler).
- ▶ "Less educated and more 'attractive' women are probably released sooner and more easily from state hospitals and from private treatment." (Chesler: 69. From Orr, Anderson, Martin Des. F. Philpot 1954).

› In 1964 the number of American women involved in the psychiatric system began to dramatically increase (Chesler).<sup>2</sup>

› Sixty-nine percent of suicide attempts are by women (Chesler).

Angela became one of these statistics. As she remained in the hospital, I sadly watched her spirit die. Her enthusiasm for life and learning vanished; even music held little interest. Her eyes glazed over and she seemed to move through a haze. Heavily medicated, she became disoriented and emotionless. She didn't relate to anyone, even those of us who had been close friends. She looked defeated and empty. I mourned the loss of a friend and a great spirit. Visitors were forbidden for a period of time; finally I got to see her again. Upon arriving I discovered that she had been given a series of electro-shock treatments.<sup>3</sup> I felt horrified and saddened. Angela had become a zombie, a human being with no personality, no color, walking aimlessly through the corridors. I couldn't reach her. She was gone. They had crushed her spirit, her music, her zest for life and our friendship. I too was defeated. At sixteen, I felt powerless to interact with the system that had done this.

The doctors and her mother all said this treatment was for her own good. They saw it as therapeutic; with time she would eventually be released and lead a "normal" life. They expected her to be able to hold down a job with minimal stress and intellectual requirements and to develop a social life through which she would eventually meet the man of her dreams and settle down. Ussher (1992) questions for whom this treatment is therapeutic. She asserts that such treatment does not serve the needs of the women themselves, but is meant to maintain the dominant societal order. In my opinion, this treatment certainly did not serve Angela.

### **City shadows: honoring Angela**

Mindell's central contribution to the field of psychiatry postulates the concept of a "city shadow" which furthers our understanding of so-called psychotic or extreme states and their relationship to the collective. Mindell adopted the neutral term "extreme state" in order to show that certain states are deemed "psychotic," "crazy" or "insane" relative to the cultural norm. The word "extreme" implies that these states occur relatively infrequently for a given culture. Thus the dominant culture has difficulty understanding them and considers them unacceptable (1988). In her

historical review of women's madness, Ussher sees this similarly. She asserts that "...madness is not an illness but a social construction" (1992: 166).<sup>4</sup>

Chesler proposes that:

Men are generally allowed a greater range of 'acceptable' behaviors than are women. It can be argued that psychiatric hospitalization or labeling relates to what society considers 'unacceptable' behavior. Thus, since women are allowed fewer total behaviors and are more strictly confined to their rolesphere than men are, women, more than men, will commit more behaviors that are seen as 'ill' or 'unacceptable.' (39ff)

Mindell demonstrates that the individual in an extreme state is a city shadow, displaying behavior that goes against the collectively accepted consensus of the norm. This individual acts like a dream figure for the collective, embodying behavior split off from mainstream consciousness. Mindell explains:

This shadow is like the city's dream portraying its neglected gods, the hopelessness it will not admit, its withdrawal from superficial communication, its suicidal tendencies, mania, addictions, murderous rage and hypersensitivity. The shadow reminds us of the smoldering revolution we normally perceive only in the dark of night or in the impinging quality of physical symptoms. (1988: 162)

I had always seen Angela's "odd" behavior as a manifestation of the terrible social and inner pressures she was under. However, I want to honor her here by acknowledging her as a city shadow for the town we grew up in, the school we went to, the families we came from and the larger world around us. Her extreme state is a collective dream, a message for us all. We are the dreamers challenged to grow.

When I began to research women's extreme states relative to culture, I found numerous cross-cultural taboos regarding women's behavior. Most of these are associated with the body, sexuality, reproduction and menstruation (Ussher). There are volumes of study about this; I offer a few tidbits.

Ussher (1992) offers a brief history of the menstrual taboo. Women have been seen as contaminated and unclean when menstruating, barred from worship and work.<sup>5</sup> A man who risks sexual intercourse with a menstruating woman

could become impotent or brain damaged. Women are thought to not be able to think clearly when they have their periods. A menstruating woman could cause crops to fail or fruit to rot. These things might seem outdated to the modern reader: however, menstruation is still used as an excuse that women cannot perform as well as men in the workplace. Women's emotions, moods and ideas are often dismissed and not valued during menstruation. Pre-menstrual syndrome (PMS) can be used as a medical way to further categorize and dismiss women. Additionally, the sense of being dirty is still with us, whether as an attitude held by men or internalized by women themselves.

