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controversial suggestion in its thesis, and I suspect the paper itself would be very useful in generating productive conversations in the classroom.

In the final section of the book, "Part III: Texts: Novels, Literary Reviews, Letters," Moore offers a collection of papers discussing the literary contributions of Wollstonecraft, providing analyses of her novels with regard to sentimentalism, discussions of Godwin's influence on her work, and suggestions for political readings of Wollstonecraft's novels. Discussion of Wollstonecraft's letters centers on the interplay of the public and the private in her philosophy, and discusses the influence and importance of her use of autobiography and narrative. The final paper of the section, and thus of the collection, is Vivien Jones's fascinating account of Wollstonecraft's death. Jones identifies a feminist narrative reflected in the choices Wollstonecraft made for the delivery of her second child, and recounts the sequence of events that led to Wollstonecraft's death from puerperal fever ten days later. The essay is compelling and serves as a well-chosen end-point for Moore's collection.

Overall, this volume serves as an impressive resource for scholars and students of Wollstonecraft, as well as those interested in Enlightenment history and theory. Moore's selection of papers represents a wide range of disciplines and interests in the work of Wollstonecraft and, for this reason, helps to illustrate the importance of her life and work. The collection is effective in demonstrating, as well, that Wollstonecraft's influence extends beyond her notability as a woman writer, and shows the importance of her political and social theory, generally. The inclusion of additional comparisons between Wollstonecraft's work and other women theorists of her historical period would have added to this collection; the focus on male philosophers' influence on Wollstonecraft's work is nicely elaborated, but the inclusion of additional essays connecting her work to that of other women would have served to improve the recognition and inclusion of women philosophers into the canon of intellectual history.

Also of note, though, is Moore's thoughtful attention to structure, reflected in her prominent choice of essays highlighting the context of Wollstonecraft's compositions. One result of this volume's focus is that the influence of context and history on Wollstonecraft's work—a woman's work—is exposed. As Moore makes clear, with each changing narrative that accompanies Wollstonecraft's work, the importance, acceptability, and entire meaning of her reflections changes. This highlights how Wollstonecraft's unique situation as a woman theorist becomes extraordinarily influential in the reception of her work and reminds us, once again, that historically, a woman's intellectual work, like her identity, is constructed as dependent rather than objective, and embodied in her time rather than timeless. Viewing Wollstonecraft and her work in this way opens new avenues for research in the history of philosophy and reminds us how important our evaluation of context must be for *all* intellectual figures—not *only* those who were women.

Confronting Postmaternal Thinking: Feminism, Memory, and Care

Julie Stephens (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011). 208 pages. Paper: \$27.50; Cloth: \$89.50. ISBN 978-0-231-14921-1.

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In *Confronting Postmaternal Thinking: Feminism, Memory, and Care*, Julie Stephens explores the causes and consequences of (and forms of resistance to) a decline in maternalist thinking in both public and private life. The intellectual touchstone for Stephens' book is Sara Ruddick's *Maternal Thinking: Toward a Politics of Peace*. In a February 2013 interview with *Feminists for Choice*, Stephens reveals that she had originally intended to examine how the concept of maternal thinking had been developed in the decades following the publication of Ruddick's groundbreaking work. However, her research findings suggested an "absence of maternal thinking in the public domain" and, moreover, "the active presence of something else, a widespread cultural unease about the values associated with the maternal (nurture, care, and protection) and also with dependency in any form."¹ This widespread cultural anxiety about care is a central premise of her book; it opens by recounting an interview she overhears on the radio while driving:

I was struck by an odd discussion of a book [*The Etiquette of Illness*] that promised to teach the skill and etiquette of how to be "kind and compassionate in a moment of illness." The author, Susan Halpern, offered advice about how to be at ease with a loved one who is gravely ill and identified the emotional challenges posed by visiting a seriously sick friend. The expertise required to manage such a situation was presented as something we needed to relearn. Apparently we once knew how to respond with care and attentiveness to illness, but now we are in danger of making serious mistakes. (1)

