

reflect an inherent tension in feminism, which aims both to address the specific embodied and embedded experiences of particular persons/groups, but also to respect and facilitate diversity. Perhaps Gavigan comes closest to offering an inclusive project by affirming that "... one's access or entitlement to social benefits...one's dignity and personal and economic security...should not and need not depend upon being situated in or relegated to a familial relationship" (117). Paradoxically, getting beyond the concept of 'family' in decision-making could help 'families' - in all their diverse forms and modalities—to coexist.

This book tackles important issues of family politics and social practices both theoretically and through data analysis of "changing" practices. It should be of interest to scholars and students with different backgrounds and interests in feminism(s), family studies, policy making and family legislation.

Mothering: Toward a New Psychoanalytic Construction

Silvia Vegetti Finzi Trans. Kathrine Jason
New York: Guilford, 1994

Reviewed by Rosario Arias

Marianne Hirsch, a well-known literary critic, stated once that "any full study of mother-daughter relationships, in whatever field, is by definition both feminist and interdisciplinary" (179). This book offers an insight into the meaning of motherhood and mothering from an interdisciplinary approach, which is successfully achieved by combining history, anthropology, and mythology with psychoanalysis in the different sections of the book. Out of her experience as a psychotherapist and her extensive research, Vegetti Finzi has written this book, in Italian titled *Bambino della notte* (*The Child of the Night*), on the issue of motherhood, described and studied from a woman's perspective.

After a brief introductory section, the author focuses on the repressed women's unconscious, which can be discovered both in the infantile imaginary realm and in ancient rites and classical myths. Thus, the first chapter examines the process of defining one's sexuality in the clinical case of Anna, a girl of nine who has problems in allying herself with being female. Vegetti Finzi pays attention to Anna's unconscious, reflected in her dreams, paintings, and drawings, and, using Freudian theory, interprets Anna's ambiguous gender and sexual identification (which should have been resolved in the oedipal stage). But, in so doing, the author overlooks the preoedipal period, privileged in

recent accounts of psychoanalytic feminism, and particularly important in this case since the girl "has become fixated on her mother—a condition that is still visible in their gestures" (15).

The second chapter represents a move beyond the Freudian theory of the first chapter. Also drawing on another clinical case story (that of Paola), Vegetti Finzi explores the role played by culture in inhibiting the potential creativity of maternity, later internalized by the woman's unconscious. As a result of this, woman's creative power has been undermined and diminished in assigning her "a mutilated and passive representation of self in the objectified and neutralized terms of natural phenomena" (90). The author contends that ancient rites and classical myths (such as that of Demeter and Persephone, for example) provide a good many images of woman's creative power, what the author also calls "the child of the night", and illustrate how this has been silenced and repressed by male dominance for centuries.

The two last chapters focus on the effects such a male appropriation of procreativity has produced in women and the necessity of a new discourse about maternity. Although chapter three is less successful than the rest, it paves the way for the last chapter. In it, the author argues that images and metaphors of motherhood enhance the meaning of the maternal process outside biology. Accordingly, she names six powerful images of female creativity, as the basis of a possible ethical paradigm; among them are the image of the mother as earth, creativity as maternity, and vice versa. What I miss here is a specific reference to the work of Carol Gilligan or that of the feminist philosopher Sara Ruddick, especially in the section devoted to the care of children as morality (another image), to strengthen the author's argument. It seems clear that Vegetti Finzi's final contention of the possibilities of a more conscious ecological sensibility and a rejection of exploitation and domination somewhat coincides with Ruddick's "feminist maternal politics of peace" (244).

In short, *Mothering: Toward a New Psychoanalytic Construction* provides a fascinating history of women's development, inextricably linked to the creative power of motherhood, as well as stresses the need for a maternal discourse. At times exciting and moving, it is extremely useful to not only a specific audience interested in psychoanalysis and feminism, but also general readers who want to know more about mothering as a gendered activity and ideology.

References

- Hirsch, Marianne. "Mothers and Daughters". *Ties That Bind: Essays on Mothering and Patriarchy*. Ed. Jean F. O'Barr, Deborah Pope, and Mary Wyer. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1990. 177-99.
- Ruddick, Sara. *Maternal Thinking: Towards a Politics of Peace*. London: The Women's, 1990.