

**Hogan, Susan. *Revisiting Feminist Approaches to Art Therapy*. New York:  
Berghahn, 2012.**

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1 Susan Hogan's second edition of *Revisiting Feminist Approaches to Art Therapy* discusses alternative approaches to therapy in a fresh and nuanced way. Hogan poses the question that if feminism is the equality of all genders, then why are therapies created by men the only techniques used? Therefore, art therapy becomes a way to help evolve psychiatry within its aim to care for the whole person. Likewise, Susan Hogan in "Forward to the Second Edition" sees art therapy as an activist action to avoid the hegemonic structure associated with traditional therapies, "in order to avoid oppressing women with misogynistic discourses that are embedded in theories and practice" (xx).

2 The revisions from the earlier 1997 edition only make the text stronger. Not merely an instruction manual, *Revisiting Feminist Approaches to Art Therapy* is a chain of stories held together within the basis of Hogan's introduction titled, "Visions of Difference". She seeks to chronicle the effects of poststructuralist, psychoanalytical and cultural theories. Finally, Hogan's aim is to defy the repressive structures even within the community of art therapist themselves, who rely too heavily on theory and cripple the therapy. The goal is to evoke a constantly evolving treatment that is contemplative and adaptive. The first chapter lays the historical groundwork of the implementation of feminist cultural theory. Her examples include discussion of representations of women who see of themselves as lesser: for example, pro-life advertisement placed in proximity to a closed up shocked woman's face indicating that fetuses are people and women merely the carrier (21). Finally, Hogan includes a call for awareness of social justice and the dynamics of power and oppression related to race, class and gender in British art therapy.

3 The traditional conceptions of men and women within gender systems are now rooted in popular culture representation of masculinity and femininity. Hogan's aim is to challenge these binary oppositional categorizations with an individualistic and neo-liberal approach to art therapy. The collected work she chooses and edits supports her vision statement. The voices throughout the texts are incredibly diverse. Hogan's text presents practitioners, novices, graduate students and professors to collaborate on best practices of art therapy.

3 Helene Burt's essay, "Women, Art Therapy and Feminist Theories of Development" reflects Hogan's aims of client awareness as the main objective of successful art therapy. Burt provides the example of Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) as an example of prejudice, "We must ask then to what degree is BPD a condition of being feminine as define by psychiatry and psychology" (79). If hegemonic women should be submissive, dependent and expressive, then BPD women are exceptions to that gendered categorization. BPD women often receive diagnoses based on their womanhood rather than symptoms, a clear gendered preconception.

4 The case studies and use of the artwork adds to the distinctions of the therapy. Specifically, Rosy Martin's sharing of her own personal path towards art therapy and photography, "Looking and Reflecting: Returning the Gaze, Re-enacting Memories and Imagining the Future Through Phototherapy" supports Hogan's argument about the stripping of the gendered gaze in photography as well as the transformative power to 'view' one's struggles and pain via photography to free oneself from trauma. In addition, Martin shares a postscript on the power of the instant share through social media to advance feedback. Although, she counters, the excess of photography may lead to a purge of its necessity. Finally, Martin is critical of photo-editing software that erased imperfections, continuing to support, "re-enactment phototherapy" to reflect on our cognitive authenticity (135).

5 Maggie Jones's powerful treatise titled, "Alice, Dora and Constance from the Eve of History," breaks down the tenacious female archetypes of women created by men and male language. Jones poses the question, "How do women make sense of, know ourselves, when we are subject to the definition of men?" (102). She adds credence to the theory of therapy to support the individual rather than to make classification assumptions on women. Jones begins this piece by breaking down male centred viewpoints on women exposing the gender patriarchal worldview. In Western Christianity, the fall of Eve became the basis of the denial of rights, education and knowledge. She exposes the hypocrisy of Freud's words on not underestimating the communal circumstances that women suffered, yet, he considered his own patient Dora a hysteric. Freud classified Dora within his own definitions due to her ending therapy before he could provide a full diagnosis. Missing from the analysis of Lewis Carroll's Alice is an easy connection to math and science as being the language dominated by men at the time, specifically Carroll, a lecturer of mathematics at Christ Church Oxford. Jones concludes that art becomes the

bridge where the losses of language between male and female can be joined together in supportive discourse.

