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Jan Campbell, *Freudian Passions: Psychoanalysis, Form and Literature* (London: Karnac, 2013), 272 pp., ISBN: 9781781812723, £22.19, paperback.

Jan Campbell's *Freudian Passions: Psychoanalysis, Form and Literature* (2013) is 'all about our mothers': our relation to—and passion for—our mothers.¹ In this vivid and original work, Campbell mixes personal experience, close reading, clinical cases, and psychoanalytic theory to great effect to remind us how our excessive passions almost always emerge in the early unconscious, telepathic relation to the mother. In the pre-Oedipal relationship between mother and child, the mother provides the child with its first forms. The mother is a 'genre' (3), Campbell tells us, returning the child's passions and giving them shape through mimetic processes. These returned forms are 'never simply the same' (36), however. They are passions with maternal form added. For Campbell, the body's essentially mobile passions are constantly in search for new forms and pathways beyond the ego, beyond the self. She regards telepathy (which Freud secretly believed in but publicly disavowed) as key to the transference, communication, and sublimation of the passions into art; to carrying the personal to the non-personal, to moving the child (and their passions) from nature to culture.² In *Freudian Passions*, Campbell adds to Freud's model of repression by arguing that our repressed unconscious passions constantly find forms and expression through unconscious communication. 'Unconscious telepathy' (43), she argues, beginning with the primary mother-child relationship, gives rise to forms which are repeatedly returned to in therapy and throughout adult life. In this

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way, those most intense passions are sublimated and tolerated. Here, Campbell reiterates the early formative role of the maternal—and highlights telepathy, in particular,—as facilitating the child’s symbolic capacities; influencing capacities for independence and autonomy, creativity and art.

The most important contribution to maternal studies to be taken from *Freudian Passions* is Campbell’s re-conceptualisation of ‘maternal lived form’ (4)—introduced in the first chapter, ‘Passions in search of form’. Utilising the work of contemporary psychoanalytic thinkers Christopher Bollas and Kenneth Wright, as well as philosopher Susan Langer, Campbell’s own idea of ‘maternal form’ refers to those non-verbal artistic forms which mirror the telepathic, pre-discursive relationship between mother and child. We may think here of that which precedes the ego and is anterior to Lacan’s ‘mirror stage’ and the Symbolic: vision, rhythm, colour, unconscious perception, sound, touch, and gesture.³ For Campbell, telepathy is how we sublimate, communicate, and translate the repressed. She stresses, however, that those excessive affects related to the maternal body are only ever incompletely sublimated. Telepathy is not an alternative to repression or castration. Rather, maternal form and telepathy are a way of communicating through a restrictive Lacanian Symbolic with its emphasis on the phallus and the repression of the drives through language. Unlike post-Lacanian theoreticians Julia Kristeva and Bracha Ettinger, whose respective theories of the maternal semiotic and the matrixial are situated in respect of Lacan’s Imaginary and the Symbolic, Campbell works from an alternative Winnicottian tradition (Khan, Bollas, Phillips). This is where her work on ‘maternal form’ is new. For Campbell, the imaginary is not just phantasmatic (as in Lacan). The pre-Oedipal has a relationship to reality that predates the symbolic. Campbell uses the theory of ‘impersonal narcissism’ elaborated in Adam Phillips’ and Leo Bersani’s *Intimacies* (2008) to substantiate her claims for a non-personal telepathy between mother and child which brings new shapes and