Women have been seen as sexually out of control if left on their own. Women have been kept under lock and key with chastity belts. Cultural morality has held the keys to women's virginity. Openly sexual women were accused of being witches. Chinese women endured foot binding so they would be more sexually attractive to men (Chesler, Ussher). Millions of females worldwide succumb to genital mutilation; one of the background myths is that female genitals left intact will grow down to the women's knees and make them sexually ravenous (Walker and Parmar 1993). Lesbian sexuality has been taboo throughout the ages; these women have been viewed as witches or pathologized and incarcerated (Ussher). Homosexuality remains illegal in many parts of the world.

Ancient and modern practices which denigrate the female body and control female sexuality are central to misogyny. Cross-culturally, generations of women have existed solely to please others. These misogynist attitudes have seeped into the female psyche, tarnished self-esteem and encouraged self-hatred. Women feel torn, longing for love and acceptance for their innate selves, while they simultaneously strive to achieve the cultural female ideal by inhibiting and molding themselves into the culturally acceptable female form.

Angela was caught in this vicious struggle. She broke familial and cultural rules and simultaneously fanatically exercised and starved herself to attain the norm. Like most women, she was split between embracing mainstream ideals and fighting against them. In her extreme state the cultural chains were broken and everything forbidden was released. In a culture that shamed her for her heavy body, wanting her to hide her flesh and

disguise her appearance, she stripped naked. In a culture that is repulsed by women's menses and that teaches us ultimate discretion during these periods, Angela acted flamboyant, rambunctiously forcing us to notice a natural female beauty. In the extreme state, the naked woman in her natural state is unearthed!

Angela's behavior also broke relationship taboos. In a world that condemns same gender love, in a country where the highest teenage suicide rate occurs amongst gay teenagers,<sup>6</sup> and in North American high schools where the nastiest insult is to call someone "queer," "fag," or "dyke," Angela dared to express her desires.

In a world that has been so unconscious in the area of relationship and sexuality, relationships have been monitored for all kinds of potential abuse. Therefore, when Angela gave Ms. B. a Mother's Day card with her deeply expressed sentiments, Ms. B. blamed herself. She felt she should have remained more distant and abruptly pulled away from Angela. Such relationship regulation spoils spontaneous and life-transforming relationship contacts. Angela broke this taboo as well, seeing correctly that Ms. B. mothered her more than her own mother did.

Angela also broke the convention around mourning her deceased father. I know she suffered this conflict greatly. She felt incredible pressure to grieve and many people in her environment criticized her distant demeanor. Beneath her coolness lived years of pain and fury from being hurt and mistreated. If she had been able to totally throw off the chains of social convention, perhaps she would have celebrated, free at last from a man who had never been fatherly.

Mainstream thinking is zealously moral about relationships, regulating the kinds of relationships and behavior it deems acceptable. Angela's state gives us a glimpse of a world in which nature or spirit creates relationship life, not humans or morals. Nature draws us to someone regardless of their gender, position in society or racial and ethnic background. These are matters of the heart, not of laws or morality.

### **Extreme states and the mainstream**

Extreme states remain difficult for the mainstream because they not only threaten basic cultural beliefs and norms, but they generally manifest themselves with little regard for mainstream feedback. There is usually little interaction

around the extreme state. Fear and shock result in mainstream withdrawal and rejection. We often feel threatened by the unusual and try to stop it, unable to appreciate and unfold its inherent intelligence and meaning. Such fear also indicates our lack of familiarity with our own internal and altered states of consciousness.

In the acute phase of Angela's extreme state, she no longer adapted herself to the behavioral expectations of the mainstream. Her inability to pick up feedback from the environment and adjust her behavior accordingly allowed her to live her dreaming process completely. Mindell states that the lack of picking up feedback is not a pathological feature but can be observed in each of us at one time or another. We become unconscious of outer phenomena

...in order to preserve and complete the inner story or myth (we) are working on. In other words, having no feedback loop functions to keep (us) in (our) own dream world, and this is a function of unconsciousness which can be observed in all of us. (1988: 39)

Since we all have difficulties relating to our own extreme and unconscious states, we lack the ability to relate to others in those states.

