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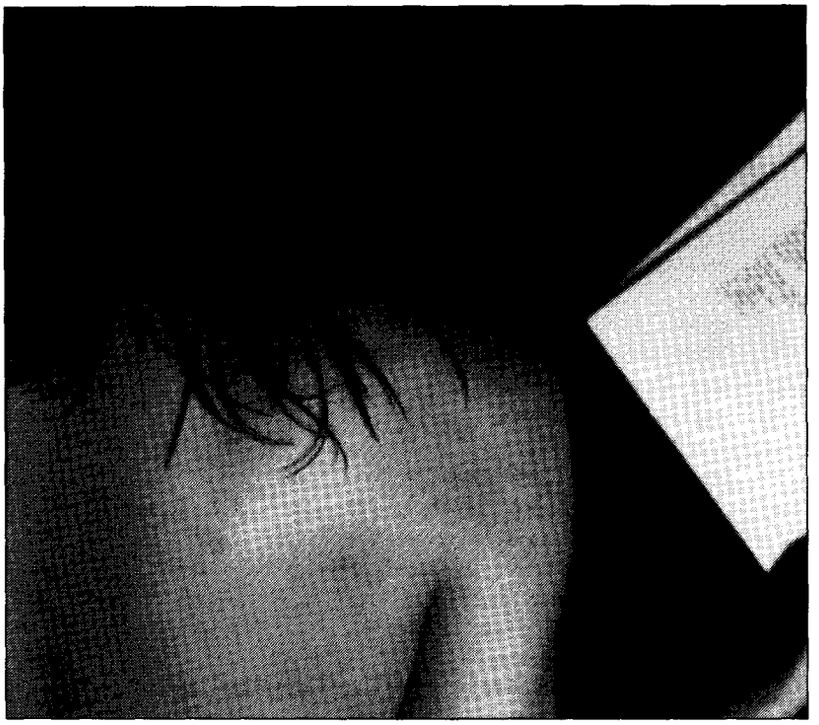
Kathleen Vaughan, "Heirloom 1: Margaret," (detail), mixed media on canvas, 72" x 120", 1993-1994. Photo: Kathleen Vaughan.



Brett Sillers, "A Book in her Hand," black and white photograph, 2000.

Emily Jeremiah

Troublesome Practices
Mothering, Literature and Ethics

To link mothering and writing, as I want to do here, might already be considered daring. Maternal muteness and marginality, most often the rule, have traditionally been seen as prerequisites for the survival of culture: "We could locate in virtually all of the founding texts of our [western] culture a version of the myth (...) that the death or absence of the mother (...) makes possible the construction of language and of culture" (Homans, 1986: 2). This myth has by now been ably and amply challenged by feminists in various disciplines, whose work I wish to build on. I will argue not only that mothers can and should write literature, but that mothering and literary production—both profoundly relational practices—can be linked and deployed as challenges to traditional western ideals of rationality and individuality, in subversive and ethically compelling ways.

The idea of a maternal writing is troublesome because it unsettles many of the oppositions upon which motherhood in western culture has historically rested, such as that between maternity and creativity, or "the binary system that conceives woman and writer, motherhood and authorhood, babies and books, as mutually exclusive" (Friedman, 1987: 65-6). When this opposition is challenged, others, such as public/private and mind/body, are also upset. Maternal writing entails a publicizing of maternal experience, and it subverts the traditional notion of the mother as an instinctual, purely corporeal being. It is thus to be understood as a key tool in the redefinition of maternity in which feminists are engaged. Maternal writing—and maternal reading—also raise the question of relationality, casting doubt on the self/other opposition, as we will see.

This article is concerned firstly to offer a critical overview of how feminists have responded to the question of mothering and literature, and, secondly, to

put forward suggestions for further theorizing on the issues, while drawing on poststructuralist ideas regarding subjectivity and literary discourse. In particular, I am interested here in how the practices of literary production and mothering can be understood as ethical in analagous ways. Such an understanding involves a questioning of traditional masculinist ideas concerning (authorial) autonomy and authority, and it suggests new directions for feminist conceptions of relationality and of knowledge production.

Mothering and writing: feminist responses

Three main strategies have been adopted by feminists in thinking about mothering and literature. The first strategy which one can detect is the examination, or re-vision,[1] of pre-existing images of maternity; in Germany alone, there have been at least three recent publications pertaining to images of mothers (Kraft and Liebs, 1993; Möhrmann, 1996; Roebling and Mauser, 1996).[2] This strategy might be known as "Images of Mothers" criticism, for it complements and contributes to that branch of feminist literary analysis known as "Images of Women" criticism. This type of approach, an early phase of second wave feminist thinking about literature, was concerned to demonstrate the inadequacy and negativity of many depictions of women in literary texts. It was useful because it highlighted the inevitably partial nature of any cultural product. But it was also a problematic project; as Toril Moi points out, it was based on "the highly questionable notion that art can and should reflect life accurately and inclusively in every detail" (1988: 45). In addition, it suggested that "woman" was a fixed and graspable category, against which false depictions of womanliness could be measured, and thus it relied on essentialism. The term "woman" is now widely being viewed as shifting and contingent. Feminist literary criticism has become more attuned to the contexts of texts' production and operation, and "images of women" have increasingly been contextualized: a laudable move, from a poststructuralist point of view.

A second important strategy is represented by the feminist attempt to posit a matrilineal literary tradition, following Virginia Woolf's claim that "we think back through our mothers if we are women" (1993: 69). This strategy corresponds to that branch of feminist criticism known as "gynocriticism," which unearthed and explored writing by women in order to combat the marginalization of female authors, and, further, to demonstrate the existence of a female artistic tradition, or genealogy (Moers, 1977; Showalter, 1982; Walker, 1984a; see here Humm, 1994: 10). Cathy N. Davidson and E. M. Broner, editors of the important *Lost Tradition*, exemplify the notions of rediscovery and revision which characterize this project: "When we seek the literature of mothers and daughters, we are looking for a lineage not traced in any genealogy" (1980: 2). The mother-daughter bond, which in Adrienne Rich's view constitutes "the great unwritten story" (1977: 225), has indeed been an important focus of feminist thought in general. A focus on mother-daughter relations opens the way towards a theory of narrative which, in contrast to

traditional masculinist models, allows for the articulation of female subjectivities. It also suggests the potential of literature to foster and shape relationships and communities—notions to which I will return in the next part of this article.

The third significant strategy involves the exploration of the mother as writing subject. This exploration has, firstly, been concerned to expose why mothers have not written, why it is that "until recently almost all distinguished [literary] achievement has come from childless women" (Olsen, 1986: 56). The reasons for the widespread absence of creative achievement on the part of mothers are in part practical and financial. As Woolf observed, maternity is a time-consuming and unprofitable business (1993: 20). But the reasons are also ideological, with women's story-telling having traditionally been subjected to scorn: "Old wives' tales—that is, worthless stories, untruths, trivial gossip, a derisive label that allots the art of storytelling to women at the exact same time as it takes all value from it" (Carter, 1990: xi). Writing, in particular, has been conceived as a male preserve, as Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar note in their examination of the pen as a metaphorical penis. Exploring analogies made between paternity and artistic creation, they assert: "In patriarchal Western culture, (...) the text's author is a father, a progenitor, a procreator, an aesthetic patriarch whose pen is an instrument of generative power like his penis" (Gilbert and Gubar, 1979: 6). And women's marginalization and silence have been sanctioned by literary theory (Hirsch, 1989: 54). Harold Bloom's concept of "the anxiety of influence," in particular, has been challenged, and its partiality noted (Diehl, 1978: 587).[3] In response to Bloom's model, one critic has developed the idea of "the intimacy of influence" (Lord, 1999), a concept to which I will come back in my concluding remarks.

As a reaction to maternal silence and marginalization, new narratological models have been developed, then: a second aspect of the "third strategy" which I have detected. As in feminist psychoanalysis, an important focus of feminist literary criticism has been the pre-oedipal phase of the child's development. This emphasis may be seen as a reaction to traditional psychoanalytic theories of creativity which "tend to identify the place of the mother as the very absence which lies at the point of linguistic origin" (Hirsch, 1989: 52). Susan R. Suleiman sums up what she views as the underlying assumption of most psychoanalytic theories about writing and about artistic creation in general, thus: "*Mothers don't write, they are written*" (1985: 356). In response to such theories, feminist literary critics have sought to read texts by women in new ways. Elizabeth Abel, for example, draws on the psychoanalytic work of Nancy Chodorow and Dorothy Dinnerstein. Abel develops and extends Chodorow's influential discussion of the mother-daughter relationship as intensely intimate to highlight the importance of female friendship, and she deploys this notion in her examination of several texts by women (Abel, 1981). Margaret Homans also detects Chodorowian impulses in writing by women (1986: 16).

French feminist ideas of creativity are also concerned with the pre-oedipal and with bonds between women. Hélène Cixous asserts that "woman must

write her body," and write with "white ink" (Cixous and Clément, 1986: 94). She thereby links maternity, corporeality and expressivity. In "Breaths," Cixous associates the maternal body and the pre-oedipal with ideas of plenitude and wholeness. She suggests here that the maternal voice could offer a substitute for conventional forms of expression: "If I had such a voice, I would not write, I would laugh" (1994: 49). Julia Kristeva links the presymbolic, what she terms the "semiotic," to the maternal body (1980a; 1984); Luce Irigaray, similarly, posits the existence of a presymbolic mother-daughter language (1981; 1985). Homans draws on such ideas in her reading of nineteenth-century English women's writing (1986).

But, as has been argued, there are problems with this emphasis on the maternal as a source of pre-oedipal language. This strategy could serve to perpetuate maternal marginalization: "If the only maternal language imaginable, or at least admissible, is a preoedipal, nonverbal one, then mothers are effectively silenced and barred from public discourse" (Daly and Reddy, 1991: 7). There are other problems involved in the linkage of mothering and artistic practice. According to Nina Auerbach, this association ignores the willed nature of the creative act, and perpetuates a view of women as irrational and as always and inevitably motherly. Where women writers may once have sought to justify themselves and their audacity in writing by taking refuge in conventional definitions of femininity—a sort of strategic essentialism—"this pious metaphorical association" is, in the view of Auerbach, both spurious and oppressive (1978: 4-5; see also Friedman, 1987: 50).

This perspective is supported by that of Roland Barthes, who, in his *Mythologies*, deconstructs a photograph which appeared in the French magazine, *Elle*. The photograph depicted seventy novelists and mothers who were labelled, for example, "Jacqueline Lenoir (two daughters, one novel), Marina Grey (one son, one novel)." The message behind the photograph is read by Barthes thus: "Women are on the earth to give children to men; let them write as much as they like, let them decorate their condition, but above all, let them not depart from it" (1993: 50). He thereby highlights the dangers of fusing maternity with creativity, a move which may serve to reinstate the traditional conflation of femininity with maternity, and the denial to women of creativity. Similarly, imagining a maternal aesthetic may have been empowering to contemporary women writers, but "a specifically 'female' poetics that links itself to the maternal gets too easily recuperated into the biologistic equation between 'female' and 'nature' that has positioned both as antagonists to subjectivity" (Kahane, 1988: 90).

The notion of a maternal aesthetic is, however, a useful one, if we consider it a "political strategy" (Gilbert, 1986: xv), operative in specific contexts. As suggested before, it serves to undermine key binary oppositions "between word and flesh, creativity and procreativity, mind and body," and to "reconstitute woman's fragmented self into a (pro)creative whole uniting word and flesh, body and mind" (Friedman, 1987: 51, 75). The idea of mothering as not only

compatible with art, but also as conducive to it, constitutes a strategy of subversion. Whilst attention has often been focussed on the difficulties faced by mothers who are also artists, as I have shown, there have also been suggestions that maternity can foster creativity (Daly and Reddy, 1991: 8; Suleiman, 1985: 366; Walker, 1984b). In a culture which has relied on the public/private, mind/body distinctions, such affirmations could prove subversive.

Theories of a maternal creativity are produced and circulated in particular sociohistorical contexts, then, and will depend for their meaning upon the status of both maternity and creativity in a given culture (see Friedman, 1987: 51). This point ties in with a poststructuralist conception of both theoretical and fictional texts. Such texts, in this view, emerge in particular contexts and depend for their resonance upon dominant contemporary discursive and material practices which they are able to "trouble," where "trouble" is understood, as it is by Judith Butler, as a healthy source of subversion (1990). As Chris Weedon expresses it: "We need to look at fictional form as an historically discursive construct effective in different ways in different contexts" (1987: 172). My own conception of maternal writing—and of theories of maternal writing—rests upon this insight. In what follows I will offer some starting-points for a theory of a maternal literary practice—involving both writing *and* reading—which I believe may be ethically "effective" in the context of Western capitalism.

A maternal literary ethics: subjectivity, relationality, "ways of knowing"

As we have seen, feminist responses to the issue of mothers and writing have been concerned with foregrounding embodied maternal subjectivities and stressing bonds between women, while revealing how these have historically been oppressed. I share these concerns, which I want now to link to notions of subjectivity and modes of relating and knowing. Firstly, I will show how the poststructuralist notion of the subject can help us here.

A poststructuralist conception of literature helps us theorize maternal writing in ways that free such discourse from confinement to the babbling or silent semiotic and allow its troublesome possibilities to emerge. It suggests that writing by mothers is not "before" culture, but rather that it takes place in, and may even shape, particular cultural contexts. Poststructuralism also offers us ways of conceiving maternal writing as not only potentially subversive, but also as ethical. In particular, poststructuralism—in some of its forms—stresses relationality over autonomy and interdependence over authority: a move that has obvious and urgent implications for feminist conceptions of both mothering and ethics.

In contrast to the liberal humanist notion of the subject as unified and rational, poststructuralism states that subjectivity is "precarious, contradictory and in process" (Weedon, 1987: 33). Subjectivity is constructed by discourses

in particular social contexts; it is, therefore, a group affair, the product of myriad social and institutional networks and relationships. Similarly, poststructuralist literary criticism alerts us to the situatedness of particular literary texts, to their anchorage in specific contexts. Aesthetic practice, then, involves relationality, constituting participation in a particular culture. If texts are understood as citational responses to other texts (see here Butler, 1993: 14; Bakhtin, 1988), then traditional liberal humanist ideas of authorial autonomy and authority are discredited, and the way is clear for an understanding of the writing subject as engaged in a relationship with other writers and with readers.

Relationality is a key concept in recent feminist thinking about maternity. Sara Ruddick's (1989) notion of a "maternal thinking," with mutuality as its key feature, has contributed significantly to the current and growing feminist awareness of mothering as a complex and changing relationship. The work of psychoanalyst Jessica Benjamin is also crucial here. Benjamin challenges traditional psychoanalytic paradigms, which place the mother in the position of object, and posits an "intersubjective" view of child development (1990: 15-24). According to this view, the child develops in and through interaction with the mother, who must also be a desiring subject. The child seeks recognition, and that recognition must be given by someone who is herself an agent.

An emphasis on women's relationality could be viewed as dangerous from a feminist point of view. It could lead to a reinscription of ideas of women as unstable, excessively emotional and "naturally" inclined to care for others. Solidity and self-containment would thus remain the preserves of men. But the idea of relationality may also be understood as subversive. To posit reciprocity as an ideal is to challenge the notion of the rational, autonomous subject dominant in modern capitalist societies—a fiction which fosters the marginalization of those who do not make the grade, the denial to these "failures" of any kind of state support, and the continuing fragmentation of community. The idea of mutuality is also not to be understood in essentialist terms, as pertaining only to "actual" mothers. Rather, I wish it to be understood as a figuration which may serve as a paradigm for modes of relating to others.

Literary production is also a relational business, as I have already indicated. Reading and writing involve an imaginative engagement with others, a process which might strategically be linked to the idea of "maternal thinking." Such an engagement has subversive potential. The imaginative engagements which reading and writing foster might not accord with those sanctioned by dominant institutions, such as those of heterosexuality and the family. They might therefore lead to a disruption of dominant narratives and constructs, just as—to pursue my analogy of mothering and literary processes—mothers can be challenging with regard to the cultures in which they mother.

Not that I am equating reading and writing with changing diapers, at least not in any simple way; rather, I am suggesting that both acts involve or could involve "maternal thinking." That is, they constitute activities which produce and encourage a relational mode of subjectivity which might, as Mielle

Chandler and Patrice DiQuinzio suggest with regard to mothering, help challenge and overcome Western capitalist models of individualism (Chandler, 1998; Chandler, 1999: 21).[4] I was helped here by Gayatri Spivak's notion of "teleopoesis," developed in a lecture held at the International Women's University in Hannover, Germany.[5] "Teleopoesis" consists of an imaginative engagement with other ways of seeing and acting which is brought about by reading. It is a concept with important implications for understandings of knowledge production, as we will see.

According to Spivak, the practice of literary reading sets us on our way to knowledge, a condition which we never reach. Literary reading is "the permanent effort to get there." It involves also the desire to create a genuine fit between self and other, to "resonate" with and through that other in an act that is profoundly ethical. This resonance stands in contrast to the othering practised by the academy, according to Spivak, who herself advocates "cultivating the reflexes of the ethics of alterity." Reading, according to her, must be "set to work" on this project, described as a "work of patience" which is oriented, however uncertainly, towards an undecidable future.

I wondered then if I could link this idea to the issues of maternal relationality and creativity. As I have suggested, reading and writing constitute ethical acts, which also foster new "ways of knowing," a term taken from Evelyn Fox Keller. Keller argues for the peculiarly masculine character of modern scientific objectivity (see Benjamin, 1990: 189), suggesting that because men originally define themselves in opposition to the mother, they reject experiences of merging which challenge the boundary between subject and object, and cling to the position of master, of knower (see Benjamin, 1990: 190). This unhappy masculine concern with controlling others raises questions as to how knowledge and understanding might be reconceived in ways that avoid reinscribing the subject/object binary inherent in masculine scientific thought.

Literary production and literary studies, I suggest, offer methods of developing and practising such a "way of knowing," involving as they do the "teleopoesis" described above. I mentioned before the idea that literature can produce modes of relation that are not necessarily sanctioned by dominant discourses, such as intense intimacy between women. Catherine Lord develops the idea of the "intimacy of influence," an ardent form of artistic dialogue which she detects at work in and between the fictions of George Eliot, Virginia Woolf and Jeanette Winterson. Drawing on the work of, in particular, philosopher Lorraine Code, she expands on this idea of shared understanding: "knowledge comes less through individual strides than dialogues between different 'persons'" (Lord, 1999: 7). It is my contention that if we understand relational, maternal "ways of knowing"—manifested, for example, in reading and writing—as models or paradigms, we are better equipped to research and live in fruitful intimacy.

What I propose, therefore, is further exploration into writing and reading as processes in which a "maternal" mutuality is at work. I believe the relation-

ship between reader and writer to be a site at which the boundaries between self and other are negotiated, challenged, drawn and redrawn in ways that could be instructive to theorists of maternity in such disciplines as psychology, philosophy and literary criticism. I am particularly concerned with the development of models of relationality which allow for conflict and anger as well as for care and support. Such new understandings of intimacy will, I contend, further our shared knowledge about shared knowing.

[1]"Re-vision—the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction—is for women more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival" (Rich, 1979: 35).
[2]The author's Ph.D. was in German Studies.
[3]"Bloom's model of literary history is intensely (even exclusively) male, and necessarily patriarchal" (Gilbert and Gubar, 1979: 47).
[4]"Mothering is an important site at which the individualist ideological formation is elaborated and imposed, but it is also a site at which this ideological formation can be contested and reworked" (DiQuinzio, 1999: xv).
[5]Gayatri Spivak, "Culture alive is always on the run," lecture given on August 8, 2000.

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Renee Norman

Making Beds of Poetry (and Lying in the Words)

I'm just going upstairs to write poetry and make beds.

I don't know how to
make beds
out of fabric springboard stuffing
or write poetry
out of gossamer webbed lace

The sheets are wrinkled
in the stanzas
blood-stained with dots of fearfulness
I don't want to change them
but I can't seem to pull them up over
images of uselessness

I don't mind picking up the nightclothes
and tossing them into the dirty laundry
but
it's hard to display them
between the rhythm of the words
everyone is always annoyed
when I return
the special toys and tempo
to the wrong person

Does everyone smooth the bedcovers
like this
wondering where the lines came from
staring
at the quilt
on the page
pleased with restored order
which lasts and stays static
for about two minutes

Am I just fooling myself
into believing that I
need to make the beds of words
or could

I think I should have washed the sheets
and written letters home

Lois Rubin

"We Have Deeper Selves to Write From"
Motherhood and Writing

Traditionally, motherhood has been considered an impediment to artistic creation, the two roles thought to be incompatible. Indeed, the artist hero, in nineteenth- and twentieth-century European and American fiction, has typically been portrayed as an ivory tower type who avoids all responsibilities, including the domestic, in order to develop "his true self and his consecration as artist" (Beebe, 1964: 6)—making him the polar opposite of the mother, commonly viewed as a selfless, nurturing figure.

A most eloquent spokesperson for the plight of the writing mother is Tillie Olsen in her book *Silences*. Echoing Virginia Woolf, she observes that "until very recently almost all distinguished achievement has come from childless women" (1978: 31). While she acknowledges that the increasing number of women who combined writing and motherhood in the 1950s and 60s suggests new possibilities for women, she remains fearful, believing that the basic conflict between the two roles still exists for women:

> Motherhood means being instantly interruptible, responsive, responsible. Children need one now ... [and their needs have] primacy. It is distraction, not meditation, that becomes habitual; interruption, not continuity ... Work interrupted, deferred, postponed makes blockage—at best, lesser accomplishment. Unused capacities atrophy, cease to be. (Olsen, 1978: 32-33)

In her essay "Writing and Motherhood," Susan Sulieman traces the history of oppositional discourse on writing and motherhood, the view that a woman can be either a writer or a mother—not both. Referring to Showalter's study of Victorian women writers, she notes that women in that time period

were expected to give priority to domestic responsibilities and to postpone writing until their children were grown—not to try to do both at the same time (1994: 19). According to psychoanalysts like Helene Deutsch, artistic creation and motherhood come from the same source, so since creativity can be fulfilled in motherhood, mothers have no need for creative expression in art—until their children are grown (Sulieman, 1994: 19). Reversing the priorities, Nina Auerbach, for example, applauds novelists Austen and Eliot for having avoided motherhood and moved instead into a broader, more intellectual world (cited in Sulieman, 1994: 20).

Others articulate this conflict. Reviewing her own experience as mother and writer, Adrienne Rich describes the struggle she felt: "But to be a female human being trying to fulfill traditional female functions in a traditional way is in direct conflict with the subversive function of the imagination" (1979: 43). That this conflict persists is evidenced by the recent media attention to Sylvia Ann Hewlett's *Creating a Life: Professional Women and the Quest for Children*, a work that explores the reverse situation—the plight of women who develop their professional lives at the expense of motherhood (St. John, 2002: A1).

Is this the only way to look at the relationship between motherhood and writing? Must the two inevitably be in conflict? Wondering if there might be an alternative view, Sulieman suggests asking today's writing mothers themselves about what it is like to hold these two roles (1994: 20-21). The inquiry is timely, for we now have a larger number of writer-mothers than existed in earlier generations. (For example, Florence Howe observes in the introduction to *No More Masks!* that "unlike previous generations half of [the poets in Part II of the book] are mothers..." [1993: xxxvii] and Erica Jong observes, "Mine may be the first generation in which being a writer and a mother is not utterly impossible" [1995: 41]).

This essay describes a study that responds to this call for dialogue with writer-mothers. Following Sulieman's suggestion, I sent questionnaires, in 2000 and 2001, to more than 150 women selected randomly from a list of 226 provided in "Writers Included, Volume 5: Supplement," of *American Women Writers.* I had determined that these women were mothers by cross checking biographical information about them in *Contemporary Authors.* In the three-question questionnaire, writers were asked to describe the effects of motherhood on their writing and also to relate other obstacles and support they had experienced in their efforts to become writers. Fifty women responded, 45 answering my questions directly and five sending me published articles in which they had discussed the issues I was investigating. In contrast to books like *A Question of Balance: Artists and Writers on Motherhood,* in which 25 artist and writer mothers speak freely about their experiences, this study asks a common set of questions of a larger group of writer-mothers and analyzes their responses, looking for themes and patterns.

What follows is a profile of these 50 writer-mothers, describing first the complex mix of factors in their early lives and relationships that both enabled

and limited their development as writers—support from childhood families and teachers, gender-related obstacles in establishing their careers, support from husbands—and then culminating in their reports of a deeper, broader creativity that resulted from motherhood, in spite of its demands on their time and energy. All comments from the writers that are not otherwise cited have come from the responses on the questionnaires. Short biographies of the writer participants are provided in an appendix.

Supportive ties: Childhood family and education

More than half (27) of my respondents report support from their childhood families—most often parents, but on occasion, grandparents, aunts, and others—in their writing development. Indeed, of those who mention childhood families, more than 80 per cent find them supportive in comparison with 18 per cent who did not. For many, parents provided various kinds of enrichment that facilitated their literacy: buying them books and reading aloud to them (Nancy Willard, Helen Vendler), giving literary gifts for special occasions (Mitsuye Yamada received from her father on her "twelfth birthday ... a leather-bound, gilt-edged book of poems by Christina Rossetti" [16]) and taking them to literary events (Sandra Gilbert's father took her to poetry readings when [she] was in high school). Nine writers mention family members who themselves wrote (though not necessarily for publication), or were teachers or artists: Nancy Willard's mother wrote stories and had been a high school English teacher, Helen Vendler's mother and grandmother wrote poetry; Mitsuye Yamada's father was a member of a poetry writing society, Jean Fritz's mother was a former Latin teacher who was "always interested in words"; Linda Ty Casper's mother wrote textbooks and essays for magazines and asked her daughter to do some of them, Nancy Mairs' aunt was an actively writing poet who critiqued her niece's writing; Jane Yolen's father was a journalist, her mother a short story writer (though she had sold only one story), Nessa Rapoport's grandmother wrote a column and grandfather wrote religious commentary.

Particularly striking are recollections of family support of their writing even in their earliest years: Lynne Sharon Schwartz describes her father, in the midst of shaving, stopping to listen to a story she had just written (1992: 8), Sandra Gilbert's mother "would transcribe the verses [she] dictated practically from [her] crib," Judith Rossner's mother "encouraged [her] from before the time when [she] could write," Ruth Jacobs' aunts "admired [her] childish poems and encouraged [her] though they were uneducated women," Nessa Rapoport's mother cried in response to a story Nessa had written for a writing contest, and this reaction made her daughter decide then and there to become a writer.

More than a third (19) of my respondents also mention teachers who encouraged or supported their writing aspirations; of those who talk about teachers, the vast majority (86 per cent) describe them as encouraging; just a few

refer to teachers who were unsupportive. A few cite teachers in the early grades: Rebecca Goldstein describes being accorded the role of "school poet," composer of poetry for special occasions; Naomi Shihab Nye recalls a second grade teacher who made poetry the center of the curriculum. A dozen or so refer explicitly to high school, college and graduate school teachers, either identifying particular teachers (sometimes naming them) or describing particular ways teachers had helped them (giving them advice about writing, getting their work published, getting jobs for them). Interestingly, seven cite supportive male teachers, for example, Rosellen Brown who says her "encouragers" were "teachers, mostly, and mostly male" who took her seriously and "prodded and praised at times when those were, jointly, exactly what I needed."

As a group, my respondents were well-educated. All but one of the women in my study for whom information was available had attended college. Seventeen of them graduated from selective single-sex colleges, like Barnard, Smith, Mt. Holyoke, Radcliffe, Sara Lawrence, Wellesley, and Wheaton. Twelve others attended particularly well-respected liberal arts colleges or prestigious universities.

Obstacles in their paths: the constraints of gender

Yet even with that promising beginning, with the encouragement of family and teachers and a good education, the women in my study also met up with some difficulties as they pursued their writing ambitions. In particular, two thirds (thirty-three) of my respondents, across the age range, describe obstacles to their writing (other than motherhood) that have a gender dimension.

Most frequently mentioned—22 women refer to this—are what some feminist scholars call restricted gender "scripts" for women (Bem, 1993: 81), cultural expectations for them to hold traditional female roles, to be wives and mothers or, if they had to work, elementary school teachers—not professional writers. Again and again, the women talk about obstacles to their writing in these terms: "gender and expectation" (E. M. Broner), "cultural customs" (Lois Lowry), "expectations" (Joanne Greenberg), "women in my culture ... were discouraged from any form of life except stay-at-home marriage, spinster-daughter-living-under parental roof, or the convent" (Helen Vendler), "contrary to social expectation" (Nancy Mairs), "programmed to marry early" (Judy Blume [204]), "never brought up to think of myself as a professional" (Lynne Schwartz), "just had to be pretty, good, and quiet—nothing was expected" (Rebecca Goldstein). Linda Pastan expresses it well: "The world's expectations (and my own) for the perfect '50s wife kept me from writing for a very long time. I call it 'the perfectly polished floor syndrome.'" In more specific terms, Sandra McPherson recalls, "My parents said I should not be leaving my daughter alone in order to write poems."

A few experienced prejudice directly. Lois Gould recalls rejections from newspapers from Boston to New York: "Every city editor scoffed at the notion of a 'girl reporter,' despite my lucky name (superman's girlfriend)." For Nancy

Willard, "The prejudice against women in the Ph.D. Program was so evident that when I sent out my work to the quarterlies, I used my initial and my last name, so that the reader could not tell the gender." In contrast to the supportive male mentors described earlier, a few had teachers who actively discouraged them: Alicia Ostriker recalls "A distinguished visiting poet who looked at her work and said 'you women poets are very graphic, aren't you ... with a slight shiver of disgust" (1983: 126); and Maxine Kumin tells that after her instructor, a well-known male writer, made disparaging comments about her poems, she "put them aside for several years" (2000: 45). Several writers experienced resentment and jealousy from acquaintances and intimates.

Also detrimental, especially for the older women in my study, was the belief, articulated years ago by Virginia Woolf, that the subject matter women had access to, their life experience, was trivial or minor and not worth writing about (qtd. in Olsen, 29), or that their writing was necessarily inferior to that of male writers. Comments like Rosellen Brown's, "I think I've suffered a bit, as have most women writing, from the biases that have seen my subjects as domestic, therefore trivial...," are made by eight writers in the study.

In addition, eleven writers across the age ranges lament the lack of models, examples of successful women writers: "I didn't know any women role models until I became one myself," says Carolyn Kizer, born in 1925; "No woman I knew in my growing up years, in most of my college years was a professional writer.... No one ever expected a woman to be a professional writer," states E. M. Broner, born in 1930; Lisa Alther, born in 1944, comments on the "Lack of role models of women writers who also raised healthy, happy children"; Nessa Rapoport (born in 1953) observes that "No mothers had interesting jobs; they all stayed at home," and Joy Harjo, born in 1951, notes that "There weren't really role models" of Indian women writers. Seven comment on the lack of support and networking available to them, or, even worse, resentment or jealousy from acquaintances and intimates or general opposition from what both Ruth Stone and Jean Valentine characterize as "the male world."

Husbands: the unexpected resource

On the other hand, husbands, in my study, prove to be more enabling of their wives' writing than conventional wisdom would lead us to believe. In her survey of the female artist novel, Linda Huf observes that men, usually husbands, act as obstacles to women's creativity: "In every woman's kunstlerroman there is at least one man ... a would-be domestic dictator who through his strength or weakness prevents the artist from working" (1983: 9). Yet, the women in my study for the most part portray their husbands differently, as helpmeets and supporters. Almost half (23) of my 50 respondents refer to their husbands as sources of support for their writing. Only two women in my study describe their husbands as definite obstacles, calling them jealous, competitive, or indifferent. Two others who bring up difficulties related to their husbands still characterize them as helpful in some respects. The 23 who mention their

husbands as sources of support, refer to them with warmth, using sentiments like the following: "gave me the encouragement and support I so badly needed" (Linda Pastan), "an immensely supportive husband" (Rosellen Brown), "The best and most consistent encouragement I got was and is from my husband" (Joanne Greenberg); "It was my husband who cheered me on when the critics savaged my early plays" (Tina Howe).

In addition, the husbands of eleven women gave specific kinds of help. Six husbands helped with the actual writing, acting as readers and critics: "he literally for more than a decade read every word I wrote" (Adrienne Kennedy); "[he] was 'first reader' of every word I wrote" (Sandra Gilbert); "my first reader, he always says the same thing: 'it's wonderful, I can't wait to read more.' He's my first encourager" (Nancy Mairs). A few spouses gave other kinds of career help—one encouraging his wife to take classes (Adrienne Kennedy) and another staying with the kids so she could attend a writing conference (Mary Jane Auch). Lois Gould's husband urged her to submit essays to *New York Times,* and Natalie Babbitt's husband wrote a story for her to illustrate to get her started in her career in children's literature. Two husbands provided extra financial support and/or childcare to enable their wives' writing: "I have a husband who took several jobs so I could spend time writing—not making money" (Patricia MacLachlan); "[my husband] does most of the cooking, shopping which allows me more time to write" (Maggie Stern). Perhaps the fact that the husbands of eight of my participants were themselves artists or writers enabled them to be supportive of their writing wives. As Mary Jane Auch puts it, "A graphic artist himself, [my husband] understood my need to pursue what often looked like a hopeless career choice."

Motherhood: challenge and inspiration

Motherhood, the factor that Olsen, Woolf and others consider the greatest obstacle to women's productivity as artists, turns out to have surprising benefits, for my respondents, which offset its challenges. In fact, of the 48 women in my study who describe the impact of motherhood on their writing, 43 (90 per cent) find that the benefits outweigh the drawbacks or that benefits and drawbacks are about even; only five women (ten per cent) mention more drawbacks than benefits.

This is not to say that difficulties do not exist. Indeed, two thirds (32) of the women in my study refer to one or more of the obstacle cited by Olsen.

What Olsen calls "foreground silences" (1978: 10) and other kinds of delays are described by some of my participants. Two women did not start till their mid-fifties when their children were grown and married (Theodora Kroeber, as reported by her daughter, Ursula Leguin and Ruth Jacobs); one stopped writing entirely after marrying and having children for about a dozen years and another for eight years (Edith Konecky, Nancy Mairs). Two did not begin serious writing until their children were in school or old enough to be cared for by sitters (Gloria Goldreich, Tina Howe). Six observe that mother-

hood slowed them down or interrupted their writing life.

Five speak of lack of time to write: "time is a casualty, an excruciating problem. It takes time to do serious work" (Nessa Rapoport) or of writing shorter works because of time constraints (Joy Harjo, Maxine Kumin). They describe squeezing writing into small, odd time periods: at night instead of in her preferred time of morning (Ursula LeGuin), at seven to nine in the morning when the kids were small (Joanne Greenberg), when the children were in school, not on weekends or in the summer (Natalie Babbitt), or in evenings or weekends because of need to maintain a job as well as to care for the child (Valerie Martin).

The "distraction" and "interruption" that characterize mothering, according to Olsen (1978: 19), are referred to by ten of my respondents: "[children] inevitably distracted me and took time" (Diane Johnson); "to have to stop in the middle of a paragraph to pick up a child from school is a major deterrent" (Maggie Stern) and "daily crises" (Sandra McPherson).

Some writers report experiencing physical or emotional strain from trying to combine the two roles. In Anne Tyler's words, "I felt drained; too much care and feeling were being drawn out of me" (2000: 7). For Lynne Schwartz, "the particular imaginative energy that goes to writing comes from the same place that rearing children comes from.... it was always a tremendous struggle." And, Alicia Ostriker comments, "Your time, energy, body, spirit and freedom are drained" (1983: 130). Other describe feeling frustrated and guilty: "I felt pulled apart" (Jean Valentine); "At times I was desperate and frustrated" (Rebecca Goldstein); and "For years I fluctuated between guilt toward my daughter when I was writing and resentment when I couldn't be writing" (Lisa Alther).

A few comment on financial strain: having to work overtime (Helen Vendler), "the pressure to make money [leading] to my doing a lot of writing that I would not have otherwise chosen to do" (Barbara Ehrenreich), "teaching four sections of freshman composition per semester" to support her daughter (ValerieMartin), and working at odd jobs to provide for her children (Joy Harjo).

However, in spite of the above challenges, almost all of the women (45 of the 50 women who answered the question) report at least one positive effect of motherhood—in content, focus or enrichment—on their writing.

In contrast to Olsen's observation that not many women writers in recent times (1950s and 1960s) "have directly used the material open to them out of motherhood as central source for their work" (1978: 32), half of the women in my study (25) report that motherhood and children are an important source of content in their work: [motherhood] "helped me define the kind of writing I wanted to do," (Jean Fritz), "provided me with subject matter" (Doris Grumbach), and "enriched [my writing] with subject matter" (Linda Pastan). "I drew on my own family experience as a resource" (Lois Lowry), and "I wrote about [my children's] lives," says Vanessa Ochs. For Barbara Ehrenreich, children were "a constant source of topics," and for Maxine Kumin "a sourcebook for my work."

A few offer more detailed explanations. For Valerie Martin, watching children grow up "allowed [her] to observe first-hand the enormous variety of human response to ordinary life, and this is the study of the writer." Even more emphatically, Tina Howe says, "my plays are a response to my gender. I write about wives and mothers and daughters and sisters. If I didn't have a family, I wouldn't have a body of work." And Lynne Schwartz comments, I think my writing was immensely enriched by having children. Being a mother and family life are such a central part of a lot of what I've written."

Some speak in specific terms of their children's influence on particular features of their writing. For example, "I listen to their use of language, and how they describe things, and that helps to shape the story and my characters," says children's writer Maggie Stern; "My daughter's remarks inspired titles, always a difficulty with me," observes Linda Ty-Casper. Their children's lives, for some, inspired events in their books. "Even now I am working on a book which began with an observation by one of them," says Patricia MacLachlan, a children's writer. And "Occasionally, an incident with my children inspired a scene in one of my books" (Mary Jane Auch, children's writer). Their children, for a few, appeared as or influenced the development of characters in their books: [they] found themselves as characters in my books (Patricia MacLachlan); "'My Body Remembers Singing' is claimed by both to be about them, exclusively" (Linda Ty-Casper); "She's me and not me," [her daughter] Adrienne said of one protagonist, "partly me and partly you" (Valerie Martin).

Six attribute particular works to the experience of motherhood: " poems about [my daughter] and myself in *The Spaces Between Birds*" (Sandra McPherson); "Dealing with your Descendants," a chapter in a longer work (Harriet Jacobs); "My Body Remembers Singing" (Linda Ty-Casper); the novels, "Four Days" and "Mothers" (Gloria Goldreich); "a book about being a working mother when this juggling act was still a rarity" (Lois Gould) and "three of the first essays I wrote" (Nancy Mairs).

And a few attribute choice of genre to motherhood: short, light verse for Maxine Kumin because "A small poem is infinitely portable. The strictures of rhyme and meter could be sorted through in my head while doing the daily chores"; conversely, novels for Ursula Le Guin because "a novel has its own momentum, and you can put it away until tomorrow without losing it" ("Ursula K. Le Guin," 1995: 247). For Helen Vendler, a college professor, the need to earn extra money to support her son stimulated her to take on "all the reviewing [she] could get," and as a result she developed a reputation as a critic.

Some observe that motherhood made them better organized and focused: "It focused me, made time more valuable, and thus, more at my service" (Anne Bernays); "My time for writing was so precious; I never wasted a minute. There was not time for 'writer's block'" (Rebecca Goldstein). "What I had to do when my three children—who came along at more or less two-year intervals—were small was to learn to manage my time and prioritize" (Jane Yolen); and "being a mother taught me a good deal about managing my time" (Nancy Willard).

Particularly noteworthy, twenty-four women claim that motherhood enhanced their personal, emotional development, which in turn, they believe, benefited their creativity and writing. They describe their growth, using various kinds of imagery. Several speak of being broadened and expanded: motherhood "broadened my perspective" (Judith Rossner); "provided me with understanding of minds other than my own and a wider horizon than I would otherwise have seen" (Doris Grumbach); "enlarged my understanding of life, human history, etc." (Diane Johnson).

Many talk of becoming deeper. As Rebecca Goldstein puts it, "the feminine aspect of life (motherhood) opened me to a different, deeper creativity. I attended to the emotional and the unconscious—things you needed to be a novelist." Nessa Rapoport observes, "Having children deepened me as a human being; being a mother made me more human, gave me more to say, was humbling. I would have been a lesser writer and person without them." For Gloria Goldreich, "motherhood so deepened me on every level that it penetrated everything I wrote thereafter." Naomi Shihab Nye, recalling Anne Tyler, speaks of having "deeper selves to write from" as a result of motherhood.

Some tell of being enriched: "[my daughter] provided me with the heights of delight and depths of frustration, the experience of which has enriched my understanding of human nature and, no doubt, spilled over into my writing" (Lisa Alther); "[motherhood] also enriched my life to the point that I had something to say" (Katherine Paterson); "it enriched [my work] with both subject matter and emotional resonance" (Linda Pastan). Two refer to nourishment: "It fed me as a human being and so as a writer" (Jean Valentine); it "fed my work and connected me with parts of my own experience that might never [have] been awakened if I had not had a child" (Nancy Willard).

A few describe other kinds of benefits. Kim Chernin observes, "The birth itself opened a creative vein that hasn't closed since." Helen Vendler reports, "My emotional life has contributed, I am sure, to my capacity as a reader of poetry; and motherhood has been a crucial(and rewarding) component of that emotional life. It also develops irony and humor—useful qualities in a writer and teacher." And Sandra Gilbert reports being "energized by maternity" to write more and more "ambitiously."

As an extra boon, for about a dozen writers, their children contributed to or shared in their mothers' writing process. Some children took an interest in their mothers' writing; for instance, Jean Fritz's daughter "shared my interest and involvement with each book, and Adrienne Kennedy's children "were such engaging companions and my writing interested them." A few children were readers and critics of their mothers' work: "my children read and commented on my work," (Patricia MacLachlan); "[they are] useful in-house critics ... often the first people I'll show a draft to" (Barbara Ehrenreich); "[I now have] two terrific critics" (Rosellen Brown); and "I test my stories on my kids" (Maggie Stern). Some children acted as supporters: "it was my children who urged me to write the next one because they had such a blast sitting in the

theater, waiting for the lights to go down" (Tina Howe), and "my children were the ones who were the most encouraging of my writing" (Rebecca Goldstein).

Conclusion

And so, putting it all together, the experience of contemporary writer-mothers has been complex: a good deal of encouragement from family and teachers in their early years, frequent discouragement from the general culture as they moved to adulthood, support and concrete help from spouses, and benefits—as well as challenges—from motherhood, both in content and in emotional depth, and the bonus of offspring who contribute to characterization and plot and act as readers and supporters.

In contrast to Olsen's pessimistic portrayal of decreased accomplishment for writer-mothers, the women in my survey give a more optimistic account, indicating that motherhood has enhanced, if not the quantity of their writing, its quality. While admitting its challenges in time and energy, they are even more eloquent about its benefits, for their development and for the writing itself. My respondents appear to have found the way, called for by Adrienne Rich, of "[uniting] the energy of creation and the energy of relation" (1979: 43). Given the many women who report on using motherhood as a source of their content, and the greater number of mother-writers in this generation, we should also be seeing in literature more numerous and richer pictures of mothering, children, and family life than before.

Finally, in contrast to the ivory-tower male artist described by Beebe, my respondents, in describing motherhood's enhancement for writing, seem to represent a different model of artist, one in which writing comes from and is nourished by relationships and community, in which a rich and deep emotional life facilitates, rather than impedes, the creation of art. In her essay on female kunstlerromane by women writers, Rachel Du Plessis defines such a new form of creative accomplishment: one in which the fictional art work "has its source in human ties and its end in human change ... can only be made with an immersion in personal vulnerability" (1985: 103) And Ursula LeGuin observes, "To me, an art grows organically out of its society at its best, so you don't cut the connection ... An artist who is working in grand isolation doesn't know anything about [relationships], is aloof from it, and this may impoverish the novel" ("Ursula K. Le Guin," 1995: 245, 249). The comments of the women in my study provide abundant evidence of these kinds of connections—with parents, husbands, and children—and the enrichment they yield both for their own development and for their creative work.

Biographies

(information taken from *Contemporary Authors Online*, The Gale Group, 2002)

Lisa Alther, born in 1944, has one child and is a novelist and short story writer. Her five novels—including her best-selling first novel *Kinflicks* whose

hero is described as a "female Holden Caulfield"—present a satiric view of American life.

Mary Jane Auch is mother of two and writer of children's books. She also conducts teaching sessions for aspiring writers.

Natalie Babbitt, born in 1932 and mother of three, is a children's book writer and illustrator. In award-winning books like *Goody Hall* and *The Devil's Storybook*, she presents challenging themes in an entertaining way.

Anne Bernays, born in 1930 and mother of three daughters, is the writer of seven novels. Her books, like *The New York Ride* and *Professor Romeo*, are marked by a witty tone, are set in collegiate surroundings and often feature female protagonists.

Judy Blume, born in 1938 and mother of two, is a prolific writer (she's written eighteen juvenile novels) of award-winning children's and young adult fiction. Books like *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing* and *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret* deal openly with sensitive issues—like divorce, religion and sexuality.

Esther Masserman Broner, born in 1930 and mother of three, writes novels, stories, plays and articles. A Jewish feminist, she focuses on women's spirituality, in fictional (*A Weave of Women*) and non-fictional (*Bring Home the Light*) formats.

Rosellen Brown, born in 1939 and mother of two daughters, writes novels, stories, plays and poetry. Works like *Tender Mercies* and *Civil Wars* feature female protagonists and depict family relationships and social issues.

Kim Chernin—poet, novelist, essayist and therapist—was born in 1940 and has one daughter. Her works often focus on what it means to be a woman in the contemporary western world—the search for identity, relations with one's parents, sexuality and eating disorders.

Barbara Ehrenreich, well known journalist and social critic, was born in 1941 has two children. In mostly non-fiction books(like the recent *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America,* she describes the struggles of women, the poor and other disadvantaged groups.

Jean Fritz, born in China to missionary parents in 1915, is mother of two. Award winning writer of historical biographies for young people, she brings her subjects to life in all their complexities, providing accurate and interesting accounts.

Sandra M. Gilbert, born in 1936, is the mother of three. Poet, literary critic, academic and feminist, she received acclaim for groundbreaking studies like *Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination.*

Gloria Goldreich, born in 1934 and mother of three, is well-known for novels that dramatize aspects of Jewish-American history, like *Leah's Journey* and *That Year of Our War.* She has also written numerous short stories and articles, mostly on Jewish themes.

Rebecca Goldstein, born in 1950, has two daughters. A professor of philosophy for ten years, she then became a novelist whose works (*The Mind Body Problem, Mazel*) dramatize philosophical questions, the struggles of gifted women, and issues of Jewish identity.

Lois Gould, born in 1932, and mother of two sons, died in May 2002. Journalist and writer, she wrote many books exploring the female viewpoint and the creation of gender roles, but also composed adult fairy tales and writings about political and social issues.

Joanne Greenberg, born in 1932, is the mother of two sons, professor of anthropology, medical technician and writer. In her novels and short stories, the best known one of which is *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden*, Greenberg frequently depicts the lives of the less fortunate.

Doris Grumbach, born in 1918 and mother of four, has had a varied career as literary critic, editor, professor and novelist. Her books, like her biography of Mary McCarthy, are frequently based on the lives of real people, and she has also written several memoirs.

Virginia Hamilton, mother of two, was born in 1936 and died in 2002. Prize-winning author of children's fiction, she blends black history, folklore and realistic elements in her stories; she also wrote biographies of W. W. B. Du Bois and Paul Robeson.

Joy Harjo, born in 1951 and mother of two, is an acclaimed poet of Muskogee-Creek background. Her works incorporates Native American myth and values, description of the southwest, feminist and social concerns and autobiographical elements.

Tina Howe, born in 1937 and mother of two, is a well-known playwright. In plays like *Coastal Disturbances,* she depicts women's roles and relationships and sets the action in unlikely locations and circumstances.

Ruth Harriet Jacobs, born in 1924 and mother of two, has been a journalist, sociology professor, consultant on gerontology and writer. Interested in women's development, she has focused on the aging process in books like *Be an Outrageous Older Woman.*

Diane Johnson, born in 1934 and mother of four, has been a professor of English and writer of novels, plays biographies and screen plays. While much of her work features female protagonists, she also wrote a biography of Dashiell Hammett and co-wrote the screenplay for *The Shining.*

Erica Jong, born in 1942 and mother of a daughter, is probably most known for her best-selling novel *Fear of Flying* in 1973. She has also written poetry and produced fiction set in other times and places. In all her work, she writes honestly about women's experience, exploring in particular their sexuality.

Adrienne Kennedy, born in 1931 and mother of two sons, is a playwright and screenwriter. She presents the experiences of black characters symbolically, revealing their interior lives, rather than following a straightforward narrative mode.

Carolyn Kizer, born in 1925 and mother of three, is a poet, teacher, translator and critic. Her Pulitzer Prize winning collection, *Yin: New Poems*, focuses on female perceptions, but in her other poetry she addresses a wide range of topics, including politics.

Edith Konecky, born in 1922 and mother of two sons, writes stories and novels. Her novels, somewhat autobiographical in nature, deal with women's issues at different points in the life cycle: *Allegra Maud Goldman,* describing a young Jewish girl's coming of age and *A Place at the Table* portraying the issues of midlife.

Maxine Kumin, born in 1925 and mother of three, is a teacher and writer of poetry, novels and children's fiction. Her poetry, for which she has won a Pulitzer Prize, takes as its subject the pastoral life of her New Hampshire home and describes humans and animals in nature.

Ursula Le Guin, acclaimed writer of science fiction, children's fiction, poetry and literary criticism, was born in 1929 and is the mother of three. Best known for science fiction, for example, *The Left Hand of Darkness* and *The Dispossessed*, her books contain complex levels of plot and social-political themes.

Lois Lowry, born in 1937 and mother of four, is an acclaimed writer of children's literature. Her works often address serious topics, like Newbery Medal winner *Number the Stars,* which portrayed the shuttling of Jews by Danes

to Sweden during World War II.

Patricia MacLachlan, born in 1938 and mother of three, writes picture books and novels for children. As in her Newbery Medal winning *Sarah, Plain and Tall,* her books often contain elements of personal experience and present realistic characters and situations.

Nancy Mairs, born in 1943, is the mother of three. In her poetry, essays and memoirs—for instance the well-received *Plaintext*—she describes aspects of her life, in particular the difficulties of suffering from multiple sclerosis.

Valerie Martin, born in 1948 and the mother of one daughter, has held various English faculty positions. Her Poe-like stories and novels—in particular *Mary Reilly,* which was turned into a film—present the dark side of life and people in extreme states.

Sandra McPherson, born in 1943 and mother of one daughter, is a poet and educator. Her poetry describes the physical world, folk art and elements in her own life. The collection *Spaces Between Birds* is a duet of mother/daughter poems.

Naomi Shihab Nye, born in 1952 and mother of one son, is an award-winning poet and writer of children's fiction. Drawing on her Palestinian background and life among Mexican-Americans, she describes ordinary events and people of diverse cultures.

Vanessa Ochs, born in 1953 and mother of two daughters, has written one book and numerous stories and articles. In *Words on Fire: One Woman's Journey in the Sacred,* she explores the spiritual development of a number of Jewish women in Israel.

Alicia Ostriker, born in 1937 and mother of three, is an English professor, literary critic and award-winning poet. In her nine books of poetry, some of which depict women's experience, she is noted for pushing the boundaries and dealing with challenging topics.

Linda Pastan, born in 1932 and mother of three, is award-winning creator of twelve books of poetry. Her poetry—which focuses on daily life, love and death—is simple and clear, yet metaphoric and elegant.

Katherine Paterson, born of missionary parents in China in 1932 and mother of four, is an acclaimed writer of children's fiction. In the Newbery Award winning *Bridge to Terabithia,* as in most of her fiction, lonely young people face crises and grow from them.

Nessa Rapoport, born in 1953 and a mother of three, is a writer and editor. Her novel, *Preparing for Sabbath*, short stories and essays often portray the inner life and spiritual struggle of Jewish women.

Judith Rossner, born in 1935 and mother of two, is the author of nine novels that deal for the most part with aspects of women's experience—childrearing, love, friendship, sex. Her best known novel, *Looking for Mr. Goodbar*, was made into a film in 1977.

Lynne Sharon Schwartz, born in 1939 and mother of two, writes novels, short stories, non-fiction and children's literature. Her fiction (for example, *Disturbances in the Field*) features intelligent female protagonists and gives a detailed view of human relationships.

Maggie Stern, born in 1954, is the mother of four sons and a writer of children's books, five of which have been published. In her books, which draw on personal experience, nature plays an important role.

Ruth Stone, born 1915, has written eight books of poetry and is professor of English at SUNY Binghamton. Her poems deal with ordinary life and sometimes reflect the difficulties she experienced in her own life, as a widow raising three young children.

Linda Ty-Casper, mother of two daughters, was born in the Philippines in 1931. Believing that a country's literature is important to its understanding of itself, she writes mostly historical novels, set in important periods in Philippine history.

Anne Tyler, born in 1941 and mother of two, is has written fourteen novels, best known of which are Pulitzer prize winning *Breathing Lessons* and *Accidental Tourist* (filmed by Warner Brothers). Depicting the daily actions of ordinary, even odd, characters, her works illuminate truths about life.

Jean Valentine, born in 1934 and mother of two, is a poet. In her prize-winning *Dream Barker and Other Poems* and eight other collections, she writes in what's been described as a suggestive, dreamy and compressed style.

Helen Vendler, born in 1933 and mother of a son, is a highly regarded literary critic. Professor of English at Harvard, she has written many scholarly articles, reviews and full-length works on poets like Keats, Yeats, Wallace Stevens and Seamus Heaney.

Nancy Willard, born in 1936 and mother of a son, is a prolific and versatile writer of children's fiction, poetry for children and adults and two adult novels.

Lois Rubin

Her many (sixty) and award-winning children's books are described as magical and inventive.

Mitsuye Yamada, born in 1923 of Japanese parents and mother of four, is an associate professor at Cypress College and poet. Her poems have evolved from personal to political as she has come to understand her identity as Asian American and woman.

Jane Yolen, born in 1939 and mother of three, is an award-winning and prolific writer of literature for children and young adults, frequently in the science fiction and fantasy genres. Particularly well known are *Dragon's Blood: a Fantasy,* first volume of the Pit Dragon Series, and *The Devil's Arithmetic,* a time travel story in a Holocaust setting.

