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## Book Review: Daddy Issues: Love and Hate in the Time of Patriarchy

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## **Book Review: *Daddy Issues: Love and Hate in the Time of Patriarchy*<sup>1</sup>**

Reviewed by Andrea Rosales<sup>2</sup>

*Daddy Issues: Love and Hate in the Time of Patriarchy*, written by Katherine Angel, is a collection of essays that explore various aspects of patriarchal systems and their impact on relationships, feminism, and gender dynamics. Angel offers sharp observations on topics such as the #MeToo movement, the backlash against feminism among younger women, and the existing dynamics of gender relations. The book explores the complexities of parenting, the different approaches to feminism between Black women and White middle-class baby boomer women, and the rebirth of patriarchy in recent times. Angel also addresses the seeming adulation received by fathers for mundane acts of parenting and further discusses the problematic relationships between fathers and daughters, including references to Donald Trump's bond with his daughter Ivanka (Angel, 2022, p. 38). The book explores the challenges faced by mothers who bear the burden of childcare, and the power of writing as a means of self-expression and self-creation. Overall, by examining the differences in feminism, the book brings attention to the intersectionality of gender and race.

Angel discusses how Black women may be less enthusiastic about workplace satisfaction compared to their White middle-class counterparts. This observation suggests that the experiences of feminism and gender dynamics can vary depending on racial background and socioeconomic status. Angel criticizes the idea that a mother “must be able to both mirror the child back to itself, and to withstand the destructive impulses; be able to let him pursue a ‘ruthless relation’ to her, a ‘benign exploitation of her’” (Angel, 2022, p. 4). Through this statement, Angel critiques the societal anticipations of motherhood, which places contradictory and unrealistic expectations on mothers. The concept of a “ruthless relation” and “benign exploitation” implies that mothers are expected to tolerate their child's demanding and exploitative behaviors without showing any vulnerability or discomfort. This unrealistic expectation can lead to feelings of inadequacy and guilt for mothers who struggle to live up to this ideal, which has historically differed between women from different races and socioeconomic backgrounds. This reinforcement of gender norms places caregiving and emotional labor primarily on women, perpetuating traditional patriarchal roles and limiting the understanding of motherhood as a diverse and complex experience.

Further, Angel highlights the importance of intersectionality in feminist discussions by examining the hierarchical division between the public and private scopes concerning freedom over careers and family responsibilities, and by provoking crucial inquiries about social privilege and its influence on women's decision-making. Angel enforces this idea by mentioning bell hooks' comments in 1984: “Many black women were saying ‘we want to have more time to share with our family, we want to leave the world of alienated work,’” to which Angel adds, “And the workplace to which less privileged women have always been tied may not hold out the same alluring promise of freedom” (Angel, 2022, p. 8). This statement serves as an upsetting reminder that women from less privileged backgrounds may not have the same appealing promise of freedom in the workplace as more privileged women might. It encourages us to critically examine the inconsistencies in women's experiences within the feminist movement and calls for an

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<sup>1</sup> Angel, K. (2022). *Daddy issues: love and hate in the time of patriarchy*. Verso.

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inclusive and empathetic approach that recognizes and addresses the diverse needs and aspirations of women from different social backgrounds. The pursuit of true gender equality demands an understanding of how social privilege intersects with feminism, which embraces the multifaceted nature of women's lives and experiences.

In a patriarchal system, some women desire to pursue careers but find their aspirations limited by societal expectations, while others are compelled to work for survival despite preferring to stay at home with their children. Angel analyzes Virginia Woolf's work *Three Guineas*, where she describes, "an imagined procession of the sons of educated men, in all their garb and finery" (qtd. in Angel, 2022). Angel writes:

We have to ask ourselves, here and now, do we wish to join that procession, or don't we? On what terms shall we join that procession? Above all, where is it leading us, the procession of educated men? The dilemma haunting her essay is this: how to join the professions and yet remain uncontaminated by them. (2022, p. 65)