Mindell has demonstrated that when we experience an extreme state we lack a feedback loop and cannot metacommunicate about our experiences. The lack of a metacommunicator, a part of the person that is able to meta-comment on experiences as they occur, over an extended period of time is a central aspect of extreme states. Mindell describes a feedback loop as what occurs when an individual adjusts her behavior to the opinions, expectations and signals coming from the environment. A missing feedback loop can be another characteristic of extreme states; this lack of outer adaptation enables the individual to remain in her inner process. The identity which normally adapts to outer feedback is not accessible. There is little regard for what were once personal or collective edges. This disregard allows new parts of ourselves to emerge. Not in contact with the edges of her identity, meaning collective norms and her own personal inhibitions, Angela temporarily lived parts of herself otherwise forbidden. Not only did she step into the dreaming world of her own personal psychology, but her behavior was a dream for her environment as well. Extreme states such as Angela's portray the dreaming drama of a

given culture, showing us our collective conflicts by revealing that which we disavow (1988).<sup>7</sup>

Angela was not able to pick up my negative feedback to her advances and I was not able to relate to the shadow she revealed. I can only praise her now for carrying the ghost of an irrepensible woman and having the soul to tread unknown land in a town that stood against her, in an environment that eventually destroyed her spirit. But the essence of that spirit can never be destroyed. It is the eternal spirit of Kali, the mythical goddess of Indian culture, dancing in her innate female pleasures and furiously stomping the collective which has downed her (Guirand 1959; Hoch-Smith and Spring 1978). Her spirit is evoked today throughout the world as women struggle, not only in the field of psychiatry, but as all of us try to live our most genuine inner natures. This is liberation for women and for men—a human liberation, free from culturally induced roles. Angela takes her place in centuries of women who have foreshadowed this revolution, blazing the trail for many of us to come. I pay homage to them all.

## Notes

1. Also, see Ussher 1992, for information on recent studies in Britain, Europe and the United States which confirm these statistics. Ussher refers to studies that indicate that women are referred more frequently for mental health services than are men. Psychotropic drugs are prescribed for women twice as frequently as they are for men, and more women receive ECT (electro-convulsive therapy, or electroshock).
2. I think this is due to the zeitgeist, the beginnings of the women's liberation and civil rights movement; a time when many women began to conflict with their limited roles and began to seek psychiatric help for their unhappiness.
3. Ussher, 1992, presents various studies showing that ECT is more widely prescribed for women than men (108). From her footnotes: "Malla (1988) in a study which examined 5,729 psychiatric admissions over three years reported that the 1,236 patients who received ECT were more likely to be female and older than the patients who received other treatments. Breggin (1979) reported that 80% of patients who receive ECT in one USA hospital are women, because its disabling effects are deemed less problematic in women" (124).
4. Mindell's ideas about the city shadow also find support from those in the so-called "antipsychiatry" movement. Ussher presents such theorists as Scheff

and Goffman who argue that "...all madness is dependent on social and cultural values, not scientific objectivity. Psychiatry is thus seen as an agent of social control" (1992: 135). She also presents various authors who assert that pathological behavior has a definite cultural bias and gives examples of how definitions of madness are inconsistent between various cultures and societies. (135; 138).

5. See also Lara Owen, *Her Blood is Gold: Celebrating the Power of Female Menstruation*. San Francisco: Harper, 1993.
6. A study compiled by the Hetrick Martin Institute in New York in 1992 revealed that gay teenagers are two to three times more likely to commit suicide than heterosexual teens. The Secretaries Task Force on Youth Suicide at the Department of Human Services in 1989 also reported similar findings.
7. See Mindell, *City Shadows*, Chapter 3, for a deeper theoretical discussion about metacommunication, feedback loops and the connection between extreme states and field theory.

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- Dawn Menken, Ph.D., is a therapist in Portland, Oregon and teaches Process Work throughout the world. She is moved by the extreme nature in people and the world, where we meet the unknown and where learning is rich.*