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Isabella Colalillo Katz

Dzikir of Love

for Samantha

I

First nights there was song. there was the baby scent of new breath. the longing for sleep never overcame the delight of seeing her tiny body resting in the curve of my arms. her sweet breath near my waking ear, the breathy morning sun always moving towards the beauty of her freshness and me attuning to the hearbeat of her needs.

Long nights of song and sleepless abandon. her stubborn, inconsolable tears, her beauty and grace. the soft smile on her face when she lay sleeping. when she still talked to angels.

I remember her scent; the way she moved her baby fingers when crying for my mother-milk. there were nights she refused to sleep and how my tired eyes touched the lines of her new face. the world became a sacredness when she suckled my breasts in a mutual passion. she cried little then. she still remembered the taste of god.

Then the scars of life appearing on the tapestry of her skin. I cried to protect her from their bites; wanted to hide her from the human face of sunlight.

II

Later, words that wound. the inevitable misunderstandings. the need between us for differentiation, for the struggle to take back her godpower. she doesn't think when she strikes out—her venom singes my soul. I scream to make her understand—defensive, disbelieving. how can love turn to such bitter dust? destroy the tango of years? pollute the purpose of our breathing lessons?

After giving her love, I stand empty handed. a mother looking for love in the dustbin of time. a child crying for the serene sharpness of old words. these are the questions I ask of the goddess. why has the daughter become the arrow seeking her own destruction? why am I the enemy now? why did I think I could tame her heart with old remedies, trust, love, the gift of freedom?

Struggling for breath she rants and rages. I have no words to destroy the venom. she splinters, unrelenting. She's fighting me for her taste of life. can she remember the flavor of our nightsongs? how my milk grew her heartbeats?

Battle weary we cry. the listening moon convinces the stars to twinkle gently. She's crying for new milk. my wounded heart flutters, breaks open. the morning wants to redeem her anger. fails again.

III

Did we ever dream it would come to this? did we know then that love is only part of the answer? could we ever have known in those days of delight and beauty that the need for love could terrorise us? as only real love can?

I write letters to my daughter. she writes me. we rush headlong into tenuous answers. she's the princess who felt the pea of my love. I am the mad Rumplestiltskin begging for my name. she needs breathing room. I give her sadness.

Isabella Colalillo Katz

These are the alchemies of motherlove. these are its sad findings. this is the poem I could not write this morning. the chant of incompatible geometries. the space between us and how it teeters for the love of you, unredeemable daughter. sweet love of mine.

Ruth Panofsky

At Odds in the World
The Memoirs of Fredelle Bruser Maynard and Joyce Maynard

> The classic mentor narrative is hierarchical. This, as should be obvious, is a masculine narrative.... Recently, however, other models, other stories have emerged, in part because of the emergence of women's stories of mentorship, sometimes less fraught with the psychological complexities, the Oedipal complexities of male mentor narratives, sometimes not.
>
> —David Lazar (1994: 25)

This paper examines the connection between mothering and mentoring in the work of writers Fredelle Bruser Maynard and daughter Joyce Maynard and argues, with Adrienne Rich, that "[f]ew women growing up in patriarchal society can feel mothered enough; the power of our mothers, whatever their love for us and their struggles on our behalf, is too restricted" (1995: 243). Not surprisingly, there are few examples of mothers and daughters who have shared the vocation of writing.[1] Moreover, there are fewer instances when mothers and daughters have made public—through writing—their personal relationships. The complex and dynamic bond between Fredelle Bruser Maynard and Joyce Maynard[2] can be studied through their respective memoirs. Fredelle is author of *Raisins and Almonds* (1972) and *The Tree of Life* (1988). Her first volume, published when her daughters were already young adults, remains strikingly mute on the experience of motherhood. Only after a space of 16 years, once they had become mothers themselves and were established in their respective careers, could Fredelle write frankly of herself as "a most imperfect mother" (1988: 237) to daughters Rona[3] and Joyce. Joyce is author of a number of works in which she reflects on her relationship with her parents. I am concerned chiefly with her memoir *At Home in the World* (1998), which obviously has led

to my title. Here, Joyce writes with a new, self-proclaimed honesty of the mother who "put the pen in my hand" (ix), whose drive and ambition made her into the writer she has become.

Many readers will recognize Joyce Maynard as the American teenager who in 1972 published an article in the *New York Times Magazine* entitled "An 18-Year-Old Looks Back on Life." From that auspicious beginning, Joyce went on to a career as writer and journalist.[4] Upon publication, the media made much of *At Home in the World* for its graphic description of Joyce's brief and youthful liaison with the famously reclusive novelist J. D. Salinger. While some may be titillated by Joyce's rendering of a relationship doomed to fail from the beginning, I read her memoir for what it tells of a fraught love for her mother and a unique literary apprenticeship. In all likelihood—and despite her own career as journalist (print and television) and author of books on childrearing[5]—Fredelle Bruser Maynard will be less familiar to readers than her famous daughter. By nature less of an exhibitionist than Joyce, Fredelle was less prolific and more discreet when writing of family relationships.

In this paper, I probe the problematic connection between two women, one of whom is mother and educator while the other is daughter and student. The painful tension that results from this blending of roles is palpable in the public writing of both women. Joyce values the skills her mother taught her, making her a precocious intellectual, while Fredelle encourages the dependence and love of her younger daughter. But a close study of the intimate revelations offered in their respective memoirs points to an unresolved tension between daughter and mother. The education of a daughter always is rife with difficulty, even more so when the mother hopes to educate her child in ways that will ensure her independence of mind and ability to earn a living. Joyce appreciates and practices the writing her mother so deliberately taught her, but she always yearns for more. This is perhaps an example of "double vision" as Rich describes the "girl-child" who, despite a true and irreplaceable connection between herself and her mother, longs "for a woman's nurture, tenderness, and approval, a woman's power exerted in our defense, a woman's smell and touch and voice, a woman's strong arms around us in moments of fear and pain" (1995: 224). The remarkable relationship between Fredelle and Joyce—possibly unique among female writers—reveals the personal cost to both parent and child when mother chooses to educate her daughter to compete and succeed "in the world."

In this reading of the memoirs of Fredelle Bruser Maynard and Joyce Maynard I do not mean to conflate writerly selves with the actual women. Fredelle who speaks out from the pages of *The Tree of Life* and Joyce who narrates her personal journey in *At Home in the World* are separate from the real Fredelle and Joyce, writerly constructs that bear resemblance to their actual creators but remain a part from them at the same time. This paper focuses on the public record—available in each writer's memoir—of otherwise private relationships.

Toward the end of *The Tree of Life*, Fredelle admits "I wanted my daughters to be successful writers and—successfully, but at some cost—pushed them towards that goal" (241). Indeed, fearing her daughters' failures would become her own (1988: 241), Fredelle was, by her own admission, a strict taskmaster: "When I was a young mother, I knew all about the dangers of spoiling a child.... So I made, and tried to keep, a lot of rules. I ran a tight ship" (1988: 241). Early in her own memoir, Joyce corroborates this image of a mother who carefully coached her children to write: "Before we knew how to form alphabet letters ourselves, we gave dictation. We spoke; our mother wrote down what we said and told us how to make it better. Soon enough, she gave us a typewriter" (1998: 39).

Parent and child understood early on that their relationship combined traditional nurturing with practical mentoring. While she attended to her daughter's physical and emotional needs, Fredelle fostered a facility with language that could lead Joyce to a career as writer. Fredelle's overweening desire for her daughter's success was rooted partly in professional and personal frustration. As Rishma Dunlop has noted, "The roles of intellectual women have an uneasy history, played out against prescribed social relations. For women committed to intellectual work, achieving coherence with their social lives is difficult and contradictory" (1998: 115). Despite her own brilliance—she earned a Ph.D. from Radcliffe and graduated summa cum laude—Fredelle was refused a position in the Department of English at the University of New Hampshire, where her husband taught. In the 1950s, the University's strict policy against hiring faculty wives launched Fredelle on her successful career as writer and journalist. Throughout her life, however, she railed against the academic hiring of men whose qualifications and intelligence were inferior to her own.

Moreover, marriage to painter Max Maynard always was difficult. An alcoholic whose behaviour was erratic and irresponsible, he grew increasingly bitter and depressed over the years. Money was ever in short supply, since Max had earned a BA and throughout his university career would never receive adequate remuneration to support his family. Fredelle later described them as an "odd pair" (1988: 29) whose marriage lasted 25 years.

For Fredelle "a child represents a second chance at being a perfect person. Inevitably, there's pressure on the child to go farther, achieve more" (1988: 241). Unaware until much later of her motivation – since mothers identify more strongly with daughters than sons, "seeing them more as extensions of themselves, ... Ego boundaries between mothers and daughters are more fluid, more undefined" (Hirsch, 1990: 183)—Fredelle encouraged her daughters to become writers, partly because writing was a skill she herself had found useful in establishing an alternate career, and because she and Max took "sensual pleasure" in language: "For them, language was music. They loved the sound of the human voice delivering the best the English language had to offer" (Maynard, J., 1998: 13).

Although Fredelle does not describe her teaching methods, Joyce does:

> ... in a circle of shabby furniture, surrounded by my father's paintings, my sister and I read our manuscripts aloud for our parents. With file cards and yellow legal pads in hand, they take notes and analyze, one line at a time, every metaphor and choice of adjective. They talk about the rhythm of our sentences, the syntax, the punctuation. My father is a careful and demanding editor, but my mother's criticism is the most exacting. Her instruction is incomparable ... (1998: 39-40)

Unlike Joyce, who casts Fredelle in the dual roles of teacher and nurturer to show how her mother's insistence on mentoring shaped their love, Fredelle focuses on her emotional relationship with her daughter. In her memoir, Fredelle does not distinguish between the practical and emotional sides of mothering and soon appropriates her daughter's pain as her own (1988: 163).

In an important chapter entitled "Two Daughters," Fredelle explores her connections with Rona and Joyce. Written in the form of two letters, Fredelle's most intimate voice is heard here. For her daughters she summons her "singing voice. It is the gift of life—of my rich lonely childhood, a marriage which forced me to confront my deepest feelings, *my suffering love for my children*, my experiences of failure" (1988: 134, [italics mine]). She writes to Joyce:

> Only in these last years have I begun to understand how I trained you to need me, because I needed you. Second child, second daughter, you were born when I had no more hopes for my marriage ... I loved you with a passion I did not then see as dangerous. You were the child who would redeem a disastrous marriage, gratify my parents, enrich and justify my life. (1988: 159-60)

Throughout *The Tree of Life* Fredelle seeks to be "truer" (xxi) to life and experience than she had been earlier in *Raisins and Almonds*, which she had come to regard as a sunnier, less authentic memoir (1988: xxi). A commitment to honesty—despite its attendant pain—is palpable in her words to Joyce. Fredelle writes as the woman who has given Joyce life, has mothered her and prepared her for the writing life. Moreover, she writes as a woman bequeathing her "singing voice" (1988: 134) to the daughter she loves and on whom she has placed "her most ambitious expectations" (Maynard J.,1998: 39).

In her letter to Joyce, Fredelle conflates facets of herself—mother, mentor, and writer—to interpret their abiding connection. A willing "rescuer" (1988: 166), Fredelle has required that Joyce function as "rescuee" (1988: 166), poised to summon mother at will. Writing to her daughter in *The Tree of Life*, Fredelle comes to recognize the folly and cost of such interdependence and offers Joyce liberation. She writes with courage as she examines the ties that have bound her and Joyce, but does not relinquish those ties. Instead, she embraces a view of

herself as imperfect mother and mentor and offers that self to her daughter.

In *At Home in the World* Joyce is determined "to tell the story of a real woman with all her flaws" (3). Like Fredelle—whose second volume of tough and honest (1988: xxi) memoirs appeared after her parents and ex-husband had died—Joyce's commitment to a true account of herself is possible only after the death of her parents. And, like Fredelle, in her latest work Joyce revisits and revises previous representations of people and events. In a prefatory note, she claims: "As painful as parts of this story may be, particularly to people who knew and loved my parents, I believe my mother and father would understand and even celebrate my having found, at last, the freedom to write as I do now" (1998: xiv). Joyce's narrative is framed by her parents, whom she invokes as spiritual overseers of her memoir. As Fredelle did earlier, Joyce acknowledges the blurring of boundaries between herself and her parents, a lifelong problem between "my mother and me ... [whose] view of all things ... has always been mine" (1998: 6, 113).

Joyce also inherited her mother's drive and ambition. From the age of 12, she was "consumed with a desire to win contests, earn money, earn recognition from the world and, above all, from my parents" (1998: 41-42). Fredelle encouraged Joyce, much as her own mother fostered her development. Fredelle and Joyce describe Rona Bruser as having sought professional success for her two daughters. In spite of a traditional Jewish reverence for men—which led her to accept an impoverished life as wife to a loving but unsuccessful shopkeeper in a series of small Saskatchewan towns—she was "a woman of fierce ambition and pride in her children" (1998: 12). At a time when Jewish girls were raised to be wives and mothers, Rona Bruser—perhaps by default, since she had no sons of her own"launched Freidele [later Fredelle] in the study of elocution, the oral presentation of poetry" (1998: 12). Fredelle's father would submit her poetry to local newspapers for publication. When later she went on to win scholarships that took her to the University of Manitoba, the University of Toronto, and Radcliffe, both parents knew education would lead Fredelle away from her roots, since few Jewish men of the time would marry a woman with a doctorate. Despite her anxiety, however, Rona Bruser celebrated her daughter's academic achievement.

Joyce basked in similar encouragement. As a young adolescent, she joined her mother's meetings with students:

> I am so proud of my glorious, brilliant, funny, outrageous mother. I take in every word she tells her students about writing. In between these classes, I sit beside my mother on our couch when she's marking student papers, and read all her comments in the margins. ...
>
> By the time I'm twelve or thirteen, I've heard enough of my mother's comments that when one of her students reads a paper, I know just what she'll say. Everytime I sit down to write, I hear her voice. (1998: 20-21)

In addition to practical advice, Fredelle imparts her view of writing as valuable. The belief she shares with her daughter—that writing is one of life's most significant undertakings—is an inestimable gift meant to celebrate Joyce's abilities and enhance her confidence.

In fact, Joyce's success at age 18 launched her career as writer. Her achievement was coloured, however, by ambivalent feelings: "With the publication of this article, I have not simply accomplished something for my own self. I have vindicated the sacrifices and the terrible disappointments my parents have suffered over the years" (1998: 69). Ironically, Fredelle's similar need to please her parents also took the form of academic success, publications, later marriage and children. Evidently, Joyce internalized Fredelle's belief that achievement belonged as much to her parents as herself.

Joyce was not alone in her ambivalence. As her daughter surpassed her greatest hopes, Fredelle felt shocked. A week following the *New York Times* publication, Fredelle wrote to Joyce who was a freshman at Yale University:

> I have thought of you a great deal this past week, with a mixture of feelings you can imagine: pride, love, anxiety, joy, excitement, apprehension. Also a certain startlement. I never doubted that you would achieve brilliant success, most probably in writing. I just didn't think it would happen so suddenly or so soon, and with such dramatic reverberations. Did we cast you on the tide? Were you ready to be cast? Where will the current carry you? I don't know, but the tide is moving.... (1998: 77)

Having schooled her from a young age, Fredelle took pleasure in Joyce's accomplishment. But daughter and mother both were unnerved by rapid success and the publicity it generated. The tone of Fredelle's letter suggests a mother who feels abandoned by the daughter she always has loved and needed, as she would admit later in *The Tree of Life*. Joyce, on the other hand, felt torn: proud but uncertain, confident but cautious. At the time of publication, she was a teenager who had been raised "deeply isolated in the insular world" (1998: 129) of family. In all likelihood, mother and daughter felt threatened by a success that soon would weaken the insularity and protection of family life.

Nancy Chodorow and Susan Contratto describe the psychological dyad of the mother and child as

> a unique and potent relationship.... It explains why mothers (even in their oppression by patriarchy) are so all-powerful in relation to their children, and why the mother-child relation is likely to be so bound up with powerful feelings. Mother and child are on a psychological desert island ... each is continually impinging and intruding on the other. (1982: 63)

Actually, "An 18-Year-Old Looks Back on Life" marked a division in the "unique and potent" relationship between Fredelle and Joyce. Soon they ceased to be partners: Fredelle's own writing career was established and Joyce began to consult with editors on writing projects. Moreover, Joyce was no longer tied to her bedroom at home in Durham, New Hampshire, once the only place she could settle herself to write. In fact, when given the assignment by the *New York Times*, she had returned home from Yale since:

> All my life I have associated writing with my parents' house. Every entry I ever produced for the *Scholastic Magazine* contest was produced in my bedroom. Every time I finished writing something there, I would call to my parents. My father would make tea and my mother would set homemade cookies on a plate and wheel a tea cart with the tea and cookies and cups into our living room. I would read out loud to them ... Finally they both agreed I had done my best, and my mother would type my work and mail it to the contest.
>
> When I learn that I have an assignment from *The New York Times*, I know that to be successful, I have to go back home to write. (1998: 63)

Soon, however, Joyce was writing magazine articles in a dormitory room at Yale and later in an apartment in New York. Less dependent on her mother for practical assistance, she nonetheless was bound to her emotionally. When, for example, her relationship ended with J. D. Salinger—his hypocrisy and caustic assessment of her parents confused and later angered Joyce—she sought the solace of Fredelle. If she no longer required her mother's advice on writing—how to write crisp, limpid prose; how to pitch ideas to editors; how to write for particular audiences—she still needed her mother "with the groping passion of that little girl lost" (Rich, 1995: 225).

Joyce's adult relationship with Fredelle was "strained" (1998: 226), partly because as "life increasingly resembles my mother's, I find myself resenting her so deeply that it's now almost impossible for us to be together" (1998: 227). Joyce's own unhappy marriage and financial difficulties recalled those endured by Fredelle. By 1977, at the age of 24, Joyce was married and soon pregnant with a daughter (born 1978). She and her husband, Steve Bethel, subsequently had two sons (born 1981 and 1984 respectively), as they struggled to maintain their household on her earnings as a writer and his as a painter. On her part, Fredelle was perplexed by her adult daughter and deliberately distanced herself from Joyce (1998: 251).

The confusion between parent and child had its roots in a relationship that early on melded mothering and mentoring. As the needs of mentor-protégée receded with maturity, the mother-daughter bond was altered irrevocably. Moreover, Fredelle came to relish the new independence of late middle age—she was now a practiced writer and content in a new relationship—while Joyce

came to reject "the teacher" and idealize "the mother," a fantasy of maternal perfection that "has led to the cultural oppression of women in the interest of a child whose needs are also fantasied" (Chodorow and Contratto, 1982: 73). As Marianne Hirsch explains,

> The adult woman who is mother continues to exist only in relation to her child, never as a subject in her own right. And in her maternal function, she remains an object, always distanced, always idealized or denigrated, always mystified, always represented through the small child's point of view. (1989: 167)

In fact, the relationship between mother and adult daughter did not end once Joyce was launched in her own career. Rather, it transmuted into a connection based on similar personal circumstances. Ironically, but not surprisingly, when they reached an impasse in their love, Fredelle and Joyce sought to resolve their difficulties through writing.

Within the culture of patriarchy, it is extremely difficult to be either mother/mentor or daughter/protégée. Patriarchy requires and endorses passive mothering and continues to undermine a mother's desire for her daughter's autonomy. Herein lies the dilemma of a mother who would offer her daughter a practical education and a daughter who looks to her mother for unconditional and unending love. In New Hampshire of the 1950s, Fredelle Bruser Maynard—differentiated from the community of women by citizenship, religion, and education—undertook what Rich terms "courageous mothering" (1995: 246) which required "a strong sense of *self*-nurture in the mother" (1995: 245) herself. Fredelle's will to challenge convention—on her own behalf and that of her daughters—showed her remarkable ability and fortitude.

Rich elaborates: "The most important thing one woman can do for another is illuminate and expand her sense of actual possibilities. For a mother, this means ... trying to expand the limits of her life. *To refuse to be a victim*: and then to go on from there" (1995: 246). When the academy refused her entry, Fredelle sought professional opportunities elsewhere. Although eminently suited to a life of scholarship, she applied her hard-won skills to magazine writing and eventually became a respected journalist. Her volumes of memoirs attest to her wisdom and creativity, gifts that sustained her throughout life. Under difficult personal circumstances, she first eked out and later earned a living that helped support her family. Her achievement was and remains significant.

By her own account, Joyce adored her mother "fiercely and deeply" (1998: xiv), took pride in her brilliance and professional accomplishments. Their adult relationship was difficult, however, when Joyce could not acknowledge that daughters "need mothers who want their own freedom and ours" (Rich, 1995: 247). In *At Home in the World*, Joyce regrets that her early work resonates with Fredelle's voice while I read that blending of writerly voices as a startling success for a young woman. Joyce, in fact, had the benefit of a mother who struggled

to articulate her own voice—and who sought to make that same struggle less arduous for her daughter. For

> [t]he quality of the mother's life—however embattled and unprotected—is her primary bequest to her daughter, because a woman who can believe in herself, who is a fighter, and who continues to struggle to create liveable space around her, is demonstrating to her daughter that these possibilities exist. (Rich, 1995: 247)

Fredelle's "bequest" is Joyce's writerly voice, rich and sonorous with knowledge and experience of the past. That mother and daughter describe a troubled, often painful relationship is not surprising, given the gargantuan task Fredelle undertook in spite of patriarchal resistance to worldly education for girls. Fredelle came to accept the limitations of her role as mother and mentor and in *The Tree of Life* wrote to free her daughter from the bind of their relationship. Joyce, too, came to see that her life's work—writing—was a realization of her mother's wishes for her and a testimony to their love. If she had been raised differently, she admits in *At Home in the World*, "I might not possess the tools to tell this story" (xiv).

I wish to thank Reference Librarian Felicity Pickup, Robarts Library, University of Toronto for her invaluable assistance.

[1]Mothers and daughters who are both writers include Anita Desai and Kiran Desai; Florence Randal Livesay and Dorothy Livesay; Linda Spalding and Esta Spalding; Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Shelley.
[2]For the sake of clarity, I refer simply to Fredelle and Joyce throughout this paper.
[3]Rona Maynard is editor of *Chatelaine*, a magazine for Canadian women.
[4]Joyce Maynard's publications include *Looking Back: A Chronicle of Growing Up Old in the Sixties* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1973); *Baby Love* (New York: Knopf, 1981); *Domestic Affairs: Enduring the Pleasures of Motherhood and Family Life* (New York: Time Books, 1987); *To Die For* (New York: Dutton, 1992); *Where Love Goes* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1995); and *At Home in the World: A Memoir* (New York: Picador, 1998).
[5]Fredelle Bruser Maynard's publications include *Raisins and Almonds* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1972); *Guiding Your Child to a More Creative Life* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1973); *The Child Care Crisis: The Real Costs of Day Care for You—and Your Child* (Markham, O N: Viking Penguin, 1985); and *The Tree of Life* (Markham, ON: Viking Penguin, 1988).

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Joanne Detore-Nakamura

Escape Artist

I recline on the white, wicker sofa
with the green and white stripped cushion
facing the lake and the highway.
The lake is calm, gentle ripples
fold into each other, easing toward the shore.

Just above the bank is the highway.
The roar of cars drown out
the twittering song of a finch
in my leafless Chinese tallow tree.
There is a line of cars like ants
streaming past one by one,
furious to reassemble
a disturbed mound.

This is my quiet solitude—
writing in my journal with a fountain
pen, disturbed by the honking of horns
and the drone of 18-wheelers.

Who am I to suppose that I can escape
from my child's cries, the ding
of dirty dishes, the bark
of a tiny persistent dog, and
the grumbling of a husband

who thinks the house is never
clean enough.

I have no room of my own
or a minute to myself.
There is my 500 pounds –
the food, the diapers,
the dry-cleaning of men's suits,
the mortgage– there, there
his dirty underwear hangs halfway off
the hamper, dingy yellow with
a stretched out waistband,
fodder for the trash heap months ago.
There is no poetry in that.

Beth Martin Birky

Katherine Anne Porter's "The Grave"

Women's Writing and Re-visioning Memory

> Re-vision—the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction—is for women more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival. Until we can understand the assumptions in which we are drenched we cannot know ourselves. And this drive to self-knowledge, for women, is more than a search for identity: it is part of our refusal of the self-destructiveness of male-dominated society. A radical critique of literature, feminist in its impulse, would take the work first of all as a clue to how we live, how we have been living, how we have been led to imagine ourselves, how our language has trapped as well as liberated us, how the very act of naming has been till now a male prerogative, and know we can begin to see and name—and therefore live—afresh.
>
> —Adrienne Rich, "When We Dead Awaken," (1979: 35)

In my Women's Studies classes, I often frame the objective and methodology of the class in terms of Adrienne Rich's classic statement of feminist "re-visioning." In "When We Dead Awaken," Rich models the personal and political dynamics of feminist literary criticism and calls literary critics to examine assumptions of a patriarchal society, search for new understanding self and society, and build new structures for living and understanding "afresh." I call the students to ask questions that expose male-dominated structures and to give voice to women's strength in their own writing, hoping that their way of living and seeing will be transformed. But there are significant elements in Rich's call that I have overlooked while keeping my eyes only on the texts and my students: *survival, self-knowledge,* and *identity*. These words call me to a more personal form of re-visioning, to consider the effect my reading and

criticism of women's literature has on how *I* live, how *I* understand myself, and how *I* survive as a woman in a patriarchal society.

Feminist reading as survival? Certainly, I must mean writing as survival. The relationship of women's voice and survival have long been a part of feminist literary criticism. In *A Room of One's Own*, Virginia Woolf (1929) creates Shakespeare's sister, a fictional female artist who Woolf says could only have met an early and ignominious death. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *Madwoman in the Attic*—an early feminist literary analysis of nineteenth-century women writers—examines literary representations of female madness as fictional manifestations of the female writer's thwarted voice. In "The Laugh of the Medusa," Hélène Cixous also articulates importance of women's writing, or what the French feminist theorists call *l'ecriture feminine,* to women's identity:

> I shall speak about women's writing: about what it will do. Woman must write her self: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies—for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal. Woman must put herself into the text—as into the world and into history—by her own movement. (1991: 354)

But what will women's writing do for the feminist reader who gathers words and images from *l'ecriture feminine* as a way of understanding her experience as a woman, of putting the text into life in a female body? Can reading offer a strategy for survival?

In September of 2000, I lost a baby 14 weeks into my pregnancy. After having heard the baby's heartbeat at ten weeks, I returned for a monthly exam and the sonogram amplified only an immense silence. The next 24 hours were a physical and emotional hell, but Katherine Anne Porter's short story, "The Grave," one of her many Miranda stories, surfaced in the midst of the very real physical pain of losing a child, and I realized later that women's language helped me find a way of moving back into my body after that devastating loss. I used *l'ecriture feminine* as an act of survival.

Suggesting an association of the female body and reading or writing ventures into the controversial area of essentialism in feminist theory. Do biological arguments risk defining women only by their bodies, a strategy used historically to restrict women's lives? Do constructivist arguments deny meaningful biological realities of being a woman, suppressing women's uniqueness in an intellectual framework? In 1952, Simone de Beauvoir, an influential French philosopher, examined the physical realities of women's experience in *The Second Sex*, even as she described significant cultural forces shaping female experience. Wading through biological detail—ovaries, uterus, glands, lactation—de Beauvoir begins her thorough, albeit now dated, analysis of female biology to answer the question, "What is a woman?"

> These biological considerations are extremely important. In the history of woman they play a part of the first rank and constitute an essential element in her situation.... For, the body being the instrument of our grasp upon the world, the world is bound to seem a very different thing when apprehended in one manner or another. This accounts for our lengthy study of the biological facts; they are one of the keys to the understanding of woman. But I deny that they establish for her a fixed and inevitable destiny. They are insufficient for setting up a hierarchy of the sexes; they fail to explain why woman is the Other; they do not condemn her to remain in this subordinate role forever. (1974: 36)

It would be too simplistic to suggest that feminist critics, theorists, and writers have only two alternatives for exploring the connection between the female body, experience, knowing, and writing: essentialist or constructivist. Feminist writers and readers have ventured into the vast and shifting realm between the social construction and bodily experience of their lives as women, between the distancing offered through language and the immediacy of physical space.

In her collection of essays titled *Voice Lessons: On Becoming a (Woman) Writer,* Nancy Mairs examines closely the idea of "writing the body," particularly in her choice to write personal essays rather than literary criticism and in her ongoing physical deterioration due to multiple sclerosis. In giving voice to her own embodied experience, Mairs creates "textual femininity" but questions what *l'ecriture feminine* really means for her as a writer. Could she, for example, write a "textual femininity—of all that can never be said lying between and beneath the words on the page—unattached to some human form whose breasts and belly ... insist upon its femaleness" (1994: 73)? Or can her writing relate to "real women ... warm and wet and fragrant and surprisingly durable, occupying some space, some time, who have (whether reasonably or not) believed themselves not men and have therefore experienced some difference whereby they have been known to represent themselves as women" (73). Whatever "femininity" is, she suggests, "it is *theirs*, it attaches to them as female human beings as it does not to male human beings, because they bear the weight of centuries of living according to certain terms" (74). Mairs refuses to separate mind and body, language and experience. In her writing, Mairs argues, she tries to "sustain a kind of intellectual double vision: to see the feminine *both* as that which language represses and renders unrepresentable by any human being, male or female, *and* as that which in social, political, and economic terms represents experiences peculiar to the female. I want my femininity both ways—indeed, I want it as many ways as I can get it. I am the woman writer" (74).

Mairs suggests that women's writing, creative or personal or analytical, inherently engages gender constructions with lived physical experience in a

woman's body. She cannot help but write what she knows in her mind and has experienced in her body as a white, middle class, educated, heterosexual, crippled woman. She states boldly, "This is the body who works here." Within Mairs' framework of female voice and body, I could identify another type of "textual femininity" and assert that, for me, *this is the body who reads here.* In this essay, I want to describe the powerful effect of reading women's writing, *l'ecriture feminine*, on my experience as a woman, particularly the painful, unscripted moments in life. Like Cixous, I will consider "women's writing: about what it will do" for a female reader, for me. A feminist critic may re-vision a literary text, but the feminist reader may put the text "into [her] world and into [her] history—by her own movement" (1991: 354).

In *The Resisting Reader*, an early feminist analysis of American literature using reader-response theory, Judith Fetterley describes vividly the subtle undermining of a woman reading only from the masculine point of view:

> In such fictions the female reader is co-opted into participation in an experience from which she is explicitly excluded; she is asked to identify with a selfhood that defines itself in opposition to her; she is required to identify against herself. (1978: xiii)

I first experienced Porter's writing as a junior in college in the early 1980s, after completing an introductory literature course centered on the theme "Fathers and Sons"; an American novel class that covered 150 years and ten novels, all written by men; a British Literature survey spanning 1800 years that included no female authors. Strangely enough, I did not miss the female voice at that point in my reading and critical experience. Reading solely from the male perspective had connected me to many truths, but, as Fetterley points out, at a great cost to my female mind and spirit. Fetterley argues that my lack of reading from the female perspective was more than just intellectual neglect:

> To be excluded from a literature that claims to define one's identity is to experience a peculiar form of powerlessness—not simply the powerlessness which derives from not seeing one's experience articulated, clarified, and legitimized in art, but more significantly the powerlessness which results from the endless division of self against self, the consequence of the invocation to identify as male while being reminded that to be male—to be universal, to be American—is to be *not female.* (1978: xiii)

Having been trained to look at female characters from a male's perspective, I was shocked by a sense of familiarity when I first read "The Grave." I experienced empowering recognition of myself in Miranda's perspective, responses, and truths. According to Fetterley's theory, I was tapping into a powerful force in Porter's story because

> Consciousness is power. To create a new understanding of our literature is to make possible a new effect of that literature on us. And to make possible a new effect is in turn to provide the conditions for changing the culture that the literature reflects. ... Feminist criticism provides that point of view and embodies that consciousness. (1978: xix-xx)

That semester I treasured Porter's "The Grave," along with the other women's writing included in the American literary canon of the past 150 years. And twenty years later, when my memory of Porter's "The Grave" leaped from its "burial place" into my "mind's eye," I received the power I needed to deal with the unfamiliar ground of seeing my own unborn child. As a feminist reader, I have experienced a new understanding of my life *in* a female body not only through my own experience, but also the feminine consciousness and power portrayed in Porter's story.

All of Porter's Miranda stories offer a wonderful example of text as "re-visioning" in character (*Miranda* suggests *to see*), content, theme, and style. In "The Grave," Porter focuses on Miranda's navigation of external gender expectations, concrete physical embodiments of female sexuality, and internal discoveries. Porter creates a textual femininity, or as Mairs says, "all that can never be said lying between and beneath the words on the page," but she also shows how feminine consciousness surfaces in a space where the physical and intellectual experience of a female converge, if only for fleeting moments. From the opening with nine-year-old Miranda and her twelve-year-old brother Paul clamoring into the fenced family cemetery to peer into its empty graves to Miranda's concluding vision, twenty years later, of a buried memory, "The Grave" traces Miranda's negotiation of the inner and outer forces of female experience and extends the same possibility to its readers. In my reading of "The Grave," I do not want to examine the text at arm's length or scrutinize it under a microscope. I want to re-vision this story, to draw it close to my own body and miscarriage experience. In the following pages, I weave between text and life, analysis and memory, in order to map the space between language and experience where I have gained understanding, some healing, and, most important, some trust in my body, a body I have sometimes cursed for what feels like its betrayal of me and my dreams for motherhood.

By titling this story "The Grave," Porter leads us directly to the physical reality of death and decay. Miranda's grandmother, the family matriarch, has twice transported her husband's bones to new graves, the last in a rural Texan farm that prospered under her control. Miranda and her older brother Paul, aged nine and twelve, venture out on an ordinary hunting excursion and come upon the empty graves left gapping open following the third and final transplant of family coffins in a public cemetery. Nature dominates this place with "tangled rose bushes and ragged cedar trees and cypress, the simple flat stones rising out of uncropped sweet-smelling wild grass" (1974: 1546).

Porter's description stresses the relationship between Miranda's instinct and behavior, as she "leaped into the pit that had held her grandfather's bones. Scratching around aimlessly and pleasurably as any young animal, she scooped up a lump of earth and weighed it in her palm. It had a pleasantly sweet, corrupt smell" (1546). Miranda contemplates the "lump of earth" as a god might consider creation, the shaping of humanity from the earth, or death, "from dust to dust."

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After conceiving our two children with medical assistance, my husband and I were surprised when I got pregnant the "natural" way. Anticipation and dread battled within me. I had already lost two pregnancies at six and nine weeks, so I woke each day feeling hesitant, uncertain that we had actually created a life that would last, another little person to join our family. After hearing the heart beat at ten weeks, I relaxed. We shared the news, fairly certain that this pregnancy, after nearly a decade of trying to have children, would be my last. Madeline was four and Hugh two—"a girl and a boy," as people were fond of commenting, as if I would not have been as pleased with two sons or two daughters—and I was already 39, with many scars from infertility work, two miscarriages, and two caesarian-sections.

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In her grave digging, Miranda discovers a small object, a "silver dove no larger than a hazel nut, with spread wings and a neat fan-shaped tail. The breast had a deep round hollow in it" (Porter, 1974: 1546). As discoverer, Miranda examines the figure very closely, looking inside to find little whorls, a very feminine detail that suggests a woman's labial and vaginal opening, its roundness and layers burrowing deeper to an unseen core. Her call to Paul "that she had found something, he must guess what..." is stopped mid-sentence by Paul's shouting, "I've got something too!" Paul has found a gold ring, perhaps a wedding band carved with flowers and leaves, symbolic of the social covenant, the "natural" binding of male to female by convention. Miranda's wonder at the dove turns to desire for the ring. Even after a swap and Paul's taunting that the dove is the screw head for a coffin, Miranda is content with the perfect-fitting gold ring.

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Ultrasounds combine the internal and external in a very odd, somewhat disconcerting way.

The technician punched numbers into formulas, hit return, covered my abdomen with a jelly-like substance, and ran the cold, crescent-shaped wand over my belly. In the darkened room, we looked intently at the black, fan-shaped area on the computer screen where the landscape of my uterus would be mapped. This ultrasound was similar to previous ones where a doctor or technician interpreted gray shadows, sketchy white lines as the dark circles of mature egg follicles, as the pulsing light of Madeline's heartbeat, as a lima-bean sized Hugh, or as the empty amniotic sacs of two aborted pregnancies. It is almost unfathomable that I could lie prone on a table,

bladder full to contrast with the uterus, and glimpse such miraculous, secret information. But with all the medical technology we had used in the past six years, I embraced technology's truths. I wanted to know more about the innermost secrets of a body that withheld so much from me. This ultrasound was tense; we wanted confirmation of the life we had heard a month earlier. The technician identified parts of a perfect little baby—outlining the skull, spine, arms, legs, feet, hands on the screen. A doctor entered to offer an official reading and examined the screen as the technician's wand probed deeply under my ribs and low towards my pelvis. She simply nodded to the technician and left the room without a word. I feebly asked, "Is there a heart beat?" The technician shook her head, eyes focused on the keyboard. "No," she said. "I'm sorry." I had known the answer all along, but the definitive truth pierced my stomach and I drew in my breath, warding off tears. Avoiding Dave's eyes or touch, I went to the bathroom. Sitting on the stool, I pummeled my stomach with clenched fists and began to cry.

*****

In Miranda's graveyard exploration, feminine instinct is modeled in Miranda's comfort with the soil and her curiosity about the dove; feminine and masculine constructions are opposed through the dove and the ring; feminine interpretation is framed by masculine definition as Paul claims and names the silver dove. Miranda's instincts differ from Paul's, but her discovery is repeatedly negotiated through masculine structures, as the remainder of the story bears out. Even their hunting trip is fueled by Paul's authority:

> On these expeditions Miranda always followed at Paul's heels along the path, obeying instructions about handling her gun when going through fences; learning how to stand up properly so it would not slip and fire unexpectedly; how to wait her time for a shot and not just bang away in the air without looking, spoiling shots for Paul, who really could hit things if given a chance. (Porter, 1974: 1546)

While having her own urges to shoot, with "no proper sense of hunting at all," Miranda prefers walking over shooting, even though it means enduring her brother's commands, frustration, and disgust. Porter establishes clear gender differences in the children's attitudes and actions but stresses the artificiality of external gender differences by dressing both Miranda and Paul in overalls, shirt, straw hat, and sandals that differ only in color. Miranda's clothing symbolizes her unusual relationship to patriarchal structures. Having lost her mother when she was two, Miranda and her siblings lived under her father's lack of concern for social custom and endured the community's criticism of "the motherless family. . . running down, with the Grandmother no longer there to hold it together" (Porter, 1974: 1547). Even at age nine, Porter points out, Miranda's intuition, "her powerful social sense, which was like a fine set of antennae radiating from every pore of her skin," made her keenly aware that "the year was 1903, and in the back country the law of female decorum had teeth in it" (1547).

Porter stresses that external social structures frame Miranda's responses, as when community women "slanted their gummy old eyes side-ways at the granddaughter and said, 'Ain't you ashamed of yoself, Missy? It's aginst the Scriptures to dress like that," and when "the ring, shining with the serene purity of fine gold on her rather grubby thumb turned her feelings against her overalls and sockless feet" (1547). When Miranda longs for a cold bath, fresh talcum powder, and a dress, Porter distances us from those desires, commenting that those desires related to a "family legend of past wealth and leisure" (1547). Miranda wasn't, Porter suggests, feeling inner stirrings of a desire for external femininity, simply a desire for comfort.

*****

After talking with my gynecologist, we decided to go through with a delivery of the dead fetus, rather than wait for a spontaneous abortion that could occur in hours or weeks. We started treatment that afternoon. Back home, I left Dave to the telephone calls and childcare arrangements while I gathered things I might need at the hospital. Reaching into the closet for my robe, I saw the maternity clothes I had just unpacked the weekend before. Methodically, I removed the multi-colored challis top I bought in Chicago when I was pregnant with Madeline, the vest my mom had made, the black slacks with their stretchy stomach panel. I folded them in a stack on the floor. Dave was startled to find me surrounded by clothes but quietly accepted my explanation, "I don't need these anymore." Together we boxed up the clothes and put them in the next room to be taken to Goodwill.

*****

Miranda's internal feminine desire surfaces less unfettered by external expectations when her brother Paul prepares to skin a newly shot rabbit, slits open its stomach, and encounters a uterine sack of unborn baby rabbits. While Paul reacts first with silent amazement and then with a fearful threat not to tell their father, Miranda's response is more complex. Porter leads the reader inward once again, first to the baby rabbits themselves, with a detailed description of the female rabbit's "long fine muscles with the silvery flat strips binding them to the joints," the "scarlet bag" that contains a "bundle of tiny rabbits, each wrapped in a thin scarlet veil." As Paul pulls and exposes each tiny rabbit, like an anatomist delving into secrets of the body, Miranda touches them, their "dark gray, their sleek wet down lying in minute even ripples, like a baby's head just washed, their unbelievably small delicate ears folded close, their little blind faces almost featureless" (Porter, 1974: 1548). Pulling us toward life—rabbits burrowed within the mother's womb—and death—their grandfather's bones, Porter lets the two co-exist as Paul "buried the young rabbits again in their mother's body ... and hid her away" (1548).

*****

Under the influence of a drug to induce labor, my body went through the painful process of delivery, and I found myself vacillating between physical immediacy and intellectual distancing. Of course, pain seared through much of my experience:

stomach straining with each wretch, legs with a bone-deep ache shifting against coarse cotton sheets, the burning twists of my uterus expelling the small, lifeless fetus that was no longer connected to my body. I hardly had room for any consciousness other than an effort to regulate my breathing, control my sobs, muffle involuntary groans. My mind raced for refuge in some idea, some memory that could order the onslaught of pain. It wasn't possible. Only after I had slipped into a morphine-induced sleep and woke covered with sweat, freed from immediate pain, did my thoughts surface. As I regained some mental and emotional reigns, I found myself detaching from my body. The early morning darkness crept in through the windows, warded off only by a small light over the sink where the nurse scribbled notes, creating an account of my body before calling the doctor for a check. I was conscious of the stillness, expectant but full of dread. I stifled the urge to scream "Stop," wanting this moment to cease, a final blip on a dark computer screen. My doctor, who had kept an all-night vigil with us even though he wasn't on call, entered the room and washed his hands quietly, funneling his usually booming bass into a gentle murmur of directions to the nurse. He patted my leg and offered a warm smile, his sad eyes betraying the truth of what he would find. He reached into my vagina, plastic-covered fingers pursing for entry, thrusting inward, expanding to glide around the slippery perimeter and to gently push the small fetus, no bigger than a small bird, out into the world.

As in any pelvic exam, I felt like a spectator, gazing through the frame of my pale, shaking thighs, knees pointing upward like sentinels securing a sacred space for the doctor to enter, push, explore, and retreat. I restrained my urge to resist the doctor's probing, but I could not obey his reminder to relax and breath. I was unable to connect what ran through my mind with the physical sensations of metal against flesh, hand into opening, pressure against a pinching cervix. So when the doctor and nurse bent more closely over the end of the bed and shifted their focus away from my body to that of the fetus, I felt confused and abandoned. Certainly they could not be looking at something unrelated to my flesh, blood, and cramping. All I had felt was a brief gushing of warm fluid that lingered coldly now on my labia and thighs. "What are they looking at?" I thought. My consciousness of the fetus was not fully developed as it would have been in the latter months of gestation when kicks and thrusts negotiated the boundaries between body and baby. So when the doctor asked if I wanted to see, I really didn't know how to answer. Standing at my left shoulder, Dave clenched my hand tightly in response, as if he could hold me back from knowledge, could ward off the pain of what we had been experiencing for the past eighteen hours. I pulled myself forward and looked past the sentry knees at what was supposed to be our third child. We gazed down at a very real body, only about 4 inches long, pinkish gray ligaments that formed a torso, arms and legs; that connected delicate feet and hands to limbs; that curved into a head that held eyes, nose, mouth, ears. And there were the budding ridges of her tiny labia. The fetus was a little girl, a little girl that had been, as the Psalmist said, knit together in my womb. I reached back for Dave's hand again as the doctor's gloved fingers prodded gently at her arms and legs, observing quietly that the spongy tissue indicated she had died several days earlier. "You can touch her, if you like," he offered. I felt Dave take a step back, but I slipped my hands under her tissue bed and

lifted her closer. She was practically weightless. With her limbs reaching out and chin tucked, she looked as if she had been dancing. I couldn't actually touch her, feeling torn between wanting to examine her carefully, like a precious unearthed treasure, and wanting to close my eyes and imagine her as my little girl. I couldn't help thinking that I had glimpsed some mystery of life that I did not have had the right to see. I did not know what to do with the image of that tiny little girl, so perfect yet incomplete, so real yet so ephemeral. I wouldn't call my feeling horror, really, more like hesitation, caution, a sense of the aweful wonder and sadness that this moment was even made possible.

*****

As Miranda observes the unborn rabbits revealed from within the mother's body, she encounters the tangible embodiment of the physical bonds of human existence and connects the sight with emotion and emotion with knowledge that is both intellectual and intuitive:

> Miranda said, "Oh, I want to *see,*" under her breath. She looked and looked—excited but not frightened, for she was accustomed to the sight of animals killed in hunting—filled with pity and astonishment and a kind of shocked delight in the wonderful little creatures for their own sakes, they were so pretty. She touched one of them ever so carefully, "Ah, there's blood running over them." (Porter, 1974: 1548)

The desire to know the truth of her own body leads Miranda to act without thinking and to experience —to look, to touch. Miranda's action leads to a formless, yet very physical, knowledge, and "she began to tremble without knowing why. Yet she wanted most deeply to see and to know. Having seen, she felt at once as if she had known all along. The very memory of her former ignorance faded, she had always known just this" (1548). Miranda's trembling suggests that the body knows even before the mind comprehends. Although "no one had ever told her anything outright," Miranda assumes that Paul must already have this knowledge, and "she knew now a part at least of what he knew." Although Miranda measures her new knowledge against patriarchal wisdom, the reader sees that her knowledge is very different from Paul's, because "she understood a little of the secret, formless intuitions in her own mind and body, which had been clearing up, taking form, so gradually and so steadily she had not realized that she was learning what she had to know" (1548). The relationship of the female body to creation and the fragile balance between life and death is an emotional and physical truth; what Miranda "had to know" was already in "her own mind *and* body" [emphasis mine] (1548). A female does not consciously move from body to mind or mind to body; the two form a wisdom buried deep within the layers of her body and spirit.

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It was over. The doctor and nurse gone, the fetus gone, our little girl gone. Dave

left to check on the kids. I slept fitfully, moments surfacing in my mind: that split second between the hopeful anticipation of the heartbeat and the painful knowledge of death; my maternity clothes buried in boxes; the baby's tiny arms spread outward. None of my thoughts fit in any framework I had received as a woman and mother. What do I do with what just happened, with what I had just seen? As they wheeled me toward the operating room to remove any stray uterine tissue with a D&C (dilatation and curettage), my mind was pulled into Porter's story, "The Grave." I retraced Miranda's steps through the cemetery, through the woods, two steps behind her older brother. Remembering the scene with the baby rabbits, I saw Miranda bend over the slit amniotic sac and run her fingers along their slick, silken heads, their closed eyes, their curled legs. I suddenly recognized that this had happened before; other women have seen the miraculous shape of life in the shadow of a small, unmoving fetus. Although I cannot escape the image in my mind of those fragile dancing limbs, I have found a place to lay this experience, to return to it, to remember and know. Closing my eyes, awaiting the veil of the anesthetic to fall, I decided to name the baby Miranda.

*****

When Porter's story ends 20 years later in a marketplace in India, nature again saturates the scene: the heat, the market smell of "raw flesh and wilting flowers, was like the mingled sweetness and corruption she had smelled that other day in the empty cemetery at home" (1974: 1548). Porter again focuses on Miranda's internal discoveries, and this time her memory serves as the burial place. At age nine, Miranda's discovery of what "she had known all along" had not led to any miraculous external change. She had told no one and the memory "sank quietly into her mind and was heaped over by accumulated thousands of impressions" (1548). At age twenty-nine, when "the memory leaped from its burial place before her mind's eye," Miranda encounters a vendor who holds up "dyed sugar sweets, in the shapes of all kinds of small creatures: birds, baby chicks, baby rabbits, lambs, baby pigs," their bright colors and sweet smell merging with the "crushed refuse of a market" (1548). As she stops, "the scene before her eyes dimmed by the vision back of them," Miranda's inner vision takes over once again, suggesting that the buried wisdom of twenty years ago, the intuition of body and mind that she had experienced that childhood summer day, could still provide an avenue to understanding (1548). But the story does not end with Miranda rediscovering a body truth. Instead, the closing image is of "her brother, whose childhood face she had forgotten, standing again in the blazing sunshine, again twelve years old, a pleased sober smile in his eyes, turning the silver dove over and over in his hands" (1548). She sees her brother's control over that experience, over the graveyard treasures, and over the knowledge revealed through the unborn rabbits. Her internal truth, the knowledge in her mind and body, had been suppressed, layered over by her brother's command not "to tell," the silencing that kept her from describing and sharing her own truth.

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Beth Martin Birky

I recovered quickly from the physical experience of my miscarriage, and my body truth was buried beneath layers of narratives I was handed for naming my grief, even though none fit what I had been experiencing. Shortly after the baby was delivered, the nurse brought me and Dave a small green fabric memento box, the hospital's gift to grieving parents. A booklet inside contained prompts for recording my experience: How had I found out I was pregnant? What had been my hopes for the baby? The nurse explained that they had photographed the baby before sending the body to the lab and would keep the picture on file. Even though I may not want the photo now, she confided, I could call anytime and ask for a copy. When the lab report indicated only that the fetus was completely normal, doctors offered us different explanations, or lack of explanations, for why a baby would die so unexpectedly. "Each day in the life of a fetus brings change and offers some new test for survival. Sometimes things just do not develop as they should." Friends bought us a tree and asked to help plan a small memorial service and tree planting in our yard. I did appreciate the hugs, flowers, and meals we received, especially the simple statements, "I'm so very sorry." But I could not go forward with a memorial service. I wanted to tell them that I didn't give a damn about symbols: names, trees, flowers, ceremonies. All of that has nothing to do with what has happened and is still happening within me, in my body. That small bundle of tissue was never a baby, only a fetus, only the beginning of a life, a cumulative bundle of cells lost from my body. How do you memorialize that?

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Porter ends "The Grave" with Paul's "pleased sober smile" as he holds the silver dove. She does not offer us an account of what Miranda will do with her vision. If the silver dove represents a feminine construction, then the story suggests that artificial constructions of feminine meaning cannot escape masculine control. Male exchanges, male exploration, male slicing open and burying the female physical experience, all are layered over her own knowledge of life's secrets and her life as a woman. Perhaps, as on that day twenty years earlier, Miranda's memory will allow her again to feel that "the very memory of her former ignorance faded, she had always known just this" (1974: 1547). Or perhaps, the unarticulated truths of female experience may surface into knowledge and language. Perhaps Miranda will react to her brother's smile, representing all the smugness of patriarchal authority, as her Grandmother had, by wresting power from patriarchal hands and creating her own story. But then again, Porter's title "The Grave," might suggest that Miranda's discovery will sink again to a burial place deep within her mind and body. As a writer, Porter unearths the graves that hold her past, testifies to her own understanding and truth, abandon the gold ring and creates her own precious silver dove to turn over and over in her hands.

****

When I returned to my Women in Literature class after the miscarriage, I was able to share my experience, titling my reflections "Why I do feminist criticism." I

didn't break down. I calmly read my script with descriptive details and a comparison to Porter's short story. I asserted for them my belief that I am a different person because of the women's literature and feminist criticism I study and teach. And I do feminist theory because I believe that reading and teaching from a feminist perspective can change my life and others' lives. I want to read, critique, and teach, I told them, with the knowledge that each person's experience, varied and complex as it may be, is a powerful component in the making of meaning in and from a text. Combining the personal and the textual isn't the only way to learn or to make meaning, but it can be a very powerful means of survival. By the baby's due date in March, I was ready for the tree planting ceremony beautifully and intimately led by some close friends and our parents. I put away a small pitcher dotted with delicate blue flowers that I had been filling with a miniature rose each week since the miscarriage, a small ritual that kept my healing process part of each day's consciousness.

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As open-ended as this story is, Porter's careful crafting of the story through language, metaphor, and action is similar to the beautiful silver dove, crafted as a coffin's screw head, bearing testimony to other layers of unperceived meaning. Just as Miranda held the small dove to the blazing sunlight and examined the hole bored into its center, Porter asks the reader to hold this scene to the light, to trace the layers of meaning. The burial places in this story—the grave, the rabbit's body, Miranda's intuition and memory—contrast with Paul's hunting, killing, and hiding. The artificial constructions—the gold ring, the silver dove, overalls and thin dresses, sugar sweet animal candies—contrast with natural constructions of grass, flowers, soil, rabbits, flesh. The sights and smells contain paradoxes and evoke paradoxical truths: sweet but corrupt, delightful and aweful. Porter is not offering us a specific truth, except that we each contain "secret, formless intuitions in [our] own mind[s] and bod[ies]" (1974: 1548). The surfacing and sinking of inner truth offers a fleeting glimpse of one form of knowledge, the knowledge in body *and* mind. In the story's action, the two are inseparable. The fingers caked with dirt don a gold ring; fingers slip along the blood-covered body of the baby rabbit and a young girl senses the physical embodiment of desire within herself. Feet "picking [their] way among the puddles and crushed refuse" lead to a woman's memory of the limiting of her knowledge and voice. The grave as "just a hole in the ground" (1546) and Grave as symbol for the mystery of physical and spiritual truths. Body and mind, action and reflection, practice and theory are not dialectically opposed but intimately connected, thought infusing experience in unexpected and inspired ways.

With that ambiguity and process of remembering and understanding and acting in mind, I turn to my own experience. Over the past 20 years, while not lying exactly dormant like Miranda's memory of the baby rabbits, this story has been part of my understanding of the way my work as a mother is balanced with teaching and writing, of the way my body can be the source of the awesome

power of pregnancy and childbirth or the fearful powerlessness of infertility and miscarriage, of the way my desire for understanding is buried in physical and emotional experience and always, without ceasing, of the way my reading women's literature can frame the unexpected and incomprehensible moments of my life.