At the heart of Stephens' work is an interesting argument about cultural forgetting and remembering and its consequences for feminist maternalism in the neoliberal global era. In particular, Stephens is concerned with three specific instances of cultural amnesia: (1) our cultural tendency to forget human vulnerability and interdependency and, hence, to forget the need for care; (2) our failure to remember the important role that ideals and practices of care have had in feminist history; and (3) a tendency to forget the gendered nature of care, i.e., that care work has been and still is typically relegated to women. Stephens argues persuasively that all of these are cases of "active forgetting" shaped by neoliberal ideologies, policies, and practices. Unlike the kind of forgetting that is a mere inability to remember the past, forgetting the need for and ideals of care are not random losses of memory. Instead, they are best understood, she contends, as memory losses essential to the formation of neoliberal subjectivities "built on ideas of self-sufficiency, autonomy, rationality and independence" (10). "Shared silences" about nurture, care, and dependency

are culturally produced in order to make room for changed relations of power that cannot admit human vulnerability and women's historical role as caretakers.

Chapter one focuses on what Stephens terms the "unmothering" of society, exploring the ways in which the celebration of market individualism has resulted in a "world turned upside down" (21). Stephens reminds us that shame has not always been associated with dependency; in the preindustrial era, dependency was viewed as "normal" while independence was viewed with suspicion (23). With the emergence of capitalism, dependency becomes pathologized, but with an important exception: the mother-child relation continued to be considered "a 'natural' dependent relationship and immune from stigmatization" (25). Under neoliberalism, however, such immunity disappears (consider the now familiar trope of the welfare mother as a lazy, good-for-nothing who threatens the social order). According to Stephens, these shifting meanings of dependency highlight "a complex process of cultural forgetting [including] a forgetting of the fact that those who 'stand on their own two feet' are often being propped up by a network of invisible (female) labor" (24). I am sympathetic to her claim that there are large ideological stakes here. That neoliberal ideologies and practices depend on "keeping the 'shadow world' of dependency out of sight" was vividly illustrated by the vilification of President Obama in 2012 for his suggestion that those who had achieved economic success "did not get there on their own," but were helped by mothers, teachers, and others. The flap over Obama's remarks reveals a deep and widespread cultural investment in denying the seemingly obvious fact that all of us are dependent on caregivers for much of our childhood, may become physically dependent again as we age or become ill, and stand in relations of social and economic interdependency during much of our adult life. This ideological investment has serious consequences for both those who require care and those who provide such care.

Chapter two turns our attention to the active forgetting of significant strands of feminist history. Cautioning us not to hold feminism "responsible for women trading maternity for work," Stephens also warns against dismissing such criticisms of feminism as a mere "backlash" against feminist ideals. Public denunciations of feminism, she suggests, reveal "a deeply shared cultural anxiety about the maternal" (43). Stephens illustrates how these anxieties are implicated in both our collective cultural memories of feminism and intergenerational conflicts about feminism by examining several published feminist accounts of mother-daughter relationships. In these accounts, prefeminist mothers are frequently portrayed as emotionally toxic, leading second-wave feminists to imagine themselves as "motherless daughters" forced to give birth to themselves (53-54). Although we might think that the third-wave daughters of second-wave feminists would have different remembrances of their mothers, they too often portray their mothers as less than nurturing. (Rebecca Walker's portrayal of her mother in the memoir *Baby Love* is but one obvious example.) What should we make of this? Stephens suggests that our failures to remember ourselves as the recipients of maternal care help to construct the neoliberal self:

Actively forgetting the nurturing mother . . . smooths the transition for a new self—defined by its separateness—to come into being. This unfettered self reinforces the current dominant meanings of care and dependency. Care-related activities are represented as a burden, and dependency is somehow shameful. (60)

