

She's Such a Liar: Incest, Knowledge & Power: A Manifesto

Susan Osborn

Shake the Table Press (Apr 7, 2026)

Softcover \$16.99 (172pp)

979-899977660-0

She's Such a Liar is a powerful feminist tract that reveals the underlying hypocrisy and corruption of traditional approaches to the subject of incest.

Susan Osborn's persuasive feminist tract *She's Such a Liar* explores the imbalance in the way victims and perpetrators of father-daughter incest are treated.

Using a historical and ideological lens, the book examines society's long, continual suppression of this taboo subject, eying two early and notable torchbearers of the collective silence: Sigmund Freud and Jean-Martin Charcot, considered "fathers" in their respective fields, psychiatry and neurology. Once disturbed by women patients' accounts of family sexual abuse, the book notes, Freud later pivoted to an erotic fantasy hypothesis after his findings were rejected by the psychiatric establishment, the book notes. And at the Salpêtrière Hospital and Asylum, Charcot claimed that his patient Augustine's "hysteria" was due to a faulty uterus and not traumatic abuse. Parading the rape victim in weekly performances delivered to crowds of people, the physician garnered publicity for himself in the process.

Such exposés of powerful, long-venerated men, which reveal the underlying hypocrisy and corruption of academic approaches to the subject, prove convincing. The book also investigates other topics that link with incest, though, broadening its scope. These include a US gonorrhea epidemic beginning in the 1920s, the shame and othering that traditionally get instilled in women, and depictions of rape in the Hebrew Bible.

With its collection of compelling evidence of a historical and contemporary patriarchal stranglehold on society, the book does an able job of showing that throughout history, young victims of sexual assault have been blamed, shamed, separated from society, or told that incest is their problem to fix with therapy, while perpetrators were defended or taken out of the equation. The book notes that there are few known incestuous fathers other than (allegedly) Woody Allen, and that a word doesn't even exist to describe someone who commits incest. While the book takes its premise—that fathers believe they have rightful ownership of their daughter's sexuality—to an extreme point, the severity of the problem and the need for action are outlined in undeniable terms.

The material is well organized into five parts and moves at a brisk pace, its tone approachable. Though terms like *etiology* and *anodyne* appear, everyday language is more common. Humor is used to overcome the "ick factor" of the topic; Frederick Taussig, an early gynecologist who blamed O-shaped toilet seats rather than sexual abuse for young girls' STIs, is described under his photograph as resembling a "smug and punctilious" stamp club president. "The lake did it" reads a caption under Italy's Specchio di Venere, blamed for an adolescent's gonorrhea infection in 2021.

She's Such a Liar uses both force and care to hammer out its argument that patriarchy is a rotten system that causes harm to girls and women. It accesses the language of women's studies ideology in an approachable way and includes well-placed doses of humor to provide bursts of relief from its heavy topic.

ANDREA KREIDLER (April 2, 2026)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book and paid a small fee to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. Foreword Reviews and Clarion Reviews make no guarantee that the publisher will receive a positive review. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.