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Rishma Dunlop

Archives of Desire
Rewriting Maternal History in Daphne Marlatt's Ana Historic

> to be there from the first. indigene. *ingenuus* (born in), native, natural, free(born) – at home from the beginning.
>
> *
>
> she longed for it.
>
> —Daphne Marlatt, 1988, *Ana Historic*,127

> i learned that history is the real story the city fathers tell of the only important events in the world. a tale of their exploits hacked out against a silent backdrop of trees, of wooden masses. so many claims to fame. so many ordinary men turned into heroes. (where are the city mothers?)
>
> —Daphne Marlatt, *Ana Historic*, 28

In her opening address at the 1995 Western Literature Association Conference in Vancouver, British Columbia, Daphne Marlatt described her interests in how one comes to see place as home, in what constitutes belonging in writing, and in the perception of self in community. Marlatt explores these concerns in her novel *Ana Historic,* which provides us with an example of what Homi Bhaba (1994) calls "a radical revision in the concept of human community." This revision of community is played out in the setting of the male-dominated world of Hastings Mill, Vancouver circa 1873, and in the world of contemporary Vancouver through the voice of Annie, Marlatt's narrator. The "radical" elements in this revision are found in Marlatt's technique of juxtaposing this

history and genealogy against efforts to create new discursive contexts to embody and articulate desires circumscribed by gender and sexuality. In this way, the novel becomes a rewriting of women's history and maternal history.

Ana Historic proposes and exemplifies ways of rewriting or revisioning the possibilities of living in the world, one in which the historical past has considered only male journeys—an imagined fraternity, yet, ironically, one which repeatedly genders nations as female. As Annie, the narrator of *Ana Historic,* states about her historian husband, Richard: "he was dreaming without her in some place she had no access to."

Marlatt and her narrator Annie explore the disruption and the erasure of maternal history within a paternal geneaology. Together they create new maps, new places in which to live, new ways of writing history. They negotiate access, entry into the world, finding place for the woman writer giving birth to creative work in "a cold country." In Marlatt's essay "Entering In," she writes: "Looking back, i think that most of my writing has been a vehicle for entry into what was for me the new place, the new world" (1981: 219).

Similarly, Annie's entry in to a new terrain is through the imagining and recreation of the story of Mrs. Richards, a historical figure with only a few lines recorded in the archival history of Vancouver. Annie's text forms a poetic narrative from bits and pieces of archival material, excerpts from *The Tickler* (the town's newspaper), official and unofficial writing Annie composes about Mrs. Richards; imaginary conversations between Annie and Ina, her mother. Within the patriarchal framework of Annie's/Ina's/Mrs. Richard's life/lives, Annie imagines her historian husband's dismissive response to the disjunctive nature of her written text:

> "but what are you doing" I can imagine Richard saying, looking up from the pages with which he must confront his students over their papers: this doesn't go anywhere, you're just circling around the same idea—and all these bits and pieces thrown in—that's not how you use quotations. (Marlatt, 1988: 81)

Women's writing in the revisionist sense of Marlatt's book is embodied in the image of "'a woman sitting at her kitchen table writing'... as if her hand holding the pen could embody the very feel of a life (Marlatt, 1988: 45)." L'écriture feminine in *Ana Historic* becomes a flow of red ink, the writing that emerges from the history of the interior life, marked with women's lifeblood and fluids, of menstruation, of labour, of giving birth. As Marlatt writes: "the mark of myself, my inscription in blood. i'm here. scribbling again" (90). This writing of the interior, becomes in Marlatt's text, a response to questions around the silences of women, the absences of women in history. The excision of women from history is aligned metaphorically with images of infertility, barrenness, and with the historical suppression of the childbearing body: "hystery. the excision of women (who do not act but are acted upon).

hysterectomy, the excision of wombs and ovaries by repression" (88). Marlatt's text attempts to respond to what would happen if women were to write their own stories, in this blood-red ink. *Ana Historic* becomes a response to Ana' s question: " the silence of women/if they could speak/ an unconditioned language/what would they say?" (75).

Ana becomes an acronym for the names of the three women—Annie, narrator, writer, voice; Annie's mother Ina; and Mrs. Richards (named Ana by Annie). Ana, *ana*—defined in the dictionary as that which can be reversed—a contradiction, a paradox—ana historic. Annie's research for her husband ends in her own research or a project of her own, a mapping, a creation of female genealogy, recovering and constructing self, rewriting a history in which the symbolic community embodies the cultural inheritances of mother to daughter to mother. Annie reflects:

> o the cultural labyrinth of our inheritance, mother to daughter to mother...
> ...hours of nothing slipped through their doors. bathrobe
> sleeping beauties gone in a trice, a trance, embalmed, waiting for a kiss
> to wake them when their kids, their men would finally come home.
> how peaceful i thought, how i longed for it. a woman's place. safe.
> suspended out of the swift race of the world.
>
> the monstrous lie of it: the lure of absence. self-effacing.
> (Marlatt, 1988: 24)

As Foucault states, the genealogist reverses the practice of historians—"their pretension to examine things furthest from themselves." The genealogist must find sources for historical analysis "in the most unpromising places, in what we tend to feel is without history" (1977: 139-40).

So the task of the genealogist is to explore silenced or subjugated knowledges. In this way, Annie gives voice to the experience of women, like the city mothers, who are not considered worthy of the books of history. By acknowledging the texts of the body and denying traditional perceptions of women's felt experience as unworthy or without history, Annie's project rejects the erasure of women in "history's voice" (Marlatt, 1988: 48). She must engage in history, but she must read it and write it against the grain:

> she is writing her desire to be, in the present tense, retrieved from silence, each morning she begins with all their names. she has taught them to say, "present, Mrs. Richards, " and so, each morning she begins with her name, a name that is not really hers. each evening she enters her being, nameless, in the book

> she is writing against her absence. for nothing that that surrounds
> her is absent. far from it. (Marlatt, 1988: 47)

> i wasn't dreaming of history, the already
> made, but of making fresh tracks my own way...
> (Marlatt, 1988: 98)

Marlatt writes against the grain of the conventional novel, "making fresh tracks" her own way, against the conventions of the sentence: all of a sudden, floating on the page, the reader encounters—"a book of interruptions is not a novel" (Marlatt, 1988: 37).

The novel begins with the question "Who's There?" As the narrative unfolds, Annie answers the question through a recovery of the semiotic, and of embodied experience, pushing against historical "fact," the "(f)" stop of act," the frame of perception in history. Annie learns to acknowledge the texts of her body, written and unwritten. Marlatt seems aligned with Julia Kristeva's (1987) notions of two elements of the signifying process, the semiotic and the symbolic, how we attach meaning to our world. The tensions between the symbolic, as evident in everyday discourse, and the semiotic are found in the underlayers of human experience. This perception seems particularly relevant in Marlatt's narrative, considering the paradoxical nature of human existence and the social conditioning of the women to suppress expression and articulation of the semiotic. The inherent tensions and the variable relationships between semiotic and symbolic imply the fluidity, changeability, and constant process of human life and the attachment of meaning to that lifeworld.

Annie renames herself Annie Torrent, a reference to the unleashing of female desire: "what does Soul, what does a woman do with her unexpressed preferences, her own desires?'" (damned up, a torrent to let loose). This releasing of desire disrupts and pushes against erasure and effacement in a paternal genealogy in which women cannot speak. Annie finally speaks. She finds her answer to "Who's There?" as she finds a new community in the lesbian romantic resolution of the novel. She finds the "country of her body," "mouth speaking flesh" that she longs for—to be "at home from the beginning" (Marlatt, 1988: 126-27). Annie names her desire for Zoe in a powerful challenge to traditional texts. Juxtaposed against the constructed history of Ana/Mrs. Richards, the world she enters rejects the male-dominated history of colonization; she rewrites the images of vessels and ships, of women's bodies emptied and filled with the seeds of patriarchy and the freight of empire. The body is written, spoken, salvaged in linguistic terrain in a map of an alternative historical path. In this genealogy for lost women, for the lost city mothers, Annie departs from "the solid ground of fact"(11):

> sized up in a glance, objectified. that's what history offers,
> that's its allure, its pretence. 'history says of her...' but when

you're so framed, caught in the act, the (f) stop of act, fact-
what recourse? step inside the picture and open it up.
(Marlatt, 1988: 56)

As cartographer and cryptographer, Annie discovers a place, a community, in which the frame of vision is opened up to new possibilities of representation for the articulation of women's experiences and desires. This new place in history is found not through appropriation or destruction, not by repeating history, but by creating something new. This new world acknowledges the search for a geography of the soul, a slipping into place that occurs as historical, archival "fact" is opened up to include the "ahistorical" undeniable text of the body, written and unwritten. In the emancipatory process that is writing, the body ceases to be a purely biological entity; it is socially inscribed, historically marked, psychically and interpersonally significant. As Mary Catherine Bateson states:

> Of all the texts that must be read to understand the human condition, the body is the most eloquent, for we read in all its stages and transitions a pattern that connects all human communities as well as differences that divide. People in different eras and places have read it differently, or made every effort to deny access to parts of the story, to its alternate readings, or to the wider learning that flows from it so it becomes the justification for mutual suspicion and for alienation from the natural world. (1994: 172)

This suspicion of the female body is reflected in Marlatt's novel as a perception inherited by young girls from their mothers, linked to the education of girls and to ideals about how a feminine body is supposed to be. This suspicion becomes a paradoxical betrayal of biology mirrored in societal norms and perpetuated in linguistic inscriptions that label and constrain the female and maternal body:

> The sins of the mothers. hating our bodies as if they had
> betrayed us in the very language we learned at school...
> ... words betraying what the boys
> thought of us. wounded or sick—you'll catch girl germs!—
> with a wound that bleeds over and over—"on the rag again," "got
> the curse," "falling of the roof." catastrophic phrases we used
> that equally betrayed us. handed down from friend to friend,
> sister to sister, mother to daughter. hand-me-downs, too small
> for what I really felt. (Marlatt, 1988: 62)

In Marlatt's novel, women's writing through the body forms new community and new ways of perceiving "mothering." As Zoe tells Annie, "the real

history of women ... is unwritten because it runs through our bodies: we give birth to each other ... it's women imagining all that women could be that brings us into the world" (131). Marlatt's text returns the reader again and again to the question: "where are the city mothers?"

> —the truth is, you want to tell your own story.
>
> —and yours. ours. the truth is our stories are hidden from
> us by fear. your fear i inherited, mother dear.
>
> -the truth is, that's women's lot. it's what you learn to accept,
> like bleeding and hysterectomies, like intuition
> and dizzy spells—all the ways we don't fit into a man's world.
> (Marlatt, 1988: 79)

Marlatt's text reminds me of Julia Kristeva's "Stabat Mater; The Paradox: Mother or Primary Narcissism." Kristeva's text acknowledges the experience of the mother reflecting the continuing exploration with forms and representations of language in text, exposing new kinds of discourse and possibilities for articulation of the women's experiences. Kristeva writes her text in columns, with personal, associative writing on one side, and more traditional academic discourse on the other, creating an interplay of texts that accepts the paradoxes of the mother's felt experiences:

> ...formless, unnamable embryo.Epiphanies.
> Photos of what is not yet visible, and that
> language necessarily skims over from afar,
> allusively. Words that are always too distant,
> too abstract for this underground swarming of
> seconds, folding in unimaginable spaces. Writing
> them down is an ordeal of discourse, like love.
> What is loving for a woman, the same thing as writing.
> (1987: 234-235)

Similarly, in Marlatt's text, *Ana Historic*:

> If only she could write it down, as if the words might
> make a place she could re-enter when she felt the need,
> when she forgot—what it was like to feel this complete.
> (1988: 40)

Ana Historic is a novel that challenges and recreates histories "anew." Marlatt's work acknowledges innovative discursive forms and representations of language in text that opens up new spaces for the embodiment and expression

of women's experiences. In the end, the new places for living in the world are found in the archives of the heart, in the terrain of women's desire, in the new maps created on the skin of the earth. With Marlatt and her narrator, we begin to write/read against historical fact, questioning the "(f)act. the f stop of act. a still photo in the ongoing cinerama." As Annie states about world events: "these are not facts but skeletal bones of a suppressed body the story is (Marlatt, 1988: 29)." Like Annie, the reader is invited to "step inside the picture and open it up." In order to create new geography and a new history for women, a "history. unwritten" (109), Marlatt opens the novel with the epigraph by Susan Griffin that asks us to locate our history in the body, to locate our "assemblage of facts in a tangle of hair."

On the back cover of *Ana Historic*, Canadian writer George Bowering comments on the beauty of Marlatt's text. By challenging our notions of The Novel, tearing The Novel down, Bowering writes: "What she has put up in its place is too beautiful to keep to oneself. Please read it. While you are at it, read it out loud. Make oral history." Indeed, Marlatt's text is a subversive, feminine map of sound, a lyric embodiment of women's histories, and a poetic rewriting and revisioning of the notion of maternity and the suppressed and oppressed stories of maternity. This novel pushes at conventions of genre and text, blurring boundaries to create a fluid text, embodying a form of women's writing that expresses and performs the writing of the body explored in the narrative. Marlatt moves us from the colonial narrative of the mother as "the vessel she is—(full)filling her destiny" (Marlatt, 1988: 118) to a reconceptualization of the maternal body as: "mouth speaking flesh. she touches it to make it tell her present in this other language so difficult to translate. the difference" (126).

So I close with oral history, reading aloud as I write, speaking with the final words of *Ana Historic*, in Marlatt's imaginative, poetic words:

> we give place, giving words, giving
> birth to each other....it isn't dark
> but the luxury of being has woken you,
> the reach of your desire, reading us into
> the page ahead.

An earlier version of this article, titled "Archives of the Heart: The Poetics of Place in Daphne Marlatt's Ana Historic," was presented by the author at The Western Literature Association Conference, Vancouver, British Columbia, October 14, 1995.

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Geetanjali Singh Chanda

Mapping Motherhood
The Fiction of Anita Desai

At first glance one is tempted to assert that there are no mothers in Indo-English novels by women. Vernacular or *bhasha* literature has numerous examples of complex mother figures. An unforgettable figure like Jashoda in Mahasweta Devi's Bengali short story, "Stanadayini" (Breast Giver), for example, has no parallel in Indo-English writing. Even the kind of mother-daughter relationships that are central in the novels of Amy Tan (1991, 1989), Isabelle Allende (1999, 1985, 1995), Alice Walker (1983), and Toni Morrison (1997, 1970) remain largely peripheral in Indo-English novels by women. The main role of the few mothers in this literature seems to be that of transmitters of cultural values.[1]

Yet, the mother figure has been central to Indian arts and ritual practices from as far back as 20,000 BC.[2] The mother goddess was and is worshipped for her awesome powers of creation and protection as well as for her fearsome powers of destruction. The nationalists' deliberately evoked the nation as mother as a rallying symbol for anti-colonial resistance.[3] Bollywood (Indian popular cinema) too, effectively used the symbol of the mother to embody the idea of the nation in classics such as "Mother India" and in more contemporary films. Indian cinema has contributed enormously to the projection of the image of the mother as a highly romanticised, nurturing and self-sacrificing figure. The mother-son bond particularly is highly valued. These over-drawn celluloid stereotypes dominate the popular imagination and mediate our perceptions of real mothers and of the ideology of motherhood. Additionally these invocations bear testimony to the continuing symbolic power of the mother figure.

The dichotomy inherent in the Mother figure of Indian mythology and culture is replayed with a certain difference in contemporary Indian society. It can be seen in the chasm between the adulation of the iconic mother (in both

her creative and destructive aspects) and, the neglect and disrespect accorded to actual women—mothers, non-mothers and widows in particular. The sacralisation of motherhood prevalent in the Indian imagination is inherently problematic because on the one hand it is indicative of female creative power, which as Kamala Ganesh notes, "conveys not so much the ideas of physical motherhood but a world-view in which the creative power of femininity is central" (1990: 58). On the other hand, though, it is possible to read the deification of motherhood as Sukumari Bhattacharji does as "compensatory, seeking to recompense society's indifference to the mother" (1990: 50). The good-mother/bad-mother binary in Indo-English fiction can be traced back to Parvati, the nurturing mother goddess, and, her other side Kali—the goddess of destruction.

In popular imagination these twin facets of the same goddess complement and contrast each other as archetypal images. Kali's independence (of any male god), her physical position above him, her dark and dishevelled appearance and association with cremation grounds are deliberate markers of her otherness that locate her on the margins of society. She is dangerous because she "threatens stability and order" (Kinsley, 1986: 120). These traits are, however, recognised as being tameable and trainable to preserve patriarchal domesticity. Kali's flip side Parvati is the upholder of societal norms. She embodies very specific cultural values of female strength as moral superiority, often achieved through self-sacrifice. Parvati as the "insider" goddess is part of the patriarchal structure of society while Kali the "outsider" goddess threatens that structure—and with that the whole moral code. The dichotomy between structure and anti-structure revolves around Woman's sexuality seen as the central balance of kinship relations in a society.

Motherhood has been a key feminist issue since the early days of women's movements; moreover, since the 1970s a substantial body of work on feminist theories of motherhood has emerged (Chodorow, 1978; Walker, 1984; Smart, 1992; Glenn *et al.*, 1994). Adrienne Rich's (1979) analysis of motherhood as "experience" and as "institution" led to a re-examination of the idea of motherhood, as did the investigation of the gap between the idea of the mother and the chore work of mothering. The change in western feminist focus on motherhood from the issue of choice, prominent in the '70s, to the creative experience of mothering in the '90s, highlights the crucial significance of the experience. Along with noting women's right to mother or not, Nancy Chodorow and Susan Contratto noted that mothering could be oppressive or gratifying or even both (1982: 55). But normative motherhood imposes strict controls on women where no choice is possible. Furthermore, often it is women themselves, especially older women, who have internalised a patriarchal ideology and who perpetuate the system victimising those who do not conform.

The sacralised attitudes towards mothers and the unwritten taboo on exploring sexuality have almost silenced Indo-English women's writing on sexuality and therefore on exploring motherhood. Anita Desai is one of few

Indo-English authors who explores the issue in some depth especially in her little acclaimed novel *Voices in the City* and later in *Fire on the Mountain.* The author of about a dozen novels and collections of short stories, Desai is acclaimed in India and internationally. Her novel, *Clear Light of Day*, was nominated for the prestigious Booker Prize. *Voices in the City* was published in 1965, before the current popularity of Indian writing in English, but even so it is considered to be one of her less successful novels. It is important though because it may be among the earliest and one of very few Indo-English women's novels to self-consciously explore motherhood. Motherhood in this novel is seen as the *sine qua non* of attachment. Birth and nurture seem to open the doors for women to interact and empathise with other individuals as well as to tap into an emotional reservoir that is common to all humanity. In *Voices in the City* Desai weaves the traditional duality of the mother as creator and destroyer (Parvati/Kali) and embeds the text in an Indian reality where actual mothers are often ignored or ill treated; whereas in folk-lore, myth and nation building the idea of motherhood is venerated and iconic mothers are worshipped.

The philosophic dilemma of the novel is a quest for salvation. The question posed is whether salvation can be achieved through a path of intense involvement with life or through detachment. Desai explored this theme in her first novel *Cry, the Peacock* (1963), and returns to it in *Journey to Ithaca* (1995). The culmination of the search in a vision, and, a fusion of the apparent dichotomies—destruction and creation—in *Voices in the City* is also repeated in *Journey to Ithaca.*

It is significant that *Voices in the City* is set in Calcutta, the capital of West Bengal. Linguistically the mother-role is underlined in the affectionate addressing of all women as "ma" or mother in Bengali culture. The worship of mother-goddesses—Kali, Durga and Saraswati—is also far more prevalent in Bengal than anywhere else in India. Visually too, the colour red of the scarlet-breasted "Bleeding Heart Doves" (1965: 120-121) that so traumatise Monisha at the zoo evokes the typical red-bordered white saris of Bengali women. This red—of the doves' breasts and of the red sari borders—signals the linked fates of the doves and the women—quietly bleeding away their lives in the nurture of others. Monisha's own unarticulated but visible suffering is suggested by "the dove's stigmata" (121).

The destruction associated with the bloodthirsty goddess Kali is also firmly concretised in Monisha's experience of the city. Her repugnance and sense of oppression are palpable:

> From all sides their moist palms press down on me, their putrid breaths and harsh voices. There is no diving under-ground in so overpopulated a burrow, even the sewers and gutters are choked, they are so full. (Desai, 1965: 116)

But Monisha does not resent the "grime, darkness, poverty and disease"

(116) of the city as much as she resents the "meretriciousness, the rapacity, the uneasy lassitude of conscience" (116). Yet this is also a space where the centrality of the mother, in both her forms as Parvati and Kali—the nurturer and the destroyer—is reinforced by daily, ritual worship in dedicated temples. Monisha is trapped in the contradictory movements, in the blatant gap between worship and a wilful disregard of the nurturing women/mothers.

Voices in the City is divided into four parts. Three sections bear the names of each of the three siblings, Nirode, Monisha and Amala, and the final section is entitled Mother. These are the "voices" of the title that narrate their experiences of the city of Calcutta. The fourth and concluding chapter of a dozen or so pages entitled "Mother" resembles the voice of the chorus in a Greek tragedy. The text renders ambiguous which mother specifically is being referred to: Monisha, her mother, the street singer, the goddess Kali, or even the city of Calcutta. They all seem to bleed into each other to form this final voice. Monisha's death and the confusion and clarity it brings conclude the narrative.

Monisha's unremarkable story is quite simple. She accepts an arranged marriage and after some years of out-of-state postings comes to live in Calcutta with her husband's large extended family. Her non-mother status already marks her as different, but living in a joint-family exacerbates her sense of loneliness and alienation. In the end, she commits suicide by dousing herself in kerosene and immolating herself.

For Nirode, his sister's suicide is a revelation of the "whole fantastic design of life and death" (Desai, 1965: 249). Monisha's death resolves Nirode's philosophic quest (shared by Monisha) between detachment as preached in religious texts like the *Bhagavad-Gita* or the path of intense involvement and empathy. *Voices in the City* has the makings of a novel in the psychological genre, but it does not quite fulfil that promise. The relationship between Nirode and his mother specifically lends itself to a Freudian reading. Nirode's ambivalence towards his mother is repeated in his negotiations with the city. As a son he finds his mother's sexuality and independence threatening. This relationship shapes and haunts his search for an identity as a writer and as a human being. His world seems to collapse around him when a local amateur theatre group rejects his play—a baring of the soul and his magnum opus.

Monisha's death provokes an entirely different reaction in her younger sister, Amala. Newly arrived in Calcutta to join an advertising firm, she sees both her siblings tread the thin line between passion that inevitably promises chaos, and, dull normalcy. Amala's adamant insistence in remembering her mother as "just mother"—a role—rather than the reality of who her mother is as an individual also marks her negotiations with Calcutta. Initially she does not allow the city to oppress her because she refuses to recognize its dark side, just as she refuses to acknowledge the destructive, dark side of her unarticulated feelings for her mother. Her amorous involvement with a once-famous artist had led her into a subterranean world of unclear boundaries. Now she opts for

emotional detachment and the safety of the socially circumscribed, bhadra-lok or respectable middle-class world that would constrain anomie.

> Monisha's death had pointed the way for her and would never allow her to lose herself. She knew she would go through life with her feet primly shod, involving herself with her drawings and safe people like Bose, precisely because Monisha had given her a glimpse of what lay on the other side of this stark uncompromising margin. (Desai, 1965: 248)

Although the text is also about the destinies of the other siblings, it explores the issue of motherhood through Monisha's unique viewpoint as a non-mother. The subtext or hidden story is that of her mother whose voice is silenced although she dominates the text even by her absence. Monisha's narrative questions the centrality of motherhood as a biological and a social imperative that can imprison and destroy women, especially those who are not mothers, or empower those who are mothers, as creators. The novel posits motherhood as a symbol of attachment—the creation of and involvement with life. Monisha, precisely because she is not a mother, opens the space for a reading of motherhood as a psychological, social and a cultural phenomenon. The text is ambivalent and leaves the issue unresolved. On one level, it makes a deeply troubling and problematic suggestion that Monisha is emotionally unresponsive because she cannot be a mother. This lack is seen as the cause of her sense of alienation. On the other hand, the novel also suggests that the detachment Monisha so assiduously cultivates could be the cause of her inability to become a mother.

Peter Berger notes in *The Sacred Canopy* (1969) that an individual needs the reflection of an outside world and a conversation with others to confirm her or his identity. One's sense of their place in society is a result of this response. The imbalance between individual and society, seen in Monisha's alienation and ultimate suicide, could be attributed to what Berger calls "a break-down of conversation" (1969: 34). Motherhood, in Monisha's case, is a normative gender role that she, as an Indian woman in a patriarchal society, has internalised to the extent that she herself cannot conceive of an existence outside it. The lack of what Berger terms "dialectic identity formation" between a society that privileges women's uni-dimensional gender roles and their multiple identities is responsible for the kind of rupture that Monisha feels between her sense of self and the world. Her acknowledgement, "I have not given birth, I have not attended death" (240), establishes her separateness. As a Bengali married woman living in a joint-family, how can she, who does not conform in this one crucial aspect, make sense of her life?

Monisha's sense of absolute alienation is crystallized as she watches an itinerant street performer couple. The singer looks like a "professional hermaphrodite" because "her poverty had destroyed her sex, cancelling out the

characteristics of lover and mother" (Desai, 1965: 236). Despite her ambiguous gender status, while the singer can still sing of passion and sorrow, Monisha, trapped in her unfulfilled normative gender role as a mother, remains unmoved. She concedes that this involvement with life is symptomatic of a primeval wisdom that has eluded her. Attributing the lack of feeling to an inadequacy in herself, she notes that the others are visibly moved while she alone is immune. In this moment Monisha realises that it is the vulnerability of involvement that she both yearns for and that terrifies her. The detachment that sets her apart promises only emptiness.

> [W]hat she feared was the great empty white distance set between her and this moist, crimson flowering of emotion in the street below. (Desai, 1965: 238)

Even in the singer whose sexuality has otherwise been erased, Monisha recognises the characteristics of an atavistic Mother Goddess:

> But the face, the face was that of the Eternal Mother, the Earth Mother, a face ravaged by the most unbearable emotions of woman, darkened and flayed and scarred by them. (Desai, 1965: 237)

This is a face that Monisha recognises but cannot relate to. The song resonates in the dull women of the house, evoking in them an exquisite awareness of life, a capacity to feel. In contrast, Monisha feels the acute futility of her life, "What a waste, what a waste it has been, this life enclosed in a locked container" (Desai, 1965: 240).

Motherhood, in this novel, is often configured spatially. The continuum of containers, cubicles, house and room link up ultimately with the womb—in Monisha's case an empty womb that mocks her empty life. The locked container, for instance, is an ill-disguised metaphor for the womb and the home at the same time. Her imprisonment is two-fold; the inability to give birth locks her in, as does the perception of being trapped by regulative norms. The text is ambiguous about whether Monisha's alienation is caused by her inability to be a mother, or whether her alienation is the cause of her failure of motherhood. Her references to being put away "in a steel container, a thick glass cubicle" (Desai, 1965: 239) suggest that she holds someone else responsible for her suffering. Monisha registers the contradiction of being both imprisoned in the house and kept out by a patriarchal familial ethos of gendered roles and spaces.

In Desai's Calcutta and its women, there is not even the possibility of a discursive coalition or communication among women that other Indo-English novels like Deshpande's *The Binding Vine* (1993) or Markandaya's *Two Virgins* (1973) seem to offer. The house and the city contrive to imprison women by the sanction of antiquity and the "tradition" of regulative norms that allow no escape. The city, house, room, and body are interconnected in the text and one

often implies the others. At moments, there is a particularly interesting conflation of room and body. Monisha's description of the invasion of her room can be read as an invasion of her body and her privacy:

> even my own room, which they regarded at first, as still bridal, now no longer is so (the tubes are blocked, it is no good). (Desai, 1965: 116)

Motherhood, even as a biological fact, is a public issue within these narrow walls, a situation which automatically permits "sisters-in-law [to] lie across the four-poster, discussing my ovaries and theirs" (116). Ironically, it is specifically this physical and symbolic construct of the women's sphere to which Monisha is denied entry, in part because she does not fit the category of Bengali women/mothers who accept traditional gender roles. Monisha's bleak view is of a society polarised between selfish, insensitive men and interminably patient women who resignedly spend their lives

> In waiting for nothing, waiting on men self-centred and indifferent and hungry and demanding and critical, waiting for death and dying misunderstood, always behind bars, those terrifying black bars that shut us in, in the old houses, in the old city. (Desai, 1965: 120)

The repetition of "old" in the last line reveals that Monisha blames imprisoning traditions in the form of "old houses" and "old cities" and men for women's futile lives. As there is no conversation between women and men; nor is there any possibility of conversation among women if they step out of the patriarchal code of social norms, women like Monisha are left with few options.

The link between the home/prison and women is repeated in the images of caged birds and animals in the zoo. The "Bleeding Heart Doves" (Desai, 1965: 120-121) for instance, are reminiscent of the many images of Monisha peering out longingly through the barred balcony of the home. As an insider, Monisha is imprisoned by and in the house, guarded by "my large, secure, round keepers" (110). Their solidity—gauged by both size ("large") and smugness ("secure")—is in stark contrast to her thinness and silence that render her invisible even if they do not quite erase her. Monisha's "eerie unreality" (142)—to others as well as to herself—cries out in her silence. She is rendered speechless in a noisy, chattering household: "I am locked apart from all of them. They cannot touch me, they can only lip-read and misinterpret" (239). She does not have anything to say to anyone in the house nor do they have the capacity to hear her. More damning, though, is her self-castigation: "I am turned into a woman who keeps a diary. I do not like a woman who keeps a diary" (140). The text is unclear about the kind of woman Monisha imagines writes a diary, but it is clear that she sees this negatively. The diary is the only thing with whom "conversation" is possible, and, it is, in the end, inadequate.

In a terrible revelatory moment Monisha finds "the answer": The resigna-

tion of women/mothers—"How can they live, eat, work, sing bleeding through life?" (Desai, 1965: 121). Their acceptance of their lot and their roles as givers and nurturers who remain unrecognised distinguishes them from her because she is not willing passively to accept her lot. Their death, like their lives, will go un-remarked: "there is no dignity in their death.... but only a little melancholy as in the settling of a puff of dust upon the earth" (121). Seen in this light, Monisha's death can be read as a grand gesture of defiance. This ability to reject, to say the "great No," is also central to Desai's *Where Shall We Go This Summer* (1982). The decision to end what has been for her a living death is undeniably Monisha's. But in giving her this agency it is unclear whether the text intends to absolve the marital family and society of the moral responsibility of Monisha's death.

Although denied motherhood and a certain identity because she cannot give birth, Monisha claims complete agency for her death. The kerosene and matches—the method of dying—chillingly recalls the "bride burnings" and "dowry deaths" of the factual world of newspaper reportage. The unspoken affinities between fact and fiction raise the uncomfortable question of whether these deaths—the nameless ones in the newspapers and Monisha's—should be seen as murder because the women are driven to this ultimate erasure by social and family pressures. Or is Desai on some level privileging women's agency over the stereotypical image of Woman as victim? Is the text attempting to legitimise this kind of death (Monisha's and the various dowry deaths) as a sign of defiance and resistance? However, if the people she is surrounded by can only "lip-read and mis-interpret" (Desai, 1965: 239), then would her end have any greater effect than "the settling of a puff of dust" that is the dove's end?

The ideology of motherhood revealed in and through this novel is, despite the particular setting, pan-Indian. Nirode claims, "Kali is the mother of Bengal, she is the mother of us all" (Desai, 1965: 256). He, in particular, blurs the lines between an abstract cultural ethos and his experiential relationship with his own mother. By equating his mother with Kali, Nirode is able to find a culturally appropriate symbol for his sexual fears. It is almost wholly from Nirode's viewpoint that we see the mother, and for him, "She is Kali, the goddess and the demon are one" (255). For all three siblings their mother is a distant figure who does not conform to the stereotype of the nurturer, and yet she does not until the end, at least in Nirode's eyes, reveal herself as the destroyer either. The mother's own missing narrative leads us to think that this deliberate silence may be her individual resistance to being thrust into a preset mould. She too may have yearned for a reflective "conversation" that would confirm her identity as a whole individual and not just as a mother.[4] The siblings' ambivalence towards her and her refusal to fit into the gender stereotype of the nurturing mother creates instability in their lives. Monisha resolves the void in her life by her death. But Nirode and Amala learn very different lessons about life from Monisha's death. Their mother (who is never named but always

referred to as 'mother'), too, seems to reveal her true self only after Monisha's death.

In the final vision Nirode senses a new grandeur in his mother: "She was a woman fulfilled—by the great tragedy of her daughter's suicide" (Desai, 1965: 252). The bloodthirsty Kali now sated by the sacrifice looks benignly upon the festive streets with divas (earthenware lamps) lit for her homecoming. On the way from the airport to the city Nirode

> imagined he heard drums throbbing beneath the cacophony of traffic, and the wailing and chanting of hymns dedicated to her exalted presence. Lights swam through the smoke and night like proffered garlands, loftily, she paid no attention at all. (Desai, 1965: 253)

The last sinister vision we have is of this mother watching Amala and Nirode from the balcony uncharacteristically dressed in mourning white.

As Nirode translates and makes concrete the iconic symbol into the specific reality of his mother, he experiences a moment of epiphany that reveals his raison d'être. He explains to his sister, Amala:

> how once she has given birth to us, she must also deal us our deaths .... I see now that she is everything we have been fighting against, you and Monisha and I, and she is also everything we have fought for. (Desai, 1965: 256)

In a single move, the mother, both real and abstract, becomes representative of cultural norms against which these siblings define and measure themselves. She also symbolises the bourgeois, bhadra-lok or middle-class values against which they contend. This ambivalence is repeated in their relationship with the city—the site of their various struggles.

As a narrative that seeks to map the attitudes towards and the treatment of real mothers on the ancient tradition of mother worship in India and thereby reveal the chasm between the two, *Voices in the City* succeeds, but only at this one level. The novel reveals women's imprisonment to gender roles. It also acknowledges that the problem is systemic, but it neither explores the nature of this prescriptive code nor does it provide alternatives. In the end both the mother and the non-mother are either transformed or erased. Nirode's mother transcends gender and her status as a real woman, and is transformed from a powerful absence into an iconic representation of the destructive mother goddess Kali. As a non-mother, Monisha is not offered any alternatives but death. The philosophic quest for salvation and resolution of the dichotomies of life are revealed in Nirode's vision of fusion and his understanding that life and death are one. In the denouement of the novel however, this spiritual answer may, in fact, serve to elide the real issue. It absolves society of the responsibility for the destruction of the many Monisha's who do not or cannot conform.

Mothers in some of Desai's novels especially *Fire on the Mountain* and *Voices in the City* stand as silent sentinels, mute reminders of unfulfilled lives. These novels could be read as a searing indictment of a society that requires women to sacrifice their individuality and personal fulfilment at the altar of duty and conformity to patriarchal gender roles. Ironically though, the unwilling conformity tears the woman apart from within as much as does the willing conformity which forces her to bleed away quietly. Berger's identity confirming 'conversation' remains an elusive chimera for these mothers.

[1]The view of women as cultural transmitters is fairly universal. Ruth Bloch notes, "it was above all as mothers that women were attributed social influence as the chief transmitters of religious and moral values..." (1978: 101)
[2]Pupul Jaykar's *The Earth Mother* provides a comprehensive mapping and explanation of artifacts and rituals relating to goddess worship throughout India.
[3]Radha Kumar's excellent study of the Indian Women's movement notes how the mother-ideology was deployed for the nationalist cause.
[4]I am grateful to Seema Sharma for her insightful comments about the mother's silence in the narrative as being a possible sign of resistance.

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Rosie Rosenzweig

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fool

Your curiosity is as abundant as
your hair your red hair you mop
top your markings
your freckled
markings are
as many as
your questions
and as (they
m u l t i p l y)
your curiosity
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mouthwaiting
to devour my
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seed waiting
o to water
it to force
o its back
straight up
o to arch it
around to
the light

o again

Jill Bergman

"Amazon of Industry"
Maternal Realism in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's What Diantha Did

So when the great word "Mother!" rang once more,
I saw at last its meaning and its place;
Not the blind passion of the brooding past,
But Mother—the World's Mother—come at last,
To love as she had never loved before –
To feed and guard and teach the human race.
—"Two Callings," Charlotte Perkins Gilman

At the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, the cult of the mother—a central tenet of American domestic ideology—underwent a crisis in cultural discourse. American women writers such as Elizabeth Stuart Phelps (1877), Kate Chopin (1899), and Edith Wharton (1913; 1905) wrote novels depicting the toll taken on women by domestic ideology and interrogating the ideal of motherhood as a woman's highest calling.[1] Other "official" discourses responded by denigrating the mother and rebutting the claim of these "radical" writers: in contrast to the women writers who suggested that the deeply embedded and institutionalized notions of domesticity limited women by keeping them in the home looking after the children, the masculine voices argued that institutions—from literary art to national progress—were limited or damaged by mothers. Social Darwinist Herbert Spencer identified women as the weaker of the species due to their mothering capacity: "The physical tax which reproduction necessitates," he asserted, "is ... a tax which restricts individual development in various directions" (1898a: 533). Describing one of these directions in his discussion of "The Constitution of the State," Spencer argued against suffrage for women on the grounds that their "love of the helpless," a trait "concomitant of their maternal func-

tions," makes them impulsive and unable to make the judgments required of voting citizens (1898b: 195-196). As Magner has put it, Spencer believed that "females came to see all social problems through the distorting medium of maternity" (Magner, 1992: 119).[2]

Freud, in *Civilization and its Discontents,* similarly argued that women stand in "opposition to civilization," "retarding and restraining" progress because they "represent the interests of the family and of sexual life." Therefore, he posited, "the work of civilization has become increasingly the business of men" (1961: 59). And the destructive power of motherhood was not limited to national progress, apparently: William Dean Howells, self-styled theorist of American literary realism, called for writers to "escape the paralysis of tradition" which, like a dysfunctional mother, produced "seeds of death" and "still-born art" (cited in Miller, 1990: 23).

Charlotte Perkins Gilman entered this conversation with her 1911 novel *What Diantha Did.* Indeed, she made her life's work the theorizing and championing of motherhood. To some extent, Gilman joins the voices critical of the mother. She agrees that the mother as constructed by domestic ideology is an obsolete and debilitating ideal. But she also acknowledges that social institutions and traditions force women to adhere to that ideal rather than adapting motherhood to fit and serve the national progress. She critiques the long-standing perception of the private sphere, describing it as passive, self-involved, and isolated from the concerns of the larger society. In its stead, she calls for an active, empowered, socially responsible and feminized space that combines the private and public. With this configuration, she expands the home to encompass all of society and places the domestic sphere's commander-in-chief—the mother—at the helm.

This revitalized image of the mother pervades Gilman's oeuvre. She theorizes it in nonfiction works such as *Women and Economics* and *His Religion and Hers*. She dramatizes its need in "The Yellow Wallpaper," its success in *What Diantha Did* and *The Crux*, and its utopian possibilities in *Moving the Mountain* and, even more so, in *Herland*, where the private sphere becomes the nation and the mother, the divinity. In these works, Gilman aggressively takes on domestic ideology, criticizing it as "unnatural" and damaging, both to women and to the nation's progress. With her interest in race progress and her revision of accepted evolutionary theory, she answers voices like Spencer's (1989) and Freud's (1961), replacing the "survival of the fittest" model with a maternally organized cooperative model of race progress. Her maternal revision of evolution theory supports Gilman's breaking down of the separate spheres by allowing her to claim a "natural" connection between home and industry. Declaring women the species original agents of industry and progress, she embraces industrialism and capitalism as appropriate areas of endeavor for women as well as men. In *What Diantha Did,* she dramatizes these ideas, bringing technological progress into the home as the natural and appropriate tool of mothers. And, as we shall see, she extends these ideas to literary

"industry" as well, developing a maternal style of realism that serves not only as the appropriate literary vehicle for her social vision, but as one of its important components.

The reality of mothering: Gilman the iconoclast[2]

So what, exactly, did Diantha do? Ultimately, she single-handedly dismantled the debilitating traditions surrounding the home and the mother. The novel tells her story: when her fiancé postpones indefinitely their wedding due to financial constraints, twenty-one year old Diantha Bell develops a business plan which she believes will allow her to both earn some money—thus speeding their marriage date—and contribute to the nation's progress.[3] Based on the belief that the work of household maintenance—including cooking, cleaning, and (for some) supervising servants—is too often conflated with the loving duty of mothering, she sets out to isolate these sites of labor by professionalizing home care and repairing a dysfunctional motherhood. She first tests her theories of domestic economic science as a live-in housemaid for a married woman with a small child who finds herself unable to pursue her profession in architecture due to the demands of her household. The experiment successful (and much talked about), Diantha proceeds to her larger goal of establishing a series of businesses designed to take the work out of the home, culminating in a complete residential community based on her principles. In the end, she marries and becomes a mother herself.

While the novel's plot resembles a domestic novel—the literary vehicle of domesticity that enjoyed its heyday in the first half of the nineteenth century[4]—*Diantha* departs from the domestic tradition in its representation of domestic ideology. In theory, the domestic ideal invested antebellum women with moral influence over the public sphere through husbands and sons. But in practice this ideology imposed a false separation of "public" and "private,"[5] keeping women in their homes, focused on their own family's well being and (at least theoretically) isolated from the concerns of society. Gilman does not portray the home as a retreat from the public sphere or a check on the ills of society; rather she envisions a home that functions in harmony with growing industrialism and capitalism. Indeed, her vision brings those developments into the home and uses them to improve the lives of mothers and children. She peels away the overdetermined layering of the notions of "mother" and "home," demonstrating that these traditional ideals—adhered to out of an unexamined allegiance to tradition—bear little resemblance to women's reality and cause damage for mothers as well as for the nation. She replaces those old ideas with a new domesticity—an industrialized domesticity—that embraces the social progress valorized at the turn of the century.

Gilman had explored these issues previously in "Two Callings," a poem contrasting time-honored traditions of women's service in the home with her vision of the publicly engaged mother.[6] The first "calling" in the poem comes from a "deep"—presumably masculine—voice (l 1). It calls the poem's speaker

to submit to "duty" and provide the "allegiance and long labor due my lord" by serving him in the home (ll 19, 21). The voice portrays the home as a safe and comfortable place, a concept justified by its longevity: "So old! so old!" (l 9). It produces images of ancient homes—caves, treetops, leafy lairs—suggesting the naturalness of the concept, in keeping with the "laws of life" (l 38). The voice calls the poem's speaker to perform her duty not by force but out of love. Evoking the figure of Mary, the ultimate willing mother-servant, the speaker agrees: "I bow—I kneel—the woman soul is willing" (l 29).[7] Comforted by notions of a safe and comfortable home as the site of duty through mothering, the speaker sleeps peacefully.

In contrast to the first, Gilman prefaces the second calling with a bugle call—a call to action—and the voice, "a clear, keen, ringing cry," suggests no gender and later identifies itself as "the world" (ll 43, 49). This voice calls the poem's speaker to see the home as an aspect of life, but not the site for all of life's work: "Home is the cradle—shall a whole life stay / Cradled in comfort through the working day?" (ll 51-52). In this calling, the voice extends the site of duty beyond the limited sphere of the personal home to the entire world. Like the voice in the first calling, this voice speaks of duty, love, and motherhood, but the object of that service has changed. Rejecting service solely in the individual home as selfish and cowardly, the voice defines the reach of the "Mother" as public and unconfined:

> So when the great word "Mother!" rang once more,
> I saw at last its meaning and its place;
> Not the blind passion of the brooding past,
> But Mother—the World's Mother—come at last,
> To love as she had never loved before –
> To feed and guard and teach the human race. (ll 85-90)

In its rejection of the "blind passion of the brooding past," the voice dismisses the tradition of domestic ideology as outmoded, but retains the belief in the value of a distinctly maternal ethic.[8] By associating domestic ideology with the leafy lairs of the past, Gilman plays upon the nation's conception of itself as progressive.

Gilman dramatizes this message in *Diantha.* As the first matter of business, she extricates the reality of mothering from the ideal touted by tradition. She opens not with Diantha, but with her fiancé's mother and four sisters. They, along with Ross Warden, Diantha's betrothed, live in an extravagant home and employ two servants. The five women are entirely supported by Ross since the death of his father, and they busy themselves with activities that Gilman clearly finds frivolous: painting flowers in the margins of a volume of poetry, embroidering Ross's shirt pockets, and knitting countless afghans (of particularly questionable value in southern California). An apparently doting mother, Mrs. Warden is aptly named as a woman who, by insisting on ad-

herence to a tradition that places women in the home, has imprisoned her daughters in inactivity and Ross—"reared in the traditions of older days as to a man's duty toward women" (Gilman, 1910: 12)—in a prison of financial obligation. Their financial position allows Mrs. Warden to remain oblivious to the details of home management, thus facilitating her extravagance. For instance, incredulous that the family has again run out of butter, she must be told by their maid the rather obvious fact "dat waffles and sweet potaters and cohn bread dey do take butter" (5). On the other end of the spectrum is Diantha's mother. The Bells are far from wealthy, and Mrs. Bell knows all too well what it takes to run a household. Hers is an endless round of cooking, cleaning, and mending—all work she hates but believes to be her "duty" (23). Diantha perceives her mother's life to be "an interminable dull tragedy; this graceful, eager, black-eyed woman, spending what to the girl was literally a lifetime, in the conscientious performance of duties she did not love" (22). Diantha, too, has suffered from the jobs linked to mothering: "her young strength had been heavily taxed from childhood in that complex process known as 'helping mother'" (31). Her father does not recognize the value of Mrs. Bell's or Diantha's work: "he expected such competence in women, all women; it was their natural field of ability, their duty as wives and mothers. Also as daughters. If they failed in it, that was by illness or perversity. If they succeeded—that was a matter of course" (31).

If Mrs. Warden and Mrs. Bell exist on opposite ends of the financial spectrum, Isabel Porne—the woman Diantha goes to work for in the fictional California town of Orchardina[9]—is in the middle. Prior to Diantha's arrival, Isabel attempts to care for her home, her husband, and her child while continuing her work as an architect, but as she has neither the skill nor the interest to keep the house the way she likes it, and as she resents the time those duties take from the work and family she enjoys, she fails, resulting in an unhappy home for everyone. As she explains to a commiserating friend:

> "Give me my drawing tools and plans and I'm happy—but this business"—she swept a white hand wearily about—"it's not my work, that's all."
>
> "But you enjoy it, don't you—I mean having nice things?" asked her friend.
>
> "Of course I enjoy it, but so does Edgar. Can't a woman enjoy her home, just as a man does, without running the shop?" (Gilman, 1910: 75)

Gilman defends Isabel's rejection of housework from charges of unwomanliness with a play on words, explaining that Isabel liked nothing more than making a home; indeed, as an architect, she had "made" the one they currently lived in. By playing with the slippage between home making and making homes, Gilman achieves one of the key points in her argument: that

housework, for most women, is not loving service, and maintaining the physical space of the house does not belong to the sacred classification of "home." This work constitutes a job or a business like any other, and to expect women to undertake it without pay and regardless of ability or inclination amounts to exploitation, not to mention a waste of valuable labor. Industrial age principles of waste and efficiency are rarely applied to the home, Diantha finds, due the sentiment attached to the ideal. But Diantha subjects the workings of the house to the same rigorous scrutiny as any labor site. Speaking at a meeting of the Orchardina Home and Culture Club, amidst the "shocked silence" and "chill displeasure" of her listeners (Gilman, 1910: 112, 113), Diantha uses the language of labor efficiency to criticize the current system of "domestic economy":

> Even where the wife does all the housework, without pay, we still waste labor to an enormous extent, requiring one whole woman to wait upon each man. If the man hires one or more servants, the wastes increase. If one hundred men undertake some common business, they do not divide in two halves, each man having another man to serve him—fifty productive laborers, and fifty cooks. Two or three cooks could provide for the whole group; to use fifty is to waste 45 per cent of the labor. (113)

Calling, in effect, for an industrial revolution in the home, Diantha proposes a collective team of home care professionals as a solution to the waste of the current situation, and the working out of these ideas forms the substance of the rest of the novel.

Maternal evolution: Progress through mothering

Diantha links her project to the national progress by asserting (in the same address to the Home and Culture club) that domestic labor, far from timeless, was simply one stage in the evolution of labor. In the pre-industrial period, all work was domestic in that it was carried out in the home. As society progressed, various forms of labor moved out of the home for greater efficiency. Weaving and spinning, as well as the making of shoes, candles, soap, wine, and other tasks became socialized as they were performed collectively for the consumer. Bakers and confectioners took over aspects of food preparation; professional window washers and the like provided certain house cleaning services. In this context, Diantha's plan of, for example, a community kitchen will not "destroy the home" and "strike at the roots of the family" (Gilman, 1910: 122), as her critics would have it, but rather would continue that progress already begun.

Diantha's critics voiced a common concern. As Alan Trachtenberg has pointed out, many Americans feared the raging capitalism and industrialization of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as the antithesis to the home and the domestic, feminine values associated with it (1982: 78), but

Gilman facilitates a relationship between domesticity and national, industrial progress through a revision of popular evolutionary theory, a topic she takes up in several of her nonfiction works.[10] Gilman asserts that the notion of home as separate from the public sphere and sites of industry grows out of a masculine evolutionary theory that fails to recognize the inherently feminine nature of industry and facilitates the nation's excessive competition, rampant individualism, and—we shall see—struggle-based literary tradition.

Conventional theories of evolution often served to justify the female's secondary place in the species. As we saw above, Herbert Spencer denigrated the role of women in evolution by arguing that "the attributes of childhood and motherhood were incompatible with the human image demanded by a model of social evolution in which the 'struggle for existence' was the essential motor," and that, because of their maternal instinct, women viewed social problems through "the distorting medium of maternity," making them ill-equipped for leadership (Magner, 1992: 116, 1181-119). However Gilman, influenced by sociologist Lester Ward, praises the superiority of female values of labor, altruism, and community.[11] Gilman criticizes evolutionary theory's dependence on the language of fight and struggle, demonstrating that in fact most progress comes about not through fighting but through cultivation, and that the act of cultivation—of nurturing—is a female, mothering act (1976: 93).[12] Men's greater power in contemporary society, she explains, has led to the popular association of evolution with combat; therefore she blames the destructive character of the nation's capitalism and industry on their association with this excessively masculine version of evolution:

> Man alone being represented in the main fields of modern industry, [the] male instinct for hunting and fighting plays havoc with the true economic processes. He makes a warfare of business, he makes prey of his competitors, he still seeks to enslave—to make others work for him, instead of freely and joyously working all he can. The best industrial progress needs both elements—ours is but a compromise as yet, something between the beehive and the battlefield. (Gilman, 1903: 90)

The doctrine of separate spheres which keeps women in their homes, Gilman argues, causes imbalance in the fields of industry. Under masculine influence, business becomes warfare—a site of violence and destruction—rather than the female-centered beehive—a site of cooperation and productivity. Gilman acknowledges that industry requires some competition, but the competition she advocates encourages growth and productivity rather than monopoly and individual gain at others' expense. Gilman calls for a balancing of the individualism and egoism of the masculine "survival of the fittest" ethos with a broader social coordination through altruistic service. Challenging Spencer, she posits that this feminine attitude, the "impulses of motherhood ...

altruistic in origin" (1976: 252) is not a "distorting medium" but rather the locus of female superiority and the basis of evolutionary progress.

Gilman's maternal revision of evolution theory significantly impacts her understanding of and relationship to the nation's industrial progress; she credits women with the human tendency to labor and therefore—in a move at once reminiscent of and revolutionary to domestic ideology—claims the nation's industrial progress to be a result of women's influence. Since "the constructive tendency is essentially feminine; the destructive masculine" (1903: 87), men adapted to women's superior lifestyle:

> Well is it for the human race that the male savage finally took hold of the female's industry. Whether he perceived her superiority and sought to emulate it is doubtful; more probably it was the pressure of economic conditions which slowly forced him to it. The glaring proofs of time taught him that the pasture was more profitable than the hunting ground, and the cornfield than the pasture. The accumulating riches produced by the woman's industry drew him on. Slowly, reluctantly, the lordly fighter condescended to follow the humble worker, who led him by thousands of years. In the hands of the male, industry developed. (Gilman, 1903: 89)

Thus Gilman overturns popular notions of evolution emphasizing masculine qualities of fight and struggle; she asserts that, in fact, those tendencies had to be—and must continue to be—overcome in order for progress to occur.

Diantha as progressive mother

This vision of evolution forms the basis of Diantha's project. The businesses she develops—home meal delivery service, housekeeping service, lunch counter—are capitalistic in their drive for profit, but that drive is modified/balanced by her motherly concern for "her" girls—the domestic laborers whose working conditions she has vastly improved—as well as for the women she serves in their homes. Eventually Diantha realizes her goal: she establishes an experimental community that separates the work of the home from mothering. Families live in their own homes, but their meals are prepared in a communal kitchen by professional cooks. The homes are kept up by professional housekeepers. Children are tended for a portion of each day by professional childcare providers in what she has called elsewhere a "baby garden."[13] And all these professionals have their own homes and families that are cared for in like manner. Beyond this professional goal, Diantha has achieved her personal goal, too. She has married Ross and become a mother herself.

It may strike the reader as odd that this novel, so concerned with mothering as an evolutionary force, says relatively little about Diantha as a mother. When her son is born, "She loved it, nursed it, and ran her business at long range for six months. But then she brought nurse and child to the [experimental

community] with her, placed them in the cool, airy nursery in the garden, and varied her busy day with still hours by herself—the baby in her arms" (Gilmlan, 1910: 243). Gilman believes that mothering becomes more meaningful and positive when the mother is pursuing a career, when she devotes herself not only to her own child, but also to the world in some way. Diantha takes time with her infant son, but soon returns to her work. Earlier in the novel, when Diantha takes the workload of the home from Isabel Porne, Isabel is able to return to her profession. And it is this ability to work that in turn makes it possible to "love [her husband] and baby—as—as I *do*!—Only when I'm tired and discouraged I can't put my hand on it somehow" (93). Thus, in *Diantha*, Gilman is not so interested in the mother-child relationship, except insofar as it is threatened by an outmoded notion of mothering. Her real interest is in a social or public form of mothering described in the second calling—a form of mothering turned toward the world. According to this system, public or professional mothers care for and nurture the community's children while the biological mothers become publicly active by doing work at which they are gifted and which they find rewarding, be it architecture, factory work, city management, or something else. In their collective effort, they mother by participating in the community. Gilman believed that mother-love was the "main current of race-preservation," and this vision of communal care for all the world's children fits that evolutionary goal (Ladd-Taylor, 1994: 111).

