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BOOK REVIEW:

**MOTHERING AND PSYCHOANALYSIS: CLINICAL, SOCIOLOGICAL AND
FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES**

Edited by Petra Bueskens. Pp. 504. Bradford: Demeter Press, 2014, \$44.95.

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Making its intervention at the intersection of psychoanalysis, feminism and sociology, Petra Bueskens' edited collection, *Mothering and Psychoanalysis*, draws together research on the maternal from a wide range of disciplines, including clinical and theoretical psychoanalysis, sociology, feminist theory and cultural studies. Many, if not all, of the papers work across these categories and the collection foregrounds the mutual implication of these fields. In fact, Bueskens describes the book as an 'impossibly eclectic ... intersection of scholarly and clinical concerns' (2), noting the inevitable tensions between a diverse set of contributions which draw on a wide range of thinkers: Winnicott, Fairbairn, Chodorow, and Benjamin jostle with the likes of Lacan, Mitchell and Butler.

The collection was inspired by a desire to synthesise the maternal turn in psychoanalytic theory (which the introduction helpfully sets out) with Arlie Hochschild's (2003) work on the commercialisation of care. With this in mind, the book comes together as a contribution to a feminist and sociological critique of the institution of therapy, in particular the 'feminization' (Philipson 1994) of therapy and of care. However, it also offers new visions of the maternal, which becomes central to the political imagination and social transformation. The 23 chapters – which include both reprints of seminal interventions in the field and previously unpublished contributions from an international group of scholars – are divided up into five interlinking sections, which work well thematically. In the interests of clarity, this review is organised in terms of these sections.

The analogy of ‘The Therapist as Mother’ is common to attachment and object-relations theory and forms the title of the first section of the collection, which features both clinical and sociological engagements with the topic. Diane Kenny sets out the purchase of the maternal metaphor in attachment theory, whilst Elisabeth Shaw and Jan Breckenridge explore the ways in which motherhood and therapeutic practice might come to influence each other in reciprocal, ambivalent and to-date under-theorised ways. The section begins, however, with an interview with sociologist Irene Philipson, who links the maternal analogy with what she terms the ‘feminization of psychotherapy’ (75). Attentive to the ways in which ideas of gender are valued and circulate, Philipson defines feminisation, Bueskens glosses, in terms of ‘the transformation of psychotherapy from a prestigious, well-paid, largely masculine profession to one with an over-supply of female practitioners often struggling to create viable practices’ (75). Philipson links this to a broader process of social change which has seen care work come to be defined as ‘almost exclusively women’s work’ and accorded ‘a low social value’ (76). Psychotherapy thus takes up a position alongside other forms of emotional labour – teaching, nursing etc – most often performed by women.

Philipson’s work offers an important analysis of the persistent devaluation of that which is deemed to be ‘female/feminine’, and the interview concludes by focusing attention on the ‘care deficit’ (Hochschild 2003: 214) characteristic of what Philipson describes as ‘this neoliberal world that venerates independence over mutual care’, a place where ‘there are few institutions that anchor us, nourish us or give us meaning’ (83). Bueskens takes up this last point in her own contribution, ‘Is therapy a form of paid mothering?’, arguing that therapy offers a form of treatment or experience (namely care) much needed in our contemporary, ‘glocal’ (Robertson 1995: 26), society. However, in addition to providing opportunities for self-realisation and transformative experience vis-à-vis a ‘liquid’ (Bauman 2005) and fragmenting present, Bueskens suggests that the need for therapy/care foregrounds a ‘psychoanalysis from below’ that might bolster and support ‘the social movements necessary to bring [a] mentally healthy world about’ (Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2006: 87).