As is highlighted in Woolf's writing, Angel discusses the dilemma faced by educated women in joining male-dominated professions while preserving their identities, which raises concerns about potential loss of authenticity and the need to navigate career paths without compromising one's sense of self. This statement remains highly relevant in current times as we continue to grapple with gender inequality and the impact of patriarchal systems on women's lives. Women pursuing a career in male-dominated industries often find themselves adjusting their behavior and conforming to male expectations to feel empowered and avoid discrimination. However, this adaptation can contribute to what Angel refers to as "daddy issues," perpetuating a cycle of women feeling the constant need to seek approval and validation from men.

Angel discusses the question of whether "this renewed scrutiny [can] be usefully read as, among other things, a story of white, middle-class disillusion with the emancipatory promise of work" (Angel, 2022, p. 9), and she suggests that some segments of society, particularly White middle-class women, may be experiencing disappointment with the belief that work alone can bring complete gender liberation. This disillusionment may arise from the realization that workplace advancements do not guarantee true gender equality if other aspects of women's lives, such as motherhood and societal norms, remain unchanged. Moreover, the problematic notion of fathers possessing ownership over their daughters' identities and achievements showcases the urgency to dismantle patriarchal control. Angel references Thomas Markle's statement about his daughter:

'Everything that Meghan is, I made her.' In rhetoric reminiscent of Trump's prideful appropriation of Ivanka's body—his narcissistic claim to ownership of her physical attributes—Thomas Markle does something similar; a daughter's identity, and a daughter's achievements, belong to her father. And when a father finds himself displaced, he can turn punitive, expelling from himself what he has hitherto seen as his own mirror. (Angel, 2022, p. 38).

This quote highlights the disturbing patriarchal notions of fathers possessing ownership and control over their daughters and how some fathers might become vindictive when they feel displaced in their daughters' lives.

Truth-telling is acknowledged as a powerful tool for change, but it does not automatically guarantee justice or address misogyny systematically, which highlights the need of systematic change to extend beyond personal narratives to disassemble patriarchal structures. Angel argues that “it is when men feel humiliated that they are most capable of violence” (Angel, 2022, p. 48). Understanding the link between male humiliation and the potential for violence calls for an exploration of toxic masculinity and redefining manhood as capable of empathy and emotional expression. The book’s complex analysis emphasizes the importance of addressing intersecting issues within feminism, promoting a more inclusive and comprehensive approach to achieving gender equality. Though most women are aware of such systematic issues, Angel argues that:

The anger and rage we might feel towards a father, towards the patriarch- towards the raving brutes or the civilized fathers -is not something we can expel, once and for all, and nor does it yield a clear solution. Rage has instead to be folded into everything else we may simultaneously feel; it does not simply burn itself out. What's more, love and hate are not opposites, but are developmentally entangled. We have to be able to hate in order to love. (Angel, 2022, pp. 48-49)

Angel explores the complex emotions surrounding the relationship between daughters and fathers, particularly in the context of patriarchal structures. The quotation emphasizes that feelings of anger and rage towards fathers or patriarchal figures cannot be easily dismissed or resolved; they must be integrated into a more nuanced understanding of emotions. The author suggests that emotions like rage cannot be simply expelled or eradicated but must coexist with other emotions. Love and hate are portrayed as interconnected and even necessary for emotional development.

*Daddy Issues: Love and Hate in the Time of Patriarchy* is an important contribution to the discussion of feminism and gender equality and the complexities associated with such. The book highlights the importance of recognizing and addressing the differing experiences of feminism among women of different racial backgrounds and socioeconomic statuses. It challenges the notion of a homogeneous and unchanging feminist movement and encourages a more nuanced and inclusive approach to feminism that considers the unique challenges faced by various groups of women. By shedding light on the complexities of gender relations and the impact of patriarchal systems, Angel’s work encourages a deeper understanding of the diverse aspects of women’s experiences, encouraging us to reevaluate feminist goals and strategies to create a more equitable and inclusive society.