We see the beginnings of that evolution in *Diantha.* After extricating the work of home maintenance from the work of mothering, "Orchardina basked and prospered [under Diantha's new system]; its citizens found their homes happier and less expensive than ever before, and its citizenesses began to wake up and to do things worth while" (Gilman, 1910: 243). Certainly, Gilman makes rather grand claims for the results of Diantha's experiment: "domestic bliss increased" and the town's physical health improved as a result of eating a more carefully planned and prepared diet (239). "Citizenesses"—the women lulled to sleep by old domestic ideology in the first of the two callings—now wake up and become actively involved in the race's development. Gilman does not offer this vision as utopian, however; she presents it as an achievable reality according to the possibilities of her maternal evolutionary theory.

Maternal realism

Gilman's revision of evolution theory impinges not only upon her theories of domesticity, but upon her literary theory as well. Just as she judged modern industry to be characterized by the overly masculine focus on battle, she judges literary forms to share this masculine fight and struggle motif. Indeed, Cynthia Eagle Russett (1976), in her analysis of Darwin's influence on American intellectual life, examines the way American naturalist writers such as London, Dreiser, and Norris take up the Darwinian world view. Darwin's theories "revealed the animalistic struggle underlying all human behavior" (Bell, 1993: 109). London's work focused on the rule of "kill or be killed, eat or be eaten"

(qtd. in Russett, 1976: 176)[14] and portrays the wilderness, which London found particularly appropriate for Darwin's theories, as the site of a "ruthless" struggle for existence (Russett, 1976: 181). Dreiser transported Darwinian law into the urban setting, demonstrating that "civilization, whatever its complexities, was no stranger to the law of tooth and claw" (Russett, 1976: 199). And in their adoption of principles of determinism, many naturalists believed that "chance reigned ... and not choice" (Russett, 1976: 185). Thus Darwinian naturalism offers "a tough-minded estimate of humanity as driven by self-seeking compulsions to which terms like 'morality' simply did not apply" (Russett, 1976: 190). Naturalism, although most typically associated with the "survival of the fittest," was not the only genre influenced by Darwinian theory. Realist writers also took up the survival ethic in their portrayal of late-nineteenth century society. Lily Bart, in Wharton's *House of Mirth*, certainly has to resort to "jungle ethics" in her attempt to survive in New York society, and Howells's Silas Lapham, ultimately experiences ruin because he refuses to compete in business according to the dog-eat-dog mentality.

Gilman responds to this literary tradition as she responds to the masculine, combat focus of evolution: with the altruism of motherhood. Since she believed that the individual and the social body exercise agency in the evolution process, she rejects the naturalists' leanings toward determinism and instead presents possibilities for attaining perfection. Rather than focusing on "devolution" and the inheritance of animal traits leading to a "beast within" (Russett, 1976: 178, 184), Gilman revises these notions, proving—albeit questionably—that improvements made in one generation can be passed on to the next, an immensely hopeful theory.[15] The optimism in her work, then, stems from her theory of evolution just as the pessimism of naturalist and realist writing stems from a deterministic understanding of evolution. Gilman would explore the way literary forms are informed by masculinist theories of evolution more fully in her utopian work, *Herland*. In this novel, the male visitors to the highly evolved, all-female nation of Herland find the drama and literature there to be "rather flat. You see, they lacked the sex motive and, with it, jealousy. They had no interplay of warring nations, no aristocracy and its ambitions, no wealth and poverty opposition" (1979: 99). By suggesting that the "law of battle" represented only a small piece of the evolutionary picture, Gilman essentially challenges the literature that depends upon the struggle motif, presenting a new kind of realism that dramatizes the altruistic aspects of evolutionary progress. In this way she opens the door to maternal realism: a genre that realistically portrays the increasingly complex factors of industrialized modern life and their effects on individuals and families, while offering an altruistic, maternal ethic as a means of negotiating these factors.

Conclusion

Gilman acknowledges the potentially negative effects of industry on women's lives, but Diantha's appellation as the "Amazon of Industry" (Gilman,

1910: 230) by one of her admirers underlines Gilman's portrayal of a society in which women master technological progress, using it to their advantage rather than fighting or fearing it. In this maternal-realistic novel, she imagines mothers freed of the work of the home to mother the community at large. She thus depicts a community organized around a maternal, feminine value system. Far from a utopian vision, Gilman's optimism grows out of her evolution theory and is, for her, realistic. She rejects the Darwinian concept of the battlefield both as a tenet of evolution theory and as a basis for realism. In its place, she offers a maternal, altruistic fiction that depicts a maternal order as both the vehicle and goal of evolutionary progress. In her maternal realism, she imagines a domestic setting not threatened by the changing world but operating in harmony with industry.

I wish to thank Nina Baym, Brady Harrison, and Katie Kane for their comments and encouragement on earlier versions of this essay.

[1]According to Nina Baym in *Woman's Fiction*, "The home may have come to seem increasingly less tenable as a social unity, let alone a feminine power base (1978: 297), and therefore, "the liberal women who began their writing careers after the Civil War found the redemptive possibilities of enlightened domesticity no longer credible" (50). See, for example, Phelps's *The Story of Avis*, Chopin's *The Awakening*, and Wharton's *Custom of the Country*.

[2]See also Lane (1991) for her treatment of Gilman's treatment of Spencer's theories.

[3]Gilman originally serialized *What Diantha Did* in 1909-1910 in *Forerunner*, the periodical she wrote and published from 1909 to 1916. She published the novel in book form through her own publishing house, Charlton Company, in 1910.

[4]My understanding of the domestic novel is informed by Nina Baym's *Woman's Fiction* and Jane Tompkins's *Sensational Designs*. According to Baym's configuration, woman's fiction was a form of Bildungsroman in which a young female protagonist is inculcated into domestic ideology. The optimistic domestic ideal informing these novels offered the hope that mercenary society might be reorganized "on the principle of familiar love" (1978: 49). Tompkins takes a broader approach, extending the domestic classification to novels that don't follow the overplot of woman's fiction. As she explains in her insightful discussion of the cultural work of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, antebellum domestic fiction portrayed a worldview in which mother love was a source of significant power. She argues that "the popular domestic novel of the nineteenth century represents a monumental effort to reorganize culture from the woman's point of view" by applying feminine values to the situations encountered in daily life. *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, she asserts, was "a brilliant redaction of the culture's favorite story about itself—the story of salvation through motherly love" (1985: 22).

[5]There has been much attention in recent years to the false dichotomy of the public and private spheres, evidenced with Cathy Davidson's special issue of *American Literature* and with collections such as Monika Elbert's *Separate Spheres No More*. My point here is not to claim that there were separate spheres, but rather to acknowledge that nineteenth-century domestic ideology was built upon the fiction of two distinct spheres. Indeed, Gilman anticipates Davidson by debunking the notion of the separate spheres and demonstrating repeatedly that these two "spheres" spilled into each other constantly.

[6]"Two Callings" served as the opening for her nonfiction treatise *The Home: Its Work and Influence* (1903).

[7]The line here echoes the language of Mary's response to the news that she will become the mother of Jesus. Mary answers: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word" (Luke 1.38).

[8]Gilman fits squarely in the cultural feminist camp in her belief that certain traits are essentially female, or come more naturally to the female. In particular, her work anticipates that of Sarah Ruddick (1995) who argues for a specifically maternal style of thinking and acting in the world. See also Seth Koven and Sonya Michel, *Mothers of a New World* and Molly Ladd-Taylor's *Mother-Work*.

[9]Gilman lived in Pasadena for many years, and her creation of Orchardina seems to be based on that experience.

[10]She addresses this issue of the nation's progress and evolution in much of her work. In this section, I'll be referring to two texts: *His Religion and Hers* and *The Home, Its Work and Influence*.

[11]Gilman was especially influenced by Ward's article "Our Better Halves." *Forum* 6 (1888) 266-275.

[12]Although she articulated these ideas in various nonfiction works throughout her life, in *His Religion and Hers*, she provided one of the fuller treatments of this theory. Published in 1923, this book came in the aftermath of World War I, explaining her focus on the male propensity for battle.

[13]Gilman describes the baby gardens most extensively in *Concerning Children*.

[14]Russett quotes London's dog hero Buck in *The Call of the Wild* here.

[15]The transmissibility of acquired traits is a scientific project that Diantha's husband Ross takes up once he is out from under the financial burden of caring for his mother and sisters. Although this theory is not defensible scientifically, it suits Gilman's optimist vision of evolution in which individuals can exercise agency over their own progress.

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Rishma Dunlop

Catherine

for Catherine Jane Troy Dunlop (1926-1997)

The Ship's Company of the "Aquitania" send you best wishes
for your happiness and good fortune in your new life in the
great Dominion, the country of your adoption.
March 1946

Widow's skin parched
spilling memory in waves
bloodremembering
across cool, hospital sheets.

Dreams of dancing
her gnarled joints unknotted,
flesh supple,
spinning to Tommy Dorsey's big band music
cheek held against his khaki uniform
his wide smile spanning
the smoke-filled canteen.

She remembers scents,
liquid memories, exotic promise
in the drabness of war
Crepe de Chine, Shalimar
In London at the chemist's shop
her soldier buys her Chanel No.5.

The chemist has a nose for perfume
The top note, he tells them, *the one you smell first,*
is the man-made synthetic aldehyde

then the middle notes, jasmine, lily of the valley, orris-root and ylang-ylang.
Finally, the base notes that make the perfume linger:
vetiver, sandalwood, cedar, vanilla, amber, civet and musk.
Base notes are of animal origin, ancient memories of smell beginning
in vast plains and forests.

It is scent that disturbs her drift of sleep
perfumare, through smoke.

She remembers ships of war brides
with their infants cradled
in the scent of salt air,
sailing into the arms
of Halifax harbour.

She becomes his geography
inhabited by mists,
Atlantic foam at her feet,
her body embedded
in fields of violets and wild berries,
endless harvests,
her blood flowing
in the veins
of new country.

Now, she resists the pull
of winter,
the deep white territory
of skin and ghosts

she insists upon another day
does not want the slow descent
into ice.

I reach for her to stop time
with my heat
breathing fire into
the clasp
of paper dry hands.

Bernadette Rosbrook

Something More
Immigrant Mothers in Anzia Yezierska's Early Fiction

An immigrant from Polish Russia, Anzia Yezierska rose to fame in America in the 1920s. Her early writing was critically acclaimed. Marketed by the press as a "sweatshop Cinderella" (Dearborn, 1988: 145), Yezierska became a well-known public figure. But by the end of the '20s, critics were tiring of her fiction and by the middle of the 1930s she had dropped from public attention. Yezierska lived in relative obscurity for the rest of her life, her fiction apparently forgotten until rediscovered by feminist scholars in the 1970s. Much current discussion of Yezierska's writing focuses on her treatment of the dilemma of immigrant identity.[1] In this article, I would like to address the theme of mothering in Yezierska's best-known work—her early stories, focusing in particular on the way in which her treatment of the mother figure in these stories attests to her involvement with early twentieth century American feminism. Specifically, I will argue that Yezierska's early mother-narratives reflect her exposure to a new awareness of female identity that was being vigorously discussed by Greenwich Village feminists—amongst whom she lived and socialized in the early 1900s (Dearborn, 1988: 50, 67).

Anzia Yezierska's first published story, "The Free Vacation House," is about the experiences of a young immigrant mother with a large family living in a tenement slum on New York's Lower East Side. Published in 1915 and based on an incident in the life of her sister, Helena Katz (Henriksen, 1988: 21), the story was written several years after Yezierska's departure from the Jewish ghetto. Yezierska had left her parent's home in about 1898, when she was approximately eighteen years old (Henriksen, 1988: 17), and had left the ghetto in about 1902 (Dearborn, 1988: 50). In between leaving her family and embarking on a writing career, Yezierska had worked in sweatshops, attended night school, graduated from Columbia University's Teachers College, worked

as a domestic science teacher, lived and attended classes at the socialist Rand School and studied at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts. She had also married twice, lived for a time with a wealthy sister on the West Coast and given birth to a daughter.[2] Given her experience of various roles and milieus, it is interesting that Yezierska begins writing with the figure of the ghetto mother firmly at the center of her narrative. In addition to "The Free Vacation House," her first published book, *Hungry Hearts*, contains three other stories—"The Lost Beautifulness," "The Fat of the Land" and "Where Lovers Dream"—which focus on the lives of immigrant mothers.

There is a certain logic to Yezierska's early concern with the figure of the mother: she is, in effect, beginning at the beginning. If, as Mary Dearborn suggests, writing, for Yezierska, was closely linked to issues of identity (1988: 81), then it makes sense that her writing starts at the place where identity formation must begin: with the family and particularly with the mother.[3] Further, as a woman in her thirties, experiencing motherhood for the first time, it is not surprising that Yezierska was compelled to think and write about the lives of the ghetto mothers she grew up amongst. But something else is going on in these stories. While Yezierska's re-engagement with the life of the mother may be attributable to her personal experiences of mothering and being mothered, it is important to recognise that these depictions of immigrant women exemplify an understanding of femaleness that is consistent with the concerns of early twentieth century feminism.

Recognizing something more

Looking on the lives of immigrant mothers, Yezierska dwells repeatedly on themes of defeat. As JoAnn Pavletich notes, Yezierska's narratives "represent the poverty-stricken lives of brutally exploited immigrants" (2000: 98). Her mothers are condemned to loveless marriages, evicted from their homes, humiliated by charity organisations, rejected by their children. Significantly though, the tragedy of the mother's life is not portrayed solely in terms of external oppressions.

The pathos of Yezierska's short stories comes from her recognition that these Old World women, oppressed as they are, are yet responsive to love and beauty. Moreover, they are aware of something inside themselves that is inherently worthwhile. They have an intense self-respect, they value their autonomy and they yearn for self-expression. Yezierska's mother-protagonists display an understanding of themselves as individuals. That her protagonists are well aware of their own substantial worth as individuals accentuates the bitterness of their oppression. Recognising the value of what they possess inside themselves, these women feel their degradation as a kind of physical pain. By conveying both the mothers' self-knowledge and their deprivations, Yezierska communicates the intensity of their loss of self: the extent to which they feel, but are powerless to redress, the damage and injury that has been done to them.

A new view of womanhood: Yezierska and the Greenwich Village feminists

A new awareness of female individuality underpinned the changing self-consciousness amongst early twentieth-century women that contributed to the birth of the new feminist movement. In *Beyond Separate Spheres: The Intellectual Roots of Modern Feminism*, Rosalind Rosenberg charts the transition from the Victorian commitment to "the unalterable nature of femininity"—the idea that women are "by nature, emotional and passive" (1982: xiv), with "superior ethical insight and nurturant qualities" (xiii)—to a modern insistence that "the vast majority of observable sex differences could be traced to cultural conditioning" (xiv) and a modern belief in women's "uncharted potential" (53). In *The Grounding of Modern Feminism*, Nancy Cott argues that an awareness of female individuality distinguished twentieth century feminism from the ideals of female activists of a previous era. Cott points out that nineteenth century women activists, with their emphasis on "the advancement of *woman* or the cause of *woman*, *woman's* right and *woman's* suffrage [emphasis added]" (1987: 3), had endorsed the idea that femaleness was defined by a group of innate characteristics. Their consistent usage of the singular "woman" symbolized their belief in "the unity of the female sex. It proposed that all women have one cause, one movement" (7). The term "feminism" came into common usage in the 1910s, and in contrast to the activists of an earlier era, women who called themselves feminists made "the *variability* among women a principle of their outlook [emphasis added]" (7). As an ideology, feminism presupposed a set of principles "not necessarily belonging to every woman—nor limited to women" (3).

An important rallying point for the new feminism was the Heterodoxy Club, formed in Greenwich Village in 1912. The members of the club were "inner-directed and individualistic" (Rosenberg, 1992: 65), united only by their commitment to unorthodox thinking (63). In 1914, Marie Jenny Howe, founder of Heterodoxy, defined feminism as "women's effort to break into the human race" (qtd. in Rosenberg, 1992: 65). She went on to state: "We intend simply to be ourselves, not just our little female selves, but our whole big human selves" (65). In *Love in the Promised Land: The Story of Anzia Yezierska and John Dewey*, Mary Dearborn discusses Yezierska's association with Heterodoxy. While acknowledging that Yezierska's official involvement with the club is not documented, Dearborn identifies some of Yezierska's closest friends as members of Heterodoxy, and summizes that Yezierska was "inevitably exposed to its views" (1988: 70).

Rose Pastor Stokes and Henrietta Rodman were among the Heterodoxy women with whom Yezierska formed close and enduring personal relationships (69, 72). A Russian immigrant, Pastor Stokes had captured the attention of the nation in 1905 by marrying the millionaire philanthropist and social worker James Graham Phelps Stokes. Despite her Madison Avenue marriage, Pastor Stokes remained committed to radical causes. A leading trade-unionist

and later, a member of the Communist Party (Rosenberg, 1992: 76), Pastor Stokes represented to Yezierska "the self-made American individuality that she herself sought" (Dearborn, 1988: 69). Henrietta Rodman was a teacher and an activist, and founder of the Feminist Alliance—a group committed to promoting the idea of married career women (Rosenberg, 1992: 66). Rodman was famous for successfully challenging the New York Board of Education's ban on married women holding teaching jobs. Although she never had children, she also campaigned for a maternity leave policy. In a 1969 interview, Yezierska said about Rodman: "To me she was a very great person because she conquered the thing that was an obstacle to her" (qtd. in Dearborn, 1988: 74). According to Dearborn, Rodman taught Yezierska "how to be a woman" (74), instead of "a woman with a big belly being such a glorious thing" (74).

In some ways, Yezierska did not need the ideas and the rhetoric of her friends to teach her about the "uncharted potential" of women (Rosenberg, 1992: 53). Early in her life, she recognized in herself the desire and the ability to transcend society's expectations of a female life. But her understanding of female potential must have been developed and extended through her close association with women like Pastor Stokes and Rodman. Various decisions Yezierska made in the 1910s—to leave two unsatisfactory marriages, to seek self-expression through writing, to surrender primary care of her daughter to her former husband so as to pursue a writing career—indicate the extent to which she may be described as "a woman of the times" (Dearborn, 1988: 75). Yezierska was also familiar with the radical ideas of Emma Goldman (Henriksen, 1988: 20), another significant Greenwich Village personality. A member of Heterodoxy and a high-profile public figure, who, like Yezierska, had an intimate, personal knowledge of life on the Lower East Side, Goldman was passionate about the plight of immigrant mothers in conventional family arrangements: "The old-time motherhood is to me the most terrible thing imposed upon woman. It has made her so unspeakably helpless and dependent, so self-centered and unsocial as to fill me with absolute horror" (qtd. in Burstein, 1996: 35). As a feminist activist, Goldman focused her attention on "the harshness of women's submission to the conventional family life" (Burstein, 1996: 55-6). As Yezierska became increasingly familiar with "the new freedom of the new woman" (76), it appears that she became increasingly aware of the plight of ghetto mothers who could not assert their individuality as the Heterodoxy feminists could, through "livelihood, personal relationships, habits of dress and living" (Lavender, 2002: 2). While Pastor Stokes and Rodman lobbied for political causes and legislative change, Yezierska—like Goldman—became preoccupied with the oppression of female identity by the demands and protocols of Old World domesticity.

Immigrant mothers in *Hungry Hearts*: "The unstilled pain of life"

Turning her attention to the figure of the mother, Yezierska recognizes

typical female experiences of child-rearing in overcrowded, impoverished conditions. But she also draws attention to individual stories and individual needs. In "The Lost Beautifulness," Hanneh Hayyeh saves for years in order to buy the paint that will transform her tenement slum into something resembling an uptown mansion. By her own admission Hanneh Hayyeh has lived "like a pig" with her "nose to the earth, all the time only pinching and scraping for bread and rent"[4] (Yezierska, 1991: 31-32). However, Hanneh Hayyeh stands out from the crowd. She is not just a laundress, she is "an artist laundress" with a "consuming passion for beauty" (35). Her transformation of her home is made possible by her awareness of something unique inside herself. Hanneh Hayyeh reveals that she was inspired by a red flower-pot, a gift from her wealthy employer Mrs Preston: "That flower-pot opened up the sky in my kitchen ... I used to talk to it like it could hear and feel and see. And I said to it: '*I'll show you what's in me.* I'll show you I know what beautiful is.' [emphasis added]" (35). Hanneh Hayyeh clearly understands the implications of asserting herself as a subject: "When I see myself around the house how I fixed it up with my own hands, I forget I'm only a nobody. It makes me feel I'm also a person like Mrs. Preston" (32). It may be argued that Hanneh Hayyeh is motivated by her desire to be like Mrs Preston, and that her act of self-expression is actually an imitation, a copy. However, even if Hanneh Hayyeh's creative act is not original, it is still an expression of individuality. She lives in "a dark ill-smelling tenement" (33), in a neighbourhood crowded with similar buildings. But her home "lights up the whole tenement house for blocks around" (35). Hanneh Hayyeh has responded to something special inside her—a deep "love for the beautiful" (35)—and she has succeeded in distinguishing herself from others, in affirming herself as an individual.

At the end of "The Lost Beautifulness," Hanneh Hayyeh and her husband are huddled on the pavement with their belongings in the rain. They have been evicted from their home because of their inability to keep up the rent on the apartment that has escalated in value because of Hanneh Hayyeh's hard-won renovations. Hanneh Hayyeh has lost both her job and her home. The "lost beautifulness" refers to her destroyed kitchen—the havoc she has wrought as vengeance against her landlord. But it also describes Hanneh Hayyeh's inner desolation: "For every inch of the broken plaster there was a scar on her heart. She had destroyed that which had taken her so many years of prayer and longing to build up" (Yezierska, 1991: 42). Economic oppression has forced Hanneh Hayyeh to compromise the thing about her that made her special, that set her apart. The poignancy of the story comes from her painful recognition of what she has become. Earlier in the story, as she was starving herself in an effort to meet the landlord's demands, Hanneh Hayyeh had cried out to her employer, Mrs Preston: "Hunger and bitterness are making a wild animal out of me. I ain't no more the same Hanneh Hayyeh I used to be" (39). Hanneh Hayyeh's soul aches "with the unstilled pain of life" (42): an image of persistent, useless rebellion. She cannot ignore what is inside her and she rails against what she

has been forced to give up. But her resistance is futile, and brings her further pain and grief.

"The Lost Beautifulness" is certainly a story of mother-love: Hanneh Hayyeh is driven by her desire to make a decent home for her son Aby, so that he will be able to "lift up his head in the world" and not have "to shame himself" when he invites people to his home (Yezierska, 1991: 31). She says to her husband: "I could tear the stars out from heaven for my Aby's wish" (32). And yet while she claims that "shining up the house" for Aby is her "only pleasure" (31), it is she who "soaks in the pleasure" from "every inch" of her kitchen (31). As the story progresses, it becomes clear that Hanneh Hayyeh's pleasure is not only the deflected pleasure of imagining Aby's surprise and gratification. The artist's appreciation is intrinsically hers: it is she who has the "consuming passion for beauty" (35), it is her eyes that possess "the hidden glow" of "the artist" (35). Her pain at the end of the story then is as much for herself as it is for her son. She had expressed herself in her beautiful kitchen and its destruction is felt as the destruction of her own "soul" (42). The "unstilled pain of life" represents her responsiveness to beauty that cannot be suppressed; a responsiveness that renders the destruction and dispossession even more unbearable.

Amongst the actions of mother-protagonists who appear in *Hungry Hearts*, Hanneh Hayyeh's painting of her kitchen stands out as the clearest example of dramatic self-expression. But there are other mothers in *Hungry Hearts* who possess an understanding of themselves as individuals and who value their right to autonomy. In "The Fat of the Land," Hannah Breineh struggles continuously to be recognised and treated as a person in her own right. As a young mother, battling poverty and hunger while trying to raise a large family in a tenement apartment, Hanneh Breineh constantly screams at and curses her children. In the midst of her cursing, she cries out for sympathy and understanding from her neighbour Mrs Pelz: " 'Why comes it to me so hard?' Went on Hanneh Breineh, the tears streaming down her cheeks. 'I can't stand it no more. I came into you for a minute to run away from my troubles...'" (Yezierska, 1991: 81). But Mrs Pelz, kind as she is, refuses to respond to Hanneh Breineh's particular tale of woe. She tries to be helpful and consoling, but her real sympathy lies with the children rather than the mother: " 'Shah! Shah!' reproved Mrs Pelz. 'Pity yourself on the child ... See how frightened it looks on you.' Mrs Pelz took the child in her arms and petted it. 'The poor little lamb! What did it done you should hate it so?'" (81). Mrs Pelz responds to the visible neglect of the child; she is moved by the plight of the vulnerability she can see and witness to. She is unable, however, to respond to or recognise the neglected needs of the mother. She cannot see that, in addition to being part of an oppressed immigrant under-class, Hanneh Breineh is an individual with a personal history of suffering:

"To whom can I open the wounds of my heart?" [Hanneh Breineh]

> moaned. "Nobody has pity on me. You don't believe me, nobody believes me until I'll fall down like a horse in the middle of the street. Oi weh! Mine life is so black for my eyes!..." (Yezierska, 1991: 81)

In the second part of the story, Mrs Pelz comes to visit Hanneh Breineh, who is now living in an Uptown "palace" (Yezierska, 1991: 85). All her children have prospered and, as Mrs Pelz once predicted, Hanneh Breineh is living "on the fat of the land" (82). Yet in spite of her wealth and her life of ease, Hanneh Breineh is still suffering from neglect:

> "Oi! Mrs Pelz; if you could only look into my heart! I'm so choked up! ... My children give me everything from the best. When I was sick, they got me a nurse by day and one by night ... but—but—I can't talk myself out in their language. They want to make me over for an American lady, and I'm different." Tears cut their way under her eyelids with a pricking pain as she went on: "When I was poor, I was free, and could holler and do what I like in my own house. Here I got to lie still like a mouse under a broom.... " (Yezierska, 1991: 88)

To Mrs Pelz, she is "the Hanneh Breineh of old, ever discontented, ever complaining even in the midst of riches and plenty" (94). But Yezierska understands that Hanneh Breineh's discontent is legitimate and comes from the fact that, throughout her life, her needs have been overlooked: she has never been recognised or valued as a "person" in her own right, with an inner life. She is overwhelmed by loneliness because, as an individual with her own "thoughts and feelings" (94), she has been continually ignored:

> "Why should my children shame themselves from me? From where did they get the stuff to work themselves up in the world? ... Why don't the children of born American mothers write my Benny's plays? It is I, who never had a chance to be a person, who gave him the fire in his head. If I would have had a chance to go to school and learn the language, what couldn't I have been?" (Yezierska, 1991: 94)

"The Fat of the Land" deals with the issue of generational conflict—"the struggle between parents and children by which an adult self is formed" (Dearborn, 1986: 72-3). Generational conflict is usually conveyed as the child's struggle against the parents—this is how Yezierska treats the theme in later stories and in her novel *Bread Givers*. It is important therefore that in this story, the narrative focus is on the *mother's* dilemma in maintaining her identity against the pressure from her children to conform to an accepted image of upper middle-class prosperity. Towards the end of the story, there is the striking image of Hanneh Breineh striding "proudly through the marble-paneled hall" of her Riverside Drive apartment block: "the market basket under her arm gave

forth the old, homelike odours of herring and garlic, while the scaly tail of a four-pound carp protruded from its newspaper wrapping" (Yezierska, 1991: 92). She flares up at the "uniformed hall-man, erect, expressionless, frigid with dignity" who discreetly tries to insist that her Delancey Street purchases come up through the trade entrance:

> "Mind your own business!" she retorted. "I'll take it up myself. Do you think you're a Russian policeman to boss me in my own house?" ... "Ain't this America? Ain't this a free country? Can't I take up in my own house what I buy with my own money" ... (Yezierska, 1991: 92)

Hanneh Breineh will not be made into "an American lady" (Yezierska, 1991: 88). She is aware that she is "different"(88), but she will not surrender her identity to please her children and she will not be treated as a "dear old lady mother" (92) to be provided for, shuffled around and ignored.

The other protagonists of Yezierska's mother-narratives in *Hungry Hearts* are younger women. Distracted and fatigued, they do not have the forcefulness and the energy of Hanneh Breineh or Hanneh Hayyeh. But significantly Yezierska allows them to speak for themselves, and their first-person narrative immediately establishes the sense of an individual story. Sara in "Where Lovers Dream" is married with several children. Year earlier she had been jilted by her lover, David, who was soon to graduate as a doctor and who had been bullied by his benefactor uncle into rejecting Sara for a more socially acceptable wife. Sara ended up marrying Sam because "he came along and wanted me, and I didn't care about nothing no more" (Yezierska, 1991: 70). And yet despite her physical immersion in the difficulties and mundaneness of domestic life, Sara carries around in her head a clear scenario—an image of herself and an imaginary dialogue—that represents her attempt preserves her dignity and self-worth:

> For years I was saying to myself—Just so you will act when you meet him. Just so you will stand. So will you look on him. These words you will say to him. I wanted to show him that what he had done to me could not down me; that his leaving me the way he left me, that his breaking my heart the way he broke it, didn't crush me ... (Yezierska, 1991: 62)

On the verge of a nervous breakdown, the unnamed mother in "The Free Vacation House" is sent by "the charities" to the country for a "rest and vacation" (Yezierska, 1991: 44). With their interrogative questioning and their long list of rules governing the mothers' behaviour, the charities make their recipients feel less than human: "like stupid cows"(46), "like tagged horses at a horse sale in the street" (47). The mother in this story feels the degradation of being denied individual rights and responsibilities as a deep and physical pain: "For

why do they make it so hard for us? When a mother needs a vacation, why must they tear the inside out from her first...?" (49) When she returns to her tenement home, she is moved nearly to tears: "How good it was feeling for me to be able to move around my own house, like I pleased" (49). This young mother hates "the very same sameness" of domestic life—"what I'm having day in and day out at home" (49)—and yet she understands that freedom does not exist solely in being free from financial worries, or heavy work or depressing landscapes: "Even the high brick walls all around made me feel like a bird what just jumped out from a cage. And I cried out, 'Gott sei dank! Gott sei dank!'" (49). She may be a "poor worn-out mother" (49)—an immigrant woman with a large family, reliant on help from social welfare—but she knows the importance of being treated as an individual and the preciousness of individual autonomy

Yezierska's involvement with modern feminism developed her attentiveness to the individual voice—to the individual story behind the collective tale of struggle and sacrifice. Carole Stone points out that Yezierska does not "valorize" her Jewish women characters, but rather "empowers them to speak as they are" (1999: 63). The stories discussed in this article go beyond telling the story of historical repression; they give imaginative expression to female individuality. Looking on the lives of immigrant mothers, Yezierska acknowledges the spark of life that distinguishes them as individuals. Her stories communicate the mothers' awareness of their individuality, and their painful, often futile struggle for recognition and self-expression In the coalescence of individuality and oppression in these early stories, it is possible to discern the germ of the idea of the woman as artist, which comes to be an important theme of Yezierska's later writing.

This article is dedicated to my mother, and to her mother.

[1]See for example, JoAnn Pavletich (2000); Carole Stone (1999; Cara-Lynn Ungar, (1999); Chip Rhodes (1998); and Melanie Levinson (1994.

[2]These details about Yezierska's life are from Mary Dearborn's *Love in the Promised Land: The Story of Anzia Yezierska and John Dewey* (in particular chapters 2, 4 and 7) and Louise Levitas Henriksen's *Anzia Yezierska: A Writer's Life* (in particular chapters 1–5).

[3]In a recent study *Writing Mothers, Writing Daughters: Tracing the Maternal in Stories by American Jewish Women*, Janet Handler Burstein recognizes "unresolved developmental issues" between immigrant daughters and their mothers (1996: 38). In an earlier article, "The Hungry Jewish Mother" (1980), Erica Duncan maintains that immigrant women writers like Yezierska needed to face "the hungers that have crippled all women, all mothers in the old tradition" in order to "carry on the lives [their] mothers never gave themselves ..." (1989: 236).

[4]All references to Yezierska's stories are from the collection *How I Found America*, which includes the complete text of *Hungry Hearts*.

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Isabella Colalillo Katz

Washing Day II

for my mother Concetta

I cling to her blue cotton skirt
she laughs and chatters all the way to the river
on her head a large wicker basket
with our soiled laundry
the women are carefree
a half day washing by the river is a kind of holiday
the sun brightens the mountaintops
stippled clouds dissolve into puffs of wispy white

my mother puts down her basket
shakes my hand free
finds her place on a wide washing stone
kneels and begins the wash:
the sheets are first, then the smaller linen
the women work together, laughing
telling stories
finally I see my favourite dress
the one we bought at the gypsy market
the green one with wine stains from last Sunday's dinner
my mother pushes it under the rippling water
I run behind her wanting to see
to help
she screams as I fall on the edge of the stone
when I'm safe in her arms

Isabella Colalillo Katz

I look out at the frothy river
a woman is laughing,
another
is tugging at something with a long stick
my mother's chestnut eyes are watching
and then I see it
my favourite dress
small and wet
bobbing
on the turning waves
floating gently down river
under the disapproving glance of
hurrying clouds

Lisa Katz

The Space of Motherhood

Sylvia Plath's "Morning Song" and "Three Women"

> Topoanalysis, then, would be the systematic psychological study of the sites of our intimate lives. In the theater of the past that is constituted by memory, the stage setting maintains the characters in their dominant roles... To localize a memory in time is merely a matter for the biographer and only corresponds to a sort of external biography...For a knowledge of intimacy, localization in the spaces of our intimacy is more urgent than the determination of dates. (Bachelard, 1969: 8-9)

To live an entirely private life means above all to be deprived of things essential to a truly human life; to be deprived of the reality that comes from being seen and heard by others, to be deprived of an "objective" relationship with them that comes from being related to and separated from them through the intermediary of a common world of things, to be deprived of the possibility of achieving something more permanent than life itself. The privation of privacy lies in the absence of others; as far as they are concerned, private man [sic] does not appear, and therefore it is as though he did not exist. Whatever he does remains without significance and consequence to others, and what matters to him is without interest to other people. (Arendt 2000: 205)

Perhaps because she often overlaps women's apparently private spaces (the home, the kitchen) with what is considered the collective sphere of life (art spaces, such as theaters and museums, the marketplace, nature and the outdoors, Sylvia Plath is sometimes accused of both a kind of exhibitionism, and a concomitant lack of interest in the general human condition (Vendler, 1985: 5). However, the opposite claim may well be made. Plath, I will argue,

has positive and outward looking reasons for presenting putatively public and private spaces as in fact overlapping, "constantly flow[ing] into each other like waves in...the life process," in Hannah Arendt's terms (1958: 33). That is, the space that contains women's private lives, including the work of motherhood, is at the same time a historical space with "public implications," as Nina Baym suggests (1995: 70).

As a writer who was also a wife and mother, Plath struggled to achieve notice and power from this complicated nexus; this essay will explore how her poetry contests the idea of fixed borders in gender-marked worlds, even for mothers. In "Morning Song," the speaker-mother is situated beyond her presumed private boundaries in the public world of writing. In "Three Women," the discussion among the women about motherhood is a public debate with public ramifications.

Plath's poetry generally features a rather routine transgression of presumed spatial limits on women's lives. Applying the terminology of the French feminist critic Helene Cixous, that of a binary system or scheme in which women are negatively defined in terms of their relationship to men, Plath may be seen as openly flouting the system; her poetry depicts both the "passivity" and "burial" of women within this scheme—Cixous' figures for the oppression of women (1994: 37-39)—but also a crossing of the divide. That is, while gender is clearly depicted as a force that structures experience for men and women (Wolosky, 2001: 130), women are not merely located or locked within the borders of space traditionally gendered as women's; in Plath's poetry, women are everywhere, and wherever they are, even the nursery, *is* everywhere, a space where writing makes women's lives public and therefore valuable.

Plath illustrates this transgression of gendered spatial boundaries in several ways in "Morning Song" and "Three Women." She uses the "characteristically feminine figures" and sites noted by Shira Wolosky: "female speaking voices; female actors; domestic imagery and spaces, traditionally the domain of women; traditionally female roles, such as daughter, wife, sister, mother; feminized experiences, such as birth, childcare and sickcare; traditionally female undertakings, such as sewing, cloth-making, cooking; gendered sexuality" (2001: 120). At the same time, I will show, she extends and distorts these spaces, and also exits them, until the "tradition[al]...domain of women" is no longer delineated by a clear dividing line from the rest of the world. In order to disrupt the idea of women's location in a fixed place, apart from men, Plath uses imagery of the crossing of thresholds, blurred borders and related images of fragmentation and dissolution. To this end, Plath also conflates spaces that might be assumed to exist in a clear opposition to one another; for example, she locates the moment of new motherhood in private and public spaces at the same time.[1]

It may be that the imagery of crossed borders represents, in a general way, a connection to the culture and society around one; whether or not a poet seizes upon this imagery depends upon his or her particular needs in relation to

society, an area in which gender plays a role. A male poet comfortable with his authority as a poet may choose to reject becoming part of the larger society. A woman poet, in order to gain authority, may seek that connection. For example, the critic Dan Miron notes a dominant imagery of borders placed between the individual and the world in the poetry of Yehuda Amichai, interpreting it as a representation of the need of an individual artist to protect himself from the assimilation process demanded of an immigrant to Israel (2000: B14).

Plath, however, in my view a seeker of power and authority in the literary world, favored an imagery of blurred and crossed boundaries in her work, in part in order to enable her women speaker-writer-mothers to become members of the Anglo-American literary canon. Of course there is a danger in the conflation of spaces: a dangerous exposure to the loss of individuality. This threat to the self which is involved in crossing borders into public spaces in a bid for power is perhaps the source of the great amount of aggression in Plath's work, rather than an indication of her personal psychological problems: the best defense of her power-seeking speakers is to be on the offensive.

In "Morning Song" Plath conflates a decidedly female gendered space—motherhood—with a surprising space in the public world, a museum, so that even this experience is shown as not taking place only within the fixed borders of gender-marked worlds. Motherhood overlaps other kinds of boundaries as well: it is depicted as a technical sexual matter, and a natural process which nonetheless must be learned. It should be noted that while there is a pronounced imagery of blurred borders, there is also an imagery of differentiation and the reestablishment of borders, perhaps to redress the loss of self that is threatened by childbearing.

"Morning Song" is about the process of separation from a child that begins with its physical birth, and the concomitant process of bonding: maintaining individuality in a situation where the body itself is a border that is crossed. The poem questions the spatial boundaries of motherhood in particular, and parenting in general; parenting is depicted, not as a private experience, but rather as a collective one, at the same time that it restricts private space. The negativity involved in spatial limitation is somewhat undermined: sound and rudimentary language are portrayed as comprising a positive location—a song—where the relationship between mother and newborn begins. The poem contains some hard truths in its time imagery as well; becoming a parent makes one extremely conscious of the passage of time, and of the unhappy physical changes caused by giving birth and by aging.

The title of the poem raises expectations of a cheerful use of language at the beginning of the day: a song in the morning that might be the child's or the mother's, or both. This song crosses several boundaries—the physical separation imposed on mother and child by the birth process, and the artistic gap between home and workplace. The child's cry in the morning is made into a song; that is, it is worked into a poem, enabling the speaker-mother-writer to fill domestic, maternal and literary space at the same time.

In the first line, the baby in the poem is presented with humor as the product of love, albeit a mechanical object, which can be "set...going," and as having the function of a timekeeper: "Love set you going like a fat gold watch." The mechanical nature of conception may be interpreted as undermining the concept of love as a spontaneous experience, or it might serve as a recognition of the sometimes blurry borders between love and sex, or between sex and conception; still, the result is well-nurtured and valuable.

The child, having crossed the borders of its mother's body to emerge into the world, crosses the borders of its own self with its voice and enters space—the physical and social world, represented by "elements," fundamental parts of a larger entity: "your bald cry/ Took its place among the elements." Connotations of the periodic table imply order, but the connotations of (inclement) weather hint at disorder, as does the synaesthesia of the "bald cry," mixing sight, touch and sound. In addition to these unsettling effects, the influence of the child on its parents seems to be an enlargement of their space, now big enough to provide an echo: "Our voices echo, magnifying your arrival." Yet the child continues to be depicted as an inanimate object (even if a work of art and even if already larger than a watch): "New statue/ In a drafty museum." The image of home as museum is one of a serious cultural space, a repository of tradition or artistic heritage.[2] Yet the draftiness connotes coldness and a lack of protection from the elements, a theme continued in the way the naked infant is said to cast a shadow on the parents' safety, making them more vulnerable, perhaps because the space of their vulnerability is enlarged to include another human being. "We stand round blankly as walls" also hints at a certain amount of helplessness, for walls, although they may protect one from the elements, are lifeless, and their blankness seems the very opposite of nurturance. Finally, walls divide; they are boundaries. But parents figured as walls are moving away from privacy and towards responsibility, moving out of their own interiority to become boundaries for their children.

The denial of motherhood in the third stanza ("I'm no more your mother"), and the cloud metaphor, because of its ephemeral nature, may be construed as shocking attempts to deny all maternal responsibility. But they may also be understood as a denial of the restriction solely to mothers of responsibility for children, and recognition of the context of motherhood as taking place within a larger world of (changing) natural forces, the elements of the universe. Borders between the world of nature and the mother's body are blurred, perhaps because giving birth makes one into a phenomenon of nature, reducing individuality, but connecting one to basic natural processes.

Borders between the space of motherhood within the home, and the outside world, are also crossed. The child's breath, part of its fledgling voice, seems to take up space in a garden, an outdoor space: "All night your moth-breath/ Flickers among the flat pink roses." Yet the flatness of the roses locates them indoors, as depictions of flowers, decorating the mother's nightgown and perhaps the bedroom wallpaper as well. The mother herself takes on the

qualities of the outdoors—a garden; she is "floral." Listening to the baby's breath connects inside and outside too: it brings external elements—the baby's life breath, the sea—to a place within the mother's body: "A far sea moves in my ear." The baby's cry gets the mother, despite her misgivings, out of a very private place, out of her bed to feed the child. The mother's space, paradoxically restricted by its enlargement, that is, made clumsy by pregnancy ("cow-heavy"), is also restricted by her maternity clothes: "floral/ In my Victorian nightgown"—the infant's metaphorical garden. These images connote the sexual limitations imposed on the mother by her post-partum condition; her intimate life is curtailed. "The window square" represents the narrowing of her world at this time as well. Trapped indoors, she may watch the stars only through a limiting window frame.

The small, open mouth of the child may also be seen as a narrowing of space. The mother's body fits into this space in a functional way. Paradoxically, the instrumentality of the mother, her usefulness to the child, may make even this private experience impersonal, much as conception is presented as a mechanical action in the first line of the poem.

What saves "Morning Song" from becoming a mourning one, a mother's grieving for her lost freedom and her individuality, is the shared territory of sound. The child cannot speak, but its "notes" (a "handful") and "vowels [that] rise like balloons," fill space rather than reduce it, ending the poem in a hopeful tone. A morning love song, an aubade, is a literary genre publicly expressing private feeling. The connection between the ostensibly private space of motherhood and public space also works against the essentialism of the idea of mother love as instinctual. In the poem the mother does not automatically bond with the child; she struggles to make her own unique bond, making use of sound, voice and language rather than an inner, essentialized femininity. In fact, femininity is seen as a cultural accessory, like a nightgown and flowered wallpaper, rather than an internal or basic characteristic of women. The mechanical nature of the child's conception ("Love set you going like a fat gold watch") also works against a putatively feminine, presumably irrational approach to love.

Plath treats the intimate subject of pregnancy and motherhood in relation to public spaces and crossed boundaries again in "Three Women," a radio play written for the BBC and broadcast in August 1962. The women of the title contemplate their different experiences in turn: the birth of a boy to a married woman; the miscarriage of a secretary, a working wife; and the birth of a girl, the result of a rape, who is given up for adoption by her single, college-student mother.

The maternity ward setting is surely a woman's space; that is, the ward is defined by women's experience in it; it is revealed, however, as hardly a private place. The writing of a poem depicting intimate after-birth situations is itself a movement away from privacy. The fact that the women are not named further de-personalizes the scene; the numbering of the three voices creates the

impression of archetypes and therefore of collective proportions rather than a personal narrative.

In the opening verses, the moon, earth and sea are described with feminine pronouns, so that what might have been thought of as a small, merely feminine space is extended to the cosmos. The first maternal voice, that of the woman who successfully gives birth, is characterized in two similes in terms of the world's rotation on its axis ("I am slow as the world") and geological phenomenon ("I am breaking apart like the world"). This may signify that women comprise separate worlds. However, the world of childbirth overlaps with the workaday world in this poem.

For example, while miscarriage is a part of women's bodily experience, it has cosmic effects: the face of the dead fetus is, surprisingly, a reminder of the world of organized political structures, gendered male: "The faces of nations,/ Governments, parliaments, societies,/ The faceless faces of important men." In terms of physical space, the loss of this child has impact outside the home, in spaces where gender is not marked: "...empty offices,/ Empty schoolrooms, empty churches. O so much emptiness!" Furthermore, male gender is not something fixed; a woman may "catch" it:

> I watched the men walk about me in the office. They were so flat!
> There was something about them like cardboard, and now I had caught it,
> That flat, flat, flatness from which ideas, destructions,
> Bulldozers, guillotines, white chambers of shrieks proceed,
> Endlessly proceed...

Death is aligned with ideology and organization in the concatenation "ideas," "destructions," "bulldozers," "guillotines," and "white chambers of shrieks." Yet the "white chamber of shrieks" is also the labor room itself, figuring women's (maternal) and men's (public) space in the same location, rather than in mutually exclusive locations.

The woman who loses her baby feels a sense of guilt for destruction on a mass scale, which may be construed as a sense of responsibility for historical processes: "I am accused. I dream of massacres." Yet the mother who has not suffered a loss feels the same identification: "I am the center of an atrocity./ What pains, what sorrows must I be mothering?/ Can such innocence kill and kill?" While these lines may refer to the pain of childbirth and to the ordinary human suffering newborns may eventually experience in life, they also recognize that reproduction of the human race is accompanied by responsibility for human action.

The third woman, who has been raped, is also concerned with the idea of evil in the world, and not only in relation to herself. The rape is depicted (and somewhat distanced) in terms of the mythological rape of Leda by Zeus in the form of a swan. The swan in the poem is a mythological figure but also a

historical one, as Leda gives birth to Helen of Troy. The use of the myth raises an issue of ethics and gender; while women are often mistakenly assumed to be historically inert, in this case, traditionally only the woman (Helen) has been blamed for the historical consequences of her birth (the destruction of Troy). Perhaps the rapist is to blame?

Rape is tellingly revealed as an abuse of power rather than an entirely sexual (and private) issue of desire:

> I remember a white, cold wing
>
> And the great swan, with its terrible look,
> Coming at me, like a castle, from the top of the river.
> There is a snake in swans.
> He glided by; his eye had a black meaning.
> I saw the world in it—small, mean and black[.]

Rather than a domestic image of home, the castle represents an enlarged field of power, either of money or of governmental authority. While the personal experience of women is important to the poem, Plath's point of view about birth, and in this case conception, is social and historical. It would seem that the very moment of birth is the moment of entrance into an inevitably public space: "How long can I be a wall around my green property?" the first voice asks plaintively. The woman who miscarries ironically notes near the end of the poem that, failing to have delivered a live child, "There is a great deal else to do." She sits at home sewing, but returns to work on Monday. Pregnancy and miscarriage, the products of women's biology, do not exist outside history, and do not limit women's engagement with the world outside the home.

[1]While the meaning of the terms "public" and "private" is contentious and slippery, Plath's public spaces are for the most part literary—relating to publication—rather than any civic space in the poems under discussion in this chapter. Yet sometimes she does use images of civic or political life. Her private space is usually the home and often the kitchen.

[2]Stan Smith finds this image historical (1982: 201-202). I think it is more accurate to relate the museum to art and culture.

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Sophie Blanch

The Sacred Space of the "Mother-House"

Reading Maternal Metaphors in Antonia White's Frost in May

First published in 1933, Antonia White's *Frost in May* recounts the experiences of Nanda Grey, a young pupil at a Catholic convent school in England. Released by her newly converted Catholic father into the care of nuns, Nanda's story explores her subsequent development within an enclosed female community. Within this setting, White challenges the traditional notion of the convent as a site of female duty and subservience to an elevated patriarchal authority. Conventional narratives of convent life have repeatedly sought to cast the female religious in the role of the devoted Bride of Christ, or the dutiful daughter of the Father's House. However, in *Frost in May* White undermines convention, enabling the reader to glimpse this unique female space as the "Mother-House," a metaphor for the devoted, nurturing relationship between mother and child.

It has been suggested that White's *Frost in May* quartet of novels clearly invites a Freudian reading of the troubled father-daughter relationship, which unites the texts. I seek to contend through this reading, however, that by re-imagining the convent as the enclosed space of the maternal realm, it is possible to read against the dominance of the patriarchal script. The complexities and ambivalences of the mother-daughter relationship are therefore re-enacted within the narrative space of the convent through the fractured communities of the female religious and their impressionable charges. Under the imposing gaze of the Catholic arch-patriarchy, this sacred "Mother-House" is endowed with the necessary autonomy to nurture a community of young girls into a generation of educated women.

For Nanda's Reverend Mother and her devoted female staff, the image of the convent represents a site of sanctified female congregation. The extent to which the material edifice of the convent stands to house an organic sisterhood

of female religious, is captured in Antonia White's depiction of a traditional convent education. White's young protagonist, Nanda Grey, enters the Convent of the Five Wounds as a pupil of Lippington. The daughter of a Catholic convert, Nanda is to become acutely aware of the ancient community upon which her school is founded. While the walls of Lippington are founded upon the lives of the female saints which pervade the school textbooks, so the Five Wounds operates as a literary reconstruction of the author's own education at the Convent of the Sacred Heart in Roehampton, England.

The convent, therefore, as an institution immersed in female history and maintained by female industry, offers sanctuary from the assumed hierarchies of patriarchy and woman's place within it. Divergent streams of thought have emerged which position the convent's structure of authority on both sides of the gender divide. Depicted in both religious and secular literatures as the "Mother-House," the home of the female religious is both the protective sanctuary of the maternal realm and the archetypal domestic scene, labouring under the almighty Law of the Father. It is the ambiguous status of this unique female community, which pervades Nanda's experience of convent education in *Frost in May*.

An implicit focus of Antonia White's *Frost in May* is directed upon the role of the convent as a grooming stable for respectable young ladies who will eventually "come out" as society wives, or "enter" into a holy marriage as Brides of Christ. However, enclosed within the intensely female domain of the convent, the congregation of nuns and their charges enter into a complex re-enactment of the mother-daughter relationship. By engaging in a reading of the text as a symbolic reconstruction of this intimate female bond, it is possible to challenge the dominant Freudian script, which seeks to privilege the father's relationship to the daughter. While Antonia White's narrative clearly aligns itself to this most conventional of psychoanalytic plots, to read against this by foregrounding moments of maternal significance, enables the reader to glimpse the rich complexities of the enclosed female community.

Within this metaphorical context the institution of the "Mother-House" is endowed with the discipline and protection of the maternal realm. As a sanctuary from the external world, its children are enabled to explore the boundaries of their existence in relative safety. Nanda, however, is divided in her loyalty to this sacred environment, as she struggles to maintain an attachment to her earthly mother. The closed community of the convent determines to guard against the intrusion of external influence upon its children and, therefore, restricts supposed intruders from breaking its bonds of intimacy. Thus, interaction between Nanda and her parents is highly regulated and must observe rigid convent convention, "At Lippington one did not even meet one's nearest relatives without surveillance" (White, 1978: 37). While it is customary for the girls to curtsey to both her parents and the surveillante as a mark of formality and emotional distance, Nanda's mother fails to observe convention in a demonstrative act of affection, "Mr Grey stood up to greet

Nanda, but her mother quite spoilt her careful curtsey by pouncing on her and kissing her" (37). It is Mrs Grey who assumes the role of the wilful child, while Nanda and her father attempt to abide by the laws of the house:

> "Visitors are not allowed beyond this board." Nanda had some difficulty in restraining her mother from darting away down various forbidden alleys, but, helped by her father, she kept her in fairly good order. (38)

As Nanda is forced to relinquish her primary maternal attachment, within the "Mother-House" of the Five Wounds, the nuns appear to usurp the natural identity of the mother. Each appointed to fulfil a different aspect of the mothering process, from Mother of Discipline, to Mother Regan "the flustered Irish infirmarian" (White, 1978: 96), the community closes upon its daughters as the all-embracing mother. However, this fractured construction of motherhood acts also as a rejection of the monolithic mother figure in whose embrace the child is utterly submerged.

This all-consuming figure is the mother which haunts the Freudian script, and who the child must reject if she is to form an autonomous selfhood. Thus, the child of the convent experiences the myriad functions attributed to the care of the maternal realm, without being placed at risk of suffocation. This radical reconfiguration of motherhood can be placed in close alignment to representations of the ideal mother in theories of feminist utopianism. As Lucy Sargisson indicates in *Contemporary Feminist Utopianism*:

> The utopian child is not the property of its mother, this newly empowered, ultra-feminine being; rather child-care and birth are identified as a communal function; non-claustrophobic and non-repressive. (1996: 32)

It is the vast catalogue of maternal functions contained within the structure of the convent that aligns it to the cultural model of motherhood indicated by Elisabeth Badinter. In her study of an historical view of the maternal instinct in *The Myth of Motherhood*, Badinter recognises the need for the mother to fulfil the educational and moral needs of the child as well as aiding its biological development. For women of the modern age therefore:

> Motherhood took on a new and different meaning. Enriched by new duties, it extended beyond the inevitable nine months to include responsibility for children's proper upbringing and a major part of their intellectual development [...] The role of teacher was added to those of protector, nurse and moral example [...] She would be her child's teacher as well as source of inspiration, counsellor and confidante. (1981: 227)

The image of the benevolent mother-figure, whose personal freedom is sacrificed to a life of devotion, elicits the iconic status of the nun and as such unites the two in a mutual vocation. Thus, as Badinter continues, "all mothers have the same 'mission,' all have to consecrate themselves in this holy office and sacrifice their will and pleasure for the good of the family" (1981: 235). However, in contrast to the natural mother for whom this act of sacrifice is considered culturally compulsory, the nurturing of another woman's child is invested with a saintly goodness.

