

Editorial

Sigal Spiegel and Lisa Baraitser

Welcome to the second issue of *Studies in the Maternal*. We are delighted to be including contributions in this open issue from those working on motherhood and the maternal across the interdisciplinary spectrum, including sociology, creative writing, literature, psychoanalysis, philosophy, painting and digital media. Further, the contributions reveal a methodological, theoretical and thematic plurality, holding open the maternal as a generative site through which discussions of neo-liberalism, classed, raced and gendered identities, and sexuality and subjectivity, can hybridize with discussions of psychic structure, attachment, identification and creative processes.

The issue opens with a review essay by the sociologists Kim Allen and Jayne Osgood which helps us navigate recent research into the ways in which social class shapes the place of the maternal in the lives of young women. Class, as these studies forcefully illustrate, continues to radically permeate and structure the ways in which young women relate to and construct motherhood, from ‘non-ambition’ in the lives of middle class young women through to ‘desired practice’ in the lives of working class young women. The ways in which ‘good’ and ‘bad’ mothering is constituted within government welfare policy is also related to class, with working class mothers being particularly subjected to the highly regulatory discourses which constitute them as the abject other: feckless, irresponsible ‘bad’ mothers. These split images of good and bad, paired as they are with middle and working class identities, are reproduced within British popular and consumer culture via the figures of the Yummy Mummy and Chav Mum. Whilst the general contours of this research might be familiar to some, the work of pulling together and synthesizing the research evidence results in an invaluable resource for mapping the complex and ever-shifting inter-relation between social class and the maternal, the theme of a forthcoming MaMSIE conference in September 2010.

In a related, though differently inflected literary vein, this issue includes an extract from a proposed quintet that follows a mixed-race family from 19th century Jamaica to contemporary Britain. Through her rendering of a highly antagonistic mother-daughter relationship, Jenny Mitchell evokes the effects of raced and classed experiences on relations within this family, as maternal love and filial affection are deeply disturbed by

cultural and racial factors. Katerina Kitsi explores the ambiguities and contradictions surrounding Virginia Woolf's use of the maternal in two of her seminal works written simultaneously at the peak of her career, *Orlando* and *A Room of One's Own*. Woolf herself didn't have children, a decision forced upon her by her husband and doctor, who together felt she was not mentally stable enough for motherhood. Kitsi's paper, though not addressing this directly, raises the question of the place of the biographical in literary criticism. Thus, intergenerational and genealogical enterprises, whether fictional, phantasmatic or real, become once again central to our thinking about the maternal.

This theme is further continued in Christine Wilks' wonderfully quirky interactive digital media work: *Fitting the Pattern: or being a dressmaker's daughter*. This is a memoir about her mother, a skilled dressmaker, whom Christine grew up with in Leeds. Christine makes use of biographical minutiae at their intersection with cultural representations for exploring the emergence of subjectivities within mother-daughter relations. The work invites the reader/viewer to take part in the exploration and mediated construction of perplexed yet intimate mother-daughter relationship. You will also find a link to Christine's parallel lecture-notes, *Being Creatively Autobiographical in New Media*.

The idea of the maternal and the maternal body as offering an encompassing care for the vulnerable other is worked on in this issue from two, very different, perspectives. In their capacities as psychoanalytic clinicians and theoreticians (and in Ettinger's case, additionally as a painter) Bracha L. Ettinger and Estela Welldon's contributions enable us to reflect on the intimate interrelations between theory and practice. This issue includes a collection of work by, and in response to, Ettinger's *oeuvre*, edited by Noreen Giffney, Michael O'Rourke and Anne Mulhall. The collection includes two outstanding and characteristically demanding recent texts by Ettinger, 'Fragilization and Resistance', and 'Neighborhood and *Shechina*'. In addition there are a number of short contributions by academics, psychoanalysts, and artists who were originally present at 'Reading Bracha L. Ettinger's *The Matrixial Borderspace*', a two-day intensive, interdisciplinary seminar at University College Dublin, Ireland in April 2009. The seminar provided an opportunity to discuss the implications of Ettinger's work for a range of fields, particularly studies of gender and sexuality, as well as fostering cross-disciplinary dialogue between psychoanalysts and psychologists, critical and cultural theorists, and practitioners of the arts. Giffney, O'Rourke and Mulhall offer us here a 'co-response' to Ettinger's work, and

Editorial
Sigal Spiegel and Lisa Baraitser

the result is a portfolio of work that ‘seduces’ us into the compelling theoretical, aesthetic and clinical thinking of one of the most important contributors to our understandings of maternal/matrixial subjectivity working today.

Finally, Estela Welldon, author of *Mother, Madonna, Whore* (1988), is in conversation in this issue with Sigal Spigel. Welldon's early work on perverse motherhood may put in question the notion of the unconditional welcoming of the matrixial that Ettinger suggests. Maternal capacity for cruelty is brought to the fore through conversation about the potentials for, and actualizations of perverse motherhood. Here the matrixial relation, (whether real or phantasmatic) is understood as unique to motherhood and a source for envy, hence that which provokes attacks on mothers. Welldon tends to focus on a particular group of pathologically perverse women and mothers, yet her work opens up the question of mundane maternal cruelty as a possibly important feature of maternal subjectivity. For Welldon, motherhood is almost the only space in which women can exercise power within a masculine structured society. As such, social structure encourages perversion. Welldon hopes for a change in societal structures that would also lessen perversion amongst mothers.

We would like to thank all of you who submitted work to *Studies in the Maternal*. We hope to accept many more submissions in future open issues, and we invite you also to comment on this issue on our blog. We would like to thank our supportive editorial board: Kate Pullinger, Imogen Tyler, Rachel Thomson and Gail Lewis and a special thank you to Polona Curk who assisted us single-handedly with both enthusiasm and dedication; to Naomi Bain who designed this issue; and to our new doctoral interns for their careful editing, proof-reading and administrative skills.

Paula McClosky will be the Review Editor as from our next issue. Details of proposed events, books and exhibitions that you wish to be reviewed can be sent to her. She can be contacted on: P.L.Mccloskey@sheffield.ac.uk.

Sigal Spigel and Lisa Baraitser

**Editorial
Sigal Spigel and Lisa Baraitser**