The tendency of feminists to forget the nurturing mother, Stephens argues, is shaped by collective cultural memories of feminism that are, at best, selective. As a corrective to revisionist feminist histories, in chapter three Stephens explores the oral histories of mid-twentieth-century Australian feminists, presenting a "memory mosaic" that resists cultural scripts characterizing second-wave feminists as myopic, anti-child, careerists who aided and abetted the ascendancy of neoliberalism at the expense of supporting an ethics and politics of care (76). Oral histories reveal a "buried maternalism" invoked in feminist campaigns around domestic violence shelters, rape crisis centers, and child care (87-88), recounting the cooking of meals for women and children in refuges and other acts of care as a critical component of feminist politics. Some of these recorded interviews also express feminist ambivalence about careers and forward a portrait of motherhood as enhancing, rather than detracting from, one's professional life and sense of self. Stephens notes the significance of affective resonance, as well as content, of the oral histories she examines.

These oral histories are . . . stories of passionate attachments, . . . loss . . . rivalries, of anxieties, angers, and disappointments. If these affective dimensions of the women's movement are culturally forgotten and absent from public discourse, then there is little wonder that popular representations of a career-obsessed feminism take hold. (87)

This strikes me as a fundamentally important point that deserves greater development in a book focused on cultural processes of forgetting and remembering. As memory theorists have long argued, memory formation, retention, and retrieval is enhanced by emotion. At the same time, our memories of past emotions are malleable and vary with our current beliefs and identities.² It would be interesting to further explore the affective dimensions of care under neoliberal regimes with attention to the role affect plays in both developing and reshaping our memories of care.

Chapter four focuses on feminist resistance to postmaternal thinking. Stephens begins by reminding us of the limitations of earlier forms of maternalism, which often invoked traditional gender roles and forwarded uniform standards of motherhood privileging white, middle-class women. Against this backdrop, Stephens examines the maternal thinking involved in three contemporary reconfigurations of maternalism: mothers' online communities and advocacy networks, maternalist peace activism in the United States, and a 2008 collection of mothers' writings. Online mothering communities, she notes, "challeng[e] the distinction between private and public motherhood" (100), but may also romanticize motherhood and uphold neoliberal ideas of self-sufficiency—a fact that no doubt reflects, in part, the middle-class status of most participants. Stephens' harshest criticism is aimed at selected essays in *The Maternal is Political*. In

particular, a contribution wherein a D.C. mother worries about the illegal status of her Bolivian maid and nanny is described (accurately, I would contend) as an “uncomfortable mix” of “individualism, maternalism, narcissism and romanticism” (121). Far from unusual, Stephens contends, this example of maternal thinking reveals a more widespread “discomfort produced by the introduction of market relations into the home” and highlights the tensions between maternalist and postmaternalist politics as the line between “work” and “care” becomes blurred and the work of caring gets “outsourced” to transnational subjects who are forced to leave their own children behind in order to work for economically privileged families in the United States (121-22). Stephens is most hopeful about the neomaternalist politics of peace activists. “[C]ampaigns and movements, like CODEPINK or the activism of Cindy Sheehan,” she states, “signal the possibility of unlinking maternalism from nationalism and developing quite different political configurations around peace, nurture, and care” (118).

In the book’s brief concluding chapter, Stephens reflects on the shortcomings of what she terms a “degendered feminism” and the potential of ecofeminism to “regender” and “actively remember” the maternalist impulses of an earlier era while intersecting with contemporary peace activism and online mothers’ movements. I agree with her claim that a gender-blind approach to care risks forgetting that caregiving is an embodied activity that has been and continues to be relegated primarily to women. At the same time, I am left uneasy by some of Stephens’ (too) quick conclusions. It is not clear to me that feminism needs to be regendered (although perhaps I am simply unfamiliar with strands of Australian feminism that she may have in mind here). Moreover, given the wide variety of feminist and queer theoretical analyses of and practices around embodiment, it is unclear to me why ecofeminism is suddenly introduced at the book’s conclusion as *the* antidote to gender-blind approaches to care.