While the convent assumes the significance of the sanctified maternal realm, the daughter raised within its walls is granted a blessed female inheritance. As a place of protection from the prescribed femininities of the secular world, the "Mother-House" comes to represent a sacred space of re-definition. Within its matriarchal structures, an autonomous female subjectivity is able to develop, divorced from the intrusions and expectations of male authority figures.

As a site of intense female attachment the convent of the Five Wounds encloses its young, female charges within the confines of an oppressive intimacy. Thus, within a psychoanalytic reading of these enclosed female spaces as symbolic of the maternal realm, such intimacy signifies the primary attachment between mother and daughter. Contained within a space of mutual captivation, mother and daughter represent a complete entity, defined only by their sameness and difference from each other. While the pre-oedipal daughter identifies herself in the reflected image of the mother, she remains desperate to seek selfhood beyond the bounds of their relationship. It is the ambivalence inherent within female pre-oedipal attachment which Nancy Chodorow foregrounds as the defining feature of the maternal relationship. In her discussion of the complex intimacy of this bond in *The Reproduction of Mothering*, Chodorow argues that, "It sustains the mother-infant exclusivity and the intensity, ambivalence, and boundary confusion of the child still preoccupied with issues of dependence and individuation" (1978: 97). This Freudian narrative is strikingly evident in the maternal metaphors of *Frost in May* as White's perceived daughter-figures resist the enclosed space of the mother.

The psychoanalytic interpretation of maternal ambivalence as a primary indicator of female development is anticipated by Antonia White to inform her depiction of the relationship between Nanda and Mother Frances. Primarily responsible for Nanda's educational development at Lippington, it is her power to both captivate and incite rebellion in her student, which marks the narrative significance of her character. While fixed in awe at the beauty of her new teacher, Nanda intuitively recognises the unspoken hostility that exists between them:

> Yet all this beauty seemed to Nanda to be touched with frost. Mother Frances looked too rare, too exquisite to be quite real. During the long,

> amused look the nun gave her, Nanda thought to herself first: "She's like the Snow Queen," and then: "I shall never be comfortable with her." (White, 1978: 22)

In this context it is clearly apparent that the ambivalent nature of Nanda and Mother Frances's relationship is entirely mutual. Whether in reaction to her student's obvious discomfort, or in the hope of developing greater strength of character, Mother Frances engages Nanda in an uncompromising battle of wills:

> It seemed to Nanda that Mother Frances was keeping a particularly vigilant eye on her. Evidently, she was waiting for a chance to pounce on some lapse and take Nanda's exemption. But she was determined to defy Mother Frances. Whenever she felt her mistress" sarcastic gaze on her, she behaved more exasperatingly well than ever. (1978: 48)

While silently hostile in tone, the intimate nature of this interaction proves increasingly progressive. Mother Frances's actions incite a passionate reaction in Nanda to gracefully observe the rules of the convent and to achieve the subsequent rewards. In this respect, Nanda is able to experience the privileges and "Permissions" afforded to obedient members of the convent community, while unafraid of challenging its authority figures. In her desire to achieve this, Mother Frances emerges as a prominent maternal figure in the text, determined to produce independent and empowered young women. It is only in contemplation of Mother Frances's untimely death that Nanda glimpses self-recognition in remembrance of this complex mother-figure and is finally forced to consider the nature of her own mortality:

> It was only a few days since they had buried Mother Frances. Her death had not made very much of an impression on Nanda at the time, but now it was real and terrifying as if a pain had begun to pierce the fog of an anaesthetic. Mother Frances had died, here in this house, only a week ago. She, Nanda, must die at some time, perhaps very soon. (White, 1978: 99)

Thus, the overtly protective maternal instincts inherent in Mother Frances's involvement in Nanda's convent upbringing, awakens her charge to the double-aspects of both conformity and confinement; rebellion and release.

While somewhat weakened by the nature of Nanda's female education, the Lippington girls remain seemingly secure within the walls of the "Mother-House." However, as White's narrative intimates, the convent operates under the jurisdiction of the patriarchal institution of the Roman Catholic Church, and as such is penetrated by the authority of the father figure. Ultimately defined by his physical absence, the presence of God the Father is endowed

with absolute dominance over this enclosed female community. While the female religious are granted a maternal and domestic authority within the realm of the "Mother-House," therefore, it is the conceptualised image of God which assumes the all embracing authority of Amy Allenby's construction of "The Father Archetype in Female Psychology." The culturally perceived notion of the paternal role, articulated by Allenby in an assessment of contemporary Jungian perpectives of the father, suggests that: "In his archetypal relevance, the father [...] represents the larger world ruled by instinct and spirit; he represents authority and law, the realm of ideas, the domain of religious and spiritual values" (1985: 137).

White punctuates her narrative construction of the convent with a double image of the omnipotent father figure. As an earthly vessel for God the Father, the visiting cardinal to the school and convent is also an embodied representative of the patriarchal authority of the Church. The status and detachment of this fleeting guest disrupts the order of convent life and demotes the female authority figures to positions of subordination. Thus Nanda's perception of the Five Wounds as an imposing matriarchy is shattered in this moment:

> The cardinal did at last appear, and was received with due Splendour [...] the children went about for three whole days in their best white uniforms, and the chapel blazed with hundreds of candles. The cardinal moved freely about the school, attended by his secretaries and Reverend Mother [...] As she swept a nervous curtsey and kissed the huge amethyst on his finger, his handsome, peevish old face would nod to her and murmur a vague blessing. (White, 1978: 171)

For the daughters of the convent, the cardinal symbolizes the power and unquestioned authority of the father. In this fleeting moment they are reminded that while enclosed within the walls of the "Mother-House," they are to abide by the law of the father.

For Nanda Grey, compliance with patriarchal authority assumes a double significance. As Mr Grey occupies position of powerful influence over his daughter, Nanda is effectively caught between the authority of her natural father and the wishes of the Church. Thus, as Simone de Beauvoir indicates of the dual hierarchies of her existence, "for a pious little girl, her relations with the everlasting father are analogous to those she has with the earthly father" (1997: 317).

Ultimately, Antonia White affords the nature of gendered authority within her text an earthly significance, as the fate of Nanda's convent education resides within the paternal power of Mr Grey. Outraged by the "disgusting and vulgar fifth" that he believes constitutes Nanda's attempts at novel writing, Mr Grey demands that she should leave the enclosed female space of the convent, to return to the domestic order of the Father's House. As this patriarchal figure asserts his authority, he assumes the powerful detachment

of the archetypal father:

> Her father was speaking again, but though she heard him distinctly, in spite of her sobbing, the words made no impression. All her consciousness was withdrawn into one burning centre of pain and misery, and the sounds merely beat on a numbed outer skin. (White, 1978: 216)

While Nanda is comforted and placated by the maternal figures of both her own mother and Mother Radcliffe, their female presence is eclipsed by the verbal impact of the law of the father:

> The whole world had fallen away and left her stranded in this one spot alone for ever and ever with her father and those awful words. She felt her mother touch her sleeve and shook her off, blindly, mechanically, hardly knowing that she was there. (White, 1978: 216)

Once again, the seeming autonomy of the "Mother-House" has to relinquish power and influence over its daughters to the demands of a higher patriarchal authority.

The image of the sacred mother is therefore placed in a position of subordination toward the father, compliant with his wishes and willing to enforce them. It is this subversion of maternal attachment which Simone de Beauvoir foregrounds as the cultural function of motherhood in a patriarchal society. De Beauvoir signifies in *The Second Sex* that:

> Even if it is in fact the mother who rules as mistress of the household, she is commonly clever enough to see to it that the father's wishes come first; in important matters the mother demands, rewards and punishes in his name and through his authority. (1997: 314)

Despite the attachments of intense intimacy which exist between "mother" and "daughter" in the enclosed space of the "Mother-House," patriarchal intrusion threatens any possibility of an autonomous female community within its walls. While a convent education from the Five Wounds encourages dedication to a different set of marriage vows, commitment to a diverse community of women and the ability to challenge the borders of an enclosed existence, it does, nevertheless advocate conformity, obedience and absolute devotion to the "everlasting father'. Thus, Antonia White permeates the maternal realm of the convent with the unquestioned hierarchies of patriarchal authority.

Caught between the ambivalent maternal attachment of the convent and the patriarchal dominance of her father's house, Nanda Grey receives a comprehensive education in gender conformity. Her only means of escape from

the confines of her environment exist in the form of forbidden departures into fiction and her creative imagination. Thus, as Nanda will later discover under the name of Clara in the Nazareth asylum in White's later novel *Beyond the Glass*, writing and the construction of fantasy provides release from mental, religious and gendered confinement. Already found guilty of expressing devotion to a female friend, Nanda's enforced dismissal from the convent follows the discovery of a manuscript, which effectively re-draws the gendered boundaries of her enclosure. Assuming the maternal role of creator and enforcer of wills, Nanda constructs a narrative in which a disempowered hero, "an entirely original creation" (White, 1978: 202) is forced to enter a Trappist monastery, in which the force of his words will never be heard again. While this may represent the narrative of an enclosed world which Antonia White could only imagine, her female protégé dreams of a different community. Nanda's irrepressible desire to describe "a brilliant, wicked, worldly society, preferably composed of painters, musicians and peers," in which, "too much piety would conflict with a really exciting plot" (158), envisages a female community entirely devoid of gendered or creative restrictions. Somewhat ironically, it was within such a community that Antonia White was able to so vividly re-imagine the enclosed, maternal community of the convent.

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Roxanne Harde

"What Was Your Living Mother's Mind?"

Motherhood as Intellectual Enterprise in Mother's Legacy Books

> I speak about a mother's thought—the intellectual capacities she develops, the judgments she makes, the metaphysical attitudes she assumes, the values she affirms. A mother engages in a discipline.
>
> —Sara Ruddick, "Maternal Thinking"

> I did truely weigh, rightly consider, and perfectly see the great care, labour, travaile, and continuall study, which Parents take to inrich their children.
>
> —Dorothy Leigh, *The Mothers Blessing*

Written prior to their deaths, between 1603 and 1712, and left to instruct their children, the nine published mother's legacy books, by Elizabeth Grymeston, Dorothy Leigh, Elizabeth Joscelin, M. R., Elizabeth Richardson, Anne Bradstreet, Susanna Bell, Sarah Goodhue, and Grace Smith stand as Renaissance English and Colonial American women's responses to motherhood.[1] Feminist literary critics and historians have argued that each of these mothers, in their reliance on social endorsement of their domestic role, has subverted the circumscription of expected female behaviour. The legacy writers gain distance and agency, if not autonomy, from patriarchal codes precisely because they embrace their roles as mother and Christian. I have argued elsewhere that when we read the mother's legacy books alongside current articulations of feminist theology, the early modern women can be seen as foremothers of today's theologians, for each legacy writer defines and claims her subjectivity in accordance with her faith, asserts and relies upon the feminist theology of women in community, and finds in her religion the power to suggest socio-political change. If, however, the mother's legacy

writers deserve critical attention for the authority and progressiveness of their theologies, their articulations of the practice of mothering are equally compelling but largely neglected. I address this critical lacuna as I examine how these women make motherhood more than a domestic service, and how they use discourse about mothering to comment more generally on women's position in their culture. I argue that the mother's legacy writers negotiate motherhood as an intellectual enterprise, that they define motherhood as a way of thinking, a response to the needs and demands that exist outside of the mother and even outside of the child.

I take as my point of reference Sara Ruddick's germinal essay on motherhood as a discipline. In "Maternal Thinking" (1983), Ruddick describes maternal thought as the intellectual work of mothering. Because she describes mothering as a discipline in broad terms meant to speak to the wide general practice of motherhood, my application of Ruddick's twentieth-century theories to early modern culture is not anachronistic. As Ruddick points out, every mother must respond to her society even as she makes choices about raising her child. In Ruddick's view, "a mother asks certain questions rather than others; she establishes criteria for the truth, adequacy, and relevance of proposed answers; and she cares about the findings she makes and can act on. Like any discipline, hers has *characteristic* errors, temptations and goals" (1983: 214). The legacy writers perform these tasks of their discipline within their culture; their books are rich with evidence of maternal care in response to cultural expectations, even as they are marked by different stages of maternal practice. Josceline (1999) writes to an unborn child, Goodhue (1773) to unborn, young and older children, Leigh (1616) and Grymeston (1610) to sons still in school, Bradstreet (1867) and Richardson (1645) to adult children. However, they are markedly similar as their discipline of maternal thought establishes criteria for determining failure and success, then sets priorities as it identifies the virtues and liabilities the criteria presume (Ruddick, 1983: 214). This similarity, I suggest, comes about because the legacy writers centre the goal of maternal thought in their religions and because each must respond to a common set of cultural values and codes. However, as Ruddick points out, sometimes the goals of maternal practice and cultural codes conflict, in which case maternal efforts are directed to ends that are different from dominant public ones. Thus, when Leigh (1616) states in her epistle to her sons, "Wherefore setting aside all feare, I have adventured to shew my imperfections to the view of the world, not regarding what censure shall for this bee laid upon mee, so that heerein I may shew my selfe a loving mother," she privileges maternal thought even as she acknowledges her most obvious transgression of cultural codes, that women be private and silent.[2] Furthermore, Leigh's epistolary apology anticipates further censure for her forays into theology and politics, as she discusses her mandates for the secular and religious lives of her sons. At the same time, Leigh states baldly that she writes out of her duty as a mother, and much of her appeal lies in her ability to disarm with apology even as she moves boldly to instruct her

sons and the public on how to be in the world and how to properly raise children.

Although she transgressed cultural codes, Leigh's (1616) book was the Renaissance equivalent of a best seller, and the popularity of the legacy books remains unresolvedly paradoxical in light of the cultural restrictions on early modern women, but further, each of these women makes clear another paradox: that the goals of her maternal practice, in varying manners and degrees, often lie at odds with public expectations for mothering.[3] Cultural codes sanctioned the forum of these books, religious instruction to children, if not the public act of writing them. The role of Christian empowered women of all denominations by exhorting them to address God directly without male mediation. Helen Wilcox argues that devotional writing allowed women to give expression to their own identity; while a woman's speaking in public and writing "were severe transgressions of the feminine norm" (1997: 10). Elaine Beilin concurs as she points out that "a mother who wrote threatened the essence of her womanly virtue" (1987: 267), and her comment goes a long way towards explaining the energy the legacy writers spend asserting their chastity and their method of overlying discussions of motherly practice with the devotional voice.[4] By their very presence, these mothers indicate that Renaissance ideologies of gender were challenged, a challenge made implicit in their articulation of maternal practice written from within patriarchal restrictions.[5]

However, as their subordination to God allowed early modern women empowerment in their role as Christian witness, so did their subordination to their husbands allow empowerment in their roles as wife and mother.[6] Ruddick argues that "a mother typically takes as the criterion of her success the production of a young adult acceptable to her group," and early modern mothers were exhorted to the same standard (1983: 215). Early modern conduct book writer, Juan Luis Vives notes that a wife should not "be overmuch eloquent," but she should be learned enough herself to teach her children morals and religion (1912: 207). Thus, Renaissance women's role as mother, with patriarchally sanctioned authority over her children, allowed an empowerment that began with her role as the child's educator, particularly in the area of religion. Although Richard Brathwait, another contemporary author, views women as less than mentally capable, he finds them fit to instruct their children: "Now, *Gentlewomen*, there be no Tutresses fitter to perfect this excellent worke in you, than those who were the secondary instruments of *being* unto you; Neither can those, who are derived from you, become better *instructed* than by you" (1970: 182). Margaret Sommerville (1995) and Valerie Wayne (1996) do not read the legacy books in terms of the discipline of the motherhood, but they do note cultural endorsement of a mother's power over her own children, and of the biblical laws that demanded obedience and respect to both parents. They conclude early modern women's authority over their children allowed them power in their own right. Therefore, while Clarissa Atkinson notes that motherhood "has always been shaped by religious systems, power relationships, and material structures" (1991: 246), Wayne makes clear that the legacy books

reclaimed the role of mother from the erosion it had undergone through the ideological construction of women by men since 1500. Wayne argues that in "disseminating the dominant ideology," these writers "also modified received opinion in order to reflect their own interests and concerns" (1996: 72). Similarly, Betty Travitsky (1980) discusses early modern cultural endorsement of women's religiosity and points out that women, in turn, applied these increased resources to their domestic and particularly to their maternal roles. Given an inch in which to act as religious instructors for their own children, these women, with intent or not, take the proverbial ell, and appropriate and integrate both religious and political power into their speaking voices as they articulate maternal practice.

Ruddick describes the interests governing maternal practice as interest in preserving the life of the child, in fostering the child's growth, and in shaping a child acceptable to his or her society. I will examine the methods by which the legacy writers attend to these three interests as they position their books as mothers *in absentia* for their children, and thus use a public forum to make the articulations of their maternal practice a private counsel for their children. Ruddick further argues that mothers, like scientists with scientific practice, "are governed by the interests of their respective practices. But the style, skill, commitment, and integrity with which they engage in these practices differ widely from individual to individual" (1983: 216). I posit that the legacy books differ mainly in their articulations of maternal practice according to the ages of the children involved, and the socio-political climate, which had immediate and often severe implications depending upon the women's religious affiliations. At the same time, the books seem cut from the same cloth as they work to see the aims of the mothers fulfilled. For example, Joscelin (1999) wrote her legacy while pregnant and faced with the possibility of death. Joscelin did die in childbed and one of the provisions she makes in her writing is to direct that her child be nursed by a godly woman and raised with her sisters, so that "her bringinge up may bee learninge the Bible as my sisters doo" (1999: 107). While Joscelin shows her faith to be profound throughout her book, I posit that she guessed, correctly, that her child had a better chance of seeing adulthood in a devoutly Christian household.

Thus, while these women did not privilege the physical life of their child over the child's soul, they hold in common a deep and abiding interest in seeing these children live, grow and gain acceptance in the family's faith, and thus ensure their immortal souls. From her assurance in her faith, Grymeston assumes the empowered voice of the mother and religious instructor throughout her book as she claims the necessity for her intervention in her son's religious well-being. Her epistolary dedication to Bernye, who has his mother's family name, makes clear her responsibility to write to him, in order to instruct him in religious and secular matters:

> *My dearest sonne, there is nothing so strong as the force of love; there is no*

> *love so forcible as the love of an affectionate mother to her naturall childe: there is no mother can eyther more affectionatly shew her nature, or more naturally manifest her affection, than in advising her children out of her own experience, to eschew evill, and encline them to doe that which is good. Out of these resolutions.... I resolved to breake the barren soile of my fruiteless braine, to dictate something for thy direction.* (1610: A3)

While Grymeston emphasizes her illness and imminent death, and that she is "*doubtfull of thy fathers life,*" the most compelling part of Grymeston's dedication comes in her Latin definition of her book as a "*portable* veni mecum *for thy Counseller, in which thou maiest see the true portrature of thy mothers minde, and find something eyther to resolve thee in thy doubts, or comfort thee in thy distress; hoping, that beeing my last speeches, they will be better kept in the conservance of thy memory.*" This Latin idiom, literally "came with me," defines the legacy as a ready reference text, which begs the conclusion that she means Bernye to keep the book by him and to consult it regularly, therefore to keep it, and thereby his mother, as his constant guide. Grymeston writes that she gathered the best material for her legacy, which is the essence of ready reference materials.[7] While her rhetoric may engender sympathy for the dying woman who may soon be a widow, empathy for the love she shows her son, and admiration for her polish and learning, Grymeston underpins her persuasive tactics with an absolute insistence upon the importance of her role as mother and her desire to have the interests of her maternal practice filled. Having raised this son to young adulthood, Grymeston sets out the goals of her mothering as Bernye's absolute commitment to his faith, a goal that will be fulfilled in part through his reliance on her book.

Grymeston teaches her son to conform even as he practices their banned religion. A recusant Catholic, Grymeston suffered persecution throughout her life, and attributes her husband's imminent death to the "eight severall sinister assaults" he has suffered for their faith (1610: A4). Ruddick argues that mothers must not only preserve fragile life, but they must enable growth and change, and she suggests that these qualities of maternal practice might underlie the perception of women as valuing open over closed structures and the ambiguous, and refusing a sharp division between inner and outer self (1983: 218). I suggest that Grymeston deliberately shades her language to her son to fulfil the interests of her maternal practice and avoid having her book censured or her son persecuted. Through careful and covert rhetoric, Grymeston makes the presence of a Catholic mother felt, even as she removes the Catholic and motherly voice from her text. For example, she follows advice in her epistle with a discussion of the conscience and makes it a motherly voice in absentia. Grymeston then points out that her personal voice is confined to the limits of her epistle, that Bernye is the only one left of her nine children, that her love is therefore concentrated in him, and that her dearest wish is for him to live in God's blessing. She thus conflates motherly and holy into a personal voice that

she then removes from her person and figures as personae of various types in the following chapters. In essence, she takes a rhetorical step back in stating "*that the discourses following are motives to the same effect: which I pray thee use to peruse*," but at the same time reasserts the authority of her role as mother, and ties that authority to her son's conscience: "*As ever the love of a mother may challenge the performaunce of her demaund of a dutyfull Childe; bee a bridle to thy selfe*" (1610: A6).

I posit that Grymeston distances herself from her text to remove both her gender, which may offend as she moves past religion to add worldly advice to a young man, and her religion, which would offend.[8] She may say in French that she will suffer everything for her faith, but other than her continued use of the Vulgate, Rowlands, and Southwell, Grymeston does not overtly identify herself as a Catholic. Because of her recusancy, Grymeston's most recurring and self-reflexive themes center on questions of facing unending adversity. For example, she opens her fifth chapter with a series of rhetorical questions that draw attention to life as a struggle, and while sin and redemption may be her subject, they become merely a trope as she belabours an adversity that seems far more external than internal. She personifies both forms of sin and human attributes that are susceptible to sin, and seems to set up the human being, in body and soul, as inviting and withstanding trouble just by being human. In the next chapter, Grymeston argues that God walks upon the hearts of men with feet of both mercy and truth, and she claims, in a rare use of the first-person voice, "I will sing unto thee, O Lorde, mercie and trueth together, not mercie alone." More than anything she teaches her son to follow social mores except where they conflict with his conscience, and to seek strength from God's mercy and justice in the face of social pressure.

Almost as often as the legacy writers address their child or children, they turn to inform the reader about effective mothering. Ruddick argues that an end goal of mothering is to shape a child acceptable to his or her social group: "the task of producing an appreciable child gives a mother a unique opportunity to explore, create, and insist on her own values; to train her children for strength and virtue" (1983: 220). However, Ruddick pays only cursory attention to the transformative values in maternal thinking, and I argue that for as often as the legacy writers conform to cultural codes, they subtly criticize social restrictions. As part of their maternal thought and in matters of conscience, they posit alternate ways of being in the world and in faith.

Writing for publication, Leigh notes her wish to inspire other women to come forward as she has, "shew their infirmities," and write for their own children, a transgression she mediates by reminding them "to give men the first and chiefe place" (1616: 17). Leigh often adds this type of afterthought, in which she belatedly privileges men or allows their authority to reinforce her own. In addition, Leigh posits God's authority and that of Princess Elizabeth, to whom Leigh addresses her opening dedicatory epistle, as endorsements of her own. In the dedication, she declares herself as able and obliged to guide

her children: "I could doe no lesse for them, then [...] to write them the right way, that I had truely observed out of the written word of GOD [...] and tolde them how many false paths they should finde, how they should finde them, and what care they should have to shunne them." Leigh takes upon herself both religious and political power as she ensures the preservation of the book that will ensure the fulfilment of her maternal enterprise. Leigh reinforces her second epistle, to her "beloved sonnes, George, John, and William Leigh, all things pertaining to life and godlinesse," by invoking her dead husband, but she places herself as the spiritual leader of the family and describes her chief desire, "to see you grow in godlinesse, that so you might meet your father in Heaven, where I am sure he is, my selfe being a witness of his faith in Christ." She concludes the epistle by turning again to worldly matters and their role in the spiritual. Ultimately, Leigh justifies her book with the rhetoric of maternal practice: "I have adventured to shew my imperfections to the view of the world, not regarding what censure for this shall bee laid upon me, so that herein I may shew my selfe a loving Mother." From this initial assurance and appropriation of a public ear, Leigh maintains a seemingly private voice as she sets forth her maternal practice and her theology. Ruddick defines maternal thinking as a conceptual scheme, a vocabulary and logic of connections, through which mothers "order and express the facts and values of their practice. [...] There is a unity of reflection, judgment, and emotion" (1983: 214). Leigh's rhetoric displays this unity in that she may transgress the boundaries of what was open for discussion by women, but the goals and emotional investments of maternal practice power her emancipatory move when she locates authority in the demands of her discipline.

Leigh (1616) frequently moves past articulating her maternal practice and past teaching her audience about parenting to usurp the role of the Puritan divine. Except when discussing her own "Motherly affection," Leigh consistently refers to the duties of the "Parent," a strategy by which she aligns herself with an authority equal to that of the male parent. Leigh's alignment of herself with male parental authority seems concomitant with her assumption of the role of preacher, an usurpation of power to which she refers repeatedly throughout the book. Leigh continues the tradition of religious instructional manuals and includes citations for the Biblical passages she draws on, thereby positioning her book as a valuable tool for other parents to use in raising their children to live "godlily." Brown points out that Leigh "maintains the connection between the more general social criticism she offers, and the ostensible origin of her writing in maternal cares and fears" (1999: 5). As part of her maternal practice, Leigh links every aspect of her children's future adult lives to the Bible, and makes their transition to adults who reference the Bible daily a natural progress. For example, in Chapter 42, Leigh moves toward the personal and into the mode of blessing that gives her book its title, and in this instance gives her children the possibility of forgiveness, including self-

forgiveness. She reminds them that "the deare children of God" may do acts which may be construed as sin, much as her breach of the codes of silence may be conflated with a breach of chastity, but which are not done in the spirit of sin and should remain without blame. Leigh draws on her own source of empowerment, as she sets the relationship between the person and God as the ultimate dictate for life and thereby gives her children personal resources that supercede cultural codes.

Joscelin's (1999) maternal thought as a response to social practice lies in her long discussion of how a daughter must be in her world. As Ruddick points out all thought arises out of social practice, and mothers "respond to a reality that appears to them as given, as presenting certain demands. The response to *demands* is shaped by *interests* that are generally interests in preserving, reproducing, directing, and understanding individual and group life" (1983: 214).[9] Joscelin's legacy reflects her conclusions on how one shapes a daughter who can thrive in her culture while achieving an empowered subjectivity, and her polished erudition also describes a unity of reflection, judgment and emotion in her maternal practice. Travitsky comments on Joscelin's "roll of phrase and command of language," but she fails to see the full implications of Joscelin's sinuous rhetoric, and concludes that Joscelin argues against educating a daughter (1980: 40).[10] While the epistle reads as both disclaimer and apology, those features merely overlie rhetorical intent. Martin (1997) argues that Joscelin gains legitimacy by presenting herself as in danger of dying in or from childbirth; I add that Joscelin ensures justification by professing her love and respect for her husband, and concern for her maternal duties. She also makes clear her concern for the child and her understanding of maternal practice.

Moreover, while Joscelin may write within the boundaries of her gender, her argument turns finely on the premise of the ideal of female education. Just as she seems to oppose for a daughter the type of advanced learning she herself possesses, her rhetoric persuades that this effort would not be remiss. Note that Joscelin did not write for the public: she writes to persuade her husband, to convince him to preserve her book, to give it to the child, and to supervise the child's education in her place. Joscelin does not need to belabour the necessity of her son's secular education, and her hand concerning her daughter's learning is light indeed. She first sets out the cultural confines, "I desire her bringing up may bee learninge the Bible, as my sisters doo. good huswifery, writing, and good work; other learninge a woman needs not" (1999: 107). However, Joscelin includes writing here, and immediately extends the limits of what a woman needs. She also places the onus upon her husband and upon God, "If thou desirest a learned daughter, I pray god give her a wise and religious hart that she may use it to his glory, thy comfort, and her own Salvatyon but howsoever thou disposest to her educatyon I pray thee labour by all means to teache her true humilitie" (1999: 107-08). She implies that between these two heads the proper young woman will be raised, one

who is a credit to her family and her God, whose very presence is a joy and whose humility alone exceeds her talents, in short, a woman like Joscelin herself. Joscelin's rhetorical strategies suggest that while she may overtly subscribe to cultural restrictions on the education of women, she covertly insists that a well-educated Christian woman should be desired and encouraged. Joscelin closes the epistle with, "Thine Inviolable, Eliza: Joscelin," which reinforces her marital chastity and defines her child as her husband's legacy, thereby ensuring his attention to her maternal practice.

Whether or not she considered publication possible and while her epistle regards her husband as the book's first audience, Joscelin writes directly to her child, a "you" of unknown gender. She makes clear that she wants this child and has considered how she would practice the vocation of motherhood: "Havinge longe often and earnestly desired of god, that I might bee a mother to one of his children, and the time now drawinge on w^{ch} I hope hee hathe appoynted to give thee unto me, it drew me into a consideratyon both whearfore I so earnestly desired thee and (having found that the true cause was to make thee happy) how I might compas this happines for thee" (1999: 109). Throughout, Joscelin employs language in a highly poetic manner, choosing for beauty and multivalent meanings: for her, "compasse" means both the bounds of moderation and skilful devising (*OED*). She may wish all happiness for this child, but it will be designed and moderated by maternal practice. She prefers for a son, "that thou mayst serve him as his minister, if he make thee a man;" like Leigh she describes the ministry in terms that hold appeal for a boy or young man (1999: 110). Neither does she lose sight of a daughter's future, and expends a good deal of effort to persuade a female child of her worth and her mother's intention to instruct her: "if thou beest a daughter, thou mayst pe[r]haps thinke I have lost my labour but reade on, and thou shalt see my love and care of thee and thy salvation is as great, as if thou weart a sonne." Joscelin then figures the legacy as a treasure stored to ensure her child's salvation:

> It may peradventure when thou comst to som descreyton appear strange to thee to receyve theas lines from a mother that dyed when thou weart born but when thou seest men purchas land an store up tresure for thyr unborn babes wonder not at me that I am carefull for thy Salvatyon beeinge such an eternal portyon. and not knowinge whether I shall live to instruct thee when thou art born let me not be blamed thoughe I write to thee before. whoo would not condem me if I should be careless of thy body while it is wthin me: sure a far greater care belongs to the soule to bothe theas cares I will endevor my selfe so longe as I live [. . .] thearfore dear childe read hear my love and if god take Me from thee bee obedient to theas instructions as thou oughtest to be unto me. (1999: 110-11)

My ellipses indicate the omission of Joscelin's often quoted apology for

writing which in critical readings consistently overshadows the main point of this passage. While Joscelin embeds an apology for the social transgression of writing, she makes clear that a daughter deserves care and attention. By setting the beautifully phrased apology for her own actions amidst this message, Joscelin sets an exemplum: that while both worthy and capable, women must profess modesty according to cultural codes. She also expresses the values of her maternal practice, and like Grymeston, she intends her maternal interests to be fulfilled with a legacy book that will govern her child's behaviour.

Joscelin moves from her admonitions to a discussion on the importance of scriptural knowledge as a means for her daughter to shun pride and embrace humility. She exhorts the need for meditation, self-reflection and prayer, and then posits set prayers, public prayers, and her child's own "conceived Prayer" as worthy and necessary, thereby setting her child's creativity as necessary and to be encouraged in worship. Joscelin tends to address her child as "thou," occasionally as "Daughter." Either way, this child will study at length, for both God and soul. Joscelin often returns to her wish for the child's education, and she describes her own life as an exemplum of female education: "the morninge I have dedicated to meditatyon, prayr, good studys, and honest recreatyon: The noon time is most used for discours" (1999: 119). Like the other legacy writers, Joscelin moves past her sanctioned role in religious instruction and advises her child on worldly matters, and, like the others, she links her cautions to the well-being of her child's soul; for example, she discusses the financial realm in terms of her child's place in the world and the charity he or she must practice for a place in the next. When Joscelin finally acknowledges social expectations of the silent female, she undermines her own admonition, "if thou beest a Daughter, remeber thou art a Maid, and such ought thy modesty to bee, that thou shouldst scarce speak," by noting that a women should "speake if need be." She then argues that even a daughter "has a calling which thou must not dishonour: thou art a Christian" (1999: 122). When Joscelin posits her daughter as the "thou" who will answer this calling, she undermines the imposition of silence with the Biblical insistence on prayer and worship. In short, she sets for her daughter a response to social practice that sees the child conform even as she assumes the freedom to express her intellect and conscience.

In a similar movement, Elizabeth Richardson opens *A Ladies Legacie to her Daughters* with a series of dedications that make clear her prayer book should be used on a daily basis by her children and should be seen as a conflation of religious and motherly practice. If her adult children use the book as they ought, they will follow her dictates from this life into the next. She places over her first dedication, rather than a flourish or abstract ornamentation, the engraving of an ornately carved chest, which suggests, along with repeated references to wills and legacies, that Richardson realized her book was the extent of material wealth she could leave to her daughters who "*will carefully receive it, as comming from my love and affection towards you, and that you will please for my sake, the more to imploy it to your good; to which I will (while I live) daily adde my prayers and*

blessing for your present and future happinesse"(1645: 1). Richardson also insists on the book's importance to her motherly practice: "*Therefore let me as a Mother intreat and prevaile with you to esteem so well of it, as often to peruse, ponder, practice, and make use of this Booke according to my intention*" (2).[11] She then presupposes and deflates any public censure for printing, "*I had no purpose at all when I writ these books, for the use of my selfe, and my children, to make them publicke; but have been lately over perswaded by some that much desired to have them*" (3). In the second epistle to her daughters, Richardson uses exempla as motherly practice when she makes clear that she has faced and surmounted many troubles in this world, that her strengths are better spent in striving for the next, and that what she can impart to her daughters of her courage and fortitude will aid them in both: "*now I have learned in what estate forever I am, therewith to be content, and to account these vile and transitorie things to be but vaine and losse, so I may win Christ the fountaine of all blisse, wishing you with me*" (4-5). Later, Richardson supports this maternal practice by comparing herself to her own parents, who she describes as careful, industrious and devout in bringing up their children to know and serve God. She takes their exemplum as the best that parents can do and suggests the accomplishment of her own maternal aims will add to her parents' eternal happiness.

As Richardson ensures the complete attention of her children, she explains why she has written mostly prayer, "*the winged messenger to carry our requests and want into the ears of the Lord,*"[12] and refers to her difficult relationship with her sons, "*and howsoever this my endeavour may be contemptible to many, (because a womans) which makes me not to joyne my sons with you, lest being men, they misconstrue my well-meaning; yet I presume that you my daughters will not refuse your Mothers teaching*" (1645: 5-6). While Richardson assumes the attention of a mature and educated female audience in her daughters, she continues to worry her issues with her sons through figurative language and Biblical exemplum. She moves to fulfill her maternal interests through rhetorical strategies that work under two diverse and gendered agendas. She wishes for her daughters eternal life and tries to ensure they receive it through her guidance; she also wishes her sons to follow the example of the reverent Christian and honour she who suffered for them, and now sits distanced from and seemingly disavowed by them. If Richardson sees her intervention as the means of ensuring grace for her daughters, then she sees her distance from her sons as indicative of their distance from God, and her concerns about each are interwoven throughout the book. Richardson moves to accomplish her motherly goals in a rhetoric that both acknowledges and tries to rectify that distance: she sets God's providence and sacrifice for "us" against the duty "we" owe him, and continues to trope her dissatisfaction with her sons' behaviour along those lines. She quotes from the Bible to remind her children of her place in their lives, and makes it the one other authority in her book, alongside her motherly authority. Where Grymeston drew upon Dives, the generic sinner, Richardson references Manasses, the quintessential ungrateful and rebellious son, in a prayer of submission and

repentance. Like Grymeston and Leigh, Richardson sets forth the conscience as a voice to which her children must listen, aligns it with her own speaking voice, and places in both the insistence that her daughters be continuously aware of themselves and their relationship with God. She insists for her daughters a personal and unmediated relationship with God, in effect sidestepping all patriarchal authority, religious or secular. Richardson privileges her own wealth of experience and wisdom as pedagogical practice. She teaches her daughters with the rhetoric of maternal practice bolstered by personal theology, and uses the same structures to remind her sons of their neglected duties towards their mother. In her book's structural analogy between prayer and epistle, Richardson privileges her relationship with God in order to empower her role as mother. The forces of motherly love and religious piety inform and stimulate each other as Richardson uses religious endorsement to criticize the behaviour of her adult sons and instruct her daughters.

Like M. R., Grymeston and Richardson, Anne Bradstreet (1867) writes to adult children and has accomplished her maternal social goals, and like all of the legacy writers, Bradstreet articulates her maternal practice in writing that reflectively expresses a disciplined conscience. In Ruddick's terms, Bradstreet identifies herself as a mother not by expressions of maternal emotion but by the strategies she adopts as she works to protect, nurture, and train her children, and she left *To My Dear Children* to instruct her children and grandchildren how to live in their world. As part of the first generation of Puritan colonists, Bradstreet faced innumerable hardships as she worked with her community to build a life in the New England Colonies. Her legacy describes these hardships and how she overcame them through her faith. At the same time, Bradstreet questions some of the tenets of her own church and describes her own views of the colony's politics and governance. Throughout her legacy, Bradstreet articulates an exacting maternal discipline that expresses her love for her children and grandchildren through the course of her legacy's memoratives, poetry and meditations, even as it aims to enable her children to live successfully and within their faith: "here you may find / what was your liveing mother's mind. / Make use of what I leave in Love" (1867: 3). Her opening letter and several following reminiscences dwell upon the hardships she faced through the course of life, and she in her hopes "that you may gain some spiritual advantage by my experiences," she makes use of exempla as motherly practice, much like the other legacy writers (4). Bradstreet lists the spiritual and physical troubles of her early life—disobedience, doubt, rebellion, smallpox, infertility—and explains that she overcame each of her trials with prayer and faith in God. She writes, "I have constantly observed this, that he hath never suffered me long to sitt loose from him, but by one affliction or other hath made me look home, and search what was amisse" (5-6). Bradstreet moves past her own exempla, however, to discuss how her children should develop their faith and belief. She articulates the basis for her own faith as her "Reason," which looks at the wonders of the world to enable the certainty of God, and she turns to the Bible

as the evidence of God's revealed word. She may pause to ruminate on Catholicism and Anne Hutchinson, but notes how quickly such considerations "turn me to my own Religion again" (9). Bradstreet follows her biographical writing with a series of poems, prayers and epistles that make clear the joy of living with faith. Bradstreet's maternal social practice encompasses more than her aim to see her children living Puritan Christian lives, however. She appends "Meditations Divine and Morall" to her legacy and sets in these series of maxims guidelines by which her children should make their educational, economic and political choices. In terms of resources, she writes "youth is the time of getting, middle age of improving, and old age of spending; a negligent youth is usually attended by an ignorant middle age, and both by an empty old age" (48). In terms of holding power, she argues that "authority without wisdome is like a heavy axe without an edg, fitter to bruise then polish" (50). Bradstreet sets forth her view on almost every aspect of life and she does not limit herself to the domestic or religious. However, her discussions of parenting reveal a good deal about her own maternal practice. Clearly, when she writes, "diverse children have their different natures; some are like flesh which nothing but salt will keep from putrefaction; some again like tender fruits that are best preserved with sugar: those parents are wise that can fit their nuture according to their Nature," she shows that she understood and raised her children as individuals, and readied each for a rich adulthood (50).

Sara Ruddick (1983) marvels that given the many oppressions women face today, it seems miraculous that maternal thought rises at all, but she points out that it does and the evidence lies in literature and daily experience. While Anne Bradstreet writes the most literary representation of motherhood, all of these women left texts that articulate their maternal thought and practice. As Sylvia Brown points out, the legacy books do matter as representations of early modern women, and we should see their authors, "not as less, but different; not as failed novelists, but as resourceful shapers of the cultural materials available to them" (1999: viii). Brown defines the legacy writers as originators of influential textual models; I suggest that they engendered their greatest influences in their representations of themselves as mothers and the discipline of maternal practice.

[1]Elizabeth Grymeston's *Miscelanea. Meditations. Memoratives*, published after her death in 1604, garnered enough popularity to warrant three augmented editions by 1610. Grymeston's *Miscelanea* was followed by Dorothy Leigh's *The Mothers Blessing*, written specifically for publication and the most popular of the genre with twenty-three editions between 1616 and 1674. Elizabeth Joscelin wrote *The Mothers Legacie* just prior to her death in childbed in 1622, and it was published in 1624, with two more editions by 1684. M. R.'s *The Mothers Counsell* (1623), and Elizabeth Richardson's *The Ladies Legacie* (1645) complete this English quintet of mothers' legacy books. The one cross-Atlantic

legacy book, Susanna Bell's *The Legacy of a Dying Mother to Her Mourning Children* (1673), was written on her deathbed in London about her conversion experience in the Massachusetts colonies. The Colonial American legacy books are Anne Bradstreet's *To My Dear Children* (ca. 1672, published 1895), Sarah Goodhue's *The Copy of a Valedictory and Monitory Writing* (1681), and Grace Smith's *The Dying Mother's Legacy* (1712). I do not discuss Bell's book because she focuses on conversion rather than parenting, nor do I include *The Countess of Lincolns Nurserie* (1622) by Elizabeth Clinton, because it is more manual than legacy, in that she writes only on breastfeeding. Due to space constraints I leave out M. R.'s anonymous legacy to her adult daughter, Smith's because it is a series of maxims very like Grymeston's Memoratives and Bradstreet's Meditations, and Goodhue's because of it similarities to Joscelin's.

[2]I cite the legacy books by Leigh, Grymeston, M. R., Richardson, and Goodhue from copies on microfilm. I use Sylvia Brown's fine edition of Joscelin's manuscript, rather than the early publication edited—and drastically altered—by Thomas Goad. I draw from the Ellis edition of Anne Bradstreet's legacy but am currently preparing a scholarly edition based on the Andover manuscript. I modernize only the alphabet used. There are no silent corrections; spelling and punctuation are left as is, and italicized font follows the original. I do not insert page numbers where there are none, but indicate chapter number or designation.

[3]Sylvia Brown attributes the popularity and authority of the legacy books to their authors' ability "to step outside the bound imposed by feminine silence and domesticity because they anchor themselves firmly within the limits of the household and the maternal role" (1999: viii). When these writers rely upon apology and justification—and the expectation of imminent death—to write from their patriarchally endorsed roles as Christian, wife, and mother, they note their unstable speaking positions as signs of culturally circumscribed subject positions. At the same time, they carefully re-form that problematic position, and the legacy writings function as crafted self-portraits through which women rhetorically reclaim their subjectivity. They move past making visible women's disenfranchisement to set forth a complex form which enables a provisional self-authorization from within cultural restrictions.

[4]Another way to make clearer the need for early modern Englishwomen to insist on their Christianity and virtue as above and as enabling their role as mother is to look at Larry Wolff's reading of the letters of their French contemporary, Mme de Sévigné. Writing to her daughter during a Lenten retreat, Mme de Sévigné was censured by her priest for holding her daughter as an idol, and told her maternal love bordered on worship. But when she explicitly states "I wish my heart were for God as it is for you," she invokes the conventions of piety to censure excessive maternal devotion, but even in seeming to censure herself, she negotiates religion into a vehicle of expression, rather than repression, of her maternal practice (1993: 360-61).

[5]Meredith Skura (1997) points out in her examination of Elizabeth Cary's play

how great a role religion could play in women's empowerment in the Renaissance. Skura also notes the importance of maternal influence in shaping Cary's own life and spiritual experience.

[6]Both Margaret Hannay (1994) and Margaret Sommerville (1995) provide very fine historical contexts for and readings of Renaissance marriage, cited below.

[7]While Grymeston (1610) may place weight on her borrowings in the epistle, in reality they work to support her arguments and magnify the beauty of her own rhetoric, rather than to add other ideas. Her selections, especially those from her executed Catholic cousin Robert Southwell, follow her own careful conclusions and echo her own meditations and sentiments. For example in Chapter IIII, she supports her assertion, "He that knowes his life is but a way to death," with this couplet from Southwell, "*For what's the life of man, but even a tragedy, / Full of sad sighes, and sore catastrophes?*"

[8]Grymeston, in fact, makes a good example for Ruddick's discussion of social perceptions of the success of mothering. Ruddick argues that society considers teaching children to conform to dominant social values an achievement, even though those values may go against the mother's own, and she points out that when mothers insist on their own values, they are perceived as failing (1983: 222). Under these terms, Grymeston's maternal practice can be seen as personal success, but a cultural failure.

[9]Ruddick suggests that when the mother is wholly powerless and allows her society to determine her maternal practice, there results an inauthentic mothering in which she accepts the uses to which others put her children and remains blind to the implications of those uses. She concludes that "a mother who trains either for powerlessness or abusive power over others betrays the life she has preserved, whose growth she has fostered. She denies her children even the possibility of being strong and good" (1983: 221). I argue that the legacy writers do not accept their own powerlessness, that they claim power in the very act of writing, and that they were motivated largely for the purpose of making their children "strong and good."

[10]In other works, Jacqueline Pearson and Randall Martin also reach this conclusion.

[11]Richardson (1645) makes similar movements in her handwritten emendations in the Houghton Library copy of the book. It is inscribed with an autograph dedication to her grandson, Edward Dering, son of her daughter Anne, a boy she is happy to claim as "one of mine, & this coming from me, I nothing doubt of your loving acceptance of it." She asks her grandson's pardon for the book's weakness, but insists that he "you will gently censure & beare it all." She follows this insistence with the highest of her titles, Elizabeth Cramond, and sets herself over him as grandmother over grandson, and Baroness over Knight Baronet.

[12]As Sylvia Brown points out, Richardson placed her prayers into public circulation just as *The Book of Common Prayer* was withdrawn (1999: viii).

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Angela Morsley

"Trapped for Life"
Negotiating the Maze of Mother and Text in the Fiction of Elizabeth Jolley

The renowned and prolific Australian writer, Elizabeth Jolley, is the author of numerous collections of short stories and novels published from 1976 to as recently as 2001. Her output is impressive and continues to grow, testifying both to her importance as a voice in Australian literature and to the appeal of her writing, which continues to probe complex and ambiguous issues which defy destinctive boundaries. Her work frequently disconcerts and disturbs, denying easy access to concerns with gender, power and morality which are given form in initially bewildering structures and in the intensely introspective worlds of Jolley's characters. Many of these characters are mothers, or adopt a mothering role within their relationships with others. Jolley's representations of these relationships or of woman as mother are typified by a psychological complexity and a deep ambivalence concerning notions of motherhood and femininity. It is an ambivalence inscribed within the very web of her texts which portray and, moreover, embody "the interwoven structures of power, gender and identity" (Miller, 1986: 272). Indeed, Nancy K. Miller's notion of the text as a web is an appropriate metaphor to describe the systems of power interrogated by Jolley's fictions, systems which seek to prevent access and exclude the abject and undesirable, or which absorb those elements they prefer to silence and contain.

The mother, as Jolley portrays her, can be both the subject and the agent of repression. Jolley's maternal figures typically dominate and confront, their depictions often bordering on therianthropic grotesquerie. As actual mothers, they are often "hungry" or "greedy," with insatiable appetite, the jaws of one appearing engaged in an "endless slack circular movement" of a mastication that forms a part of the many tropes of digestion and devourment associated with the mothering characters in Jolley's texts (1985: 167,196). While Dorothy

Dinnerstein describes the Minotaur, the creature that is half-man half-beast in Ovid's myth of the labyrinth, as the eternally infantile, male figure of devourment (1976: 5), Jolley subverts the mythical figure of the monstrous child, instead investing her mothering characters with an aggressive urge to devour that borders on the unnatural. The Jolley mother either desires to be immersed in the trappings of modern domesticity and the consumer society, "protected by layers of brick and tile and well-manured rose beds, marriage and reticulation, double fronts, double garages, double beds and double faces" (1998: 137), or, like Sandy in *Foxybaby*, inflicts her own drug addiction onto her newly-born child, gratification of the mother's physical desire or need redressed in a sick child that cannot accept nourishment. "My baby's rotten like me. Even his mouth. He can't suck" (1985: 89). Maternal desire is represented as bearing threatening and dangerous consequences for the child and its larger social context. Jolley's mothers appear to replicate horror and reproduce inherited rottenness—they are pregnant with the offspring of incest, other characters remain "contaminated" by their association with them (1998: 79). While they themselves appear figures of harm, their children, like the children in Jolley's story "Grasshoppers" who lure their grandmother into darkness and injury, also perpetuate the threat of maternal malignancy. The mother is found "slithering snake-like," or can be "a fierce unpredictable little animal. An unnamed one" (1998: 22; 1979: 162). Her development from girlhood to motherhood is accompanied by the transformation of her own child's hands into an "unreachable bony claw," the perversion of innocence and humanity registered in an image of maternal monstrosity (1985: 93).

The maternal is frequently the abject in Jolley's writing. Her mothers represent hybrid figures, occupying the borders between humanity and bestiality, innocence and depravity. They transgress moral boundaries, threaten social orders, and are never free from their implication in the corruption of relationships and institutions. Jolley explores a deep cultural anxiety concerning the mother. On the one hand, the mother appears in her excavation of the collective psyche as an uncontrollable, bestial perversion or a "frightened animal let out of its cage by mistake," as the unnamable and uncomprehended, that which is harmful to itself and the world and which is safer locked away (1998: 207). The excessively maternal Jonquil Castle, "hungry" for her grandchildren, is, in accordance with this pattern of sublimation and institutionalisation, packed off to residential school to suffer "the feelings of exclusion experienced daily" (1985: 167, 57). Conversely, feminine desire and motherhood are often represented by Jolley as remaining already denied and confined within a patriarchal paradigm. Hester Harper in *The Well* dismisses female sexuality as "cowshed and corner-of-the-paddock business" and reproduction as the "mating of cattle for stock ... all right for the beasts and for some people," but not for Katherine, the orphan she takes into her care and whose maturity into a woman she seeks to stem (Jolley, 1987: 150). With her own "rather flat breasts," her ambition to follow "her father's ways," and her identification with patriar-

chal symbols of power and ownership, Hester embodies a femininity subjugated by masculine power structures (1987: 7). It is these "[w]omen caught" who, in Jolley's words, "tried to ensure others were similarly trapped" (1987: 109). Having never known her mother, haunted by the traumatic memories of her nurse's miscarriage and a sense of maternal abandonment, Hester associates motherhood with the pain of separation and the violence of birth. She refuses a recognition of Katherine's maternal instincts in order to replicate within herself the patriarchal protection desired by her as a child, protection which is complicated by an unacknowledged lesbo-erotic desire, repressed sexual possessiveness compromising Hester's attempts to establish a "warm" and "safe" domestic seclusion.

John O'Brien argues that, in comparison with the claustrophobic atmosphere and sexual repression of *The Well*, Jolley's novel, *Palomino*, portrays a homosexual relationship defined by an openness of sexual expression and a physical and emotional freedom (1991: 141). While this is true of the novel to a certain extent, motherhood forms both the genesis and disruption of Laura's and Andrea's co-existence. The apparent resilience of the conventional roles of family structure leads inevitably to the stifling of sexual expression and to the seeming conclusion that homo-erotic female desire can only ever be an abberation to the act of mothering, that motherhood is an abnegation of that desire. While Laura identifies herself with the figure of a "farmer" and appears increasingly masculinised in her work on the land, her lover, Andrea, feels constrained within Laura's house and by her own pregnancy. "I'm really trapped in this place, every time I feel the baby move I feel caught" (1998: 1, 228). Laura too, in the ambiguous role of both masculine figure and caring, surrogate mother to the younger Andrea, who is to her at times "only a child," fears the possibility of the relationship developing into a "trap" with "no means of escape" (1998: 94, 252). As lovers existing outside the boundaries of conventional relationships, Laura and Andrea nonetheless find themselves falling into the restrictions of traditionally constructed gender patterns within which woman or mother figure is desexualised and forced to conform to a pre-existing and established norm. Jolley has been criticised for presenting motherhood and sexual desire as mutually exclusive conditions and for denying her characters the freedom to be both mothers and lesbians. Maureen Bettle asserts that Jolley's conception of lesbianism and motherhood is not inclusive at all, rather a matter of either/or, that "dykes are mothers manqué: that motherhood is the end of women" (1991:127,130). An argument of this nature ignores the fact that Jolley represents her lesbian and mothering characters as confined by imposed conventions and institutionalised structures. Her concern is with entrapment and with the possibility of freedom, in spite of its frequent denial. In almost every case, those who mother in Jolley's work find themselves inextricably caught within the trap formed by patriarchal systems of power and representation, systems which build themselves upon a monstering and a denial of feminine and maternal desire.

It is the mapping of these structures which is the motivating impulse behind Jolley's narratives. The manifestation of the archetype of the labyrinth in Jolley's work expresses both the threat posed to established convention by female sexuality, as well as the subsequent repression of the maternal as the source of monstrosity. In its mythic incarnation in Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, the labyrinth was the prison for the aforementioned Minotaur, Asterion, the progeny of Queen Pasiphaë of Crete and a beloved bull. Representing both the bestial in human nature and the threatening and unnatural consequences of female desire, the Minotaur is condemned by King Minos to remain in a "private lunatic asylum," the labyrinth (Doob, 1990: 35). The idea of the labyrinth as an institution, its function being to contain and conceal the disturbing and unfamiliar, can thus be traced from its Classical origins as a mythic structure. While the concept of the labyrinth may at first seem remote from the parameters of Jolley's work, its mythical influences are present in her writing in a variety of aspects. Jolley's fiction resonates with notions of a monstrous, masculine child—Mrs Morgan is "scared stiff" of her violent, domineering son, Doll, while in *Milk and Honey* the idiot child, Waldemar, is kept hidden from sight and knowledge within his father Leopold's labyrinthine house of "innumerable rooms in a kind of dark confusion" (1976: 28; 1984: 14). By giving birth to a beast, Wendy B. Faris argues, woman was changed into a beast in order to be conquered by the patriarchal confines of the labyrinth (1988: 192). The mother of the monster is implicated as the source of transgression in both the mythical context and in the entrapment and exclusion experienced by Jolley's mothering characters. It is the institution of the patriarchal symbolic order, and institutionalisation, which, like the house of Leopold, swallows, which denies escape and obstructs penetration, and, by invoking the idea of matricide, Jolley suggests it to be destructive to the notion of motherhood as lived experience. Frequently, the maternal is positioned outside this order or dominated by it, alienated beyond recognition and acknowledgement, crippled, covert and confined. For the father-identified Hester Harper, motherless since infancy, the word mother "seemed to have very little meaning." When young Katherine hits an unnamed and unnamable object in a car accident, Hester deposits the body down the well of the novel's title, and her cover-up is part of the process of her denial of the maternal. The body represents in her mind "rotten fruit discarded," the fertile made abject, and Hester's act, in the protection of Katherine's innocence, is significantly likened, in the terms of "farm management," to extracting "a thoroughbred and possibly prize-winning bull calf free from an injured or dying mother" (Jolley, 1987: 47, 107).

