"Remembering Mothers: Representations of Maternity in Early Modern English Literature,"
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Abstract

This psychoanalytic study focuses on representations of the maternal in early modern English literature, beginning with Errour and Glauce in Spenser's 1596 *The Faerie Queene* (Books One and Three) before shifting to analyses of the maternal on stage, from Gertrude and Ophelia in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, to the Duchess, Cariola, and the Old Woman midwife in John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*, and closing with Hermione in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*. The close readings of the literature are contextualized by a study of early modern beliefs surrounding female flesh, pregnancy, foetal development, and childbirth as presented in the medical treatises of the period. While the medical treatises contextualize the literary presentations of maternity, they also provide an introduction to Melanie Klein's phantastic mother and the development of the paranoid-schizoid position as a mode of human experience. This theoretical frame is further developed in a discussion of object relational theory's growth through the works of Hanna Segal, D.W. Winnicott, Thomas Ogden, Jessica Benjamin, and, to a certain degree, Julia Kristeva.

As traditional scholarship tends to emphasize the Oedipal over the preOedipal, much of it enacts the same kind of forgetting as the literature itself, erasing the mother's relevance to contemplations of the body, subjectivity and even dramatic structure. Further, maternal figures are frequently mistaken for the phantasies projected upon them, instead of contemplated as characters in their own right. Arguing that the medical treatises and literature alike participate in the paranoid-schizoid position provides one means to articulating the continued importance of the maternal - beyond a mother's particular presence on stage. This dissertation explores the
male imaginary as it revolves around a maternal body forced to enact its phantasies. It does so in an unyielding effort to dismantle the phantasy and to discover the mother in her difference, or, at the very least, to remember the possibility of that difference so as to contemplate her figure in relation to but not the same as the phantasies she is forced to enact.