6 Not only is this collection a critique of the pitfalls of psychiatry, it is also a critique of capitalism. The essay, “The Role of the Woman-only Group: A Creative Group for Women Experiencing Homelessness” by Judie Jackson explores how art therapy can increase the confidence of homeless women. However, Jackson also discusses the higher likelihood of homeless women to be sexually abused and to take part in sex work as adults. The art therapy group and cooperative projects led to women abused or ignored by the system of mental health practitioners the confidence to move ahead with their lives. Jackson’s piece views the relationship of women producing art and beauty rather than relying on their bodies for livelihood.

7 Similarly, “Art Therapy and Empowerment in a Women's Self-help Project” by Marian Liebmann discusses women gaining perspective on their own life’s journeys with the use of art supplies; they can be free to experiment with making a mess. Hogan fulfils her initial goal within her introduction of discussing the woman only groups, but does not withdraw in the discussion when money is the major issue for its continuance. Hogan criticises the ‘business as usual’ schema of white capitalist imperialistic patriarchy as a harbinger to the prevention of art therapy.

8 “The Pregnant Art Therapist's Countertransference” by Sally Skaife presents an ambitious beginning; however, the voice struck me as weak and undeveloped. While I do agree it is important to have the graduate student voice articulated, this piece would have benefited from another practitioner’s perspective in a co-authored piece. Skaife’s piece mediates between the exposure and the physicality of the pregnant art therapist’s experience. She discusses the patient’s documented fears of abandonment in the loss of the practitioner. Interestingly, the theme of being “on display” is discussed, but needs auxiliary progress (239). The practitioner’s pregnancy and patient’s desire for information on her life is an interconnected theme that could have been touched on further within the concept of the submissive woman. If a male practitioner’s partner was pregnant, the group would never know, therefore, the navigation of the pregnancy within the embarrassment and shame of the therapist’s sexuality needs further links to the power and privilege in childbearing and disclosure. It would be delightful to see Skiafe continue to mature her arguments in a postscript in a future addition. At this time, the piece is out of place within this text on art therapy.

9        The strongest pieces are the final three articles, by Wadeson, McGee and Hogan, which each chronicle a specific patient's experiences of interaction with art therapy as a case study. These final three could branch off to a specialist text on navigating therapy and theory. In "Many Murders: Art Therapy with a 'Traditional' Woman," Harriet Wadeson evokes the story of a woman's life, thanks to art therapy, becoming a successful and confident artist, using her therapist as role model. However, over time, the patient became her own hero by using art therapy to transcend the traditional spaces of womanhood. Continuing with McGee's piece, "A Feminist Approach to Child Sexual Abuse and Shame" claiming art therapy creates positive bodily associations for those who suffered trauma in their past. Ending with Hogan's piece, "A Tasty Drop of Dragon's Blood" about the surrender of female power in pregnancy and birth and how power was returned through art therapy provides a strong case on the continuance of research in these therapies.

10       Each essay contributes to the understanding of therapy as a process of wholeness; every practitioner also discusses their own personal involvement with the therapies and techniques. Hogan composed and edited a collection of thrilling, transformative discussions of the role of artistry and therapy. *Revisiting Feminist Approaches to Art Therapy* is useful to practitioners and first timers alike. While not unfounded, the conjecture that women are educated about feminism due to their womanhood is a little troubling. There is a wide disparity between genders of art therapy practitioners; perhaps Hogan bringing in a male or trans art therapist's perspective in a third edition would strengthen her argument about the need for change in the practice.

### **Works Cited**

Hogan, Susan. *Revisiting Feminist Approaches to Art Therapy*. New York: Berghahn, 2012.