As has already been seen, the figure of the mother is not always objectified, her potency not always denied. Maternal power finds its expression in Jolley's writing in the very form of the labyrinth. While Carl Jung located his theory of the anima, a feminine figure of the psyche that threatens to ensnare men, in the dominating power of the mother, he saw the journey through the labyrinth as

akin to the individual's extrication from the entangling power of the overpowering originary figure, the mother (1969: 29; cited in Faris, 1988: 38). Jolley's work and her evocation of labyrinthine imagery and form can therefore be interpreted as an investigation of the significance of the maternal archetype in the collective unconscious. The ensnarement of her male characters within the labyrinthine domain and design of the mother indicates an attempt by Jolley to write of a reclamation of feminine power which is directed against a patriarchal order excluded from an understanding of its counterpart. The hapless Edwin of *The Sugar Mother* is enticed into a web of deceit designed by the mother of his lover, Leila, and he is physically drawn by his desire into the labyrinth of a pine plantation which "seemed endless, a wild place" in which "the possibilities of being lost" reflect upon his own destabilised and disorienting domestic situation (Jolley, 1989: 119). Similarly, Mr Scobie recalls being lured by his sexually precocious pupil, Lina, into her mother's room, into the "secret places" of the house which "frightened him," the "mysterious woman's room" bearing undoubted associations to the womb (Jolley, 1983: 96). The architecture of his memory, suggestively labyrinthine, expresses his fear of the mother who lurks like a monster within the domestic labyrinth. Within the large house of many rooms, she "sat behind the doors listening ..."(1983: 95). The exaggeration of mother as monster in these texts is used by Jolley to explore a fundamentally masculine anxiety concerning motherhood, as well as to portray alternative and conflicting structures of power and dynamics of desire. If the (m)other is otherness trapped within an ideology which seeks to confine feminine desire and deny maternal legitimacy, then Jolley's portraits of rapacious, even murderous mothers indicate an assertive and subversive reaction against the structures, both moral and cultural, which position the mother as abject.

The Jolley mother is represented as monstered in her motherhood, entrapped within the role assigned to her by patriarchal structures of definition and control, structures which both dominate and are embraced by masculinised female characters. However, as the monster she also appears to her weakened and emasculated male victims as a figure of fear and malignant power. Like the imprisoning, stifling form of the labyrinth itself, she too can be the agent of suppression and oppression, even of infanticide. In *Mr Scobie's Riddle*, Matron Price, in a mothering role, "cradle[s]" her patient, Miss Hailey, against her "full round breasts," while she secretly imagines murdering her for the hospital's financial gain (Jolley, 1983: 155, 157). Delys Bird argues that such sadomasochistic images of devouring associated with motherhood indicate the tension between the two notions of motherhood identified by Adrienne Rich, that of motherhood as an ideological institution and mothering as lived experience (1989: 41). Institutions, such as hospitals and schools, are frequently sites for the conflict between these ideas of motherhood in Jolley's fiction. The domination of these institutions by women and the identification of them with the maternal plays with the possibility of the colonisation and consolidation of a distinctly female territory. Jolley's often humorous, frequently macabre,

portrayal of such a territory nevertheless implies the terrifying and destructive consequences of such an institutionalisation. *Mr Scobie's Riddle* is set almost entirely within the Hospital of St Christopher and St Jude, a nursing home which has a vortigal hold upon its elderly occupants and is presided over by Matron Price, the "mater" of this particular institution. To Mr Scobie, her frail patient, Matron Price resembles the frightening maternal figure of his memory—she is "big like Lina's big mother" with the possibility of also possessing "mottled breasts and enormous thighs" (Jolley, 1983: 52). Her patients are infantilised—grey blankets are "tucked in" and "secured" under their chairs "with a large safety pin"(175), confinement within a labyrinthine structure evoked in the experience of being "wound up in a rug"(178). The patients exist in a state of entrapment, both physically and financially, their assets "swallowed up"(167) by Matron's lascivious ploys, leaving one Miss Hailey to acknowledge "'I can't leave St Christopher and St Jude. I'm trapped for life'"(149). Significantly, the matriarchs of Jolley's hospitals and schools—Matron Price, Miss Peycroft, Miss Thorne, Night Sister Bean—are all childless, and yet are afforded a power usually denied the biological mothers of her fiction. Most also possess a rampant sexual appetite directed towards other women and girls. With these recurring characterisations, Jolley would appear to be making the provocative suggestion that institutional power is inherently unproductive and unnurturing, merely necessitating further repression of the maternal.

The experience of entrapment, of being absorbed into a condition without any scope or channel for escape, all attempts being thwarted, is intensified by the labyrinthine anatomy of the institution. Upon entering the Hospital of St Christopher and St Jude, having traversed a labyrinthine network of fortification and obstruction, of paths which "wound beneath the lines of wet washing which crossed the back garden"(Jolley, 1983: 17), the "maze of old-fashioned out buildings" gives way to a black smoke which forms a barrier to the "sacred regions of the kitchen" and within which characters entering its bounds are "engulfed"(18). The kitchen, traditional site of nurture, is a womb-like sacred centre in this structure, but is posited as a sinister matrix that consumes those who penetrate it. At the other end of the hospital, the front door is like an orifice opening into the intestinal tract as those who enter "seemed to flow ... through the door disappearing, as if swallowed, into the passage beyond" (201). The kitchen stove, another mythologically and culturally-constructed image of feminine nurture, merely marks the opening to further labyrinthine bifurcations as the cook is imagined to have periodically "entered the secret passages of the flues and subsequently lost her way therein" (132). The mother's body is written into the very architecture of the edifice. Indeed, the mother *is* the institution itself in this particular text, unknown, relatively unexplored, and threatening to devour those who enter its internal recesses. By denying access and preventing escape, it represents the confinement of the maternal and the restriction of generative and creative power. However, Jolley's iconoclastic representation of that institution exposes previously hidden and unfamiliar

depths within familiar sites and images of nurture. The maternal anatomy is imagined as a sequence of labyrinths, one leading ever inward to another, creating complexities and ambiguities which incite a revision or suspicion of the values underlying the structures and images of convention. The labyrinth occurs as a rupture within the constructed institution of motherhood, as if a way is sought beyond its strictures.

Throughout her work, Jolley adopts labyrinthine imagery and form to explore the dichotomy of mothering as institution and as lived experience. Although her mothering characters would frequently appear to fall into the conventional and simplistic category of bad mothers, Jolley does not write within the unsophisticated framework of portraying the good mother and the bad mother. Rather, she is concerned with interrogating the institution of motherhood, its conventions and the anxieties which arise from it, and the destructive consequences of its divorce from the lived experience of the individual. The labyrinth is appropriate as an interpretative mechanism for an exploration of this nature. Aside from an image of artifice and imprisonment, the labyrinth has equally, from its origins as a symbol for human life, expressed an organic conception of the womb, a maternal fertility and a longing to return to a state of wholeness in order to achieve rebirth (see Attali, 1999: 3, 79; Purce, 1974: 104, 110-111; Eliade, 1960: 71; Ayrton, 1974: 16). In keeping with this idea, like an umbilical cord, the covert labyrinth of the well connects Hester with notions of mothering she had attempted to expel from her consciousness. The descriptions of the water flowing through "small openings and channels" to "the wide shaft of the well" evoke birth (Jolley, 1987: 151). The labyrinth of the well encompasses and reclaims a distinctly female territory. It is an expression of the mother, of fecundity and reproduction in its proliferation of diverging paths and womb-like structure, its passages "leading from one cavern to another" (Jolley, 1987: 132). Jolley's writing is frequently a statement against institutionalisation and the deadening occlusion of an imposed structure, and an advocation of the organic, lived experience of motherhood, particularly in a recognition of origins. From within the institution of the hospital, Mr Scobie's memories of his mother and of home, recalled with a longing "such as a young child experiences"(1983: 42), lead him on mental journeys to his childhood home which take the form of labyrinthine meanderings along "a long, winding gravel track" which "wound along the foot of the hill, and went on to other places"(51). The labyrinth can be a vehicle for the expression of freedom, not just entrapment, and Jolley ensures both representations are included in her novels.

Carol Ann Howells locates Jolley's fiction within the "post-colonial search for lost mothers and the longing to feel at home" (1988: 69). As a migrant writer, having emigrated to Australia from England, Jolley's evocation of labyrinthine form and imagery as it relates to ideas of mothering indicates a profound concern with the experience of exile and disorientation and ambivalent ideas of home. In her story, "The Long Distant Lecture," the terror of

being lost within a labyrinth of the unfamiliar, of unrecognisable tracks "winding across this empty world," gives way to a palingenesis—a return to one's past and origins, and a connection with an inchoate notion of home (Jolley, 1979: 73). As if in response to the recognition of the burgeoning and generative, creative possibilities which accompany initial disorientation within unfamiliar territory, Jolley incorporates this auto-generative notion of rebirth into the very form of her fiction, making many of her protagonists writers and connecting the process of writing with the act of giving birth. Alma Porch is the mother of the ideas "born" from her writing (1998: 122), while the writer Miss Hailey transfers her creative energy into a whirling, labyrinthine dance depicting the natural motions and "meaningful movements" of childbirth and the "joy of the new mother"(212). "'I shall write this,' she said, and she began, with solemn movements, to dance"(211). Jolley's texts themselves embody labyrinthine structures, forms which equally suggest a maternal anatomy. They are typically cyclic in configuration, usually beginning with displaced events, incidents which actually happen at a later stage of the narrative and which must be revisited in their chronological order. The disorientation is intensified by Jolley's use of mises-en-abyme, stories within stories, as the internalised imaginings of her writer characters are integrated within the larger narrative. In this structural sense, Jolley's texts represent a maternal containment —they are "swollen with a mysterious knowledge" which finds its most profound expression in labyrinthine form and imagery, associated as it so intrinsically is with a conception of mothering (Jolley, 1985: 146).[1] Not only does the labyrinth as a textual paradigm allow for the accommodation of mystery, but it also suggests to the reader the path of his or her reading experience, one which involves tracing the thread of the narrative back to central concerns with mother as both monster and origin.

By contrasting terrifying and benevolent images and ideas of the mother, Elizabeth Jolley suggests the profoundly problematic and influential dynamic of maternal power and desire. Labyrinthine imagery and form are the vehicles for Jolley's deconstruction of the ideologies of motherhood, and, in its malignant and benign manifestations, the labyrinth allows for an expression of the undeniable ambivalence with which Jolley approaches a conception of the maternal. Her fiction seeks to embody a maternal subjectivity, one which is radical and subversive, attacking the constructions of institutionalised ideology, and which attempts to recover a very real and physicalised sense and experience of the mother. In *Palomino*, the pregnant woman's naked body is inscribed with the maternal configuration that permeates Jolley's writing.

> I let myself look upon Eva, her pregnancy is advanced, her breasts are full and heavy. The white skin of her breasts is delicately traced with fine blue veins in a strange design belonging only to Eva herself. (1998: 145)

It is a recreation of that unique and organic maternal configuration, as well as a deconstruction of the confines of the institution of motherhood, which lie at the centre of the labyrinths of Jolley's texts.

[1]Sue Gillett observes that Jolley gives the cliché of writing as childbirth new meaning by making writing "an extension of the female body" (1991: 109).

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Rishma Dunlop

Slippage

My neighbor's house
stands tall, exemplary,
a white standard
on the tree-lined street
where spills of children
play in the fragrance
of newly mown grass
and friends gather like moths
at patio barbecues,
swim laps in blue pools
of suburbia.

Behind the pristine door
the air is scented with peach
and lemon pot-pourri,
imported soaps,
Gucci colognes and
white terry cloth robes.

One night in June
the cul-de-sac is lit up
red and blue lights pulsing
in Delta Police cars

he is escorted from his home
the marriage ended

in restraint and order
his throat caught in the noose of love

his raging words
burn a path
through his small sons' bodies
across her lawn
through her rose bushes

That night I dream
of masked raccoons
night marauders
owls following the paths of headlights
a falcon circling small prey
the tattered beat of wing

I dream of consumption plants
the choke of deadly nightshade
stinging nettles along the Serpentine River

I dream a black fisted storm
a singular fury
lightening razoring
the neighbor's pine tree
its scent in my nostrils
crashing through my roof

In the morning
the tree still stands
outside my window
the sun rises
a warm peach
offering up seaside angelica
the air full of anise swallowtails
and red admiral butterflies

At dawn
I slip into my daughters' rooms
listen to their measured breaths
stroke their hair softly back
from their foreheads.

Monika Elbert

Persephone's Return
Communing with the Spirit-Daughter in Morrison and Allende

> "Maybe the most important reason for writing is to prevent the erosion of time, so that memories will not be blown away by the wind. Write to register history, and name each thing. Write what should not be forgotten."
>
> —Allende, "Writing as An Act of Hope," in *The Art and Craft of the Political Novel*

> "This is not a story to pass on..."
>
> —Morrison, *Beloved*

Both Toni Morrison and Isabel Allende create mothering situations which force the mother to come to terms with her limitations and her position in history through imagined dialogues with the deceased or dying daughter in their novels *Beloved* and *Paula* (for Sethe, with Beloved, and for Isabel, with Paula).[1] In recreating the story of their child, the mothers come to terms with and make sense of their own history. Finally, by extension, they make sense of their cultural past, and in joining with a community of women, maternal in nature, they are able to go beyond the arbitrary boundaries forced upon them by men. Their versions of history show how deeply intertwined a vision of the political and of the personal can be. Most of all, their examples show how the story of mothering is a story which does, indeed, need to be passed on—in the face of cataclysmic change and of political and oftentimes violent upheavals.

Isabel Allende's autobiographical work, *Paula* (1994), is a paradigm of the modern autobiographical impulse to stave off worldwide tragic events and personal impending disasters through a recounting and reconstruction of the self in the face of such apocalyptic forces. Indeed, on a personal level, Allende

is able to exorcise her fear of mortality and aging through writing letters to the dead, in the case of *Paula,* to her daughter. On a political level, too, she is able to weave in the events of an explosive situation in Chile with the disruption of her personal life through a universal communing with the spirits of the dead, more specifically, through evoking the spirits of her deceased family members. Though she already accomplishes this in her semi-autobiographical work, *The House of the Spirits,* she confronts the problem of the modern malaise, self-annihilation, in *Paula*, where the death of her daughter makes her reevaluate her entire mission in life. In fact, her autobiographical *Paula* makes it clear that there is only a fine line between fictional and realistic reconstructions of the self.

In *Paula*, Allende emphasizes the two crucial times in her life, when she feels compelled to communicate with the dying or near-dead. Early on, she tells the story of how, as an expatriate in Venezuela, when she receives news of her grandfather's fatal illness, she starts writing a letter to him, a letter which he never receives, but which, 400 pages later, ends up becoming her first novel, *The House of the Spirits.* Then, in 1991, as she begins to write a letter to her dying daughter (who died of porphyria in 1992), she universalizes her own experience as a woman who has suffered and suggests parallels between her life and that of her daughter. This exploration of death enables her to encode and finally exorcise her own fears and experiences of trauma and sexual molestation and violence, and it culminates in her book, *Paula.*[2]

Similarly, in *Beloved,* a semi-biographical account of the slave Margaret Garner, the character Sethe needs to make sense of the manner in which she has killed her daughter, as a result of the political reality, slavery. Both women, Isabel and Sethe, realize that they need to let go of their daughters in order to welcome a possible happy future in a partnership based on mature love (Isabel with Willie, and Sethe with Paul D.). They need to stop berating themselves for the tragic ends of their daughters and so they create these imaginary dialogues, to exorcise the demon-child. Whereas Beloved actually does appear as a demon-daughter, Paula is more passive, but both mothers appear super-natural in their efforts to exorcise the memory of the failed maternal (and hence personal) experiences and start anew.

Sethe explains her rationale for killing Beloved as rightful maternal proprietorship; she sees her children as an extension of herself, her own "best" things, and will go to any length to protect them from the slave-catcher: "The best thing she was, was her children. Whites might dirty *her* all right, but not her best thing, her beautiful, magical best thing—the part of her that was clean" (Morrison, 1987: 251). The confusion of mother-daughter boundaries in the incessant litany between mother (Sethe), daughter (Beloved), and sister (Denver), "I am Beloved, and she is mine" (200). In fact, Sethe suggests that it is through the intercession of the spirit of her deceased mother-in-law, Baby Suggs, that the ghost of Beloved has returned: "Beloved, she my daughter. She mine. See. She come back to me of her own free will and I don't have to explain a thing .... my love was tough and she back now ... I bet you Baby Suggs, on the other

side, helped" (200). The distinctions between mother and daughter become blurred: "Beloved/You are my sister/You are my daughter/ You are my face; you are me" (216).

Allende (1994) is also able to cross over into another realm of being in her autobiography. She bids farewell to Paula and welcomes her into another realm all in the same breath (in her concluding paragraph): "Godspeed, Paula, woman. Welcome, Paula, spirit." She is ultimately able to accept Paula's death, but it is only through her own final meditation on her inevitable demise (as Sethe feels the threat of annihilation and possession by the demon-child, a now pregnant Beloved) that she feels in harmony with nature. She has images of sinking into "cool water" and hearing "the music of thousands of voices whispering among the trees." The identities of woman—as mother and as daughter—are interchangeable as Isabel projects herself onto nature. In a manner resembling that of the American Transcendentalists, she is able to break the artificial man-made bounds imposed upon natural cycles and time and enter a mystical sense of time:

> "As I dissolved, I had the revelation that the void was filled with everything the universe holds. Nothing and everything, at once .... I am the void, I am everything that exists, I am in every leaf of the forest, in every drop of the dew, in every particle of ash carried by the stream, I am Paula and I am also Isabel, I am nothing and all other things in this life and other lives, immortal...." (Allende, 1994: 330).

This recalls the mystical and chantlike merging of voices between Sethe, Denver, and Beloved. In this way, the lives of all women—of all generations—are connected: as Allende reaffirms the connection between mother and daughter, she writes the story of everywoman. Moreover, Allende triumphantly reconciles the moment of birthing and dying, so that in her mind, she becomes, with her mother and daughter-in-law at her side, the midwife[3] who will allow Paula passage to the other realm. In fact, she imagines the spirits of the departed, especially the clairvoyant women in her family, appearing at her side to welcome Paula to the other realm: she is "surrounded by ethereal beings, by murmurs and tenuous fragrances from the past, by ghosts and apparitions, by friends and relatives, living and dead" (1994: 329). There is a mystical union between the living and the deceased women who come together over Paula's body in celebration of her spirit: "We were filled with Paula's spirit, as if we were all one being and there was no separation among us: life and death were joined" (328). The narrator compares birthing with dying, and concludes that "the two moments are much alike: birth and death are made of the same fabric" (328). She also realizes that she will keep the spirit of her clairvoyant grandmother and her sensitive daughter alive—within herself, through her writing.

In fact, both Sethe and Isabel are able to triumph over death through a magical and ritualistic union with the mothers in the community. In Paula's

dying scene, the women in attendance, Isabel, her mother, and Celia, her sister-in-law, participate in a victorious manner by telling stories, singing, and lighting candles. Isabel distinctly recalls her Granny's mystical, "grandmotherly songs," which always soothe her at moments of death. Similarly, the demon-child Beloved is sent back to the nether world, as the community of chanting women, among them departed spirits as well as the living generation, drive her away through a communal purging of songs and prayers: "Mothers, dead now, moved their shoulders to mouth harps" (Morrison, 1987: 259). Just as Isabel and the surviving mothers (Celia has just had her first daughter) feel a sense of rebirth at the moment of Paula's death, Sethe is overcome by the strength of maternal voices, as images of birthing are allied with images of dying, as in the case of Allende: the singing "broke over Sethe and she trembled like the baptized in its wash" (261). And so the healing and recuperative powers of women (like the spiritual Baby Suggs or Isabel's mystic "Granny") are passed down from one generation to the next, through the communal rituals, which act as antidotes to the authority of male institutions. Allende casts herself in the role of such a supernatural mother-progenitor and protector: "I have the idea that we grandmothers are meant to play the part of protective witches; we must watch over younger women, children, community, and also, why not?, this mistreated planet, the victim of such unrelenting desecration" (261).

Mothering, witchcraft, and writing all become connected in these mystical dialogues with the departed or departing daughter.[4] Allende realizes that the story which the memory of her daughter gives life to is as much a child as the literal child; as she writes *Paula,* she is giving birth to another child, and so, is transforming herself, who lives on through the child of her imagination. As Allende says of the artist's craft:

> The joyful process of engendering a child, the patience of gestation, the fortitude to bring it into life, and the feeling of profound amazement with which everything culminates can be compared only to creating a book. Children, like books, are voyages into one's inner life, during which body, mind, and soul shift course and turn toward the very center of existence. (1994:231)

And later Allende makes a more obvious comparison between child-bearing and writing: "my books are not born in my mind, they gestate in my womb and are capricious creatures with their own lives, always ready to subvert me" (1994: 281).

Beloved, too, is transformed from spirit to flesh, from idea to book, in Morrison's novel through maternal imagery. One recalls that the spirit of Beloved is evoked in a very watery, gestational description, in which Sethe emerges from the water. Upon seeing the newly reborn Beloved, Sethe feels the urge to urinate, and she recalls two other times, when her watery functions were uncontrollable—both events relating to mother-daughter relationships (the

first, when as a "baby girl, being cared for by the 18-year old girl who pointed out her mother to her, she had an emergency that was unmanageable"; the second time is when her water broke at Denver's birth). The music which finally reconnects Sethe with the community is described as "a wave of sound wide enough to sound deep water," and which causes her to tremble "like the baptized in its wash" (Morrison, 1987: 161). Although in both cases, the mothers are renewed through the communal ritual catharsis surrounding the daughter's death, both are still very heavily indebted to their daughters for an understanding of their own stories. Both titles speak out the daughters' names, and the frontispieces of the texts memorialize the daughter. In Morrison's work, one sees the engraving of Beloved's headstone. Since the child was never officially named, we hear that Sethe had exchanged sex with the engraver as payment for having "Beloved" chiseled onto the tombstone ("ten minutes for seven letters, [5]), and wonders if she could have had "Dearly" engraved if she had given ten more minutes of her body: "But what she got, settled for, was the one word that mattered" (5). The book is a celebration of the fact that the child's life could be vindicated, that the mother could give the child a name and then recount the entire story (the personal as well as familial), so that the final word of the text is a resounding, triumphant "Beloved." And the story which was not supposed to be passed on becomes a living legacy to countless generations of silenced women.

Similarly, Allende's tribute to Paula begins with a picture of Paula, and a brief explanation of how the story was written: "In December 1991 my daughter, Paula, fell gravely ill and soon thereafter sunk into a coma. These pages were written during the interminable hours spent in the corridors of a Madrid hospital and in the hotel room where I lived for several months, as well as beside her bed in our home in California during the summer and fall of 1992." The book itself starts with the mother telling her comatose daughter a bedtime story of sorts: "Listen, Paula. I am going to tell you a story, so that when you wake up you will not feel so lost" (1994: 3). And the narrative ends, also, with the eternalizing and comforting phrase, "Welcome, Paula, spirit" (330).

What strikes the reader in both novels is the emphasis on the domestic space as magical, enshrined space for women: Allende says that "houses need births and deaths to become homes" (1994: 258).[5] And in the beginning of Beloved, we hear that the house "124 was spiteful" (Morrison, 1987: 3), and we know that 124 cannot be made into a home, until birth is celebrated and until the spirits of Baby Suggs and Beloved are reconciled with the surviving woman and child, Sethe and Denver. The hauntings which initially afflict 124 are most negative: "Together they [Sethe and Denver] waged a perfunctory battle against the outrageous behavior of the place; against turned-over slop jars, smacks on the behind, and gusts of sour air. For they understood the source of the outrage as well as they knew the source of light" (4). They finally propose to call forth the ghost "that tried them so": "Perhaps a conversation, they thought, an exchange of views or something that would help. So they held

hands and said, "Come on. Come on. You might as well just come on" (4). Denver proposes that the spirit of Baby Suggs is keeping the spirit of Beloved back, but the mother suggests that the baby (only two at her death) was too young to recall and to remember, even though her hauntings are "powerful," but not as "powerful" as Sethe's love for her, in Sethe's opinion. Sethe wants to commune with the dead, to make the story "clear" to Beloved, but her initial attempt to evoke the ghost only brings Paul D. to the door, whose appearance is crucial to the exorcism of the ghost.

Similarly, Allende feels moved to commune with the spirits and to teach her grandchildren about the other realm. She revels in the spirit world which brings life to her home:

> In the basement I have hidden sinister surprises for the grandchildren: a plaster skeleton, treasure maps, and trunks filled with pirate disguises and fake jewels. I have the hope that a scary cellar will act as a stimulus to the imagination, as my grandfather's did for me. At night, the house shudders, moans, and yawns, and I have the feeling that memories of people who have lived here, the characters that escape from books and dreams, the gentle ghost of the former owner, and Paula's soul, which at times is freed from the painful bonds of its body, all roam through the rooms. (1994: 258)

The hauntings in Allende's home are positive, as she feels the continuity between generations, and certainly, Sethe, too, is finally reconciled with the spirit world of Baby Suggs, once she has allowed the story of Beloved to be told. But the strong maternal impulse is finally what curses but redeems both women. Allende recalls, for example, her encounter with evil during the cataclysmic events of a repressive Chile, and she points to a communal original sin, contradictorily connected to a strong maternal, life-preserving instinct:

> We were all accomplices, the entire society was mad. The devil in the mirror.... Sometimes, when I was alone in some secret place on the hill with time to think, I saw again the black waters of the mirrors of my childhood where Satan peered out at night, and as I leaned toward the glass, I realized, with horror, that the Evil One had my face. I was not unsullied, no one was: a monster crouched in each of us, every one of us had a dark and fiendish side. Given the conditions, could *I* torture and kill? Let us say, for example, that someone had harmed my children .... What cruelty would I be capable of in that situation? The demons had escaped from the mirrors and were running loose through the world. (1994: 220)

In acknowledging her own place in an evil, destructive world, she points to her motherhood, which would give her the right to torture and kill (if

someone harmed her children). Similarly, Sethe's sin, the murder of Beloved, is more a reflection of the social evils (of slavery) imposed upon her. Throughout the novel, we hear that Beloved is her "best thing," indicating a strong maternal devotion, but also denial of herself (which Paul D. finally helps her with), but finally also a distorted vision of maternal ownership (allied with slavery). Paul D. describes Sethe's love as being "too thick." Though distorted, it is comprehensible. In an interview, in which Morrison describes the slave Margaret Garner's story as the basis for Sethe's story, she defends Sethe's maternal choice, "This is a real dilemma. Shall I permit my children, who are my own best thing, to live like I have lived, and I know that's terrible, or to take them out?' So she decided to kill them, and kill herself. And that was noble. That was the identification. She was saying, "I'm a human being. These are my children. This script I am writing" (cited in Moyers, 1990: 3). Allende laments the much-maligned motherhood which she sees around her: "It came to me how for countless centuries women have lost their children, how it is humanity's most ancient and inevitable sorrow. I am not alone, most mothers know this pain, it breaks their heart but they go on living because they must protect and love those who are left" (1994: 291-292).

For both Morrison and Allende, the script or story they write and rewrite (right), is the mother-daughter bond, which becomes a metaphor for communal love. As Morrison says in an interview, "We are here, and we have to do something nurturing that we respect before we go. We must. It is more interesting, more complicated, more intellectually demanding and more morally demanding to love somebody, to take care of somebody, to make one other person feel good." At the height of her daughter's illness, Allende remarks, "Perhaps we are in this world to search for love, find it and lose it again. With each love, we are born anew, and with each love that ends we collect a new wound. I am covered with proud scars" (1994: 314). And one finds solace in Paula's parting message from the dead to her mother:

> I suppose there is nothing to fear, death is just a threshold, like birth. I'm sorry I can't keep my memory, but I have been detaching myself from it, anyway; when I go, I will go naked. The only recollection I'm taking with me is of the loved ones I leave behind; I will always be with you in some way.... After I die, we will stay in contact the way you do with your grandparents and Granny; I will be in you as a constant, soft presence. (1994; 315-316)

In this way, the wounded generations of mothers and daughters are healed through an eternal communion of spirits. And finally Morrison's story not to pass on is the story needed to keep the mother-daughter bond alive, to finally engrave a name on Beloved's headstone. More specifically, the women who come to Sethe's rescue to exorcise the ghost of Beloved are the same type of women (dead and alive) who stand around Paula's deathbed to release the ghost

of the dying daughter. And the grieving mother's story must be told in the same way women's grief has always been told—by sharing with her community through the magic of words (as Baby Suggs does initially) or through the magic of writing, often withheld from women. Thus, Allende postures herself as a "wise old crone" who aspires to "fly on a broomstick and dance in the moonlight with other pagan witches in the forest...." (1994: 261). Her supernatural wish is akin to the desire to engage in the taboo realm of writing. Allende concludes the passage on witchcraft by inadvertently summarizing her goals and techniques: "[witches] inhabit other dimensions and travel to other galaxies, they are navigators on an infinite ocean of consciousness and cognition" (261). Moreover, the product of such illicit behavior, whether that is a book or a child, can be perceived as a child of the imagination, or a monstrosity, as was the case of Mary Shelley's birthing of Frankenstein. As Allende concludes: "it is also possible that stories are creatures with their own lives and that they exist in the shadows of some mysterious dimension; in that case, it will be a question of opening so they may enter, sink into me, and grow until they are ready to emerge transformed into language" (260). The language reminds us of Sethe and the now transformed demon-child with a swelling pregnant belly, an image of Sethe's alter-ego, waiting to be reborn through a communal language. For both Allende and Morrison, transformation and transcendence can only come about through an immersion into the collective unconscious (or womb) of woman. And the ghosts of the past are exorcised, when the spirits of the present are assuaged.

The personal history of the child, the personal history of the mother, cannot be eradicated by time. Indeed, Morrison and Allende seem to be daughters of the 1960s in recreating a new type of history, in making over a mother's life, in making the personal political. And, the mother's identity, rather than the child's, becomes the major focus of the novel: it is not that the daughters are taking on the mother's identity, but that the mothers are trying to understand their own selves, their own histories, through the image mirrored back to them in their daughters. Indeed, as daughters of the '60s, Morrison and Allende, the post-Friedan mothers, realize the folly of supplanting one's identity with that of one's child. Though both *Beloved* and *Paula* have Gothic elements in their narrative structure, I would not go so far as to say that the mother figure becomes the "devouring" Gothic mother who usurps her daughter's identity, which Claire Kahane (1985) sees as the paradigmatic mother for Gothic texts. Instead, the mothers, living in the Now, become the vehicle to connect past generations of women with those of the future. As Naomi Ruth Lowinsky describes her notion of motherhood, or "motherlines," the generational connections between grandmothers, mothers, and daughters, becomes the mainstay of women's history, as embedded in "the narratives of women's lives" (1992: 2). Walking along the shore with her mother and two daughters, Lowinsky meditates upon her mother's and grandmother's life as well as her daughters' lives and in her daydream, time is obscured, and women's

identities are blurred. She cannot exactly verbalize the experience, as the mother tongue is elusive in phallocentric thinking (this, too, according to French feminists), and thus, she finds refuge in natural women's cycles. In a crescendo of feeling, she places herself within a larger sense of universal/maternal time and mystical lunar cycles: "But I do remember a surge of feeling that goes beyond words, of overarching connections, of the present moment holding within it the seeds of both past and future, and all of it held in the bodies of these four women of three generations" (2). This passage emphasizes generational bonding between women and recalls the deathbed scene of Paula, in which the spirits of deceased mothers and Isabel Allende, commune as if the generations have merged in maternal rhapsody. And it also recalls the "exorcism" section in Beloved, where the generations of dead and living mothers break into song to perform a maternal healing: "For Sethe it was as though the Clearing had come to her with all its heat and simmering leaves, where the voices of women searched for the right combination, the key, the code, the sound that broke the back of words" (Morrison, 1987: 261). These are sounds and emotions that surpass the limiting logocentric male thinking which tries to circumscribe the maternal experience. This idea of "breaking the back of words" is also compatible with Julia Kristeva's notion of writing and mothering, as she expresses it in "Stabat Mater: "Flash on the unnameable, weavings of abstractions to be torn. Let a body venture at last out of its shelter, take a chance with the meaning under a veil of words. WORD FLESH. From one to the other, eternally, broken up visions, metaphors of the invisible" (1986: 162).[6]

And in the end, for Morrison and for Allende, the personal maternal identity is ultimately supplanted by the collective history, by a higher reality, than that of a narrow familial bond.[7] In her lecture, "Writing as an Act of Hope," Allende speaks about the harsh realities of Latin American life—earthquakes, hurricanes, revolutions, coups, tortures, and other atrocities, and asserts that these are realities, not just products of the imagination:

> It is very hard to explain to critics that these things are not a product of our pathological imaginations. They are written in our history; we can find them every day in our newspapers. We hear them in the streets; we suffer them frequently in our own lives. It is impossible to speak of Latin America without mentioning violence. We inhabit a land of terrible contrasts and we have to survive in times of great violence. (1989: 46)

Allende thinks much about the contrasts in life, which are brought out in times of crisis—whether it be a political or a personal crisis, whether it be a coup d'etat or death. Even before her daughter's death, Allende maintained that her acquaintance with pain was a motivating factor for her writing and a source of creativity: "All my books come from a very deep emotion that has been with me for a very long time. And those emotions are usually painful—abandonment,

pain, anger, death, violence" ("The Writer's Life," 1993: 84). But she also associates writing with "a prophetic or clairvoyant quality" (84). She shows how the political is indeed personal and how supernatural life is not so far removed from earthly life.[8] Similarly, for Toni Morrison, the life of Margaret Garner becomes a story that seems too horrific for reality, but as Allende would say, it is not "a product of our pathological imagination. [It is] written in our history." Thus, the story of the dispossessed or deceased daughter becomes a story that urgently needs to be passed on, as it unites generations of women and mothers. Interestingly, both novels have as their point of departure the names of the daughters, in the titles of the narratives, *Beloved* and *Paula.* And both narratives end with the evocation of the daughter's name, so as to preserve her memory, but also to connect the mother's story with that of her daughter. In Morrison's case, there seem to be two conclusions, the penultimate chapter, in which Sethe begins to discern her own separate identity, as she responds to Paul D.'s comment, "You your best thing, Sethe," with the question, "Me? Me?" (Morrison, 1987: 273). The final chapter ends with the narrator affirming the dead daughter's name, "Beloved." Similarly, Allende concludes, "I am Paula and I am also Isabel, I am nothing and all other things in this life and other lives, immortal" (1994; 330). She also asks Mother Earth to take charge of her daughter in the eternal cycle of being: "Earth, welcome my daughter, receive her, take her to your bosom; Mother Goddess Earth, help us" (324). Like a shape-shifting mother spirit, Allende, the earthly mother bids her daughter farewell, while Allende, the mother who is the collective mother/ancestor, casts herself in the timeless realm of the dead: "Godspeed, Paula, woman./Welcome, Paula, spirit" (330).

[1]No other critic, to my knowledge, compares the two novels *Beloved* and *Paula*, despite the obvious similarities. One critic, however, Gabrielle Foreman, does notice similar uses of history (in the context of magical realism) by Morrison and Allende in their works (respectively), *Song of Solomon* and *The House of the Spirits*. Linda Gould Levine has noted that in several of Allende's interviews, Allende has acknowledged a sisterhood with such contemporary authors as Amy Tan, Louise Erdrich, Gloria Naylor, and Toni Morrison (2002: 16).

[2]Though Allende genuinely grieves as she watches her daughter slipping away in a comatose state, it also serves as a point of departure, an occasion to write about the pain—to sustain her and to keep the memories of Paula alive. It also is a way in which to explore the byroads of her soul. Thus, she discusses the ways in which she (Allende), as a woman, has been violated—in the fisherman's molestation of her as a young girl, in her husband's sexist attitudes towards her as his housewife, in the censorship of her work as a journalist. Ultimately, she allies the witnessing of Paula's death with her own sexual and traumatic experiences, so that thanatos and eros (and their by-product, pain) are inextricably linked. And Allende notes that therapy could not heal her during the

grieving process for Paula, but rather the act of writing did ("Interview with Linda Gould Levine," 8 August 2000: 182). In an earlier interview, Allende asserted "I think that most of the creative process comes from a very unhappy childhood" ("The Writer's Life," 1993: 85). It is interesting to speculate whether her own child's death brought her closer to that creative process (and to her own childhood).

[3]As Kathryn Allen Rabuzzi points out, the goddess of death, Ananke, or Necessity, is also part of the Mother/birthing goddess image, and must be accepted as part of the natural cycle (1988: 186).

[4]For the role of repression in the sorceress's life, and the way to alleviate symptoms of disease through creativity, see Cixous, and Clement, 1991: 50-57.

[5]Though Gaston Bachelard is by no means a precursor to feminist thinking, his notion of intimate space is inadvertently akin to that maternal space which French feminists have carved out as their own. For example, he notes the evanescent thinking of children, which is allied with memories of their first home. He discusses the need to return to the childhood home in poetic reverie to understand our present circumstances: "In short, the house we were born in has engraved within us the hierarchy of the various functions of inhabiting. We are the diagram of the function of inhabiting other the particular house, and all the other houses are but variations of a fundamental theme" (1994: 15). Since mother is the creator of this first domestic space, I would certainly replace Bachelard's notion of home with womb or mother. Moreover, his discussion of the childhood home accords with notions of "hauntings" and haunted houses in Allende and in Morrison.

[6]Certain feminist critics point to the dangers of the codification of women's writing by French feminists and try to show that maternal writing, as the French feminists perceive it, is not the "only genuine mode of feminine writing" (Suleiman, 1985: 371). Certain American feminist thinkers, like Nancy Chodorow and Nancy Ruddick, seem to affirm the French feminist vision by allying mothering with other forms of female creativity (as, writing, or even carrying on household management). Marianne Hirsch, however, is daring enough to explore the darker side of motherhood, by looking at repressed anger and the experience of motherhood, especially for the mother who is "overly invested in her child, powerless in the world ... and an inadequate and disappointing object of identification" (169).

[7]In her autobiographical *Remembering the Bone House*, Nancy Mairs talks about her encounter with her body and disease as a source of enlightenment and creative discovery. Finally, she recognizes the parallels between her own personal story and that of the collective mind: "I think that my 'story,' though intensely personal, is not at all private. Beneath its idiosyncracies [sic] lie vast strata of commonality, communality" (1989: 10-11). And she asserts in a way that parallels Sethe's choral merging with Denver and Beloved that her personal story reflects the communal story—in a Whitmanesque way: "The not-me dwells here in the me. We are one, and more-than-one. Our stories

utter one another" (11).

[8]This echoes the notion of maternal politics, set forth by Sara Ruddick, who contends that mothers, through their ability to nurture and teach children, can become arbiters of world peace. The cyclical/universal time which I evoke in my conclusion resists male categorization of history, and is related to Julia Kristeva's (1986) conception of "women's time."

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Susan Hennessy

Bearing the Cross of Sterility
Childless Women of Les Rougon-Macquart

In *Les Rougon-Macquart*, the 20-novel series penned by Emile Zola, reproduction and mothering are essential elements of the naturalistic theme for which the author is known. Because reproduction plays a central part in the development of women characters in *Les Rougon-Macquart*, Zola's method for configuring the feminine subject must be examined in terms of motherhood.

While mothers abound in this multi-volume "family history," the three characters under consideration here embody one of the most intriguing paradoxes of Zola's work. They are members of a cast created to glorify motherhood, yet they have no children of their own. Jean Borie's observation that "Souvent, les personnages de Zola se définissent par ce qui leur manque, par les caractéristiques que l'auteur leur refuse ... " (1971: 33)[1] signals us that such a strange contradiction may hold meaningful information regarding the complexity of Zola's literary creation.

Pauline of *La Joie de vivre,* Caroline of *L'Argent*, and Hubertine of *Le Rêve*—all express a strong desire to be mothers, and that desire surfaces in glorified, excessive, or harmful devotion to others. Zola's inclusion of these biologically sterile yet spiritually generous characters reveals a contradiction in the series and raises some crucial questions: why does the author implant a strong desire to mother in childless women? And how does this paradigm reflect Zola's opinion that motherhood is women's most important mission (Bertrand-Jennings, 1973: 18)? How do maternal compassion, virginity, and sterility configure the maternal subject in Zola's work?

Further complications arise upon closer inspection of these childless women, for one shared characteristic is their angelic, even saintly demeanor that recalls the literary figure commonly known as the "angel in the house."

> The ideal woman that male authors dream of generating is always an angel.... In the Middle Ages ... mankind's great teacher of purity was the Virgin Mary, a mother goddess.... For the more secular nineteenth century, however, the eternal type of female purity was represented not by a madonna in heaven but by an angel in the house.... [T]here is a clear line of literary descent from divine Virgin to domestic angel.... (Gilbert and Gubar, 1979: 20)

The phenomenon described here by Gilbert and Gubar can be found throughout nineteenth-century art and literature with its most notorious embodiment in Michelet's *La Femme*. Zola's spiritual mother figure incarnates qualities of the virgin Mary and of angels, which combination becomes the "ideal mother" that Zola was attempting to create (Bertrand-Jennings, 1977: 98).

Turning first to the virginal aspects of Zola's mother figure, let us recall Kristéva's discussion of the cult of the virgin Mary in "Stabat Mater." The virgin's extraordinary circumstances give her tremendous power:

> ... [T]here was the matter of drawing a parallel between Mother and Son by expanding the theme of the immaculate conception ... and, by depriving her of sin, to deprive her of death.... Next, she needed letters patent of nobility ... since Mary was to be proclaimed queen, given the attributes and paraphernalia of royalty, and ... declared Mother of the divine institution of earth, the Church. (1985: 164)

The spiritual power of the virgin is echoed by Caroline in *Le Rêve*, with her "royale couronne de cheveux blancs"("royal crown of white hair" [19: 58]), and Hubertine, whose husband " ... vivait aux pieds de sa femme, dans un culte, une de ces passions conjugales, ardentes et chastes ... "("...lived at his wife's feet, as in a cult, one of those conjugal passions, ardent and chaste"[17: 24]); both images command reverence and devotion befitting a queen. Pauline's power is described as magical, exemplified in her miraculous resurrection of a premature newborn. Her act is all the more significant because the baby is her godson (13: 327).

Kristéva asserts that the virgin Mary's position as mother of the Catholic church makes her representative of Christianity on the whole. Both divine (as mother and daughter of Christ and wife of God [1985: 169]) and mortal, the virgin is uniquely qualified to reflect both human and spiritual aspects of Christianity. A similar representation can be seen in Caroline and Pauline. The latter is described as the very soul of humanity: Pauline has "une âme commune"("a common soul"[13: 327]) with her godson; and Caroline's life is a microcosm of humanity: "J'ai pensé souvent que mon cas est, en petit, celui de l'humanité ... "("I've often thought that my case is, on a smaller scale, that of humanity..."[19: 75]). The result of this spiritual link between each woman

and the world around her is a widening of her female power, exemplary of woman's ability to transform humanity through mothering. Each character's elimination of sexual love and espousal of maternal love gives her a life force that she uses to do good works.

The absence of sexual activity in the lives of Pauline, Caroline, and Hubertine underscores their similarity to the virgin Mary and would seem to indicate an effort on the author's part to spare these characters the fatal consequences of sexual intercourse. Kristéva's allusion to the ancient theological premise—"... where there is death there is also sexual copulation, and where there is no death there is no sexual copulation either" (1985: 165)—reminds us that the virgin, as a result of her immaculate conception (and thus her lack of sin), does not die but rather ascends into heaven: "Mary doesn't die ... she is transported" (Kristeva, 1985: 168). Mary's avoidance of death relegates her to a super-human level of existence that can also be seen in Zola's mother figure. These women are granted sainthood, fictional immortality, and unconditional praise. They are among the very few women characters in *Les Rougon-Macquart* who are not simultaneously admired and maligned. Others, such as Félicité Rougon, Nana, Lise Fouan, la Grande (*La Terre*), and Mme. Chanteau (*La Joie de vivre*) are considered typical female characters in Zola because of their duality; capable of generosity and kindness, they are also calculating, deceitful, and selfish. Thus since Caroline, Hubertine, and Pauline lack biological children, sexual activity, and self-concern, they meet Zola's pre-requisites for sainthood. These deficiencies are potential obligations that would lead to a more imperfect and sinful existence. In Chantal Jennings words: " ... women can only be accepted as ideal or positive characters in Zola's fiction, if they have been somehow deprived of their sexuality ... " (Bertrand-Jennings, 1984: 32).

The laudatory light in which the characters are portrayed confirms Zola's satisfaction with them. This sense of admiration also stems no doubt from the hackneyed opposition between purity and desire, whereby Zola can exalt the virtuous maternal qualities of the women and describe their sensuality. As long as the women's desire remains unfulfilled, the conventional puritanical code is not violated. By suppressing sexual activity but emphasizing the loving, maternal behavior of his characters, Zola attempts to have it both ways. His physically sterile women, inaccessible yet desirable, or desirable because inaccessible, reflect the revered paradox that the virgin Mary embodies.

Turning now to the desire of the mother, I will attempt to clarify the function of maternal feeling in the development of the feminine subject. The desires to experience pregnancy, childbirth, and motherhood have been analyzed extensively in psychoanalytic theory. Freudian theory maintains that woman's desire for a penis transforms into a desire to bear her father's child (Freud, 1963: 81). Lacan intimates a similar opinion in his theory of the desire of the mother, whereby the child satisfies all of his mother's desires and acts as the phallus that completes her lack (Wright, 1989: 108). Nancy Chodorow, in *The Reproduction of Mothering* (1978), attempts to explain woman's desire to mother from social,

cultural, and psychoanalytical perspectives. Her thesis asserts that mothering is a psychological need that is reinforced on a cultural level and proliferated by women who mother.

All of these theories are based either on the premise that women experience a sense of lack or that women's upbringing gives them different expectations from those of men. While Zola does not delve into the psychological aspects of maternal desire, his characters' expressions of an unfulfilled desire to mother are evocative of Freud's and Lacan's theories of lack; these characters perceive their childlessness as an affliction that denies them a full life. Moreover, they confirm society's belief that motherhood is the sole mission of women and women who are childless are incomplete. In this manner, Zola leads us to believe that motherhood is the ultimate justification of feminine existence, none the less providing only sterile women as the most admirable female role models.

The most obviously ontological examination of woman's existence is seen in Pauline's regret of her childlessness: " ... [J]amais elle ne serait femme, et elle vieillirait dans la stérilité.... Elle voulait vivre, et vivre complètement, faire de la vie.... A quoi bon être, si l'on ne donne pas son être?"("She would never be a woman, and she would grow old and sterile...She wanted to live and live fully, make life...What good is being, if you can't give your being?"[13: 264]); "Elle baissait un regard désespéré vers ses hanches, vers son ventre de vierge.... Dans la largeur de son flanc, aurait tenu un fils solide et fort. C'était un regret immense de son existence manquée, de son sexe de femme qui dormirait stérile ... "("She lowered a desperate gaze toward her hips, toward her chaste belly.... In the width of her loins a sturdy and strong son would have grown. She felt tremendous sorrow for her lost existence, her womanhood that would sleep barren"[328]). These thoughts imply that a childless woman is not a woman, that she is not at all.

Zola suggests that reproduction sustains women physically and emotionally by likening sterility to a dried-out, abandoned field. Pauline is "un champ inculte, qui se dessèche à l'écart"("an uncultivated field, drying out in isolation"[13: 328]); Hubertine's desire for a child is described as a pardon that would flower inside her (17: 168).

Zola also uses biological determinism in his argument for motherhood as the primary female objective, once again seen in the case of Pauline: "Ah! misère! la pluie rouge de la puberté tombait là, aujourd'hui, pareille aux larmes vaines que sa virginité pleurait en elle. Désormais, chaque mois ramènerait ce jaillissement de grappe mûre, écrasée aux vendanges ... ("Woe! the red rain of puberty was falling, today, just like the useless tears that her purity weeped inside her. From now on, each month would bring that explosion of ripe fruit, crushed during the harvest..."[264]); "A quoi bon sa puberté vigoureuse, ses organes et ses muscles engorgés de sève, l'odeur puissante qui montait de ses chairs, dont la force poussait en floraisons brunes?"("What good was her vigorous puberty, her organs and muscles filled with sap, the powerful smell

that rose from her flesh, whose strength grew in brown blooms?"[328]) Briefly, because Pauline's body was made to bear children and does not, the female reproductive organs have no purpose. The strength of her sap-filled body and her *odor di femina* only accentuate her unrealized natural destiny.

Ironically, even though this passage emphasizes the futility of Pauline's untapped reproductive potential, the metaphors used reflect ripening and harvest: the *grappe mûre, écrasée aux vendanges*, the *muscles engorgés de sève*, and the *floraisons brunes* are peculiar images chosen for a passage that recounts the heart-breaking sterility of Pauline. Indeed, this example of Pauline's maternal desire is nothing more than a device that allows the narrator to revel in her passionate sexual nature. What surfaces from this morass of maternal grief is a thinly veiled male regret that she remains undefiled. The vivid imagery, which both affirms and denies Pauline's reproductive capacities, could be explained as a naturalist's impartial portrayal of life. But the repeated contradictions of this text undeniably mirror Zola's and society's ambivalent attitude about motherhood and sexuality.

Another angle of the wish-for-a-child paradigm is seen in the Hubert ménage in *Le Rêve*, where the lack of a child negates the Catholic ideal of marital love. Not having a child is indicative of sin, since it suggests that the couple is having intercourse for pleasure rather than for procreation. Love is worthless and Hubertine's happiness is unrealizable when not validated by motherhood:

"Non, je ne suis pas heureuse.... Une femme qui n'a point d'enfant, n'est pas heureuse.... Aimer n'est rien, il faut que l'amour soit béni"("No, I am not happy...A woman without a child is not happy...Loving is nothing, love must be blessed"[17: 168]). Hubertine's "je ne suis pas ... Aimer n'est rien" and Pauline's affirmation that " ... jamais elle ne serait femme.... Elle voulait vivre, et vivre complètement ... " are blatant negations of female existence due to childlessness. These regrets effectively define the female subject as negative, non-existent and never will be.

The final example of unfulfilled motherhood in *L'Argent* involves Caroline Hamelin, who, although married for two years, was unable to conceive a child. Her short-lived relationship with Saccard does not lead to conception either. Based on these two fruitless unions, Zola declares that Caroline is sterile; he does not provide a scientific basis for her condition. However, Caroline's traditionally masculine efforts at self-improvement offer an explanation for her barren womb: "Elle parlait quatre langues, elle avait lu les économistes, les philosophes, passionnée un instant pour les théories socialistes et évolutionnistes"("She spoke four languages, she had read the economists, philosophers, impassioned for a time by socialist and evolutionary theories"[19: 60]). Caroline condemns her advanced instruction as a sort of transgression against femininity; by devoting herself to unfeminine pursuits, she bypassed the traditional reproductive path of women: "Voyez-vous, j'ai beaucoup trop lu pour une femme, je ne sais plus du tout où je vais ... "("You see, I've read much

too much for a woman, I don't know anymore where I'm going"[75]).

Caroline's sterilizing intellectual achievement stands out in stark opposition to *l'avachissement* of la Maheude (in *Germinal*), yet it is apparent that Zola approves of Caroline's instruction. This is an example of Zola's conscious desire to make women strong. However, Caroline's sterility and the corruption to which she falls prey reflect an unconscious need to punish her for her strength and for overstepping the bounds of the ideal female companion. This ideal is summarized by Bertramd-Jennings:

> [E]lle se doit avant tout de rester <<*une vraie femme*,>> avec tout le traditionalisme qu'implique l'expression.... L'effacement anonyme, le renoncement dévoué, la soumission résignée sont donc de règle dans le comportement féminin idéal où toute tentative d'accomplissement personnel apparaîtrait comme égoïste et malséante. (Bertrand-Jennings, 1972: 16)[2]

The idea that intellectual development was a perversion of femininity held substantial sway when Zola was writing *L'Argent. La femme nouvelle*, the woman who sought autonomy and education, was seen as a threat to the structure of society and to the family. "Women leaving their traditional domestic and familial havens would be transformed into "*hommesses,*" dessicated and rigid characters divested of all feminine 'coquettishness'" (Silverman, 1989: 68,69). *La femme nouvelle* was perceived as rejecting her reproductive role in the pursuit of male goals, thus effecting a metaphorical sex change. Zola does not depict Caroline as the caricatured *hommesse* seen in French publications in the 1890's (Silverman, 1989: 68). Yet when she reads the Civil Code to verify Saccard's business dealings, her infringement in male territory is obvious and she becomes an adversary: "[Cela] ... la lui montrait méfiante, prête à le surveiller, de ses yeux de femme, fureteurs et intelligents"("He saw her as untrusting, ready to watch him, with her woman's eyes, probing and intelligent"[19: 119]). In sum, Caroline's intelligence empowers her, since it protects her from exploitation. However, it also masculinizes her and bans her from the female realm of reproduction.