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styles to the ego. Although her theory of ‘maternal form’ may be likened to Kristeva’s semiotic, Kristeva’s semiotic is always structured in relation to a repressive Oedipal Symbolic. Campbell argues, instead, for a ‘maternal form’ which mixes with the drives and ‘unconsciously translates and communicates them telepathically’ (6). It is not semiotic as it is not dependant on the structures and strictures of a Lacanian Symbolic (though she does suggest that maternal form can be carried over into language). Thus, Campbell’s notion of maternal form in art offers a different kind of sublimation of sexuality which is ‘non-repressive, re-duplicating the primary identification with the mother in ways that form and de-form, shape and re-shape the ego’. The potential of Campbell’s theory for feminist thought is obvious. She demonstrates how the paternal order is not the only route for the passions out into reality. The mother does not have to be denied access to by the intervention of the father’s law. Rather, Campbell’s idea of maternal form means that the child’s early love and unconscious reading of the mother—collected through telepathy—can be given unconscious expression in reality, allowing articulation of those primary pleasures we have had to repress but which still persist in shaping our ego and sexuality. Contrary to the anxiety neurosis which arises in the hysteric or the obsessive whose affects must be subsumed to secrecy, maternal form promotes elaboration of previously forbidden excitations through creative illusion and symbolic play. Hence, the excessive passions related to the mother’s body do not have to be repressed. One can continue to express and sublimate love for the mother through art, poetry, film, and literature. Along these lines, the desire for the mother can be accessed, maintained, and elaborated instead of prohibited. Maternal telepathic form, then, is a return to pre-Oedipal first forms in the Oedipal arena that are not forever fixed and regressive (as with the hysteric). It is a return to the mother that is also a movement forward, transforming passion ‘into new configurations and possibilities’ (31).

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In chapter 2, 'Unconscious reading of mothers and flowers', Campbell addresses Lacan's radical splitting of the subject between the domains of the Imaginary and the Symbolic, respectively, with her suggestion of 'lived maternal form' (35). Instead of the Freudian Id being held by a repressive unconscious, she foregrounds how passions unconsciously move through an unconscious perceptual ego, and thus can communicate through 'maternal, telepathic form' (23). Campbell uses Virginia Woolf's early memory of her mother's dress in *A Sketch of the Past* (her conscious and unconscious reading of her mother) to demonstrate how imagination can participate with the real both to free ourselves from the maternal (the object), and also to reproduce the lost maternal object. This is not a secondary elaboration or deferred action (as Lacan would have it) but involves both primary and secondary processes. It is this mix of memory and perception which provides the shock and vitality essential to great poetry and art. The mother is created and re-created by Woolf as a flower mother, 'an alive genre' (58) rather than a dead relic from the past. Campbell shows how Woolf's earliest memories are brought to life in art through a maternal aesthetics which begins with the mother's idiom of care.⁴ Through her maternal poetics Woolf sublimates and moves, and yet remains connected, to her repressed desires.

In the second half of *Freudian Passions*, Campbell's idea of 'maternal form' is more fully shown in a literary context. Chapter 4 looks at gender performance and 'maternal form' in Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*, whilst chapters 5 and 6 analyse melodrama (as in George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*) and psychoanalysis, and how sexuality moves between the personal and the non-personal through 'maternal form'. Campbell states, 'melodrama is on one level the return of first impressions: the return of the repressed' (133). This return 'home' to the first forms of the mother constitutes melodrama and the search for the self. Like hysteria, melodrama is expedient to psychoanalysis as it shows excessive passions on the move and in search of form. For

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Campbell, such forms ‘can only be in found in the response of the other’ (131). The mother, again, is highlighted as crucial in this respect. As Winnicott (1971) showed, the mother is essential to the child’s dream and symbol making capacities.⁵ Through her receptiveness and attunement to her baby, the mother mediates the child’s first passions and their ability to play, imagine, destroy, and recreate. Hence, Campbell encourages us to think of the early mother as a ‘maternal genre’ (136)—open to both sexes and hence a ‘genre’ that can mediate between our minds and cultural and social spheres. Importantly, we do not have to succumb to the injunction and potency of Lacan’s ‘Name-of-the-Father’. We do not have to suffer separation (castration) from our mothers.⁶ Campbell suggests, rather, that mothers can be both present and lost to us by way of ‘maternal form’. Through ‘maternal form’ we can move ‘backwards and forwards between passions and forms and between fantasy and the real world’ (137). The recreation of the passions of melodrama—brought through rhythm to maternal form—is what allows a re-imagining of who we can become: a new life with a new sense of being and relationality with difference and otherness attached. There is another way out of the Oedipal, Campbell informs us: a way painted through the dreamworld of maternal aesthetics, where old unconscious passions of the past are made anew.

