FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

Erotic Anger: A User's Manual
Gerard Pommier
Catherine Liu, translator
University of Minnesota Press
978-0-8166-3530-6
(March 31, 2001)

French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan challenged Anna Freud and the leadership of the International Psychoanalytic Association and was evicted from the IPA more than fifty years ago. Now, one of his eminent followers, Gerard Pommier, a distinguished French psychoanalyst and author, has broken with the Lacanian movement in France. American readers have a chance to find out what Pommier is about, thanks to this fine translation of his 1994 book on the interplay of anger and sex.

Like Lacan, Pommier invokes basic Freudian theory: the Oedipus complex, castration fear, and penis envy underlie his presentation of a paternal complex that determines the dynamics of sexual anger and angry sex. Fortunately, the cases are so elegantly presented that one does not have to be a Freudian to enjoy and learn from Pommier. “Certain shortcomings in his partner that he had not noticed in the beginning suddenly took on such an importance in his eyes that after a few months his sexual interest was transformed into a conjugal duty that was performed stealthily, head turned the other way, and with all the lights out. His wife drank too much, and perhaps even more since he had distanced himself from her, as he became increasingly disgusted by the smell of alcohol.” This could be from a short story or novel, and it is no surprise that Pommier has published fiction among his twelve books.

Topics covered—perhaps one should say “uncovered”—include masturbation, virginity, incest, premature ejaculation, impotence, childbearing, idealization of women, and obscene language. The Oedipus story is so improbable and so rich with possibilities that it supports a plethora of psychological interpretations. Pommier’s approach is rich and stimulating as literary work, if rather a stretch as science. But he also argues that fiction can lead to more profound understanding than science in an area dominated by religion and other irrational social constructs. While those familiar with Freud and Lacan will be most at home with the text, others, helped by Patricia Gherovici’s and Catherine Liu’s introductions, will find this a thought-provoking, dramatic introduction to an ultimately optimistic thinker who concludes, “When it

has eroticism as both its point of origin and outlet, anger can be a healthy thing!”

E. James Lieberman