Contrary to the popular belief that modern women would reject motherhood, Caroline demonstrates a strong desire to be a mother: " ... elle avait coûtume de dire qu'un seul chagrin était resté saignant en elle, celui de n'avoir pas eu d'enfant"("...she was in the habit of saying that a lone sadness remained bleeding in her, the sadness of not having had a child"[19: 60]). Furthermore, the bleeding wound of maternal desire, like Pauline's incessant menses in *La Joie de vivre*, influences Caroline's actions: " ... [S]a maternité inassouvie, son amour déspespéré des enfants, l'enflammait d'une tendresse active pour tous ces pauvres êtres, qu'on tâchait de sauver du ruisseau parisien"("Her unfulfilled motherhood, her desperate love of children, lit her with an eager tenderness for all these poor beings that they tried to save from the Parisian gutter"[73]);

"[E]lle s'attendrit, émue ... profondément remuée dans sa maternité de femme restée stérile"("She melted, moved... deeply touched in her sterile motherhood"[153]). The manifestations of her yearning are characteristic of an illness—with terms like *chagrin, saignant, enflammait, femme restée stérile, faiblesse, maternité souffrante(grief, bleeding, inflamed, sterile woman, weakness, suffering motherhood)*—relegating Caroline to the realm of abnormal and incurable non-mothers.

Ultimately, Caroline's downfall stems from contradictory sources. While her masculine pursuits exclude her from reproduction, the stereotypically feminine trait of maternal affection and the unfulfilled wish for a child lead Caroline to abandon her integrity and perpetuate the suffering of those around her.

In each instance, Zola alleges that the loss of a woman's reproductive potential is the loss of her potential for fulfillment. The author's repeated emphasis on the sterility of Pauline, Hubertine, and Caroline denotes the importance he attributes to the matter. Many different arguments for motherhood are seen in the texts: reproduction is woman's raison d'être, a biological imperative that leads to punishment if rejected; a sterile existence becomes synonymous with physical ailment and leads to moral corruption. In a roundabout manner, Zola elaborates variations on the same theme; first by lauding the maternal emotions in his mother figure then by describing the torment of her childlessness, Zola affirms the belief that woman's primary duty is to procreate. His assertion clashes with the sterility of the mother as it does with his paradoxical slander of motherhood among the most fertile characters of *Les Rougon-Macquart*.

These repeated contradictions reflect the author's inability to reconcile the progressive notions of feminism and female independence that he as a modern writer wanted to espouse and his bourgeois attitude about the traditional roles that women should fill. According to Zola's novels, particularly the "utopic" novels that follow *Les Rougon-Macquart*, women's primary purpose is to be a mother. Marianne Froment in *Fécondité* is an illustration of this belief; with each birth of her twelve children, she grows in beauty and strength: "Et c'était au milieu que Marianne rayonnante allaitait son douzième enfant, la chair blanche, fraîche encore, belle toujours de sa sérénité forte, de sa volonté saine"("And in the center a radiant Marianne nursed her twelfth child, her white skin, still fresh, still beautiful in her strong serenity and her healthy willingness"[28: 560]).

Although Zola attempts to create intelligent and strong women characters to demonstrate his own modernity and his advocacy of feminism (Bertrand-Jennings, 1972: 172, 173), he cannot let go of the conventional desire to describe women whose enlightenment and strength enable them to benefit mankind in general rather than further their own emancipation (Bertrand-Jennings, 1973: 10). In other words, empowered women are acceptable as long as they use their power to have a family and support their spouses. Bertrand-Jennings documents Zola's personal conflict by examining some of the same

characters discussed here. She concludes: "Aussi bien ses héroïnes idéales, même instruites, savent-elles rester à leur place et ne revendiquent-elles pas des droits qui seraient en contradiction avec le rôle que leur a fixé la nature" (Bertrand-Jennings, 1973: 13).[3]

If we cannot explain the enigmatic maternal figure in Zola's work, perhaps by considering this paradigm from the perspective of literary creation in general might we gain some insight into the why's and how's of these characters. To summarize, in Zola, ideal women are incomplete women. The female subject has no life and does not exist if she does not reproduce. Therefore, woman's only hope of being is in a reproductive union with a man. Woman's being hinges on male creation. This statement recalls one of the suppositions made by Gilbert and Gubar—that authorial desire ultimately usurps maternal creation: "Like the metaphor of literary paternity ... [is the] notion that the chief creature man has generated is woman ..." (1979: 12). Such an idea is hardly surprising today. *The Madwoman in the Attic* is one of many studies that relate examples of male authorial desire and its effects on women writers and the feminine subject.

What is intriguing in Zola is that the female subject might embody the very desires and disappointments that a male writer struggles with. If we look at the sterile maternal figure as a metaphor for the anxiety experienced by Zola as a writer, we can better grasp the reasoning behind the creation of such idealized and almost perfect characters. Indeed, their only flaw was the inability to create life. They were potentially perfect, ideal because their creation could only be imagined and never realized. The same can be said of any creation, including Zola's novels—always perfect in theory, and flawed in reality. Ultimately and perhaps unintentionally, Zola's maternal figure in her barren state is ripe with meaning, productive in her sterility, and empowered by the writer to represent human creation.

[1]"Often Zola's characters are defined by what is lacking in them, by the characteristics that the author refuses to give them."

[2]"She must more than anything remain 'a true woman,' with of the tradiontionalism that the expression implies....The anonymous erasure, devoted renunciation, resigned submission are required for the ideal feminine conduct in which all attempts at personal accomplishment appear selfish and unseemly."

[3]"Thus even his ideal heroines, even the educated ones know how to stay in their place, never laying claim to rights that would contradict the role nature assigned to them by nature."

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Writing the Victorian Home

A Nursemaid's Perspective on Maternity and Empire

One of the most popular figures associated with the British Victorian home over the past two centuries has been the Victorian mother in her role as the "Angel in the House," presiding over a tranquil family hearth insulated from the chaos of public life by her love of domestic order.[1] Many scholars have noted that such an idyllic separation of public and private spheres simply did not exist in practice; some women were employed outside of their homes and even for those who were not, their activities in the domestic arena were significant to various public matters. To name just a couple of examples, domestic women were important consumers of industrial and imperial goods and were tasked with raising the children who would be the future rulers of the British Empire. In rethinking Victorian literature with such matters in mind, scholars have overlooked one important group of women almost completely: nursemaids. Nursemaids (working-class women who were hired by the middle- and upper-classes to care for their children) played a central role in sustaining the Victorian home and need to be incorporated into our current understandings of Victorian maternity.[2]

The literary text I focus on, *Aunt Janet's Legacy to her Nieces*, is the autobiographical account of Janet Bathgate, a Victorian working-class woman who worked as a nursemaid. Written in a third-person narrative voice rather than the more common first-person autobiographical "I," the text moves between the categories of non-fictional "fact" and imaginative "fiction," making it a complex and rich literary source. The mothering that I analyze in this text is done by two nursemaids: the author and an Indian *ayah*.[3] Sustained engagement with Janet Bathgate's representation of her interactions with the Indian *ayah* reveals the importance of non-biological mother figures in Victorian literature as well as their complex relationships to ideologies of domesticity

and empire. Bathgate's text shows that nursemaids and their charges participated in discourses of empire in complex and sometimes contradictory ways. On one hand, Bathgate's representation of the way her employers (the Pringles) position her in regard to the *ayah* suggests that she is aligned with the racial Other in that they share space as servants who are subservient to a young girl of a higher class. On the other hand, Bathgate distances herself from the *ayah* and positions herself as one who is maintaining a dominant, white, British Empire. This episode demonstrates how central the presence or absence of nursemaids, both British and non-British, were to the maintenance of a "proper" Victorian home.

Janet Bathgate begins to work for the Pringle family because she expects her duties as an under-nurserymaid there to be relatively light, which allows her to recuperate from a long illness. After a few weeks, Bathgate is sent to the main residence of Mrs. Pringle (the grandmother in the family) to meet Mary, Mrs. Pringle's seven-year-old grandchild who is returning from India with an *ayah* to whom she is very attached. Bathgate's first recollection of their appearance emphasizes the physical and racialized differences between the two:

> In a few days the little girl from India arrives, accompanied by a black woman servant [the *ayah*]. What a contrast there is between the two! Miss Mary Pringle has very lovely pale blue eyes, and a profusion of flaxen hair flows over her shoulders. She is attired in a green silk pelisse and white frock. Her ayah is dressed in a purple skirt and white, loose spencer; she is bare-headed, and her long black hair is plaited, coiled up, and fastened by a silver comb. She wears silver earrings, in the shape of little bells, a string of yellow beads round her neck, and two or three silver rings on her fingers. (1894: 138-9)

Bathgate's description of the white girl and the Indian woman places emphasis on the racial difference of the *ayah*. Mary's "pale" eyes, blond hair and "white frock" highlight her whiteness and her privileged position. The emphasis on hair in this passage and the "contrast" of the *ayah*'s dark hair to Mary's blondness not only represents Mary as superior, but also implies that sexuality is at issue. As Jennifer Brody notes, "Hair has long been considered a signifier of race, class, and gender, as well as a marker of sexuality. In European culture, blond hair in particular came to be associated with forms of idealized femininity [...], purity and power" (87). Mary's "profusion" of hair, symbolizing acceptable femininity and non-threatening sexuality, is permitted to "flow over her shoulders" while the movement of the *ayah*'s dark hair, a marker of threatening and "exotic" sexuality, is restricted by being "plaited, coiled up, and fastened by a silver comb."

However, the *ayah*'s sexuality is not completely controlled in this representation. While her hair is "coiled up," her head remains uncovered, and the implication of the *ayah* being "bare-headed" in public is that her sexual virtue

may be questioned. Nineteenth-century customs of proper dress and head attire dictated that women's heads be covered both inside and outdoors: "Headgear was always worn—caps could be worn indoors; bonnets invariably when outside" (Pool, 1993: 214). The *ayah* enters the house having an exposed head (and hair), indicating that she has violated these rules of decorum both publicly and in the domestic scene. Furthermore, the *ayah*'s "spencer"—generally a short, close-fitting jacket—is "loose," leaving her breasts unbound. This possible implication of sexual laxity makes the *ayah*'s position as a maternal woman in a "proper" British home threatening.

That Bathgate is drawn to note markers of difference at points where sexuality is displayed or controlled is one way that her participation in Orientalist discourses is apparent.[4] Bathgate's emphasis on the physical appearance of the *ayah* and the absence of the *ayah*'s voice in the text also position Bathgate as a representative of empire, the one who is allowed to look and report. Bathgate's description of the "exotic" trinkets that adorn the *ayah*'s body—a "silver comb," "silver earrings" shaped like bells, "yellow beads" and "two or three silver rings"—places the *ayah* squarely in another, very different, culture. Edward Said notes that this type of emphasis on "exteriority" when representing racial Others is common in Orientalizing and imperialist discourses (1979: 21). Part of the reason "exteriority" and physical markers are focused on is because the tendency in Orientalist writing is always to represent the Orient, or objectify it, rather than to let the Orient speak for itself (Said, 1979: 21). Bathgate further participates in these discourses by never referring to the "black" *ayah* by name.

While Bathgate emphasizes the racial difference of the *ayah* as a "black" Indian woman, she also stresses the maternal status of, and the child's intimate relationship to, the *ayah*. Bathgate's complex description of the family's interactions after Mary's arrival with her *ayah* merits quoting at length:[5]

> Everything was done that could be thought of to make Miss Mary's arrival a happy one, but she rejects all caresses, and clings to her black maid, like a loving child to a tender mother. She can speak English, and Hindustani as well. In this language she converses with her ayah, and sometimes weeps bitterly, but not a word of English will she speak to any of her friends. The couple are shown into the bow room next to Janet's, in order to familiarise them in time with each other, but Mary repels all her approaches to kindness. The Indian woman and Janet, however, very soon get warm friends. The former can speak English well, and she tells Janet that Mary is one of the most loving and loveable of children, but she knows that she (her attendant) is to return to India in a few days, and she wishes to go back with her to her own happy home. (1894: 139)

The *ayah*'s status as a maternal figure is clear in this passage as Mary "clings to her black maid, like a loving child to a tender mother." The implied equation of "black maid" and "tender mother" suggests that racial and class borders have

broken down within this home. I have already shown that Bathgate emphasizes the "contrast" between Mary as a "pure" white British girl and the *ayah* as a "loose," "black" Indian woman. Having emphasized that contrast, the physical and emotional closeness between the two here can be viewed as a threat of miscegenation, if not at a reproductive level as when a man and woman conceive a child then at a discursive level. Brody points out that "if the proper family is the building block of a strong nation, then incest, miscegenation, and hybridity threaten the family (of man) and, by extension, the nation (of proper gentleman)" (1998: 55). The *ayah* threatens a discursive miscegenation as a "black" mother figure for a white girl in Britain. If Mary has a "black" mother figure and will only communicate in the language of that "black" mother, then she has severed the connections with her biological family that would ensure the dominance of the white empire and nation.

Mary's "pure" Britishness is threatened as long as she clings to this "black" figure even more so because Mary refuses to speak English—perhaps the most forceful way to protest because language is a strong marker of ethnicity and cultural cohesion. By speaking only "Hindustani," Mary marks the *ayah* as the only adult figure she endows with authority and respect. That both Mary and the *ayah* are able to speak English but do not use that language with one another constitutes active resistance to the authority of the British matriarch, Mrs. Pringle, who expects to be able to monitor all interactions within the household. It is unclear who initiates this form of resistance, but the text seems to lean toward Mary as the instigator. The *ayah* speaks to Bathgate in English, and speaks it "well;" it is Mary who will not speak "a word of English." Mary rejects her appropriate "native" or "mother tongue," again aligning herself with the racial Other by communicating in the Othered language of "Hindustani." This mixing of ethnic markers—Mary as physically "white" yet speaking like and clinging to a dark racial Other—contributes to Mary's status as a "great mystery" to her cousins and, arguably, to Bathgate's readers (1894: 139).

Mary's actions are also threatening to nineteenth-century British ideals of "home" because she does not conflate her comfortable domestic home in India with her official home country of Britain. In fact, she prefers her home in India. The *ayah* says that, rather than parting, Mary would prefer to return with her to "her own happy home." In this context, the referent of "her" is unclear; the home could be Mary's or the *ayah*'s. It could refer to the *ayah*'s own home in India, in which case the domestic space of the racial Other has become more comfortable for the child than what is supposed to be her "natural" home in Yair. Or the home could refer to the colonial home in which the *ayah* worked, making a colonized and controlled India the child's home. What is clear is that the girl wants to be in India with the *ayah*, to "return with her," and she does not value her British surroundings as ones that will result in happiness. Rosemary Marangoly George argues in *The Politics of Home* that "the basic organizing principle around which the notion of the 'home' is built is a pattern of select inclusions and exclusions. Home is a way of establishing difference.

Homes and home-countries are exclusive" (1996: 2). Mary complicates this process of inclusion and exclusion because she does not want to be included where imperial discourses say she should. She does not want to be included in the home that is deemed appropriate for her as an upper-class white girl in Britain. And she does not want to be excluded from the "foreign" home of the racial Other in India. The difference that discourses of home try to establish does not remain clear-cut if Mary insists that her "true" home is in (or simply *is*) India. Furthermore, Mary threatens the exclusivity of the home in the "home country" by insisting that the *ayah*, as a racial Other, be allowed into it. Thus, Mary is redefining "home" by making its fundamental feature the presence of the *ayah* rather than its location in Britain.

Mary's persistence causes her grandmother to exert domestic and imperial authority by insisting that the *ayah* return to India without Mary. Indeed, she must exercise this authority in order to maintain the home as a site where difference is established:

> The day appointed for the ayah's return to India has arrived.... The parting is heartrending. Janet had thought that the children of the rich had no trials, but she sees differently now. Grandmamma locks the room door, takes her seat by the window, and commences her knitting; and Mary, in the anguish of her soul, throws herself upon the floor, crying, "Oh papa, mamma, oh ayah, dear ayah, come back and take me to my happy home—cruel grandmamma! I will die; yes, I will die." (1894: 139-40)

The previously unclear referent of "her own happy home" is now clear as Mary identifies the "home" in India as "my happy home." The *ayah*'s and Mary's "happy home" are one as Mary insists that she will "die" if she is forced to remain away from it. The girl has tied her identity and survival to India, the colony, and her existence is dependent not only upon the colony but also upon the labor of its people. Mary decreases the difference between her *ayah* and her parents by listing them together in her plea, "Oh papa, mamma, oh ayah, dear ayah," and even elevates the *ayah* above her parents by repeating only her name with the endearing "dear." Bathgate's description of the "cruel" grandmother portrays her as the icy, detached ruler of the home, indicated by her possession of the all-important household keys. As the maternal guardian of the home that is the foundation for the British Empire, she "commences her knitting" without paying attention to Mary's pain. The grandmother functions here as the domestic authority figure whose action of locking the door signifies her patrolling of the boundary of the British home in two ways. She is locking Mary in, to keep her in her "homeland" and away from her *ayah*. And she is locking the *ayah* out of the colonizer's home space and out of contact with the child, pushing her back to India.

Again, conceiving of the "home" as a set of decisions about who and what

to include is helpful in understanding the actions that take place in the Pringle family: "The inclusions are grounded in a learned (or taught) sense of a kinship that is extended to those who are perceived as sharing the same blood, race, class, gender, or religion" (George, 1996: 9). In this case, the grandmother is in control of the inclusions, and the *ayah* cannot maintain her membership in the home because all of these factors (blood, race, class, gender and religion) establish her as an Other who belongs in the colonies, abroad. Even as a servant, the *ayah* is no longer an appropriate member of the family once she is in Britain. Bathgate, on the other hand, may become a member of this home because her class difference is not as threatening as the *ayah*'s racial difference. Thus, the select inclusions of the home do not completely exclude all Others, but rather those inclusions are negotiated to admit the least threatening Others as determined by a combination of factors. Although nursemaids functioned as "boundary markers and mediators" who were "ambiguously placed on the imperial divide" (McClintock, 1995: 48), it is important to complicate that notion by noting that all nursemaids were not represented as policing or threatening those boundaries of home and empire in the same way. While members of the working classes and domestic servants, especially those from Ireland, were often racialized in Britain, when represented in contrast to racial Others from abroad these British servants appear to be more "white."

Although Bathgate clearly emphasizes the racial difference of the *ayah*, their relationship becomes more complex when Bathgate validates the *ayah*'s position in a maternal role. Comparing the *ayah* to her own mother, Bathgate initiates a series of complex crisscrossings between class and race. Mary's separation from the *ayah* makes Bathgate recall being separated from her own mother when she entered domestic service at the age of seven: she "herself weeps, for her early experience enables her to understand Mary's bitter sorrow"(1894: 139). Identifying with Mary in this situation, Bathgate places the *ayah* in a maternal position, visualizing the racial Other as her *own* mother. In a sense, then, by envisioning the *ayah* in the position of her mother, Bathgate lessens her focus on the *ayah*'s racial "difference." At the same time, this identification with the *ayah* as a maternal figure also verges on the threat of miscegenation referred to earlier. If Bathgate sees the *ayah* as her own maternal figure, she, as well as Mary, crosses racial boundaries. However, Bathgate's insistence upon identifying with Mary as opposed to the *ayah* in this episode reveals how deeply she is invested in maintaining a white British identity. Bathgate focuses so much on Mary's pain as a mirror of her own at age seven that she does not comment on or allude to the fact that, as a nursemaid who has left several posts, she has most likely been in the *ayah's* position more often than Mary's. Like the *ayah*, Bathgate has worked as a servant far away from her original home in places that seem foreign and filled with people practicing different religions and cultural traditions.[6] Instead of noting these parallels (or perhaps sharing some insight into what the *ayah* may be feeling), Bathgate stresses her bond to the upper-class white girl.

Some similarities between Bathgate and the *ayah* become even more pronounced after the *ayah* leaves and Mary decides to accept Bathgate, who she calls "Jessie." Bathgate stays with Mary as she continuously cries following the *ayah*'s departure, remaining awake all night, tending to Mary's fever, and listening for renewed cries as the girl sleeps. This devotion endears Bathgate to Mary to such an extent that Mary begins to return the friendly feelings that Bathgate has shown her. The next morning, Mary asks Bathgate if she got any sleep of her own. As soon as Bathgate says, "No, darling, you were ill, and I could not leave you," Mary responds by declaring: "Kind, loving Jessie, you will be my ayah now" (1894: 140). The child now uses the term "*ayah*" to refer to her British nursemaid, and it is Bathgate's self-sacrifice that completes Mary's ability to view her in this way. Mary appears to align Bathgate with the *ayah* because both women are in subservient roles to her; once Bathgate privileges Mary's needs over her own, the girl can see her as having the status of a new *ayah*.[7]

In moving into the *ayah's* role, Bathgate carefully shifts her representation of difference from one that emphasizes race to one that focuses on class. Immediately following Mary's declaration, Bathgate appears to accept her role as Mary's new *ayah*, stating: "So the two hearts were then united till death break the bond. True friendship halves sorrows and shares joys, whether they come to rich or to poor" (1894: 140). The first part of her statement emphasizes that a strong bond, like that between a mother and her child, exists between a nurse and her charge "till death." The second part implies that any tension between "rich" and "poor" disappears between the nurse and her charge. But in the very intimacy that is constructed in this episode, it is clear that differences in class status are necessary to create the bond because the nurse must occupy a self-sacrificing position. While Bathgate implies that class lines are at least blurred in these maternal bonds, it is clear that lines demarcating race and ethnicity are not. The *ayah* must be sent back to India to prevent her from corrupting the "proper British home" by continuing to act as a mother to the girl while Bathgate is permitted to fill the maternal void.

We do not know why the *ayah* must return to India, only that Mrs. Pringle has insisted upon it and that Mary opposes such a move. The *ayah* may desire to remain with her charge or she may just as well want to leave Britain to return to India, and possibly to a family of her own. This ambiguity surrounding the figure of the *ayah* reminds us of how much information about her Bathgate does not provide. There is a long history to the presence of Indian servants and *ayahs* in Britain. Rozina Visram dates the process of bringing servants to Britain from soon to be colonial territories to at least the beginning of the eighteenth century (11). Although *ayahs* were often brought to Britain in the nineteenth century, they were just as frequently dismissed as soon as the family reached British shores. *Ayahs* were considered to be extremely good nurses at sea, but there was no contract guaranteeing their continued employment when they arrived in Britain: "Once in England, their services were over and they were discharged

to await a return engagement" (Visram, 1986: 29). In Bathgate's text, there appears to be some arrangement for the *ayah's* return passage—"the day appointed for the ayah's return to India has arrived"—although this is only an implication (1894: 139). Whether or not the *ayah* in Bathgate's text does safely return to India, it is clear that the presence of an *ayah* who accompanied a child back to Britain from India would not have been an irregularity.

Given that this situation would not have been unusual, and that some *ayahs* did stay in Britain, the question arises: why does Bathgate portray the *ayah* as being so out of place and threatening in the British home? I propose that the episode with the *ayah*, rather than functioning as a commentary on the actual state of "foreign" servants being transported to the British Isles, serves as a method to bolster Bathgate's own image. The entrance and dramatic exit of the *ayah* establish Bathgate as Mary Pringle's savior; she becomes the "new and improved," white and British, *ayah*.

While it is important to pay attention to Bathgate's use of the *ayah* to represent herself in a more positive light, I think it would be wrong to then assume that the *ayah* is a figure completely denied agency. Despite Bathgate's intention, it is possible to read the *ayah* in this representation as retaining some forms of agency. In many ways, Bathgate certainly denies the *ayah* subjectivity by limiting her voice as well as keeping her nameless. The *ayah* has no direct voice in the text; it is always mediated by Bathgate's description and she is never quoted directly. Bathgate says that the *ayah* speaks English well, but we never hear it. And the topics of conversation Bathgate describes all amount to the *ayah* being a transmitter of information that will benefit Bathgate or her "masters" as they try to gain control over Mary Pringle. The *ayah* tells Bathgate why Mary is upset and explains to Mary that Bathgate "loves her" (1894: 139). Bathgate never refers to conversations in which the *ayah* discusses anything about herself or India, nor does she include examples of the conversations her and the *ayah* might have engaged in as "warm friends;" she only includes Mary's utterances (139). Bathgate, then, denies the *ayah* subjectivity because she does not represent the *ayah* as having her own perspective, and she does not acknowledge the *ayah*'s own personal feelings or thoughts. After witnessing the separation of Mary and the *ayah*, Bathgate reevaluates her previous opinions about rich children's experiences, but not about Indian domestic workers. Recall that "Janet had thought that the children of the rich had no trials, but she sees differently now" (139). Bathgate's new perspective does not appear to deal with the "trials" of the *ayahs* who cared for the rich children.

However, Bathgate's description leaves open the possibility that the *ayah* possesses a certain amount of agency.[8] It is clear that the *ayah* impacts the Pringle home and the lives of her "masters" tremendously. While the *ayah* is not quoted directly, which contributes to a denial of subjectivity, she is also not silenced completely. Bathgate does make it clear that the *ayah* engages her in conversation, and while the import of those conversations to Bathgate may only have to do with her ability to gather information about and endear herself to

Mary Pringle, the *ayah* is the one controlling the flow of information. Bathgate may use the *ayah* as a sort of translator or transmitter, but nonetheless the *ayah* remains in control of what she translates and how she transmits it. The *ayah*, then, determines what information Bathgate and Mary receive about one another, as well as what information they are kept ignorant of. Also, while it is unclear if the *ayah* or Mary is responsible for deciding to speak only Hindustani in their conversations, it is clear that the *ayah* participates in this behavior that excludes her English speaking "masters." As the adult who is responding to Mary's insistence on speaking Hindustani, the *ayah* does not urge Mary to speak English by refusing to answer her in Hindustani, for example.

As discussed above, the *ayah* constitutes a forceful threat to the "British home," introducing into it not only the presence of a racial Other but also images of miscegenation. By complicating definitions and categories of "race" and "home," the *ayah* becomes a disruptive figure, and this disruption is a kind of agency. Perhaps the most threatening aspect of this agency is the fact that the *ayah* is the only adult whose authority Mary respects when she arrives from India. The happiness and behavior of the white child at the center of the household's concerns is determined by a "black" Indian servant, which threatens the grandmother's domestic authority. It is the *ayah*'s prominence that makes the grandmother have to *use* her key to lock the door of the sitting room when the *ayah* leaves. Rather than being able to rely on her keys as a symbol of authority that will maintain domestic order, Mrs. Pringle is forced to take action in order to maintain both domestic and imperial borders. Continuing with this line of analysis, we can also read the markers of the *ayah*'s racial "difference," such as the beads and dress that she wears, as an insistence on retaining her own traditions and culture while in Britain. The *ayah* may not benefit materially from these actions, but nevertheless it is important to pay attention to this type of agency because it clearly affects the functioning and maintenance of discourses of domesticity and empire. The *ayah* produces a tremendous effect on the British "home," participating in the discourses surrounding it rather than only being affected by them.

While Bathgate laments Mary's loss, she never indicates that Mrs. Pringle makes a mistake by separating Mary from her *ayah*. In fact, Bathgate does not hesitate to replace the *ayah* immediately following her departure. Bathgate's failure to mention the *ayah* again suggests that she may indirectly support the grandmother's decision. We can read this silence as implying that because Mary ends up happy with Bathgate, a "proper" British nursemaid, readers need not be concerned with the fate of the *ayah*. Bathgate and Mary Pringle become so close that after only six months, when Bathgate leaves Mary to return to the main family residence, Mary is as distraught at the prospect of losing Bathgate as she was at losing her *ayah*. Bathgate has completely replaced the *ayah*, but in this case, Mary's protests at being separated from her maternal figure are successful and she is reunited with Bathgate. Mary is permitted to maintain a close bond with her British ("white") nursemaid, a bond she was prevented from

maintaining with her Indian ("black") *ayah*. Bathgate has reconstructed this episode in a manner that portrays Mary's relationship with the *ayah* as threatening in a way that her relationship with Bathgate is not.[9]

To understand these complex dynamics surrounding maternity in the Victorian period, we must understand the presence and function of nursemaids as related not only in traditional literature penned by the parents who hired nursemaids, but also from the perspective of nursemaids themselves. The voices of nursemaids clearly allow us to see some of the ways that motherhood is constructed from a unique perspective. Janet Bathgate's description of her experiences shows that nursemaids were important mother figures. The relationships between Mary Pringle and both of her nursemaids show that children became at least as attached to nursemaids as they did to their biological mothers. Furthermore, Bathgate's description of her encounter with an *ayah* begins to reveal which maternal relationships were viewed as threatening and which were more permissible. It then becomes clear that British nursemaids did not occupy only passive roles in dominant discourses (of maternity, domesticity, and empire), but rather actively reinforced them by engaging in actions such as excluding racial Others from the "proper British home." Nevertheless, while Bathgate clearly denies subjectivity to the *ayah*, her representation also (seemingly inadvertently) demonstrates that there was room for racial Others to exercise a significant amount of agency and disrupt the very homes from which they were assumedly excluded. The figure of the *ayah* brings race to the forefront of Bathgate's text, showing how central the concept was in determining who was allowed to become a "good mother" in this period, even in the "substitute" role or capacity of a nursemaid.

[1]I borrow this now familiar phrase, "Angel in the House," from the title of Coventry Patmore's 1854 poem.

[2]It is difficult to determine exactly how many women were employed as nursemaids in the nineteenth century and how many households employed them. Nursemaids were counted in national census figures, but it is unclear how reliable these figures are. In regard to domestic servants, J. A. Banks notes that the census "seems to have been at its most confused and unreliable in handling this category" (1954: 102). Nevertheless, these figures do suggest that nursemaids increased in number throughout the century; in England and Wales, Banks notes a 110.1 percent increase in the number of people identified as nursemaids between 1851-1871 while the general population grew only 26.7 percent over the same twenty year period (83). Banks lists 35,937 nursemaids in the 1851 census, 67,785 in 1861, and 75,491 in 1871 (83). These appear to be conservative estimates, given that the number of nursemaids listed in other summaries of the census tend to be substantially higher.

[3]As I discuss below, Bathgate never names the *ayah* in her text.

[4]See Edward Said's Orientalism for a fuller discussion of the various and

overlapping definitions of this term. In short, I use "Orientalism" to characterize the western tendency to define Eastern cultures as "exotic" or different; I follow Said in understanding "Orientalism as a western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (1979: 3).

[5]Recall that Janet Bathgate writes this autobiography in the third person. Thus, in the quotations I excerpt from the text, Bathgate is referring to herself as "Janet."

[6]Especially as a young girl in domestic service, Bathgate struggles to remain true to her Nonconformist faith. In Anglican homes, and even in some Nonconformist homes, it is difficult for her to continue praying and observing the Sabbath according to the strict customs her parents followed.

[7]Although Mary begins to refer to Janet Bathgate as her new *ayah*, to maintain clarity all future references to "the *ayah*" in my text refer to the *ayah* from India.

[8]For the purposes of this argument, I include the following traits in my definition of a person with agency: "one who (or that which) exerts power; who produces an effect" (*Oxford English Dictionary*).

[9]When Bathgate must care for another upper-class child, she and Mary do part ways. By that time, Bathgate has prepared Mary to attend a boarding school so that Bathgate may tend to a sickly newborn infant in the family.

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"Thirty Billions of Things Started ... and Done"

Grandmothering in 20th Century Magazine Fiction

In 1957 the *Saturday Evening Post* published "Good-by, Grandma," a short story by Ray Bradbury far different from the science fiction for which he was already famous. In this semi-autobiographical piece, Bradbury described in realistic detail some of the "thirty billions of things started, carried, finished and done" by a much-loved great-grandmother, who decided at 90 that she had done enough (Bradbury, 1957: 28). She consoled her assembled descendants by insisting that she would live on in each of them: "I'm not really dying today. No person ever died that had a family" (91). Then she told each of "those other parts of me," her children and grandchildren, what domestic tasks they needed to do next week, since they would "have to take over" (91).

Bradbury's story catalogued the myriad domestic tasks that defined mid-twentieth century middle-class North American mothering in terms that echoed Bette Friedan's *Feminine Mystique* (1963), and continued it on through another generation: "She had washed ceilings, walls, invalids, and children. She had laid linoleum, repaired bicycles, wound clocks, stoked furnaces, swabbed iodine on ten thousand grievous wounds. Her hands had flown all around, gentling this, holding that, throwing baseballs, swinging bright croquet mallets, seeding black earth or fixing covers over dumplings, ragouts, and children wildly strewn by slumber" (Bradbury, 1957: 28). This definition of grandmothering in terms of domestic work resonated with the idealized conceptions held by magazine publishers: it was reprinted twice, in *Reader's Digest* in 1983 and again in *Saturday Evening Post* in 1988.

Since popular periodicals generally functioned to reinforce as well as reflect the values of their predominantly white middle-class readership throughout the twentieth century, they are a good source of information about prevailing cultural ideals. (See, for example, Meyerowitz, 1993; Stearns, 1993; Ward,

1996.) Short fiction allows authors to create characters less complex and ambiguous than actual human beings, but closely tuned to the "values of the dominant culture" (Hume, 2000:11). Thus the genre of magazine fiction provides an especially rich source for idealized role expectations and how they evolved during the 20th century (Hynes 1981; Martel, 1968).

For this article, I used *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature* to locate fiction about grandmothers published between 1900 and 1999. I found fifty short stories or plays listed under a grandparent heading or entitled with some variation of "grandma." The earliest was dated 1900; the latest appeared in 1988, although the genre seems to have peaked in the 1930s and 1940s.[1] After that, magazines turned far more often to memoir and other nonfiction modes when discussing lifestyle issues, including grandparenthood (McCracken, 1993:183). About 60 per cent of the stories were written by women, and the same percentage appeared in general-interest magazines, with another 20 per cent in women's magazines.

Emerging from these pages was a definition of grandmothering as an active family role for older women, involving both an exchange of care-work and individualized affective connections to grandchildren. Of 46 grandmothers in these stories whose marital status was clearly identified, 42 were widows, nearly 60 per cent of whom lived with family members, permanently or temporarily. Their shared living quarters provided the setting for much of the action in most of the fifty stories.

Within the domestic sphere created in these stories, many grandmothers' daily activities fulfilled traditional expectations, but some of them resisted. More grandmothers were seen knitting in these stories than were making cookies, but they also had many other things to do. These fictional grandmothers interacted with their grandchildren most often as storyteller, caregiver, confidante, tutor, or chaperone. However, Bradbury's thoroughly family-focused grandma was not the only model of grandmotherhood that magazine fiction presented. Throughout the century, these stories featured women characters who self-consciously rebelled against the stereotypical role prescribed for them.

As life expectancy lengthened and cultural views about aging, and about women, changed, so did the portraits of fictional grandmothers. The earliest story, published in *Ladies Home Journal* in 1900, described a woman even strangers recognized as "a real grandmother": "Her bared head was white as snow, her wrinkled cheeks were slightly flushed, her brass-bound `specks' were perched high on her forehead. Her dress was a faded calico" (Blethen, 1900: 6). Psychologically, however, this particular grandmother was "too confused to know what was going on" (6). Though she was respected and valued by her family and community, she was far too feeble to take an active role in either.

In contrast, over the course of the century, ten grandmothers were shown as active career women, mostly self-employed in family businesses. In the most recent story I located, published in *Redbook* in 1988, a highly successful real

estate broker learned of her only child's first pregnancy the same day her own doctor informed her that her failing vision necessitated her surrendering her driver's license. Feeling suddenly old, and fearing loss of independence, she was at first "A Reluctant Grandmother," but in less than a day she decided that an active retirement, including both travel and caring for her grandchild, would be keep her engaged and happy. There would be no "blue-hair and-rocking-chair" for her (Clayton, 1988: 55). Stories appearing in the first decade of this century usually described grandmothers in older stereotypical terms, often delivered in patronizing language: "a very nice old lady indeed, as an old lady should be, with a pretty cap upon her erect little old head, and a pretty soft dress upon her little, trim old figure" (Hibbard, 1903: 310). Advanced age seemed synonymous with frailty: "the dim, frail face of age, with its silvered hair and slow, tired step" (Bussenius, 1910: 616).

However, this same story, published in 1910, clearly made the point that such appearances could be deceiving. Gran'ma's entire demeanor changed dramatically when her daughter-in-law left the house, and the old woman had a chance to work by herself: "Her pale, withered cheeks blossomed red again as she bent ecstatically over the steaming [laundry] tub; occasionally, from sheer jubilance, she burst into song, her cracked voice breaking with the tremolo of age over her cadence"(616). Some frailty was thus exposed as psychosomatic: the result of boredom and depression associated with the old-fashioned, dependent role many grandmothers had been assigned to fill against their will.

After the first decade of the century, only a few grandmothers, identified as either in their 90s or near death, were described in terms emphasizing feebleness—and even these had their vigorous moments, in the present or past, featured in the story, evident in Bradbury's list of Grandma's activities. Even in most of the stories in which grandmother's death was a prominent theme (20 per cent of the total), she seemed in control, either choosing a dramatic time to exit, faking her demise, or controlling her family's fate from beyond the grave. (See for example, Machar, 1921; Thomas, 1931; Frost, 1936; Perry, 1942.)

Rather than her frailty, Grandmother's strength of character dominated her fictional portrait in magazines throughout most of the 20th century. In nearly all of these stories the grandmother character was at the crux of the plot, central to the action.

Two different images of grandmother dominated her depiction in magazine fiction: the active and attractive matriarch (eleven stories), and the tough and canny crone (twenty stories). One quintessential matriarch, who presided over a mansion, was described as "inclined to be tall, round, almost plump.... Behind a gentle, even exquisite, appearance, Granny's brain, unrivalled in the family connection, is working busily" (Willison, 1934: 308). Similarly, "Grandmother of Pearl," a middle-class woman from Illinois, had "an austere calm, an unruffled dignity, ... undoubtedly the air of a duchess" (Goodloe, 1916: 102). Matriarchs were thus described in terms that emphasized their power within

their families; their class position, elegant demeanor, good looks, and obvious intelligence served to underline their domestic authority. As was said of one such character at her death, "Blessed Grandmamma—doing all things well"(Machar, 1921: 31).

The tough and canny crone, more prevalent in these stories, had a different body type, generally "small and wiry," and often a lower class status than the matriarch, but she was similarly described in terms that emphasized keen faculties as well as physical vigor (Frost, 1936: 154). For example, Grandma Gingersnap's "eyes were a sparkling black, as her hair was said to have once been, and they had the bright, interested look of a sage old bird" (Sampson, 1931: 210). Similarly, Grandma Sharpless, "a straight, solid uncompromising figure," was noted for "a memory ... as reliable for retaining salient facts as her vision was for discerning them" (Adams, 1913: 220, 173). Crones possessed an essential unity of inner and outer character: "if one is still tough and strong,—as grandmother undoubtedly was—one looked like a gnarled tree that has weathered years of tempest" (Wylie, 1926: 8). "Feisty" is the condescending term often used to describe these women, but that word seems to emphasize their vigor but minimize their power.

In 20 per cent of the stories I found, grandmothers were powerful, effective leaders, exercising authority outside the home with an impressive list of accomplishments: chasing a patent medicine salesman out of town (Adams, 1913); finding the culprit in a robbery (Kelland, 1921); killing a pouncing puma with a single shot (Hess, 1932); rousing the troops on the way to World War II (Hager, 1943); and wrestling a buck deer who had invaded her toolshed (Vance, 1969).

In 1950, *Saturday Evening Post* featured two stories about Granny Hite, an elderly Appalachian woman who seemed to have been given her honorific title by her community, with no biological grandchildren mentioned in the story. Her neighbors had good reasons to honor her as fictive ancestor. In one story, she rescued her village from "progress" by blocking construction of a highway, and in the other, she rescued it from narrow-minded traditionalism by turning back a mob of her neighbors threatening to uproot a family of Jewish refugees who somehow found their way to that remote place (Wilson 1950b; Wilson 1950a). "Granny" had clearly earned the respect of her community for her leadership both as protector and critic of traditional values.

In all of these stories grandmothers were both intuitive and active, extending their maternal authority to chastise adults or wild animals as they would naughty children. Problems were resolved in a few pages with a healthy dose of Grandma's folk medicine. The implausibility of some of these stories exaggerated grandma's power in ways that undercut her validity as a person of authority. Interestingly, all of these stories were written by male authors, more comfortable perhaps with action plots rather than family dramas, who might have had a subconscious patriarchal stake in keeping "feisty" grandmas in their place, even while they were stepping out of it.

This ambiguity led to some interesting plot twists and combinations of themes. For example, in "Grandma Was A Lulu," a seventy-year-old, who "had her own money, which was plenty; her own inclinations, which were positive; and her health, which was perfect," thwarted a kidnapping while touring in the Amazon, meanwhile helping her grandson win the heart of the erstwhile victim (Garth, 1935: 47).

In this story, the adventure theme intersected with a theme even more popular, particularly with female authors: romance. Three-quarters of the sixteen stories with romance themes were written by women. In many of these stories grandma was a matchmaker or confidante of younger lovers, particularly a favorite grandchild. When the mother of one of these lucky young adults failed to mention him in two letters, his grandmother drove 200 miles at 25mph to find him unemployed and dispirited. Understanding that he needed love to give him something to work for, she lent him her car, and within a few paragraphs he had acquired both a job and a girlfriend (Weston, 1934). Other grandmothers applied their talents in the romantic realm outside their own families, helping young couples elope or arranging reunions of oldsters who once were youthful sweethearts (Bussenius, 1910; Thomas 1938).

Sometimes Grandma's matchmaking was prompted by memories of her own past romances, but in a few stories, Grandma herself was the love interest. In "Grandmamma's Gigolo," an intellectual grandmother's friendship with a handsome young scholar aroused the worried (but mistaken) suspicions of her granddaughter, whose patronizing assumption that old age meant obsolescence was shattered (Miller, 1931).

In another story, the flow of advice reversed its usual direction, as two granddaughters arranged "Grandmother's Debut," beginning with that women's magazine staple, a makeover. After they had modernized their formerly frumpy feminist grandmother's image—"It's very inconsistent for a woman who thinks ten years ahead of her time to wear clothes twenty years behind"—the transformed, "altogether elegant-looking creature" rekindled the spark of an old flame at a suffrage ball (Hall, 1919: 14, 74).

Most of the four stories in which granddaughters taught grandmothers were published in the era of World War I, when consciousness of rapid modernization and social change was especially prevalent, and thus assumptions that grandmothers would be old-fashioned were made most explicit (Hynes, 1981).

Awareness of changing times and competing values prompted some authors to create characters who pointedly resisted the old fashioned grandmother role. Two stories that appeared in the first two decades of the century both featured younger, widowed grandmothers who had raised their children alone, a particularly challenging experience of mothering. "That Grandmother of Ours" promised to be generous to her newborn first grandchild, but refused to love it: "it hurt to love little babies," so selflessly and completely, only to have them grow up (Collins, 1905: 12). She couched her resistance in terms of fear

of commitment to the child, with overtones of lack of confidence in her now-outdated nurturing techniques. However, she was soon won over by the experience of feeling needed and appreciated by her son and daughter-in-law.

A decade later, another middle-aged widow was declared "rebellious" for refusing to become "a grandmother-creature in black silk and mitts," and ruin her chances for remarriage (Bailey, 1914: 589). She cared for her grandchild through a crisis, but refused to let the role swallow her completely. Relentlessly modern in dress, she remained fully confident in her old-fashioned maternal skills: "From noon until midnight she was of to-day—smartly gowned, girlish; from midnight until dawn she was of yesterday—waking from her fitful slumbers at the first wailing note, presiding in gray gown and slippers over strange brews of catnip and of elderflower," home remedies that proved effective (591). Not surprisingly, this story had a conventional happy ending. When her suitor discovered the familial status the widow had tried to keep secret, he insisted that he preferred a "Madonna-creature" to a sophisticate (592).

Other fictional role resisters focused on the dependence and inactivity associated with old age, as well as resentment of the younger generation's assumption of authority, in their efforts to rebel against their family's expectations for them as grandmothers. The title of an early story with this theme proclaimed how the conflict was resolved in 1906: "Grandma's Surrender" (Houk, 1906; see also Bussenius, 1910).

This theme resurfaced, not coincidentally, in the 1940s, when wartime housing shortages made 3-generation households more common. Only magic seemed to solve intergenerational problems in a 1948 story. Grandma's helpful neighbor, a witch, taught her to transform herself into a bird to escape the constraints her son and daughter-in-law enforced upon her. Her son took her to a psychiatrist, who at first dismissed her, "'Nobody can reason with any female ... especially an old one ... What's remarkable about an old dame who thinks she's a bird?'" (Fessier, 1948: 82). When she finally was able to convince her family to take her needs seriously, Grandma agreed to stay human, provided she retain her freedom to attend sporting events, and "buy a yellow convertible roadster with white-wall tires" (83). Again, the grandmother capitulated, but not before winning some concessions from her family as she accepted her dependence upon them.

Only two authors drew grandmother characters intended to elicit readers' unambiguous contempt; they both appeared during the early 1940s, and were the only role resisters who refused to compromise. George Sessions Perry published two stories about Granny Tucker, who lived with her dirt-poor grandson Sam and his family on his tenant farm in Texas, and fiercely resented her dependence (Perry, 1941; Perry, 1942). Although Granny was "the scourge of his household, the terror of his existence," her grandson "loved and understood her, understood her selfishness and heartlessness, her violent hunger to dominate, the blind compulsion that drove her to contrive the

devastating little schemes to which she resorted as a defense against boredom" (Perry, 1941: 44, 42). In spite of this explanation and Sam's sainted compassion, Granny appeared as unrelievedly selfish, manipulative, and mean.

These qualities also dominated the personality of the other negative grandmother, who appeared in the *New Yorker* in 1943. The title of "Grandma What Big Eyes" hinted at the wolfish character of the woman disguised as a Red Cross volunteer, proud to look too young to be a grandmother, but too absorbed in her own image to help her daughter-in-law care for her grandchild while her son was at the front (Finletter, 1943).

Selfishness was clearly the antithesis of what grandmothers were supposed to be, particularly when their contributed services were needed by families disrupted "for the duration." These characters may have won their struggles against for independence, but they lost the warmth and respect more traditional grandmothers elicited. They contradicted a consistent theme emphasized in nearly all the stories: grandmothers were most often seen giving: gifts, money, time, help, or advice. Those who refused to conform to "selfless old age" were scorned, not pitied (Machar, 1921: 531).

Not all of the stories conformed to conventional plots with one-dimensional characters. Particularly in the last decades of the century, magazines anticipated the change of genre preference from fiction to memoir. Several character studies appeared in which grandchildren wrote in first person, but sought to understand grandmother's perspective in a way not seen earlier; these stories did not have happy endings. In the most moving story I read, Janice Davis Warnke explored the relationship of a young adult granddaughter to her dying Gram, as they transcended the sometimes painful memories linking them and reached a new level of mutual compassion that "survived even the rubbings of daily, fettered life" that ensued when, unlike Bradbury's character, this Gram failed to die on cue (Warnke, 1954: 225). When the narrator of a 1964 story arrived for "Grandma's Funeral," he realized that "for the first time I saw Grandma's first name, framed in a black border. I had never known it" (Telpaz, 1964: 35). This recognition of the person's confinement within the role seemed to make most explicit a theme addressed, but resolved too neatly, by earlier authors in this genre.

Although grandmothers in magazine fiction throughout the twentieth century were thus granted a degree of individuality and strength, none of them was allowed by her creator to address readers directly and define her life in her own terms. It seems significant that more than three-quarters of these stories were third-person narratives. When first person was used, the grandchild's view generally prevailed, with an occasional voice from the intervening parental generation. The grandchild's vantage point would seem most likely to emphasize grandmothering in terms of service to the family, especially to the juvenile narrator; parental generation narrators focused more often on intergenerational tensions.

Rules about happy endings and rose-colored lenses of sentimentality

affected the portrait of grandmothers that emerged in these pages. When grandmother characters deviated too far from role expectations—particularly if they committed the cardinal sin of selfishness—the respect their strength had previously warranted was abruptly withdrawn. If she pressed too strongly her claim for independence, a grandmother challenged too blatantly the contingent, family-oriented nature of magazine grandmothering. Extending her activism on behalf of her community was permissible if it were couched as an extension of domestic authority, scolding naughty adult children or protecting them. If a grandmother acted out her own desires without considering others' needs, she was negatively depicted, unless or until redeemed by adjusting her attitude and behavior to standardized expectations. Only rarely, and in the latter part of the century, were the more subtle complexities of defining grandmothers entirely in contingent terms addressed—as magazines moved away from fiction.

Thus the dominant discourse in twentieth century magazine fiction defined grandmothering more strictly in attitudinal terms than in terms of unwavering fulfillment to domestic ideals. The range of personalities, activities, and plot lines involved these fictional grandmas in "thirty millions of things" (Bradbury, 1957:28), but they all added up to one essential characteristic required of grandmothers: unselfish concern for others.

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[1]The distribution of stories by decade showed a rapid decline after World War II. I included the Bradbury story only once in my overall story count.
1900s: 5
1910s: 7
1920s: 7
1930s: 10
1940s: 10
1950s: 5
1960s: 4
1970s: 1
1980S: 1 NEW story + 2 Bradbury reprints
1990s: 0

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Martha Addante

Rupturing the Patriarchal Family
Female Genealogy in Disappearing Moon Café

In his renowned text, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, Claude Levi-Strauss concludes that social organisation rests upon the exchange of women. Surely this is the case in a patriarchal social system such as that initially represented in Sky Lee's *Disappearing Moon Cafe.* According to Levi-Strauss, the incest taboo is the codified law of reciprocity through which men form alliances with other men to secure the survival of their group and the institution of social organisation. Within this system, which Levi-Strauss claims is the original model of social organisation, women function as commodities. The Oedipal model of socialisation ensures that women are taught to accept their powerlessness and their status as objects of exchange. Yet there exists an alternative model of social organisation. In opposition to Levi-Strauss, Evelyn Reed in *Women's Evolution* argues that women originally instituted the incest taboo along with various other food restrictions to protect themselves and their young from cannibalistic, male hunters. Within Reed's model, women not only possessed much social and sexual autonomy, but they held political power as the founders of society. In Sky Lee's novel, *Disappearing Moon Cafe*, women reclaim their autonomy and status as subjects which Reed claims they once possessed. Her characters challenge the patriarchal establishment built upon the exchange of women.

Disappearing Moon Cafe is the saga of four generations of Wong women as narrated by Kae, the last of the Wong women whose story the novel records.[1] Before engaging in a critical analysis of the novel, I will offer a brief summary of the narrative. Each of the women–Fong Mei, Suzi and Kae—contest and undermine the hegemonic system of social organisation in class-based societies in which descent is traced through the male line. Fong Mei is the first of the Wong women who rebels against the established order. Fong Mei, "a renowned beauty in Chinatown" (Lee, 1990: 34), is bought by patriarch, Wong Gwei

Chang, and his overbearing wife, Mui Lan, to be wife for their son, Choy Fuk. She is purchased and brought to Canada exclusively to bear heirs for the Wong family. Her situation is not unlike those of many Chinese women in the nineteenth century and well into the first half of the twentieth century whose value depended upon their reproductive function without which they were deemed worthless. Only a woman who bore her marital family descendants, preferably sons, could hope to gain "undeniable status in her husband's family" (Wolf, 1975: 124) and escape her lowly existence. Yet Fong Mei does not submit to the system of exchange, but commits adultery and bears three children with her lover, and Choy Fuk's half-brother, Ting An.

Suzi, her youngest daughter, like her mother also undermines the kinship system at the root of patriarchal organisation. She engages in incest through which she reproduces a son. Incest, as I will elaborate, is a subversion of patriarchal continuity since it disrupts the flow of exchange. Women are no longer available for exchange if they marry within the group or family. Kae is the last generation of Wong women to defy the patriarchal establishment. The birth of her son initiates her into a creative project to trace her origins. Her account reveals "the accidents, the minute deviations ... the reversals ... the errors, the false appraisals and the faulty calculations that give birth to those things that ... have value for us" (Foucault, 1984: 81) and in Kae's case, that define her personal genealogy. Thus, in the novel, women's (re)productive power becomes the source of resistance to the patriarchal order. Both Pierre Bourdieu, in his *The Logic of Practice*, and P. Schweitzer in his Introduction to *Dividends of Kinship*, oppose Levi-Strauss, contending that there are no universal rules of kinship or marriage to which a group prescribes. Instead, there are various individual "strategies," as Bourdieu terms them, directed "towards the satisfaction of material and symbolic interests and organised by reference to a particular economic and social condition" (Bourdieu, 1990: 167). Strauss' model is "reductionistic" (Mahon, 1992: 75) as Foucault points out. I would like to take the opportunity then to explain why I have undertaken a western anthropological reading of Sky Lee's *Disappearing Moon Cafe.* Lee's novel is a critique of male-dominated social systems in both China and the West that have traditionally exploited women. I am interested in the discourses and "technologies of power" (Foucault, 1978: 109) that enable these social systems to operate. Western anthropology is not the objective study of cultures, their social structures and their people, but it is part of a "mechanics of power" (109) that seeks to regulate bodies, especially women's bodies and reproductive labour. In fact, anthropological discourse reproduces "the interplay of relations and maintains the laws that governs" (106) social systems. In this paper, I have sought to examine the inherent bias in traditional, Western anthropology and investigate other systems of social organisation that foster women's autonomy.

For Levi-Strauss, the oppression and exploitation of women are inherent in social systems. The practice of exogamy or the exchange of women and its correlate, the incest taboo, are the founding features of social organisation, and

they are universal, although the specific content of the numerous versions of the incest taboo vary. He also notes that the prohibition often extends beyond "degrees of real kinship", but includes "individuals who use certain terms in addressing one another" (Levi-Strauss, 1949: 29). Strauss concludes then that the invention of the incest taboo was not to avoid the genetic mutations resulting from the close mating between individuals of the family group, but it was culturally imposed "to ensure the group's existence" (32), and culture ensures the group's existence through the exchange of women. Strauss writes: "the prohibition of incest is a rule of reciprocity, for I will give up my daughter, or my sister only on the condition that my neighbour does the same" (62). Under such conditions, men form alliances with other men.

For Foucault, genealogy, the study of origins, is "effective history" (Mahon, 1992: 113) because it challenges the belief in the continuity and coherence of history and offers a "dissociating view that is capable of decomposing itself, capable of shattering the unity of man's being through which it was thought that he could extend his sovereignty to the events of his past" (113). In *Women's Evolution,* Evelyn Reed offers an alternative explanation for the incest taboo. She presents a "dissociat[ed] view" of matriarchal social organization, one that not only decenters the male subject, but challenges traditional notions of social organisation that seek to impose present condition on the past in order to "introduce meaning and purpose into history" (1975: 112).

