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Illusions of a future: psychoanalysis and the biopolitics of desire, Kate Schechter, (2014), Durham and London, Duke University Press, (277 pp.), ISBN 978-0-8223-5721-6

Illusions of a Future: Psychoanalysis and the Biopolitics of Desire is an ethnography of psychoanalysis as a domain of theoretical, institutional and clinical practice in Chicago from the early 20th century to the present. In a keenly observed and elegantly written account, Schechter traces the history of this psychoanalytic training milieu through the emergence of key figures, the influence they exerted through psychoanalytic training on subsequent generations of practitioners, and the progressive institutionalisation of the discipline against the backdrop of momentous shifts in the political economy of healthcare provision in the United States.

A key paradox structures Schechter's analysis: how to make sense of the existence of psychoanalysts without patients? In other words, how can the robust sense of professional identity held by Chicago psychoanalysts be reconciled with their experience of a structural dearth of patients and sense of deep crisis in their field? Schechter brilliantly contextualises the intertwined discourses of scarcity and crisis, carefully accounting for their production, whilst also tracing how they function epistemologically to craft and orient the workings of this psychoanalytic epistemic community.

Unlike in France, Argentina and elsewhere, in the United States, psychoanalysis expanded as part of, and not independently from, medicine. In the second half of the 20th century, Schechter shows how psychoanalysis was progressively folded into the health insurance industry and government funded schemes such as Medicaid and Medicare. The resulting expansion of the sector, however, exacerbated some contradictions tied to the standards of training set by US psychoanalysts' professional organization, the American Psychoanalytic Association (APsaA). The increasing reliance on insurance and government funding elicited new demands for accountability and auditing. More fundamentally, it engendered a reframing of the 'standards' of psychoanalytic training. Debates over the appropriate frequency of sessions generated schisms between those intent on protecting Freud's legacy and the tradition of sessions four to five times a week, and those

conceding to less intensive arrangements. The debate over session frequency connects to a central dispute between those defining psychoanalytic theory and practice in terms of the analysis of the transference, and thus defending the analyst's detachment, and a new constituency of practitioners in psychotherapy – a more applied field less stringently committed to Freudian precepts and grounded in an understanding of the analyst/patient relation as one based on empathy, dialogue and mutuality. Schechter subtly points to the gendered politics inherent in this boundary work and the progressive 'de-medicalization and feminization' of the profession brought on by new training routes open to those not medically qualified and drawn from other professions, notably social work (Schechter 2014:25).

Schechter carefully charts the schisms in the history of Chicago psychoanalysis, whilst also considering the theoretical implications of ensuing bifurcations and impasses. In the light of Jacques Derrida's understanding of psychoanalysis not as unified domain, but rather as a set of 'resistances' – including the resistances to analysis – Schechter shows how failure is constitutive of, and not external to, the field itself (Derrida, *Resistances of Psychoanalysis*, 1998, Stanford University Press). Further, the author skilfully connects the tensions between visions of a pure intensive psychoanalysis of the transference and a relational empathetic psychotherapy to a context in which practitioners engage in, regardless of theoretical leanings and genealogies of training, ever more precarious and marketised forms of affective labour. The ethnographer shows how individual practitioners are caught between the desire for autonomy and the pragmatics of flexibility, as they increasingly struggle with, and adapt to, neoliberal rationales where risk has to be reframed as an opportunity (Schechter 2014:178), crisis turns into cruel optimism (Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, 2011, Duke University Press), and the demands of auditing regimes into illusions of a future.

Illusions of a future is a sophisticated and nuanced ethnography of the Chicago psychoanalytic milieu that charts its complex and fraught history leading to the rise of neoliberal psychoanalysis. The book is an important addition to the anthropology of audit cultures and epistemic communities. It will be read alongside other anthropological analyses of the histories of

psychiatry and psychoanalysis (e.g. Fassin and Rechtman, *The Empire of Trauma*, 2009, Princeton University Press). Deflecting Foucault's somewhat monolithic rendition of psychoanalysis and following instead Derrida's emphasis on the resistances constitutive of the field, the book places psychoanalysis firmly within biopolitics. Beyond anthropology, this intervention will be of interest to a broad interdisciplinary constituency and open up new avenues for analysis and critique of the contemporary.

Dr Silvia Posocco, Department of Psychosocial Studies, Birkbeck, University of London

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