

# Book Reviews

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## **Mothering and Psychoanalysis: Clinical, Sociological and Feminist Perspectives**

Petra Bueskens, ed.  
Bradford, Ontario: Demeter Press, 2014.

REVIEWED BY HELENA VISSING

I received this ambitious book with eager anticipation and admittedly, high expectations. As a psychoanalytically informed reader interested in maternal studies, I am constantly searching for psychoanalytic studies of mothering. This book confirms that motherhood and mothering are topics that cannot be fully examined exclusively within one discipline. The book “brings together the different disciplinary strands of psychoanalysis, sociology and feminism to consider motherhood and mothering,” as editor Petra Bueskens begins her introduction (1). Bueskens is a Lecturer in Social Sciences at the Australian College of Applied Psychology and a psychotherapist in private practice. Having a foot in both an academic world and in clinical psychotherapy serves Bueskens well in her ambitious project as editor of this volume. The classic intersection between psychoanalysis and feminism with the question of the maternal as the triangulating point is intriguing and challenging. In addition to this, the book aims to add the ongoing debates of the psychological vs. the sociological in relation to this intersection. In twenty-three chapters, the contributors present analyses, research data, clinical case studies

and original theory. Among contributors are notable names many readers will be familiar with, for example Nancy Chodorow, Lynne Layton, Alison Stone, and Lisa Baraitser.

The majority of the introduction is a literature review of the overlapping areas of psychoanalysis, feminism, and the question of the maternal. It serves as an excellent overview of the central issues of maternal studies (and could easily be used as core curriculum for any graduate level class). However, although Bueskens encourages readers familiar with this to skip to the chapter summaries, the length and density of the literature made me wish for a separate and perhaps even longer chapter for this overview. Readers might not enjoy choosing to start the reading experience with either skipping or risk getting stuck in a quite intense and concentrated overview of more than a century's worth of philosophy, psychology, and feminist theory related to the topic.

Following the introduction, the book is divided into 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." The first section seeks to shed light on the "feminization of therapy," and the reciprocal impact of mothering on therapy and therapy on mothering. Sections two through four explore psychoanalytic theories of maternal subjectivity through artistic analyses, theoretical discussions and research. The last section returns to the question of the social and the way feminism influences therapy culture in relation to the maternal. Although the chapters in the middle sections can easily be read independently, I found that the last section is best understood after reading the first section. The last section continues the discussion of how motherhood and therapy are related. Furthermore, some chapters are challenging and require more than basic familiarity with feminism and psychoanalysis, for example Baraitser's chapter on Maternal Publics. Fortunately, a great introduction to Baraitser is offered in Julie Rodger's chapter on Baraitser's book *Maternal Encounters*.

The most significant strength of this book is the effective execution of a solid interdisciplinary approach, in several ways: the dialogues between theory and clinical practice, the psychological and the sociological, psychoanalysis and feminism, all in light of the maternal as the impossible question. Although not all of the chapters are technically interdisciplinary, all the mentioned perspectives and paradigms are brought into play both within chapters and in the way the chapters work together in the sections. Bueskens does a remarkable job of weaving the myriad of arguments and ideas together and maintaining the focus, especially in her own three chapter contributions (in Section I, an interview with Ilene Philipson and the chapter "Is Therapy a form of Paid Mothering?" and in Section V, the chapter "Beyond the Para-

digm Way: Good Psychotherapy is Sociological”). Bueskens insists on bringing in sociological perspectives to inform and challenge psychological and psychoanalytic vantage points while maintaining authentic appreciation of clinical work and psychoanalytic theory. It is the tireless unfolding of disciplines with the maternal as the constant focal point that makes this volume a valuable text for scholars, clinicians, theorists and researchers alike. My high expectations were indubitably met.

## **Love, Loss and Longing: Stories of Adoption**

Carol Bowyer Shipley.

Winnipeg, Man: McNally Robinson Booksellers, 2013.

REVIEWED BY PAT BRETON

A birth mother's grief when giving up a child for adoption, identity loss for adoptees disconnected from birth parents in closed adoption registries, and the joy of new parent/ child relationships in adoptive families are just some of the heart-tugging stories that Carol Bowyer Shipley shares in *Love, Loss and Longing: Stories of Adoption*. Her study of domestic and international adoption in Canada is located within an adopted child's rights framework, attachment theories, and critiques of legal reforms in Canada's adoption laws. Here, her research traces the liberalization of Canadian adoption beginning in the 1970s where many adoption processes and adoptees' search for birth families benefited from laws allowing for active searches of birth parents. With the passing of Bill 183 in 2009, the author is critical of how the disclosure rights of those who do not want their identities released trump the human rights of Canadian adoptees and birth parents to know and be known to each other. One of Shipley's strongest convictions is the "belief that the right of adopted persons to know the identity of their birth parents surpasses in importance all other adoption issues" (267).

Shipley's passion for transparency in adoption processes is perhaps best reflected in the first section of the book where she writes about her own personal struggles for "completeness" as an adopted child in Manitoba. She recounts how she lived with "disenfranchised grief" and depression for many years until, as a fifty-two-year-old adult and adoptive mother with her own family, she finally reunited with her birth mother and Ukrainian birth family.