Stephens seems drawn to ecofeminism, in part, because of its care ethic and, in part, because of its attention to embodiment. To be sure, women who choose domesticity over corporate career tracks—staying home to raise children, produce their own food, and reduce their carbon footprint—represent a manifestation of care that resists “market driven, commercial processes and notions of identity” (138). At the same time, as Stephens notes, these practices are linked to affluence, requiring access to land (143) and, I would add, the luxury of not having to engage in wage work as a means of survival. (I have similar concerns about the practices of intensive mothering that Stephens defends as exemplary of a commitment to care in chapter four. Only certain women can afford to be stay-at-home mothers and provide children with a vast array of enrichment activities.) This raises the following question: Can we view such practices as a paradigmatic form of resistance to postmaternalism *without* reiterating the classism of earlier forms of maternalism? Perhaps, but our focus would need to be on examples of more co-operative living.

Similarly, we might ask whether (or how) to use ecofeminism to address the embodied (gendered) nature of care. Stephens voices concern about our failures to remember the marked materiality of motherhood for women who have recently

given birth, bemoaning the ways in which breastpumps have disconnected care from its fleshy elements. (“One wonders,” she says, whether “we will look back at the vision of all of this feverish pumping with . . . abhorrence” (135).) Here Stephens comes dangerously close to claiming that some maternal practices (e.g., breastfeeding) are better than others (e.g., bottle-feeding) by virtue of the fact that they are more “natural”—again risking a reinvocation of traditional gender roles and uniform standards of motherhood. This is unfortunate, as it is unnecessary to her argument against postmaternalism. We need not imply that all women should breastfeed in order to critique, as Stephens justifiably wishes to do, the neoliberal commodification of care and the corporate supply of lactation rooms in place of more generous maternity leave policies.

An identification of women with nature also risks romanticizing motherhood as a “natural” and thus essential identity. Stephens is aware of this risk—she addresses essentialism both in her introduction and her conclusion, pre-empting my objection by suggesting that “perjorative accusations of essentialism have ‘closed questions of women and nature and feminism and pacificism’” (142) and, worse yet, that feminist queasiness about essentialism may work to “silence debate about care and justice in the social and political sphere” (13). But I don’t think this is true. Throughout her work, Stephens follows Ruddick in emphasizing mothering as a *practice*, rather than an *identity*. This is a good way to avoid gender essentialism (providing we don’t uphold some practices as “natural” and suggest others are deviant). I would contend, however, that Stephens’s emphasis on mothering as a practice seems a better fit with a postmodernist feminist or queer understandings of gender as a *performance* than it does with an ecofeminist focus on nature. Using such a postmodernist or queer approach, we might view mothering as a specific type of gendered performance of care, thereby avoiding both essentialism and gender-blindness in our accounts of caregiving. Maternalist politics, in turn, could be viewed as a gendered performance of the politics of care. Interestingly, this seems an apt rendering of, for example, the peace activism of CODEPINK that Stephens discusses sympathetically in the previous chapter:

Exaggerated gendered symbols of motherhood or female sexuality (pink slips and underwear) are employed in parodic, playful ways when marching in the streets or confronting opponents. These expressive elements create what the authors call “maternalism with a wink” and “traditional femininity with a wink.” (116)

Maternalism “with a wink” is preferable, I think, to a maternalism that invokes traditional gender roles and uniform standards of motherhood. That said, despite my disagreements with Stephens’ conclusions, I find her analysis of the causes and consequences of postmaternalism both provocative and timely.

NOTES

1. “Julie Stephens Talks Postmaternal Thinking,” *Feminists for Choice* (February 6, 2013), <http://feministsforchoice.com/julie-stephens.htm>.
2. See, e.g., Linda Jane Levine, Heather C. Lench, and Martin Safer, “Functions of Remembering and Misremembering Emotion,”