Philipson’s and Bueskens’ attention to the vicissitudes of the socio-economic present are echoed in the second section, ‘The Mother in Therapy’. The papers here are concerned with the ways in which the theory and practice of mothering and therapy intersect with class and race in the context of neoliberalism. Lynne Layton critiques psychoanalytic models of subjectivity that

focus on the achievement of separation (namely Freudian and Kleinian thinking but also, arguably, object-relations theory). Following Irigaray, Layton suggests that these models are symptomatic of the social formations from which they arise – namely patriarchy and capitalism – and she draws attention to the ways in which clinical work can collude with such structures, to the extent that it works with these models and presupposes a split between autonomy and mothering. In response, Layton argues that relational psychoanalysis offers a way to overcome ‘dominant ideologies that rely on splitting’ (173) – into good/bad or self/other – by reconfiguring an understanding of subjectivity and autonomy outside of a logic of separation.

The essays that follow share Layton’s preoccupation with how the psychic is worked over by the social. S. Alease Ferguson and Toni C. King offer a theory of the psychic effects of deferred mothering on Afro-American women, insisting that those effects cannot be understood in isolation from the social conditions that necessitate such mothering practices. Tony Talevski offers a fascinating Kleinian analysis of how ‘marginalised’ mothers (198) (often drug-dependent and lower class) come to function, at a societal level, as sites of negative projection. Maura Sheehy’s case study focusses on the implicit devaluation of motherhood in the USA – through the failure to supply any kind of maternal welfare provision – and on the potentially negative effects on mothers of internalising this attitude in the form of a ‘self-hating mother introject’ (217). Finally, Nancy Chodorow draws attention to women who delay mothering until it is biologically too late, exploring the collusion between internal conflicts and contemporary ideas of female identity that valorise thinness, career and choice. This section powerfully elucidates the complex ways in which ideas of subjectivity, attitudes to motherhood and social norms – all imbricated with economic imperatives – potentially collude in maintaining the neoliberal status quo.

If the second section begins to draw attention to the ways in which motherhood is represented, this preoccupation becomes central in the proceeding section, ‘Mothers in Art and Culture’, which takes stock of contemporary representations of the maternal across a diverse range of media forms. Caroline Bainbridge examines journalistic responses to Kate McCann, whose daughter, Madeleine, disappeared in Portugal in 2007. Bainbridge argues that McCann became a testing ground for contemporary notions of femininity and motherhood that exist in fraught relation to feminism and its concerns. Penelope Ingram offers a reading of Alejandro González Iñárritu’s *Babel* (2006) through the lens of Lacanian psychoanalysis, arguing that the

film manifests a ‘maternal gaze’ (262) and, as such, contains the possibility for thinking female subjectivity beyond the terms of repression and lack. Berkeley Kaite uses the ambivalent maternal photography of Sally Mann to formulate a theory of the maternal fetish, a trope, she suggests, that allows the complexity and ambiguity of motherhood to find purchase, supplementing the mother’s discursive idealisation. Finally, Hadara Scheflan Katzav turns to contemporary Israeli visual artists, analysing how they construct and represent maternal subjectivity. Katzav suggests there is a *jouissance* specific to the maternal subject which is connected to the visceral trauma of separation. Collectively, these essays explore both entrenched negative representations of the maternal and other discursive productions which offer new modes and possibilities for maternal signification and symbolisation. They thus play a role in the necessary re-imagining and transformation of the maternal beyond the terms of patriarchy.

The penultimate section, ‘Mothers in Theory and Practice’, continues this work of re-imagining and redefinition, not least by foregrounding a move from the ‘infantocentric perspective’ common in much psychoanalytic theorising to a more intersubjective, even ‘maternocentric’, one (344). In their respective papers, Nollaig Frost, Rivka Tuval-Mashiach and Shirit Shaoivitz explore how fantasies of ideal motherhood impinge on mothers themselves, delineating the problems that arise when mothers crave the capacity to offer unambivalent love and faultless care. While all of these writers emphasise the importance of negotiating and accepting ambivalence, Frost argues for the positive impact of a second child who shatters the mother’s fantasy of being able to give ideal care, releasing her from its fantasmatic grip. This acknowledgement of the complex, multifaceted nature of maternal subjectivity provides a necessary redress to a rhetoric of idealisation that can leave mothers feeling inadequate.

