

Guilds and Corporations were in a strong position to close ranks against possible competition from women workers (as well as ensuring a steady supply of wifely unpaid labour at home). Linda Grant's investigation of Coventry echoes this in a twentieth-century context. The strong consciousness of hierarchy among male car workers (even when it was factually no longer true) was not about skill alone, it was also about men and masculinity.

In a collection as varied as this one, inevitably there are differences of purpose as well as approach. Some concentrate exclusively on women, while others take on issues about men and masculinity. The individual pieces cover a great variety of sources of all kinds: documentary, statistical, qualitative. This gives a rich, 'grounded' sense as well as a real feeling of diversity which is absent from some of the more recent free-floating, textually based

studies. Not surprisingly, one of the strongest impressions left on the reader is the sheer variety of situations in which European women were to be found in the last four centuries.

For nonspecialists, the collection taken as a whole performs a valuable service. If nothing else, it brings to light those so often 'hidden from history', from Catherine Hall's merchants' and small manufacturers' wives and daughters to Pat Ayers' pawn-broking, thieving neighbourhood women among the poorest. It is full of stories interesting in their own right as well as important historical insights, if only unromantic negative findings about lack of change or the demonstration of local variation. It is to be hoped that it will soon appear in paperback and become more accessible to the wider readership it deserves.

Leonore Davidoff

Motherhood: Meanings, Practices and Ideologies

Edited by Ann Phoenix, Anne Woollett and Eva Lloyd

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This collection analyses the representation and treatment of mothers and mothering in psychology. The relationship to psychology is important, for the discipline is both the resource for the normative models of mothering that are critically addressed within this book and the domain of its intervention. Motherhood is analysed as central to the maintenance of sexist, ethnocentric and heterosexist models of the family and the sexual division of labour. Definitions of good (and therefore 'bad') mothering function to regulate women through health and welfare practices, which are also recycled as popular common-sense knowledge. This 'social construc-

tionist' perspective will come as no surprise to feminists. But feminism has made little impact on dominant psychological models and methods, and this book is an example of the new wave of critiques of psychological models and practices that are now beginning to emerge from feminists working within the discipline.

The focus of the book is on how psychology has constructed models of mothering and the ways it has distorted or failed to reflect women's experiences of mothering. There is a clear structure and organization, with the theoretical and political analysis that guides the collection set out in the first two chapters and themes and current debates drawn together in the editorial Afterword. The second section addresses the consequences of the 'mandate for motherhood' for all women, firstly in Anne Woollett's account of the perspectives of women engaging in fertility treatments. This is followed by

Harriette Marshall's particularly useful analysis of contemporary child-care advice literature, updating similar work done in the 1970s and mid-1980s, and demonstrating that there is little variation beneath the current rhetoric of 'parenting as equal partnership' from the old theme of motherhood as idyllic and as women's true vocation. The section on 'The "right time" to have children' highlights how the normative model of the ideal mother positions those either younger or older than her as social problems. Ann Phoenix contrasts the pathologizing popular and academic representation of young mothers with empirical work and with the women's own accounts, and Julia Berryman discusses the myths and realities, the social trends and the medicalization, of having children in one's thirties and forties. The final section on 'The question of employment' consists of a helpful and succinct evaluation by Barbara Tizard of the pronouncements of child-care experts on 'the effects' of women engaging in paid work outside the home, historically and currently, and, from an organizational perspective, an analysis by Suzan Lewis of the consequences of the elision of women and mothers for women's conditions and status at work. This last contribution is especially welcome because it underscores the wider context in which ideologies of mothering function to keep women economically subordinate.

Not surprisingly, the book is clearest in its political perspective in the chapters written by the editors. But it is also unfortunate that chapters devoted to indicating specific structural absences within the literature sometimes reproduce those very features that are subject to criticism in other chapters. In particular, several of the chapters reporting studies conducted by the authors take as their sample white, middle-class, married mothers without even explanation or apology –

exactly as criticized early on in the book. And, in giving 'case study' vignettes from her observational research, Jacqueline McGuire's account of variability of mothering styles in relation to the gender and age of the children threatens to lapse into precisely the sort of classification and evaluation of mothering practices that the book sets out to problematize.

