

Jacobus, Mary. *The Poetics of Psychoanalysis in the Wake of Klein.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005 (pp 316). ISBN 019924636X.

In terms of context, *The Poetics of Psychoanalysis* is difficult to place. The impetus behind the writing is “a wish to explore the literary aspects of the twentieth-century psychoanalytic tradition . . . that has come to be known as British Object Relations” (v). But the implications of this wish are more complicated than the reader first imagines. The wish to explore a twentieth-century psychoanalytic “tradition” is on its surface a historicist impulse. A “tradition” is a body of thought *in* time; its development is the stuff of history. The writer, however, is quick to correct our assumptions: “this . . . book . . . does [not] set out to be a history of Kleinian or post-Kleinian thought” (v). The book “sets out,” instead, to examine the “literary elements and aesthetic concerns” of British psychoanalytic theory (v). And yet, the reader who expects a literary critical breakdown of Marion Milner or Ella Sharpe will be bemused - or pleasantly surprised. What follows is more interesting than either an exclusively historical or critical project could possibly have been.

The wish informing this book may be said, with justice, to emerge from a “literary” interest in psychoanalytic theory; but the word must be understood in its broadest sense. The interest of Joan Riviere, for example, extends beyond the analogy she draws between influence and theft - beyond the literary figure of “stolen goods” - to her literary allusions (Rogers, Apollinaire, Ibsen), and to the sheer readability of her correspondence with Ernest Jones. The chapter absorbs this story of frustrated love into its own structure. The effect of the letters - their fascination - is its very own “stolen” property. There is thus a sense in which Riviere is not only the subject of these pages, but their author as well. Analysis, here, becomes a kind of appropriation (a theft). And the wish to explore psychoanalytic writing becomes a wish to interiorize its most interesting elements. It is, therefore, tempting to read the title - “Stolen Goods: *Joan Riviere*” - with an eye both to the chapter’s explicit argument, and to the material it lifts from Riviere’s correspondence: is this a mischievous confession?

In absorbing bits of Riviere, Jacobus not only extends the meaning of her “wish to explore the literary aspects of [a] psychoanalytic tradition” (v); she also contributes to what becomes a theory of reading. The wish to reproduce a text is part of what it means to read, or to read with interest. In moving from analyst to analyst, Jacobus examines the extent to which writers are affected by their reading and, implicitly, the extent to which she her-

self is affected. After all, it is her own readerly preference that drives the book's transition from Sharpe, to Riviere, to Klein and others. A meticulous engagement with theory "in the wake of Klein" would devote a subsection at least to Frances Tustin or Betty Joseph; but the writer/reader's interest takes us elsewhere. The result is a book about reading - or a book about the implications of reading closely, reading well. The mark of this emphasis may be traced through the evolution of the term itself. In chapter six, reading is the metaphor for an obscure mutuality. The shared "poetics" of Wordsworth and Winnicott (crudely, an aesthetic of silence) is expressed in the phrase they "read each other's books" (169). To read, in this sense, is not to decode the marks of a text; the literal meaning has evolved into something else. To read, here, is to write in a way that anticipates the work of another writer. Or, to write in a way that probes one's idea of Winnicott, that *reads* Winnicott on one's behalf.

The statement that Wordsworth is reading Winnicott not only alerts us to the evolution of the term but also to the existence of another reader. If Wordsworth is reading Winnicott in the sense imagined here, it takes a reader to notice this reading; the poet's commentary on the analyst can only be experienced as such by a reader familiar with both. His "reading" is by its nature the discovery of a reader; it exists in being read. In drawing our attention, here, to an act of reading the writer shifts the focus of her study from the effects of reading on the reader, to the effects of reading on a text. *The Prelude* becomes a "reading" of Winnicott *when* read in a certain way; the act of reading transforms the content of the poem. In subsequent chapters the idea of reading as a transformative act is explored in depth, and the writer's own "transformations" - the evidence of her reading - are increasingly apparent. At the conclusion of "Bion's Aesthetics" she writes that in order to read we must "not-see what we are seeing, or see it only in the mind's eye, in order to understand it" (253). The act of reading is essentially an imaginative one. To read is to re-imagine rather than simply to "see." In order to understand what we read we transform it. We create a different text, and in doing so (paradoxically) discover the original for ourselves.

The implications of these ideas for psychoanalysis are far-reaching. If the act of analytic reading is bound to transform its subject, there can be no such thing as an accurate diagnosis. There will always be a difference between mental illness itself, and illness as it is imagined. The implications for literary criticism, however, are for more positive. The idea presented of the critic as a reader who "transforms" (rather than decodes) what she reads is refreshing. There is an implicit acknowledgment throughout this book that

what we encounter is *no more* than a reading; there is no aspiration beyond a state of not knowing or “not-seeing.” But we may also feel assured that the readings offered here are among the very best - the most astute, intelligent, complicated. The sense of “not being able to see,” we read, “plants eyes in the mind” (253). The *Poetics of Psychoanalysis* is a tribute to its author’s second eyes.

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