In chapter 7, Campbell gives an astute reading of Mrs Ramsay in Virginia Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse* to show how in our attempt to fashion ourselves ‘the first passionate affects for the mother are what we keep coming back to’ (176).⁷ The final chapter, ‘Dreaming Lilies’, looks at Freud’s essay ‘Screen Memories’ (1899) and his reminiscence of yellow flowers from his childhood.⁸ Campbell argues that these flowers, as in Woolf, are the maternal forms of Freud’s ego which carry his passions beyond the personal ego. They are a ‘telepathic and unconscious reading of his repressed incestuous desires’ (212). Freud’s flowers reflect a desire that is always on the move, allowing him access to first impressions and his most intimate wishes—going back

to the real of the maternal body. By giving shape to these wishes, Freud's flowers alter Oedipal dynamics and create 'new possibilities of who Freud can become'. In this last chapter Campbell writes, 'passions are by their very nature the incestuous, enigmatic currents that dog our lives' (242). Her book argues that it is the very sublimation of these passions—through those forms telepathically given in our early relations with the mother—that can shatter and reconstitute the ego.

Freudian Passions is a vital contribution to maternal studies. Adding a feminist to a Winnicottian line of thought, Campbell's sustained and convincing argument for maternal telepathy distinguishes her from Lacan, Kristeva, and Ettinger by suggesting that sublimation need not be viewed as only achievable through 'repression, a fixed ego ideal or castration through language' (7).⁹ Failure to accept Campbell's argument for unconscious telepathy naturally undermines her stance. Yet, Campbell states at the conclusion of *Freudian Passions* that her re-thinking of 'maternal form' is intended as an important addition to be placed and debated alongside rather than a substitute to other psychoanalytic and feminist accounts. Whether you are persuaded by Campbell's case, *Freudian Passions* provides hope in the face of maternal loss. As she states, 'there is no way back to the mother's lap' (187). Yet, through maternal form, Campbell suggests that we can dream different mothers, new mothers, non-personal mothers, virtual mothers; all of whom can carry the passions that we felt early on with our own mothers. In this way, we can live, create, let go, and move on.

¹ Jan Campbell. 2013. *Freudian Passions: Psychoanalysis, Form and Literature*, London: Karnac Press. p. 119. Page numbers hereafter will be given in the text.

² Freud expressed greater conviction about telepathy privately than he did publicly. This was largely owing to his concern that an avowed interest in occult phenomena would bring psychoanalysis into disrepute. See Campbell (2013) and Campbell and Pile (2010).

³ For a description of Lacan's notion of the 'mirror stage' see his seminal essay 'The Mirror Stage as Formative of the I Function as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience' in *Écrits* (2006), pp. 75-81.

⁴ Campbell's use of the term 'maternal idiom' in *Freudian Passions* is taken from Christopher Bollas' *The Shadow of the Object: Psychoanalysis of the Unthought Known* (1995), pp. 32-35. For Bollas, 'the mother's idiom of care and the infant's experience of this handling is one of the first if not the earliest human aesthetic'. This first human aesthetic 'passes into the idiom of formal aesthetics', and we continue to bear the structure of the maternal aesthetic throughout life.

⁵ See D. W. Winnicott. 1971. *Playing and Reality*, London: Routledge.

⁶ Winnicott (1971) argues that full castration and separation from the mother never fully happens anyway. In his essay 'Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena', he states, 'it is assumed here that the task of reality-acceptance is never completed, that no human being is free from the strain of relating inner and outer reality, and that relief from this strain is provided by an intermediate area of experience', p. 18.

⁷ Woolf's matriarch in *To the Lighthouse*, Mrs Ramsay, is shown by Campbell to be vital to various characters because she is the 'virtual, maternal idiom' (179), an Id through which their unconscious passions are mirrored, liberated and given shape. For instance, Mrs Ramsey is able to telepathically provide her son James with the forms and maternal responses that he needs to achieve a 'sense of space and an internal place' (178): a sense of self.

⁸ See Sigmund Freud, 'Screen Memories', in *The Uncanny* (2003), pp. 1-22.

⁹ Kristeva's (1984) notion of the semiotic distinguishes her from Lacan by bringing the material body back to work at the level of the Imaginary and the Symbolic. Still, Campbell (2013) notes how the excess of the maternal body—in both Lacan and Kristeva—is 'always structured in relation to a repressive Oedipal Symbolic' (7). By contrast, in *Freudian Passions* Campbell asks us to consider a more telepathic and receptive unconscious through which the excessive passions related to the maternal body are shaped and translated into new forms of the ego.

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