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Mothering & Psychoanalysis: Clinical, Sociological and Feminist Perspectives, edited by Petra Bueskens (Toronto: Demeter Press, 2014), 504pp., ISBN: 978-1-927335-26-0, \$34.46 Paperback.

Petra Bueskens has edited and organised an impressive array of contemporary writing on mothering and psychoanalysis from clinical, sociological and feminist perspectives. The book consists of five sections: the therapist as mother; the mother in therapy; mothers in art and culture; mothers in theory and practice; and mothering, therapy culture and the social. Highlights of the volume address maternal subjectivity; the rewards and unrecognised costs paid by working mothers; the relation between the devaluation of care and the feminisation of the helping professions; and how maternal legacies may ravage daughters, whose maternal bonds may lay siege to a sense of agency hijacked by anger, envy and a perpetual sense of loss. This issue of mother-daughter ambivalence is touched on in many of the essays across the five sections of the volume, and will be the focus of my discussion here, particularly in relation to how maternity and a woman's identity are thought of as either condensed, distinct or informing one another.

One of the themes of the volume is the way a daughter's sense of abandonment, or a perceived absence of care, (whether due to her mother's own ambivalence, or depression, for instance, or her other social commitments), can animate what Jungians refer to as dark animus, where the struggle to individuate from the mother prevents realisation of a maternal inheritance on the side of agency and care. S. Alease Ferguson and Toni C. King's chapter 'Dark Animus: A Psychodynamic Interpretation of the Consequences of Diverted Mothering among African-American Daughters' presents cases of African American women whose adolescence was marked by the absence of their mothers, many of whom were working as domestic carers in other households. Such absence and the demand to pick up the domestic work and care for siblings left these women struggling with maternal ambivalence or a refusal to become mothers themselves. Nancy Chodorow, in 'Too late: The Reproduction and Non-

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Reproduction of Mothering' registers similar effects. Where a sense of maternal neglect is internalised as the mother's ambivalence towards her children, women may struggle with the idea of becoming a mother. Through clinical vignettes Chodorow describes the effects of ongoing anger concurrent with a fantasy of remaining outside time. Yet she seems to equate femininity with maternity even while making the opposite claim, ending one vignette and the chapter with the statement that the patient called her the day her child was born and "her active, achieving self now internally completed", never heard from her again (p. 237). Whether seen as perfect or predatory, the omnipotent mother is a fantasy or a delusion, a perception of totality carrying conflict. Hadara Scheflan Katzav, in her essay about artistic expressions of maternal jouissance picks up the question of how to situate a mother's jouissance. She argues that where the subjective aspects of motherhood are trapped in a fantasy of wholeness and self-contentment, artists generally don't succeed in bridging female and maternal identities. Lacan formulated a distinction between phallic, and an other or feminine jouissance, noting that there is always something about the feminine position that escapes discourse. Being not-whole with regard to representation 'makes her absent from herself somewhere absent as subject' (Lacan, 1998, cited by Scheflan Katzav, p. 308), and hence available to experience this other jouissance, to which 'the *a* constituted by her child' (Lacan 1998, cited in Scheflan Katzav, p. 308) might work as a cork or stopper. Scheflan Katzav identifies feminine jouissance as inherent in the 'maternal 'absence as a subject' that touches on the real' (p. 308), as an aspect within maternal experience that is outside the terms of both Oedipal mechanisms and symbolic representation. A woman, we might note, may experience feminine jouissance (as a sense of abundance) in relation to her pregnancy and her child, and she may also feel alienation or horror at the life within her. While we need be careful to distinguish ideal and idealised experience from that of actual and particular women, these concepts can provide useful distinctions that allow us to map and name aspects of experience that are particularly troubling or overlooked. Describing works of art in these terms opens a field of conjecture, from the writer's construction to the artist's experience, or the distance between the writer's experience of the work and its place in the artist's own psychic economy. Whether, and how they align, must be raised as an open question. That said, Scheflan Katzav's writing about the work of three Israeli artists seeks to illuminate how feminine jouissance may be an aspect of subjectivity 'in which the participants know one

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another physically and not symbolically'. This takes in a familiarity inscribed concretely without involving a gaze (p. 302), a relationship between motherhood and femininity where these aspects of a woman's identity do not exclude but rather shape each other.

