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Casarino, Cesare and Andrea Righi. *Another Mother: Diotima and the Symbolic Order of Italian Feminism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018. Pp. 335. ISBN 1517904943. \$28 (paperback), \$20.32 (Kindle).

The collection of essays *Another Mother: Diotima and the Symbolic Order of Italian Feminism* curated by Cesare Casarino and Andrea Righi makes an important contribution to current scholarship on Italian feminism. Focused on the Veronese women's collective, Diotima, *Another Mother* comprises ten essays that present, discuss, and critique the major theoretical points developed by the group between 1981 and 2007. The authors of the essays are either members of Diotima (L. Muraro, C. Zamboni, D. Sartori, I. Dominijanni) or feminist scholars (A. E. Berger). The aim of the book is to introduce Anglophone readers to the original criticism advanced by Diotima, and consequently by Italian feminism, and to reconsider it as an autonomous, specific contribution rather than a branch of French feminism or an appendix to continental thought. For the editors, Diotima's relevance in current discourses in gender and sexuality studies and critical race studies today stems from its deep understanding of the constitutive elements of contemporary biopolitics (before its theorization by Foucault).

Most of the essays come across as reverberations and expansions of Muraro's seminal work, *The Symbolic Order of the Mother* (1992), where the mother is theorized as a relational concept that works as a nexus between language and being, and between epistemology and ontology. The introduction offers an encompassing endorsement of Muraro's philosophical discourse, rather than a statement of methodology or a contextualization of Diotima within Italy's socio-cultural history and within the history of feminism in Italy. Diotima's theoretical reflections are decontextualized from the separatist sphere in which they existed for decades, and brought into conversation with major contemporary global events (the 2016 shooting in Orlando, the killing of Yazidi women). For the editors, Diotima's archetypal mother is in fact what can save us from the rise of "misogyny and phobia for anything associated with the feminine" to which these events testify (p. 7).

The book, divided in three parts, is organized as a crescendo from key concepts, to problematization, to critique. The structure also suggests, but does not strictly follow, a chronological order. The contributions originally published by Diotima's members in the 1980s or 1990s are included in parts I and II, but are then reassessed in the last essay of each part, most of which were written in the early 2000s. Part III reproduces two chapters from a 2007 Diotima book, *The Shadow of the Mother*, and Part IV offers essays written specifically for this volume, published in 2018, by scholars not involved in the feminist collective.

Part I, *Metaphor, Metonymy, and the Politics of Sexual Difference* follows the rich Introduction with three essays. The first, "The Contact Word" by Dominijanni (1998), situates Muraro's work in relation to Marxism, psychoanalytical and poststructuralist thought, illuminating the paradoxes of the theory of sexual difference and of the necessity of a symbolic order. Then follows an extract of Muraro's "To Knit or to Crochet" (1980), a theorization of "the enmity between metaphor and metonymy" (p. 67), where Jakobson, Freud, Lacan, Kant and others are evoked in the examination of "a regime of *hypermetaphoricity*" (p. 92) in which, according to Muraro, the language of traditional politics is entrenched. Opposed to this, the maternal authority stands as key element for subversion within the existing socio-symbolic order. Here, the reader is exposed to the first of many examples of Muraro's peculiar and challenging style. In the following essay, "On the Relations Between Words and Things as Frequentation" (2014), written more than thirty years after "To Knit or to Crochet," Muraro explores the maternal in relation to infancy and turns to one of the most classically feminist texts of all times, V. Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929), to discuss sexual difference and its place

between language and reality. Part II, *On the Maternal Symbolic and Its Language*, begins with an essay by Chiara Zamboni, written in 1998. Here the author dives into the theorization of the maternal language versus the logocentric approach to language as a system of rules. The following essay, once again by Muraro, engages with the work of contemporary thinkers such as Žižek, Green, and Butler and discusses the question of freedom within the authoritarian pushes of the symbolic mother.

Part III, *The Mother and the Negative*, contains two essays, “With the Maternal Spirit” (Diana Sartori) and “The Undecidable Imprint” (Ida Dominijanni). Whereas the first essay is still an expansion of Muraro’s theorization of the maternal, the second inaugurates a series of productive critiques of the concept. These contributions appear not only as a necessary counterpart to the previous essays, but also as an essential step toward the contextualization of Diotima’s feminism within the contemporary debate. In her essay, Dominijanni individuates three major weaknesses in Muraro’s work: the absence of the father, the erasure of female sexuality, and the danger of repurposing a model of relation based on authority and hierarchies.

Contained in Part IV, titled *Thinking with Diotima*, Anne Emmanuelle Berger’s essay, “And Yet She Speaks!,” is perhaps the most compelling piece of the entire volume, especially for scholars who are already familiar with Diotima and Italian feminism. Here, Berger effectively considers the absence of a conversation on gender, sexuality, and desire in these Italian feminists’ thinking, and the problematic normativity of the categories of “mother=woman” and “man,” which appear to be ontologically given and molded by experience at the same time. She also argues that what is missing in these theorizations is intersectionality, and with it an awareness of the heterogeneity of the category of woman, a critique that Diotima has received extensively throughout the years of its activity, and that this volume does not address in any other instance. Another noteworthy point of Berger’s essay, the relationship between Italian feminism and Esposito’s Italian Thought, is picked up in the following contribution by Righi, “Origin and Dismasure.” Finally, the last essay of the collection, “Mother Degree Zero; or Of Beginnings” by Casarino is an effective disquisition on the inaptitude for philosophy shown in Muraro’s work as an evidence of its distance from patriarchal modes of thinking.

The volume gives a complete and thorough overview of Diotima’s philosophical reflections across three decades and offers some possible ties to contemporary critical discourses. I believe, however, that it would have been even more convincing if it hadn’t taken the aim of reevaluating this specific feminist thought within contemporary discourses on gender, sexuality and, most importantly, race. The Anglophone scholar of gender and sexuality studies might in fact find this book not as essential as the curator wishes precisely because of the absence of race and class questions within Diotima’s feminism. In spite of the curator’s purpose of reassessing this thinking as a “vital resource for theorizing biopolitics [...] and for envisioning and practicing anti-racist political projects,” as affirmed in the back cover’s theoretical blurb, the non-intersectional, separatist, and anti-institutional authoritarian character of Diotima’s feminism forcefully arises from most pages with little or no critique of it. In lieu of such an ambitious objective, the book might have enjoyed more success if it had given more extensive consideration of other strains of Italian feminism that problematize what Diotima leaves aside. Moreover, what is missing in the volume is an honest and clear historical contextualization of Diotima within Italy’s ‘80s and ‘90s reactionary politics that openly situates the collective as the final act in an incredibly varied and politically effective mass feminist movement. The risk is that such overlooking might fabricate the fantasy that Diotima is synonymous with Italian feminism.

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