While the book constitutes a critical appraisal of the psychological literature, there are uncertainties or ambivalences about how far the critiques extend. These are most evident in the fourth section entitled 'Mothering real children in real circumstances', and this is where one of the underlying tensions within the book becomes manifest. How could three examples (of women mothering a deaf child in a chapter by Susan Gregory, of bringing up sons or daughters discussed by Jacqueline McGuire, of having several children in Penny Munn's contribution) be sufficient to attest to the diversity and variability of women's experiences of mothering? While issues of 'race' and sexuality were clearly evident in the conceptual framework guiding the book, some more detailed corrective account of lesbian mothering and implications of the cultural chauvinism of psychological research would have been useful.

There are also more general political and methodological questions at issue. While highlighting the ideological and regulatory basis of psychological accounts of mothering, its commitment to providing a more adequate and more accurate account based on, and recognizable by, women as mothers is contradictory. A guiding theme of the book is that the research does not reflect women's experiences, but this leaves unaddressed the question of whether it could reflect women's lives, and, further, whether it should. There is no guarantee that ensuring psychology has a 'more accurate' representation of women's experiences of

mothering will necessarily be politically progressive, given the current functions and organization of psychology – in the editorial introduction Ann Phoenix and Anne Woollett describe well the polarized and equally unsatisfactory treatment of black women in psychological literature as either devalued absence or pathologized presence.

It could be argued that formulating critiques which assume that a discipline like psychology can be 'improved' is reformist. But this would be to ignore the strategic impact this persuasive book will have for its audience within psychology. It is however important for all of us struggling to make similar inter-

ventions to recognize that the enterprise involves internal contradictions. In the case of this book, even if it were possible to add in more and more factors or categories to reflect women's experiences, this attention to diversity would eventually collapse into a muddled homogeneity which flattens out, and treats as equal, women's different, and differently privileged, positions. Moreover, notions of accuracy, truth and reality underlying this position leave unquestioned the knowledge-producing practices of empirical psychology.

Erica Burman

Naked Authority: The Body in Western Art 1830–1908

Marcia Pointon

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In 1989 Marcia Pointon asked which direction 'a theorised art history might take in the 1990s?' (Pointon, 1989). The direction she offers in this book of essays is a careful and multi-layered analysis of paintings as material objects in their own terms. It is an analysis she regards as the public responsibility of art historians, one which she believes they have recently failed. Despite her general welcome, it is history labelled 'new' she claims most culpable. That history, whose purpose lies in deconstruction of the artefact, is most vulnerable to the charge of dealing best with the worst paintings¹ – or of not dealing with them at all, but with merely their surrounding discourses. New art history has not accounted for the needs and desires of artists and viewers who make and respond to certain artefacts regarded as 'best'. Pointon herself does not labour issues of qualitative judgement but does proclaim that

many canonical works have 'an abiding power to move people' (p. 3) and despite being institutional 'high' art forms, their effect is personal. So she deals here with 'important' paintings that are also 'very popular'.

In her first essay on the female nude Pointon disposes of the popular binary opposites posited by Kenneth Clark and John Berger. Clark's notion of the natural body outside culture and against which art is to be measured, along with Berger's proposition that the nude be true woman 'translated into art by love' (p. 17) are dismissed as 'deeply flawed' (p. 33). But also she urges acknowledgement that depiction of the female nude does not always represent male power over women. Instead Pointon argues that such rigid categories of viewing position cannot be so established because representation of the body will constantly shift. Her agenda throughout these essays is to examine the unstable boundaries of such movements in order to gain an understanding of whether, and how, such images articulate power, and over whom.

The chapter on psychoanalysis maps more fully the terrain of succeeding essays, as Pointon addresses