Lisa Baraitser similarly considers this engagement of identities in a woman's experience. She highlights the maternal subject as a subject who emerges from the experience of interruption, distinguishing maternal love and maternal desire and noting how the alterity of the child takes the mother by surprise, offering something we can think of in terms other than wholeness, by noting how 'in moments when a splitting of the self is experienced, something we may call love can emerge' (Baraitser, 2008, cited by Rodgers, p. 383). Commenting on how mothers remain 'the lynchpin of neoliberalism' as the contradictory processes of late global capitalism are played out across female and maternal bodies, Baraitser describes motherhood as a practice of waiting that stands outside the economies it underpins: intruding into the public 'through her capacity to reinstall, and make visible, unqualified time' (p. 489). This relation to unqualified time, enacted in 'the relational and duration work of maternal labour that entails encounters between mothers and children in non-places' such as car parks, supermarkets and airport lounges, defines the maternal as it 'exists in the 'interval' between postponement (her postponed productivity) and an anticipated future that is not hers (that of her child)' (p. 485). It is also a characteristic of feminine *jouissance* and its disruptive potential.

From the emergent field of motherhood studies Bueskens presents the work of Baraitser and Alison Stone as paradigmatic of a current generation of psychoanalytic maternal feminist scholars in their work of 'releasing the mother from the daughter' by recognising their unique desires and developmental sequence (p. 27). While Chodorow and Benjamin refocused on 'the mother' from the perspective of the daughter, Irigaray and Kristeva 'similarly conflate maternal with feminine subjectivity' by remaining in the daughter's position, concerned with 'the struggle to articulate a feminine speaking position that is not, as with the mother, locked out of the patriarchal symbolic' (Bueskens, p. 27). As Berkeley Kaite has noted in her piece on fetish operations, 'maternal space, pre-natal and otherwise, is a radical confusion of one and other' (p. 289). Difficult to valorise as it reigns incumbent with the ambivalences of self and other, prey to imaginary oscillations as the symbolic tries to thread its way across the real. The rather heavy handed, textbook style constructions offered by some of the writers miss this nuance of the symbolic as it works through and amidst the

real, not simply as some patriarchal domain of law but as the work of a subject seeking to act on desire in the real.

Baraitser's point that motherhood "brings feminist theory closest to its own blind spots" (Baraitser, 2012, p.118) is illustrated in many of the references to Lacan throughout the volume, particularly those relying on secondary sources or paraphrases of his work from the nineteen fifties. For glossing over the idea that the symbolic can be rejected as patriarchal (Bueskens, p. 15) serves to undermine some of the positions presented as correctives to the 'Freudian-Lacanian' paradigm. While many of the papers in this volume arrive at questions mapped out by this 'paradigm', there is a distinction between the work of Freud and Lacan that at times is not registered and to that extent continues to haunt the volume if not the field. The idea of the symbolic disrupted by a maternal gaze (Ingram, p. 274) can, for example, fail to register the degree to which the mother carries the symbolic and herself transmits the name of the father where it functions. Lacan's later work however focused on that function as itself a symptom, one of many. To reiterate and gloss over this equation of the symbolic and patriarchy is to simplify and misrepresent his work. I found it disheartening that such representations continue uncorrected after all this time. Citing Butler as making the point that relational ties need to be construed more broadly than in their dyadic form seems to overlook the ethical ground of psychoanalytic work that itself theorises the position of a third term outside the dyad, whether that of mother and child or patient and therapist. Theorising in dyadic terms risks remaining in the sway of the imaginary; this was one of Lacan's fundamental points, applicable to the analogy of therapy as mothering where the role of a third party or position (without which there would be no mothering) is overlooked. I am similarly wary of Bueskens' idea that good psychotherapy is sociological, for while therapy is necessarily immersed in phenomena we are aware of from sociological perspectives, and they indeed inform our constructions and responses, therapist and educator are distinct positions, collapsed in psycho-educative interventions rather than therapeutic work. Lynne Layton cautions us on this note by registering moments in her work as a therapist when she thought she was countering neoliberal ideology and instead was colluding unconsciously with its rhetoric of choice and autonomy (p. 173). Layton also notes mother and daughter estrangement may be a middle class phenomena produced in particular socio-economic circumstances where mothers and daughters, less likely to thrash out boundary issues in negotiating shared communal spaces on a daily basis, perceive them as psychological dramas.

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It is refreshing to find the lived experience of motherhood addressed in its complexity, and taken up in socio-political terms even where some theoretical characterisations are disarmingly simplistic. The volume both articulates and falls short in key areas, and thereby provides a critical compass for the field of maternal studies today. What is missing, registered in a poverty of research into the experience of mothers, repeats through use of theory that tends to conflate and sometimes collapse the maternal and the feminine as if they were not distinct. This distinction is important, given the way that both the maternal and the feminine may compete in a woman's experience. This central question is differently inflected throughout the volume, and the highlights of the book occur at points where the relation between the maternal and the feminine is considered.

References

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