Alison Stone’s chapter asserts the need for a nuanced vision of maternal subjectivity – one that foregrounds the experience of motherhood as transformative for the mother herself – and speaks to Layton’s concerns. ‘The psychoanalytic emphasis on how others shape the self’, she writes, ‘undercuts the competing psychoanalysis on the need to detach oneself from the first other, the mother, to become a self’ (336). This is a situation with broader implications: ‘psychoanalysis enables us, too, to critique the forms of psyche and society that result from this (attempted) separation’ (339), though whether the psychoanalytic narrative of separation is symptomatic or causative here is not quite made clear.

In her exposition of Lisa Baraitser's *Maternal Encounters: The Ethics of Interruption* (2009), Julie Rodgers adds to Stone's approach, suggesting Baraitser's work holds out an invitation to look at maternal subjectivity anew, in ways that challenge the idea of a unified subject. Similarly to Stone, maternal subjectivity is presented as a transformative experience that takes place through an encounter with, and negotiation of, the otherness of the child, but it is also a subjectivity, Baraitser claims, that 'extends beyond the confines of the mother-child dyad' (2009: 157). The implications of this extension aren't really foregrounded here, though we might infer that they include the kinds of critique already set out by Philipson, Bueskens, Layton and Stone. This section concludes with Anu Ajena's reflections on the need to supplement the empiricist-materialist analyses prevalent in Indian work on motherhood with feminist psychoanalytic approaches. Whilst this essay doesn't speak directly to Stone or Baraitser's concerns, Ajena's focus on synthesis, as well as her investment in the transformative potential of theory, finds affinity with the other chapters.

The final section, 'Mothering, Therapy Culture and the Social' reprises many of the themes already at play across the collection. Eva Illouz charts the intersections between feminism and therapy culture over the last century. Concluding her paper, Illouz reads therapy culture as a process of feminisation that has 'called on women *and* men to adopt a quintessentially woman's attitude to the self (to reflect on one's feelings, express them and understand them)' (425). This stance is interesting when placed in relation to Buesken's second chapter, where it becomes apparent that Illouz critiques this therapeutic turn in *Saving the Modern Soul* (2008). However, Bueskens argues that psychoanalysis stands counter to the therapy culture with which Illouz aligns it, insisting on the ability of psychoanalytic therapy to facilitate subjective reflection and agency within a 'dissolving social structure' (440). Katie Wright offers weight to positive analysis of the therapeutic, using the play *Mom's the Word* (Carson *et al* 2000), wherein maternal ambivalence is foregrounded, to suggest that therapeutic culture offers forms of representation capable of challenging dominant ideology.

Still with an eye on transformation, the final two chapters recapitulate the most political of the collection's themes. Steven Botticelli offers the most overt statement of a politics/ethics of care underpinned by a relational analysis that undermines the subject/object split, referencing Marx and Butler to foreground 'that relationality needs to be conceived within a larger framework' (469) than the mother-child dyad, in terms of, to quote Butler, 'our collective

responsibility for the physical lives of one another' (2003: 19). Concluding the collection, Lisa Baraitser makes overt what was left implicit in Rodgers' piece: the implications of a certain understanding of maternity and motherhood for a broader progressive politics. Here Baraitser presents a maternal time of waiting (for parturition, for the child to grow...) as in radical opposition – much like the time of analysis itself – to 'the ideological metanarratives of power that underline public time...the time of neoliberal global capitalism' (488). This maternal time has the capacity to remind us of 'the intimate and the relational', signifying the possibility of a form of wasteful labour that represents, at least, a formulation in opposition to neoliberal hegemony.

Bueskens is correct that the collection is eclectic, though it's an eclecticism that works. Across the diverse papers certain themes recur, pulling them together into what feels like an important and timely conversation. The relationship between motherhood and neoliberalism, and the need to create new modes of signifying and symbolising the maternal beyond the terms of patriarchy are central themes that receive sophisticated and compelling exploration. These themes also speak to and feed into the collection's abiding concern with not only an *ethics*, but a *politics*, of care. In this context, the maternal takes centre stage in both the theory and practice of imagining the world otherwise. As such, this collection will be an essential read for anyone concerned with this process of re-imagination, and with bringing the mother from 'the shadows of our culture' (Irigaray 1991: 35), into the light.

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