According to Reed, the incest taboo was one part of a "double prohibition" (Reed, 1975: 22) that was actually a taboo against cannibalism. The double taboo was necessary to protect the community from the "twin hazards that confronted early humanity - violence of male sexuality and the problem of cannibalism" (73). According to Reed, it was much more likely the women, "already equipped by nature with their highly developed maternal functions and ... capable of co-operating with other females" (1975: 69), instituted the totem taboos to ensure the survival of the group. Most forbidden, Reed notes, was the flesh of certain birds and animals associated with the female sex (88). A woman was also tabooed so long as she nursed and cared for a child. In this way, she was able to protect her child.

Because of prolonged periods of segregation of the sexes, marriage as it is conceived of today did not exist. Reed explains that "where a wife segregates herself from her husband for years at a time, occupies her own independent household with her children, does not cook for the man or eat with him, we cannot speak of marriage in the true sense of the term" (1975: 139). In fact, according to Reed, in "savage society" (138) there existed much sexual freedom. Neither men nor women restricted their mates' sexual practices. Women were not required to limit their sexual relations to one man and "if they did so, it was voluntary" (139). Furthermore, women were not "compelled" (139) to marry or have sexual relations with anyone with whom they did not wish.

Many feminists support the hypothesis that in pre-class societies women enjoyed greater autonomy. Ernestine Friedl, in *Women and Men: An Anthro-*

pologist's View (1975), argues that in pre-class society or band society, such as hunting and gathering communities, it is possible for women to achieve autonomy provided that they participate in the production and distribution of goods, specifically food, outside the domestic unit. Eleanor Leacock, in *Myths of Male Dominance,* upholds Friedl's argument and draws upon Iroquois society as an example of an egalitarian society. Women in Iroquois society controlled food productions and distribution. This gave them a certain measure of political or public power, for example, to "veto declarations of war and to intervene ... to bring about peace" (Leacock, 1981: 153). Like Engels (1978), she links class development with women's decline in status. In addition, Leacock argues that ethnographic reports and documentation that question the egalitarian quality of pre-class societies are the result of "ethnocentric bias" or else fail to consider the defilement of the band's egalitarianism via colonial contact.

Katherine Gough in "The Origin of the Family," unlike the feminists cited above, questions both the matriarchal theory of the origins of human society and the egalitarian nature of pre-class society. She argues that "there is no 'matriarchal,' as distinct from matrilineal society in existence or known from literature, and the chances are that there never has been" (1975: 54). Gough underscores that even in matrilineal societies where women appear to hold greater autonomy, and where property, rank and group membership pass through the female line, the "ultimate head of the household, lineage, and local group is usually a man" (1975: 54). David Schneider in *Matrilineal Kinship* confirms Gough's findings and notes that men in matrilineal society still possess authority over women and children in both the domestic and descent groups (Schneider and Gough, 1961: 7). In short, whether matriarchy was the original system of social organisation or whether it existed at all is a highly contested issue with little resolution. However, as Gough asserts, "this does not mean that women and men have never had relations that were dignified and creative for both sexes ... nor does it mean that the sexes cannot be equal in the future, or that the sexual division of labour cannot be abolished" (Gough, 1975: 54). Reed's hypothesis, and those of the many feminist theorists who support it, are in fact constructive because they offer a "dissociating view" of history, but also because they encourage us to envision new social relations and practices that challenge oppressive social structures. Sky Lee's *Disappearing Moon Cafe* likewise urges us to dream of new social relations and practices that foster women's autonomy.

Fong Mei is the first in a series of Wong women to rupture the law or patriarchal order that depends upon the exchange and exploitation of women. She arrives in Vancouver as a young Chinese native whose parents sell her in exchange for wealth and power. Gayle Rubin in "The Traffic in Women" highlights that "kinship and marriage are always points of total social systems, and are always tied to economic and political arrangements" (1975: 207). In a letter from her sister, Fong Mei, learns of the riches and power her marriage has brought to her natal family: "with the money, our parents purchased one

hundred barrels of store bought brides cake.... There hasn't been a neighbour within ten li who hasn't stopped by and commented on your Yeh's generosity ... Father is just full of himself these days" (Lee, 1990: 46-47).

While her father benefits financially and gains prestige and respect in the community, Fong Mei remains miserable. In a letter to her sister, Fong Mei laments her misery and loneliness: "now, I wouldn't be able to claw my way home as a beggar. I'm lost among strangers ... there's no one to turn to, as I think of home constantly" (Lee, 1990: 44). Yet Fong Mei's loneliness is the least of her problems as she hints, "even at night in my sleep, I must be on my guard. There's a strange man in my bed now ... " (Lee, 1990: 145)—a man she will later come to despise. Fong Mei's greatest enemy, however, will become her mother-in-law, Mui Lan. Fong Mei must fulfil her family's side of the contract and provide Wong descendants. Her failure to do so gains her a tyrant for a mother-in-law. It is Mui Lan and not the "patriarch," Gwei Chang, who presides over marital negotiations in which Fong Mei is purchased on behalf of the Wong family. It is she who bargains and schemes to obtain Fong Mei and who later hires another mistress to reproduce Wong descendants when her daughter-in-law fails to become pregnant. Mui Lan holds domestic authority. All too often, as is evident in Lee's novel, women's reproductive function comes to represent the woman as a person. She is no longer a complete subject with other needs and desires, but she fulfils a function as the vessel who bears male heirs. This is dangerous and destructive to women. In her essay, "Kinship, Reciprocity and the World Market," Jenny B. White highlights that in certain communities, such as the working class neighbourhoods in Turkey, kinship is about "doing" (2000: 124) rather than "being" (2000: 124). One is a member of the community so long as s/he contributes labour and resources to that community (2000: 125). Fong Mei's "belongingness" (2000: 125) is contingent on whether she contributes her labour, that is, (re)produces a son. Mui Lan makes this clear: "the past five years, you have learnt and worked a good deal ... but no matter how much you do, you have done nothing until you have given a son to us" (Lee, 1990: 61). If Fong Mei fails to fulfil her duty as a daughter-in-law and produce male heirs, she is disposable and no longer "belongs" to her husband's family. In fact, her marriage contract is void.

Mui Lan is what Irigaray terms a "useful Athena" (1980: 12) who serves the patriarchal order or those "who spring whole from the brain of the Father-King, dedicated solely to his service and that of the men in power" (1980: 12).[2] Her desire for "a grandchild to fulfil the most fundamental purpose to her life" (Lee, 1990: 31) in whom she could "claim a share of that eternal life which came with each new generation of babies" (31) is understandable and even desirable to ensure the continuation of the family. The problem is that Mui Lan partakes in the exchange of women for the sole purpose of reproducing a "little boy who came from her son, who came from her husband, who also came lineally from that golden chain of male to male" (31), while her daughter-in-law remains an "unidentified receptacle" (31).

Although Mui Lan envies the closeness between two laundresses, mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, each of whom carried "a baby strapped to her back" (Lee, 1990: 24), she fosters a relationship with Fong Mei based solely on motherhood. In contrast, the two laundresses share a closeness that "gave an impression of strength" (25). This "annoys" Mui Lan partly because it reminds her of her own longing for the network of village women she left behind upon immigration to Canada, but also because it appears to her as if "they knew something that she didn't" (25), or at least something that she has forgotten. Mui Lan and Fong Mei become rivals because they have not established a bond, mutual love and respect for each other as women. Irigaray warns that this is often the case when women do not love and respect one another as subjects or as women. She writes, "if they [women] ... become rivals, it is often because the mystery of their personal status remains imperceptible to them. Except in motherhood ... but that is not necessarily a human identity" (Whitford, 1991: 192). Since it is not a genuine closeness between women for which Mui Lan longs, she has no qualms about hiring another woman to reproduce Wong descendants nor about participating in the trade of women. Thus, she becomes an accomplice to the patriarchal order which subjugates and exploits women because of their reproductive function.

Fong Mei, alone in a foreign land, tormented by an overbearing mother-in-law and trapped within a loveless marriage, retaliates not only against her marital family, but indirectly also against the social system which is responsible for her misery and exploitation. Shortly after Mui Lan reveals her plan to hire a mistress to bear a Wong descendant, Fong Mei commences her affair with Ting An, Choy Fuk's stepbrother, although the latter is unknown as such to all except patriarch, Chang. Fong Mei does not turn to Ting An out of revenge, but rather out of "silent desolation" (Lee, 1990: 182). The exchange of women not only ensures alliances between men and the division of labour that divides women, but it also sanctifies, through marriage, men's sexual access to women. By committing adultery, Fong Mei regains power over her woman's body, over her sexuality, and makes herself accessible to a man who has not acquired her within a contract, but who is of her choosing.[3]

Out of her transgression, Fong Mei reproduces three children. Her womb is the site of her oppression, but it also becomes a means to rebel against a patriarchal order that exploits women and appropriates their reproductive labour. Fong Mei, in Kae's story at least, realises the power of her woman's womb: "I was given the rare opportunity to claim them [her children] for myself", but she also realises, "I sold them each and every one, for property and respectability" (Lee, 1990: 189). Fong Mei is unable to endure anew the wretchedness of poverty and hunger and so she eventually abandons Ting An and sells out her children. She too becomes what Irigaray calls, a "useful Athena" (1980: 12), who upholds the patriarchal system for economic security and for the social prestige that accompanies it.

In Kae's rendition of the story, however, Fong Mei realises the full

implications of her transgression. She also imagines that she could have transgressed further; she "could have run away with any one of those lonely Gold Mountain men ... if men didn't make me happy enough, then I would have moved on. Imagine, I could have had children all over me ... And in turn, they could have chosen whomever and how many times they fancied and I would have had hundreds of pretty grandchildren" (Lee 188). Like Reed, who hypothesizes the prior existence of a sexually autonomous society, Fong Mei dreams of establishing a dissident community in which women are not the objects of exchange, but subjects articulating their desire and claiming rights to their bodies, to their (re)productive labour, and to their children. It is through this utopian projection that she, or rather Kae, imagines an alternative model of social organisation and perhaps more "dignified" relations between the sexes than is possible within a patriarchal social system.

In *Eroticism: Desire and Sensuality*, George Bataille, in conformity with Levi-Strauss, argues that the incest taboo and the exchange of women are not a set of rules prohibiting close mating to avoid genetic mutation, but rather they are a set of "rules intended to share out women as objects of desire" (Bataille, 1986: 213). Bataille expands the aspects of Levi-Strauss' model that he considers undeveloped. He argues that the distribution of women was necessary to contain the violence of the flesh that could incite great disorder. Bataille writes that "everything suggests that these regulations deal with the play of deep seated impulses ... a sort of inner revolution of violent intensity ... this movement is no doubt at the bottom of the potlatch of women, exogamy" (211). In short, if these "urges of the flesh" (92) were not controlled they "might have disturbed the order to which the community desired to submit itself" (52). Marriage is the institution that brings order and restraint to a "madness" or sexual frenzy that could otherwise, cause havoc.[4]

During intimacy, Fong Mei and Ting An experience what Bataille refers to as "urges of the flesh" (Bataille, 1986: 92): "Ting An braced himself ... ready to be seized by her feverish passion.... Fong Mei tore into his body like a starved woman. Wave after frenzied wave of pure pleasure consumed her; she couldn't stop until she felt him spent inside her. And afterwards, there was more hunger" (Lee, 1990: 184). However, contrary to Bataille's (1986) or Levi-Strauss' (1949) argument(s), social order is not contingent on the exchange of women. Fong Mei envisions an alternative, matriarchal order which is not based on the trade of women. Within this social system she and her children control their own sexuality and reproduction which, according to Reed, was once the norm for women. Exogamy and incest, necessary to ensure the distribution of women, are relevant only in a patriarchal system of social organisation. In short, Fong Mei's brief fantasy supports Irigaray's (1985) and O'Brien's (1981) conclusion that patriarchy is not the result of a desire for social order, but rather the outcome of men's desire to appropriate power.[5]

In *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, Foucault converts Bataille's (1986) self-repressive social scheme into a scene of production; in other words,

the process of exchange is itself productive insofar as it comes to constitute the social. The exchange process or system is traced, enacted, across and through the human body, so that Bataille's primeval categories of desire, violence, energy are assimilated to a productive model of social interaction and identity construction. From the seventeenth century onward, under evolving economic conditions, sexuality is integrated into the productive system as a component of its own. The body is disciplined and sexuality regulated. The "deployment of sexuality," says Foucault, begins to supplant "the deployment of alliance."

Foucault examines the process by which women's bodies, for example, are not merely exchanged, but also sexualised. Sex is accorded utmost value in western society. It is the "imaginary point ... each individual has to pass in order to have access ... to his identity" (1978: 155-156). Via psychoanalytic discourse of the nineteenth century and the hysterization of women, sex is redefined "as that which belongs to man, and hence is lacking in women, but at the same time, as that which by itself constitutes women's body, ordering it wholly in terms of the function of reproduction and keeping it in constant agitation through the effects of that very function" (1978: 153). In short, sex identifies women as lack, but also, conversely, it defines them in terms of their reproductive function. Foucault underscores the fact that social practices "normalise human behaviour" and human sexuality via the regulation and appropriation of bodies, and in this case, specifically through the sexualization of women's bodies. This new system of power networks, particularly psychoanalysis, reinforce the alliance system as Foucault notes, "with psychoanalysis, sexuality gave body and life to rules of alliance by saturating them with desire" (1978: 113).

Gayle Rubin in "The Traffic in Women" illustrates how the psychological model of the Oedipus complex upholds the kinship system. She argues that the Oedipus complex is an instrument for the socialization of children: it "is an apparatus for the production of sexual personality ... [and makes it possible for] societies ... [to] recalculate in their young the character traits appropriate to carrying on the business of society" (1975: 189). Prior to the Oedipal phase, the child's sexuality is unbound or unstructured. She holds "all the sexual possibilities available to human expression" (189). Although a number of sexual possibilities are available for human expression, a society will cultivate a selected few. In a patriarchal society, Rubin argues that little boys and girls are taught that the mother, the original incestuous object of desire, is unavailable to them, but belongs only to the father. If boys are willing to renounce the mother, in time, they too will possess the phallus, "the symbolic token which can later be exchanged for a woman" (193). Conversely, society teaches little girls that she will never possess the phallus or a penis. It may "pass through her" (195) and leave behind a child, but she can never exchange the penis for another woman or man. By the conclusion of the Oedipus complex, children are socialised and little girls are made to accept their "castration" (195) or powerlessness and acknowledge that certain relationships are not permissible.[6]

Unlike her mother, Suzi totally rejects and rebels against the restrictions

and exploitation inherent in a patriarchal exchange system. She protests against society's rules of mating. Suzi inhabits a pre-Oedipal-like phase where there are no limits on sexual expression. When explaining her feelings for half-brother, Morgan, to her sister, Beatrice, she justifies that "there was a way in which he refused to be sucked in. He could see that I wouldn't play the game either ... Nope, for me, it was too much like selling my soul" (172). Suzi refuses to accept her own castration as the Oedipal model prescribes for women, and chooses to be with Morgan. She also refuses to accept that certain relationships are not permissible. Hence, she is unwilling to participate in the whole system of exchange and chooses a mate from her own group rather than willingly accept to be contracted away to benefit her natal or marital families.

When Suzi becomes pregnant with Morgan's baby, a symbol and real manifestation of their transgression, "higher" powers cannot allow the baby, the product of a transgression, to survive. As Mary O'Brien observes in *The Politics of Reproduction,* "modern obstetrics, as opposed to ancient midwifery, has been a male enterprise" (1981; 46). This male enterprise must eliminate the product of a rebellion against the patriarchal system. It is no accident that the product of Suzi's transgression against the patriarchal system should die in the care of a "male enterprise." Suzi's baby is "a Doctor Dean special!" (Lee, 1990: 207) It suffers a head haemorrhage when the doctor "tried to turn the baby's head with forceps ... and punched it a bit too ... much" (208). The healthy baby boy is disposed of by the male dominated patriarchal medical institution. One of the nurses observes, "wouldn't you know it though ... that this would have to happen to a baby that nobody wanted. Like it was an act of God or something. The mother's an unwed teenager" (208). The "accident" did not have to happen nor was it an act of God. Since the baby boy was evidence of a couple's transgression or disregard for society's norms, even though he was healthy, he had no place in a patriarchal society.

Like Reed (1975) who challenges Strauss' model of social organisation, Luce Irigaray, in *Body Against Body: In Relation to the Mother,* calls for the re-evaluation of the Oedipal model especially in its resolution in relation to the mother. According to Irigaray, the renunciation and repression of the mother, which in traditional psychoanalysis is imperative for the successful completion of the Oedipal phase, actually results in "madness" (Luce Irigaray, 1980: 15) for the child of either gender. The violence of the flesh, which Bataille (1986) reasons is the basis for exogamy and the exchange of women, is, for Irigaray, the consequence of a child's repression of the mother. For little boys, negating their primary caregiver in exchange for the phallus, "the instrument of power" (Irigaray, 1980: 7) through which they will become "organisers of the world" (14), ensures that as adults they will "constantly ... seek refuge in any open body, and forever nestle into the body of other women" (15). However, when the mother, moreover when female identity, is valued and no longer sacrificed to establish "the cultural domain of the father" (16), man will find escape from the "insatiable"(15) nature of his desire and become "capable of eroticism and

reciprocity in the flesh" (17).

It is equally important for women to re-connect with "the mother in every woman and ... the woman in every mother" (17). For Irigaray, women are always mothers "just by being women" (18). They give birth to many things aside from children, such as, "love, desire, language, art, social things, political things, religious things" (18). Irigaray (1980) also cautions women against identifying with each other solely in terms of "motherhood, relations with children and nurturing function that is not necessarily a human identity" (Whitford, 1991: 192). Instead, women must improve relations among themselves and develop the intimacy that will foster their unique individual and female identities. Irigaray urges women to resolve "the problem of women-amongst-themselves [*l'entre-femmes*] and the problem of their human identity" (192) or develop what she and other feminists refer to as "'verticality' in the female identity" (Irigaray, 1993: 94). For Irigaray, "verticality" refers to women's right to foster their own "spiritual becoming" (94) and to realise their "grandeur" and "importance" (95).

Yet to develop and sustain a female identity, women require a "genealogy of women" (Irigaray, 1980: 19)—connection to their mothers and other women. Irigaray stresses, "each of us has a female family tree: we have a mother, a maternal grandmother and great-grandmother ... because we have been exiled into the house of our husbands, it is easy to forget the special quality of the female genealogy ... let us try to situate ourselves within that female genealogy so that we can win and hold on to our identity" (19). Female genealogy has much in common with Foucault's notion of genealogy. In "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," he argues that genealogy cannot pretend to offer an "unbroken continuity" (Foucault, 1984: 81) or a coherent account of events gone by. Rather it reveals events as they occurred in "dispersion" (81). Because the study of history has often been a male enterprise, it is difficult for women to discover the stories of their foremothers and to situate themselves in relation to other women.

In *Disappearing Moon Cafe*, Kae does not offer a coherent account of her family history or an "unbroken continuity" by tracing her descent "lineally from the golden chain of male to male" (Lee, 1990: 31). Rather she offers to write the story of her mothers—the stories that are often forgotten or erased because they are incongruent and conflict with patriarchal history. In short, she chooses to investigate the point of fissure, the breaks, the "accidents" and the "deviations" (Foucault, 1984: 81) that constitute her personal genealogy. The written reproduction of her history, her creative project, her "baby" in a metaphorical sense, challenges the notion of origins as traced through patrilineal lineage. In fact, her very creativity is a challenge to patriarchal order in which the father traditionally held authority over the written word.

Kae Ying Woo, Fong Mei's granddaughter and Suzi's niece, is the last in a series of Wong women to refuse and disrupt the patriarchal order. Kae's very decision to become a "poor but pure writer" (Lee, 1990: 216) and her project

to trace her matrilineal lineage incited by the birth of her son, are both creative acts that rupture the patriarchal culture. In a letter to Hermia, Kae equates becoming a writer to committing suicide: "where did I read that suicide is a declaration of ultimate bankruptcy? Hey, something I understand very well ... Nope, I am afraid that I am just as vulnerable as Suzi to having my first real creative expression thwarted. Aborted. Then like her, where would I be but nowhere?" (215). Kae immediately recognises that becoming a writer is like committing suicide or going bankrupt in a tradition historically dominated by men. Like Suzi' s baby, her creative work is in danger of being "aborted," or rejected by the patriarchal establishment. Still, like Suzi, with whom she identifies, she is willing to die "with the same passion with which she lives" (214).

Kae's decision to become a writer is an act of defiance in a literary tradition in which women in the West have traditionally felt "crazy, neurotic, splenetic, to want to be a writer" (Gilbert and Gubar, 1979: 61). According to Gilbert and Gubar in *Madwoman in the Attic*, "when seventeenth- and eighteenth-century women writers and some nineteenth-century literary writers did not confess that they thought it might actually be mad of them to want to attempt the pen, they did usually indicate that they felt in some sense apologetic about such a 'presumptuous pastime'" (61). Because of the social stigma against women developing as writers, they were made to feel guilty, remorseful and even insane for pursuing their vocations. They suffered what Gilbert and Gubar term "anxieties of authorship" (1979: 57). This anxiety was only aggravated by the fact that they were also working in "male-devised genres" (72).

In patriarchal China, women writers not only "had no tradition behind them," but they also had to combat a tradition that "kept her in place" (Feuerwerker, 1975: 146) by perpetuating oppressive and limiting images of women. For example, women were femmes fetales who would bring men to their ruin, women as the objects of desire or women as sentimentalists (146-147). Many women writers, both in the West and in China, did, however, manage to work well in "male-devised genres" (Gilbert and Gubar, 1979: 72). They also managed to tell their own stories by appearing to "conform to and yet subvert patriarchal literary standards" (73). Like her predecessors, Kae too works within a male-dominated discourse, genealogy and origins, but rather than focus on the image of the father and the tradition that traces the inheritance of the son passed on by the father, she traces her matrilineal legacy.

In short, Kae's creative project, and the narration of the story, is about tracing the mother's line, what Irigaray terms, "female genealogy" (1980: 19). She is looking for her origins, for her identity which is undeniably linked to her foremothers: "individuals must gather their identity from all the generations that touch them - past and future" (Lee, 1990: 189). Kae's search into her past is a study of genealogy in the Foucauldian sense too, for she discovers both the "happy and unhappy accidents and coincidences" (Prado, 1995: 34) that do not yield a cohesive and orderly family history. For example, she discovers her grandmother's secret affair which brought the latter fulfilment, but was

detrimental for her aunt Suzi. Kae does not "go back in time to restore an unbroken continuity" (Foucault, 1984: 81), but accepts "the miscellaneous and discontinuities of her origins" (Prado, 1995: 35). Her only certainty is that of her maternal legacy.

Kae's search for her origins is subversive because it is an alternative to the father/son paradigm in which the son, "assuming the father's name, becomes his double and thus his extension beyond death" (Aiken 184). Unlike the traditional narrative text that traces the son's succession from the father, she traces her maternal legacy.

Like the genealogist, she "sees the present state of affairs as ... a result of struggle and relations of force and domination" (Mahon, 1992: 112). Her very existence is the outcome of a transgression and not the result of a "meaningful development" (112). She is the product of a struggle in which the exploited forces were victorious. In short, her genealogy, like Foucault's analysis of descent, works to "displace" and "disassociate" (110) the subject, particularly the male subject. Rather than present an "unbroken succession of fathers begetting sons" (Aiken, 1984: 157), she introduces into female consciousness the silenced participant, the mother, and traces the succession of mothers who in some way struggled against patriarchal oppression.

In Sky Lee's *Disappearing Moon Cafe*, women's reproductive power is a source of resistance to the patriarchal order. Fong Mei conceives her children outside the marriage contract, a contract built on the "exchange of women," while Suzi commits incest and conceives a child within this forbidden union. Kae's "baby," her creative work, is a challenge to a literary tradition dominated by men. Simone de Beavoir (1997) and Shulamith Firestone (1970) have located women's oppression in women's biological and reproductive function, and perhaps this is so in a patriarchal system where women are exploited biologically, economically, and politically. It is, however, in women's power to challenge the patriarchal order and, if not (re)create the matriarchal order that Reed hypothesises as the original system of social organisation, then forge a reality that is, at least, equitable for their daughters.

[1]For reasons of length, I will limit my focus to the stories of three Wong women. The novel commences, however, with the story of Kelora Chen, a Native who is eventually rejected as a suitable partner for Gwei Chang because she offers glimpse of a matriarchal, and possibly egalitarian, society. Her ways threaten the patriarchal and economical foundations of class-based society.

[2]Irigaray's term is in reference to the play, *Oresteia* where Athena, instead of punishing Orestes for the murder of his mother, Clytemnestra, allows his crime to go unpunished and becomes "the virgin goddess, born of the Father [alone], obedient to his laws at the expense of the mother" (1980: 13).

[3]Choy Fuk also forfeits his marriage contract yet his violation is not a transgression; that is, in Chinese tradition it is permissible that a man turns to

a concubine when his wife fails to (re)produce an heir. His first wife then becomes "first mother" (Lee, 1990: 60) to the child.

[4]The legitimisation of sex within marriage need not include the oppression of women. In fact, Bataille's (1986) transgressive model maybe transposed into a (feminist) critique of patriarchy. However, Bataille builds his theory upon Strauss' model of kinship and marriage and as a result, his position too remains bound by the androcentric discourse and ideological limitations inherent in Levi-Strauss' model.

[5]For men, Irigaray maintains, sexuality entails "the appropriation of nature [women], in the desire to make it [them] (re)produce, and in exchange of its/ these [their] products with other members of society [men]" (Irigaray , 1985: 184). Mary O'Brien in *The Politics of Reproduction* explains that behind this appropriation lies "the intransigent impotency of uncertainty, an impotency which colours and ... brutalises the social and political relations in which it is expressed" (1981: 191). O'Brien theorises that patriarchy is men's attempt to resolve their alienation and exclusion from nature and the reproductive process.

[6]Foucault's argument differs slightly from Rubin's here. He argues that psychoanalysis, or any social practice in the deployment of sexuality, does not repress or prohibit sexual expression rather it produces sexuality. Yet like Rubin, Foucault agrees that the Oedipus story is "not the secret content of our unconscious, but the form of compulsion which psychoanalysis wants to impose on our desire and our unconscious ... Oedipus is an instrument of power" (cited in Mahon, 1992: 177).

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The Grandmother/ Mother/Daughter Triad
A Feminist Matrilineal Reading of Jung Chang's Wild Swans

> I have felt the age-old triangle of mother father and child, with the "I" at its eternal core, elongate and flatten out into the elegantly strong triad of grandmother mother daughter, with the "I" moving back and forth flowing in either or both directions as needed. (Lorde, 1990: 7)

In the prologue of her book *Zami*, Audre Lorde marks the advent of a new triangular structure of the so-called feminist family romances.[1] The new pattern is manifest in women's textual construction of grandmother, mother, and daughter in their exploration of femininity (maternity) and creativity. Illuminated by Lorde's groundbreaking statement, this paper seeks to offer a textual analysis of matrilineal narrative in Jung Chang's *Wild Swans* (1992). Drawing on the concept of a genogram as utilised in Howe's research (1990), this study aims to introduce first the use of "mother biography assignment" as a parallel to its literary counterpart, matrilineal narrative. The study will then continue with a close and critical examination of Chang's text by illustrating in detail the complexities as involved with literary representations of matrilineal narrative.

Thinking about the grandmother/mother/daughter triad in relation to the writing of matrilineal narratives, one important aspect that is worth noting is women writers' engagement with the use of what Karen G. Howe terms a "genogram." A genogram, according to Howe, is the clinical parallel of "the mother biography assignment" she adopts for her course on Psychology of Women. The genogram is widely used in family systems therapy, whose approach is targeted at a multi-generational level and provides a participant with "more objective views of one's parents and grandparents," and thus enables her or him "to know the personal history and stories of the older generations"

(1990: 34). In particular, this use of the genogram is applied to healing the mother-daughter relationship in therapy (34-35). In terms of literary representations of a genogram, contemporary writers of matrilineal narratives have concurrently either written "one story about matrilineage that situates individual mothers in wider contexts and understands them as having other lives, beyond the maternal function" (Hansen, 1997: 124) or allocated in their fictional and autobiographical writings one writing figure as a (grand)daughter biographer who writes about the stories of her grandmother and mother.

Drawing a parallel between "mother biography assignment" and "genogram," Howe describes and analyses how she utilises the two methods to mend the mother-daughter relationship. In an excerpt quoted by Howe from one of her students' mother biography assignments, Howe highlights the multigenerational context her student is able to see through:

> I never knew my maternal grandparents and am ashamed of my former lack of interest in them. As a result, it was difficult imagining my mother as a daughter. I also recognize the importance of my mother's role as grandmother in helping my children see me as a daughter. She often tells them what I was like as a little girl and the funny things that happened to me. (1990:36-37)

The significance of writing a mother biography assignment or genogram is that it allows daughters to see their mothers in a social context: "not only knowing the mother's story, but seeing it in the context of the family and the patriarchal society is the key to the power of the mother biographies and the genogram" (37). Viewing the mother's life in context inevitably creates a feeling of empathy in the daughter as one of the participants said: "I felt as if I knew my Mom but didn't really know her. She would tell me how she felt at a certain point in her life and I would try to remember that time and place my self back there and relate to how she was feeling all over again"(36). Indisputably, the most important technique involved with writing a genogram reverberates with Lowinsky's description of women's distinct narrative pattern as "the mother-daughter looping" when they are telling stories from their motherlines (1992: 21-22).[2]

As a literary example of genogram, Chang sets the stories of three generations of women, those of her grandmother, mother, and herself, against the background of a political maelstrom—the Warlord period, Japanese occupation, the Nationalist corruption, fanatical communism, and Cultural Revolution—in recent Chinese history. Spanning the period from 1909 (the year when Chang's grandmother was born) to 1978 (when Chang left for England), Chang weaves her *Wild Swans* into a saga of both family and national history. In addition, the name "wild swans" implies their female identities as Chang's grandmother, mother, her older sister, and herself all have, as part of their names, the character of "hong," which carries the connotation of a "swan"

in Chinese. Thus, the title and the outline of the book demonstrate Chang's purpose in constructing her own matrilineal narrative.

At the time when Chang launches the writing of her book, her grandmother has already died. As an intellectual herself and being better educated than her mother and grandmother, Chang definitely has the privilege to write. Even though the idea of writing the book is initiated by her mother, Chang has apparently conducted in-depth research into her book as she indicates in the epilogue that she made a research journey back to China in spring 1989 (1992: 506-507). Thus, it is rather intriguing to ponder over the question of whether *Wild Swans* is purely based on truth or fiction or an amalgam of several contributing factors such as oral history, social and political history, and her own research and fiction. Despite this, Chang's elaboration on her family's life narratives in both extensive and intensive detail demonstrates her attempt to re-present, to a certain degree, the "truthfulness" of each individual life she is narrating.

One effective means she uses to achieve this effect of truthfulness is by juxtaposing and contextualising their personal lives within the political and historical milieu or upheaval. Casting her matrilineal narrative in both historical and social contexts, she is able to go back to the past when her grandmother and mother were located in different times and places. Chang's lively or near-to-life narration of the incidents happening in the lives of both her grandmother and mother engenders a truthful re-presentation of the subjectivities of her female ancestors. That is, a reader is presented with the most approximate closeness to or encounter with Chang's grandmother and mother back in their times. Although their life stories are written in an objective and third-person narrative, it is Chang's detailed descriptions of them that equip the reader with the subjective experiences of her female ancestors. Fundamentally, Chang's elaborate way of narrating life stories assists in recovering the subjectivities of her female predecessors. One such instance can be found in Chang's riveting but excruciating portrayal of how her grandmother's feet were bound at the age of two:

> My grandmother's feet had been bound when she was two years old. Her mother, who herself had bound feet, first wound a piece of white cloth about twenty feet long around her feet, bending all the toes except the big toe inward and under the sole. Then she placed a large stone on top to crush the arch. My grandmother screamed in agony and begged her to stop. Her mother had to stick a cloth into her mouth to gag her. My grandmother passed out repeatedly from the pain. (24)

When first reading Chang's uncensored and revealing disclosure of the whole process of binding her grandmother's feet, one can be overwhelmed by a sense of uncanny terror. As is common to women either predating or contemporaneous to the generation of Chang's grandmother, Chang's grand-

mother's experience of bound feet can be said to be "truthful" or "representative" at least in certain significant ways. More notably, the divulgence of her grandmother's extreme agony and helpless pleading with her own mother to stop the binding brings the grandmother's subjectivity to the surface. Even though the whole episode is not articulated in the first-person narrative of the grandmother, the dramatic effect of the narration exudes the writer's and the reader's "intersubjective attunement" with the grandmother.

Indeed, a number of things emerge as Chang refers back to her matrilineage. What Chang learns from her grandmother and mother is the perseverance, capacity, and strength they have earned from their enduring suffering throughout their lives. Although constantly succumbing to her fate and circumstance, Chang's grandmother takes a major leap by arranging to flee with Chang's mother from the imprisonment of her concubinage and from the prospect of being manipulated as a slave to General Xue's wife upon the death of General Xue. It is by this outrageous and courageous escape from her demeaning life that Chang's grandmother brings a new life to her daughter and also the generations to come. In an analogous fashion, Chang strives to "take wing" at the end of the book by winning a scholarship to study in the West, commencing her new life after the inhuman ravages of Mao's Cultural Revolution. In retrospect, what Chang has in common with her mother is their talent and incredible determination that make them outshine their counterparts. Chang's mother is subject to numerous trials that serve as testament to her unshakeable faith in communism. Chang, apparently following her mother's footsteps, also endures various ordeals of being a red guard and then working as a peasant, a barefoot doctor, a steelworker, and an electrician during the Cultural Revolution in China. These three generations of women or the "Wild Swans" as named by Chang outlive their male counterparts because their perseverance and strength allow them to be the ultimate survivors.

Inspired by the notion of "progress" in Cosslett's reading of Forster's *Hidden Lives* (2000: 149-150),[3] I would also like to spotlight that Chang's *Wild Swans* can be interpreted in this respect. Despite the recurrence of a similar pattern and trajectory in the formation of life among these three generations of women, there is also simultaneously a moving forward or a progress in Chang's matrilineal narrative. Being located in their different times and contexts, the life of a daughter repeatedly departs from and revises the life their mother is leading. Chang's grandmother, having her feet bound, being a concubine of a General and later a proper wife of a doctor yet under insurmountable obstacles and circumstances, cannot possibly lead the life her daughter, Chang's mother, is privileged to own by her own choice and knowledge as an educated and devout communist officer. Chang's mother, however, is trapped in her firm belief in and stout loyalty to Chinese communism and its party so that she, unlike her daughter, Jung Chang, who "take[s] wing" to fly to the West, cannot triumphantly escape from her later wasted and betrayed life under Red China.

This means, as the time advances along with the blooming of new generations, a mother's footsteps are followed by her daughter but performed with a deeper and different imprint each time.

Contemplating this narrative of "progress" in relation to the matrilineal ambivalence as exhibited often in a three-generational triad,[4] there is, as we can see, hardly any overt or explicit display of either resentment or ambivalence between mothers and daughters in Chang's *Wild Swans*. One discernible instance of dissension and conflict between mother and daughter occurs only when Chang's mother deviates from her mother's path of life, when Chang's grandmother wants to subsume her daughter to an arranged marriage, as symptomatic of a woman's life during Chang's grandmother's time. Partly due to Chang's mother's rebellious but independent character and partly because of the introduction of communism and women's equal rights into China during Chang's mother's time, Chang's mother reacts unexpectedly by running away from home and opting into being enrolled in a teacher's college with a guarantee of a prospective teaching profession which can sustain a self-reliant life for Chang's mother but also a wasted and downgrading position with regard to her talent. Although Chang's mother eventually consents to go home more often upon Chang's grandmother's incessant pleading (83-84), Chang's mother's self-awakening and awareness are already indicative of the likely progression of this matrilineal narrative. Yet, the paucity of ambivalence existing between mother and daughter in *Wild Swans*, with the exception of this episode of conflict discussed here, could be mainly the result of the overriding importance of identification and strength between mother and daughter in order to be an ally to one another in their life-long struggle against the overpowering impact of patriarchal dictates and political and social turmoil and chaos.

In comparison with the delineation of the mother-daughter relationship—the strong mother-daughter identification in *Wild Swans*—the daughter's ambivalence towards her father becomes more conspicuous. For instance, Chang's father is portrayed, on the one hand, as a man of complete integrity who sticks to his communist belief and principle even at the risk of his life. He is perceived, on the other hand, as a husband and a father who will sacrifice his family's needs for the benefit of his communist party. In the early years of her parents' marriage, Chang expresses several times her empathy with her mother's suffering, including her mother's miscarriage, caused by her father's indifference to her mother's needs. During Chang's mother's several unfair trials by the Chinese communist party, Chang's father does not evince any of his sympathy for his wife but instructs her to remain loyal and honest to their party. Once, Chang's father even sends her grandmother back to Jinzhou from which her grandmother is later forced to take a long march across China in order to take good care of Chang's mother who is giving birth to a child. Chang's father's incorruptibility is shown later when Chang's last hope of entering the university relies heavily on her father's assistance but is dashed by her father's unwillingness to help:

> On the hospital grounds we sat on the edge of a low stone bridge to rest. My father looked in torment. Eventually he said, "Would you forgive me? I really find it very difficult to do this.... For a second I felt a surge of resentment, and wanted to cry out at him that there was no fairer alternative. I wanted to tell him how much I had dreamed of going to the university, and that I deserved it—for my hard work, for my exam results, and because I had been elected. But I knew my father knew all this. And it was he who had given me my thirst for knowledge. Still, he had his principles, and because I loved him I had to accept him as he was, and understand his dilemma of being a moral man living in a land which was a moral void. I held back my tears and said, "Of course." We trudged back home in silence. (456-457)

This extract typifies how Chang's attitude towards her father is mixed together with feelings of resentment and consent. Chang's ambivalence towards her father is able to be understood and even reconciled by her love for him even though Chang tries hard to appease and surpass her anger and despair. Yet, it is also notable that Chang, who shows less sympathy with her father, is inclined to describe her father as a tragic hero in her book whose character inexorably leads to his downfall in the end. Despite her father's inadequacy in fulfilling his daughter's need, Chang still enters the university thanks to her mother's resourcefulness (457).

Chang's ambivalence or resentment against her father, as divulged in the process of writing her father's relationship with her mother and grandmother, heightens and gives prominence to the importance of the mother-daughter bonding in their three-generational triad of grandmother, mother, and daughter. The persistence of a sense of strong female networking and cohesion between mother and daughter can be found in several instances in the text. One such remarkable example happens in the incident of Chang's grandmother's death. After her grandmother dies, Chang shoulders a major responsibility by blaming herself for not taking good care of her grandmother while she is terribly ill. As a kind of self-punishment, she even takes her vow of not establishing any relationship with boys in the future:

> I blamed myself for not looking after my grandmother as well as I might have. She was in the hospital at the time when I had come to know Bing and Wen. My friendships with them had cushioned and insulated me, and had blunted my awareness of her suffering. I told myself it was despicable to have had any happy feelings at all, by the side of what I now realized was my grandmother's deathbed. I resolved never to have a boyfriend again. Only by self-denial, I thought, could I expiate some of my guilt. (409)

Chang perceives her ultimate separation from her grandmother as though

it were an enactment of the Demeter-Persephone separation by male intrusion. For Chang, compensating for the loss of her grandmother means a separation from men. This strong grandmother-granddaughter bond between Chang and her grandmother can be seen in their interactions with each other. Chang's grandmother has always been both physically and emotionally present in their family. While Chang's mother is forced to separate off from her children because of the infliction of several political trials on her, Chang's grandmother is there to function as a substitute or surrogate mother. In addition, Chang's filial duty to her grandmother reflects what Edelman says about the reliving and reproducing of the mother-daughter relation in a grandmother-granddaughter one if there is a close and connected relationship between grandmother and granddaughter (1999: 202-215). Chang's remorse in reaction to her grandmother's death is a result of what she has cultivated from her mother's loving and devoted relationship with her grandmother. Thus, by implementing the act of repenting and writing in response to her grandmother's death, Chang is able to reestablish her maternal connection in her mother's absence.

Another episode, which delineates the mother-daughter struggle between separation and connection though it is enacted by the outside force of social and political disruption, happens when Chang goes to visit her mother in the camp after their long separation. After staying with her mother for ten days and heading for her next destination to her father's camp, Chang and her mother experience an anguished separation. While both of them are waiting for the truck to pick Chang up to take her to her father's camp, Chang's mother, who wants to give her daughter a taste of the New Year's breakfast, runs back to her camp to fetch a bowl of round dumplings, tang-yuan. Unfortunately, her mother does not manage to arrive earlier than the truck. When Chang is anxiously waiting for her mother's arrival, she is astonished to see her mother carrying the bowl, striving to maintain her balance in fear of spilling the soup out of the bowl while approaching Chang at a steady speed from a distance. As Chang knows the truck won't wait any further, she gets on the truck without waiting for her mother to arrive. The bowl Chang's mother is holding then falls to the ground upon her mother's seeing that the truck will soon be taking her daughter away. Yet, Chang's mother continues walking to the spot where they have been waiting for the truck previously to make sure Chang has left safely. Chang rehearses hearing her mother narrate the story thus:

> Years later, she told me the bowl had fallen from her hand when she saw me climbing onto the truck. But she still ran to the spot where we had been sitting, just to make sure I had really gone, although it could not have been anyone else getting onto the truck. There was not a single person around in that vast yellowness. For the next few days she walked around the camp as though in a trance, feeling blank and lost. (434-435)

Although the physical separation between mother and daughter is inevitable, their emotional connection cannot be severed by outside forces. As round dumplings symbolise "family reunion" in terms of Chinese culture and tradition, the mother's insistence on running to the spot where she and her daughter have been sitting *together* even after the bowl of round dumplings she is carrying is gone indicates the mother's longing for the mother-daughter reconnection.

In *Wild Swans*, Chang describes vividly the torments and sufferings her family has all been through until she "take[s] wing" to fly away from her motherland, China, and separates from her family. Nonetheless, her mother's visit, which materialises the mother-daughter reunion in London, enables Chang to see through her past in a new light. Instead of suppressing this painful memory of her family history under the incessant destruction of Mao's sovereignty, Chang begins to recognise that "the past was no longer too painful to recall because I had found love and fulfillment and therefore tranquility" (506). More significantly, what Chang has gained from looking back at her matrilineage is the scripting of the mother-daughter connection in resistance to the totalising estrangement and devastation of family enforced by Chinese patriarchal doctrines and apparatus. Her construction of matrilineal narrative has not only materialised Lorde's delineation of grandmother/mother/daughter triad but also developed the writing of a genogram in a more complex and creative form.

This paper is extracted from my unpublished PhD thesis, entitled "Mother S/he Wrote: A Poetics of Matrilineal Narratives in Contemporary Wo/men's Writing," which I have completed recently.

[1]In tandem with the recuperation of motherhood in a series of feminist writings since the 1970s, particularly the revisionary psychoanalytic paradigms of object-relations theory, Marianne Hirsch in her book *The Mother-Daughter Plot* recognises a shift from the centrality of the paternal, as formulated in the classic Freudian model, to that of the maternal in her vigorous study of selected women's texts published in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This modification from patrilineage to matrilineage, as Hirsch envisions it, serves as an alternative to reformulate traditional Freudian family romances whose androcentric and ethnocentric framework has failed to account for the dynamics of other discourses. Thus, Hirsch proposes the emergence of the mother-daughter plot in post-modernist women's texts to counter the paternal plot as previously constructed in a number of women's texts in the nineteenth century. In contrast to female family romances whose narratives are centred on fictional heroines' denigration of mother figures and their subsequent embrace of male (father) figures, feminist family romances render the male position as secondary, mainly because of psychoanalytic feminists' preoccupation with a pre-Oedipal mother-child bond. According to this psychoanalytic feminist revi-

sion, the relative obscurity of male figures becomes the corollary of feminist family romances. In an attempt to make clear her notion of the feminist family romance as deviating from the Freudian paradigm, Hirsch continues to reinforce that "the feminist family romance of the 1970s is based on the separation not from parents or the past, but from patriarchy and from men in favor of female alliances" (1989: 54-58; 125-40). Connecting Lorde's grandmother/mother/daughter triad with Hirsch's feminist family romances, I seek to term matrilineal narratives "new feminist family romances."

[2]Linking her notion of motherline with story-telling, Lowinsky (1992) uses a term "looping" to describe women's pattern of telling stories from their motherline as they refer to themselves as mothers and daughters and traverse this journey to different times and locations.

> Looping ties together life stages, roles, and generations. It disregards linear time. It involves a cyclical view of life, it finds meaning in patterns that repeat. We measure our lives in our mother's terms, and in our daughter's terms....You re-experience your past in your children and anticipate your future in your parents, while at the same time your children constellate the future and your parents the past. (22)

According to Lowinsky, we see our past and future in our daughters and mothers while simultaneously in ourselves as mothers and daughters, we revise and reincarnate our mothers' past but also envision and shed light on our daughters' future. In short, Lowinsky defines "looping" thus: "Looping is an associative process by which we pass through our own experience to understand that of another" (21-22).

[3]Margaret Forster's *Hidden Lives* is another good example of contemporary women's writing of matrilineal narratives. Forster's book is based on the life stories of her grandmother, mother, and herself. But her book can also be seen as oral and social history in which the life narratives of her grandmother and mother chronicle the changes of working-class women's lives in Carlisle, England across generations. See Forster (1996). For a full discussion of Forster's text, see Cosslett (2000).

[4]The existence of ambivalence between mother and daughter is a recurring theme in most matrilineal narratives. As illustrated often in contemporary women's writing of matrilineal narratives, this feeling of ambivalence is mainly caused by the misunderstanding between mother and daughter. However, an important feature of matrilineal narratives is the working out of mother-daughter conflict and ambivalence that reconnects them together. See Maglin (1980) and Cosslett (1996).

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Book Reviews

Inventing Maternity: Politics, Science and Literature, 1650-1865

Susan C. Greenfield and Carol Barash, eds.
Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1999

Reviewed by Pamela J. Downe

The eleven essays that constitute this volume present persuasive evidence that our current, increasingly globalized notions of maternity and maternalism actually have their roots in 17th and 18th century social process and popular thought. Specifically, trends in breastfeeding, child custody laws, domestic duty, and various conceptualizations of female physiology are shown to have influenced the shifting and contested terrains of maternity that emerged in Britain and North America between 1650 and 1865. Through analyses of a variety of literary and scientific texts, all the contributors to this volume expertly discuss how these emergent terrains were naturalized so that the strong relationships between mothers and children that came to the fore during this time period, despite evidence to the contrary, are now seen as a timeless characterization of universal motherhood.

The historical excavation of modern maternity presented in this book is perhaps the best I have ever read. The articles are arranged chronologically, beginning with four opening chapters that explore issues of maternal and paternal authority in the seventeenth century. Eve Keller's article, "Making up for Losses: The Workings of Gender in Harvey's *de Generatione animalium*,"

analyzes the scientific accounts of conception offered by William Harvey in 1651 and it offers an interesting interpretation of how the maternal body was seen as the space *against which* the masculinized fetus develops his autonomy. This article—particularly when coupled with Susan Greenfield's analysis of how ideas of sovereignty collide with contemporary understandings of embryology in John Dryden's (1682) poem, *Absalom and Achitopal* – presents readers with an insightful and methodologically innovative reading of 17th century scientific thought on maternity, fetal agency, and parental authority. Kimberly Latta's article on the tensions between secular and religious notions of maternity that emerge in the writings of Anne Bradstreet, and Julia Epstein's reprinted article on the gendered interpretations of "monstrous births," round out the introductory section that deconstructs and historicizes debates over parental roles, responsibilities, and regulation.

The remaining seven articles in *Inventing Maternity* build on the momentum and richness of the first four by delving into questions of 18th and early 19th century breastfeeding, male authority and heterosexuality, reproduction, as well as infanticide. Claudia Johnson's article on Mary Wollstonecraft is particularly interesting as Johnson offers a profound and often overlooked critique of the relationship between compulsory heterosexuality and maternity that can be found in the writings of this feminist icon. Issues of class and nationalism underlie many of these articles as the romantic construction of maternity is unearthed and the bias towards the economically privileged and the colonizing nations is revealed. Toni Bowers brings issues of class to the fore in particularly telling ways in her study of the representations of mothering and women's domestic responsibilities that appear throughout Samuel Richardson's (1741) *Pamela, Part 2*, while Mary Chapman's article on the supposed instances of infanticide of White children at the hands of Native Americans in James Cooper's (1826) *The Last of the Mohicans* deals effectively with the ramifications of British colonialism. The emergence of a Malthusian nationalism that relied on a particular view of reproduction-as-duty-and-destiny is dealt with most effectively by Anita Levy in her chapter on "Reproductive Urges: Literacy, Sexuality, and Eighteenth Century Englishness." Here, Levy examines how language used to describe reproduction, maternity, and population growth—and the related language describing the spread of literacy—reflects the overriding societal concern in eighteenth-century England with unauthorized and uncontrolled replication and growth within national borders.

It is extremely difficult to capture and convey the complex richness of this volume. Taken together, the constitutive essays offer a historical analysis of the making of modern maternity that is sure to appeal to a wide variety of readers, though I believe the volume is primarily intended for academics. Susan Greenfield's introduction is remarkably thorough, offering enough context and commentary to wet readers' appetites without becoming redundant. The only drawback is an over reliance on English texts. Although three essays deal specifically with American and Irish material, the volume restricts itself by not

dealing with a broader array of scientific thought, literature, folklore, and song. Otherwise, *Inventing Maternity* is a thought provoking and extremely important volume that will have a significant impact across academic disciplines.

House of Mirrors: Performing Autobiograph(icall)y in Language/ Education

Renee Norman
New York: Peter Lang, 2001

Reviewed by Dorothy Agnes Lander

It's hard to find an alias for "my mother" (199).

This line is embedded in Renee Norman's "bricolage" – a mother/daughter story that incorporates and transforms the autobiography of her teenaged daughter, Sara. The epigrammatic phrase anticipates the parenthetic "m(other)" who is constitutive of Norman's "autobiography in/as re-search" (10). Norman performs autobiograph(icall)y through poetry, personal essays, memoirs, and examines her own subject positions—writer, m(other), teacher, scholar, Jew—as interwoven with the autobiographical texts of others. As a mother-writer, she states emphatically, "I am to this day stuck on writing about mothering as I mother while I write....The mother life looms largest and is writ in the writing" (18).

The primary organizing metaphor of Norman's book, the house of mirrors, is joined with the m(other)ing metaphor. The author introduces these metaphors in her opening chapter, and I accepted her invitation to enter an/ other side of the mirror, to "speculate in mirrors as you look at m(others)" (23). As a "not-mother"—Norman uses Brandt's hyphenated category throughout her book—I perform autobiographical research in/as activist mothering and engage in personal speculating on performative instances of othering not-mother-writers. Norman's autobiographical writing, replete with fractured words such as "m(other)," singles out mothers and mother-writers who are not always taken seriously. Norman discusses the co-emergence of autobiography and mother-writings as "a burgeoning field in education" (19) and she maps the connections between autobiography and mother-writings.

The "contradictions between what [Norman] intends and constructs" (21) is felt, however, in her valorizing of mothers and mother-writers over not-

mothers as autobiographical writers. The juxtaposition of rooms and mirrors in the works of Doris Lessing (as a mother-writer) and Hannah Arendt (as a not-mother writer) is a performative instance of m(othering). The category of "not-mother" defines writers in terms of what they are not, however, and echoes phallocentric writing in which women are constituted in Lacanian terms of insufficiency.

In her opening essay "Genesis," Norman introduces Ursula LeGuin and Helen Weinzweig who began to write after their children were born and raised. The bricolage that Norman performs with Doris Lessing's autobiographical fiction in the Martha Quest books emerges from her attraction to Lessing as a mother-writer and shapes the section of the book entitled "Martha-and-I-in-Mirrors." As she "entered Martha, inhabiting her like a spirit for a series of poems" (86), the reflections of the many not-mother-writers who shape Norman's theorizing—most notably Ted Aoki and Carl Leggo – fade out of focus. Still, she ably performs the bricolage of reading and writing mothers and allows not-mothers to "enter the contested territory of what it means to (be) mother" (183). But Norman challenges the anti-autobiographical positions of not-mother writers, particularly Hannah Arendt, and I was left with the impression that maternity, "the most important and transforming experience" (184) of Norman's life, must leave not-mother-writers bereft of experiences that qualify as "transformative."

Compare Norman's bricolage layered onto the correspondence between friends Hannah Arendt and Mary McCarthy, with her subsequent musings on childlessness and its effect on Arendt's philosophical positions. In a lyrical poem entitled "Hannah's Child," Norman suggests that Arendt's childlessness is manifest in her lack of feminist thought: Arendt "did not know the interruption and plurality of motherhood. That may account for Hannah's strict division between the public and the private" (177). In Norman's account, writing friends seem less likely than writing mothers to experience transformation or to generate feminist thought.

From my position as not-mother, I entered each of Norman's rooms to speculate on m(others) and I wish to revisit these rooms for particular themes and writers/re-searchers who enrich her autobiographical performance. Her bibliography is an excellent resource for further work on autobiography and language/education. Unfortunately, the book lacks an index that would facilitate browsing in the house of mirrors.

Misconceptions: Truth, Lies, and the Unexpected on the Journey to Motherhood

Naomi Wolf
New York: Doubleday, 2001

Reviewed by Michelle Moravec

Naomi Wolf's *The Beauty Myth* (1991) was the closest thing that women of my generation had to *The Feminine Mystique*, so I had great hopes for her latest work *Misconceptions: Truth, Lies, and the Unexpected on the Journey to Motherhood.*

Misconceptions is really three books in one. In part one, which accounts for almost half the book, Wolf documents her nine months of pregnancy. In part two, she discusses the medical model of childbirth that predominates in the United States. Finally, part three allows Wolf to explore the impact of motherhood on her life as a feminist.

Although she promises to "explore the hidden truths behind giving birth in America today" (13), Wolf offers little that is new in *MisConceptions*. Her indignant disbelief that pregnant women experience misogyny within the medical establishment and society makes one wonder where Wolf has lived, since numerous feminist authors before her have documented their own experiences of misogyny. And while she raises some potentially interesting issues – how pregnancy makes a feminist reconsider her position on abortion, for example – they are subsumed by sensationalism as Wolf imagines her fetus "lurching" (31) against her lungs when she voices pro-choice sentiments.

Wolf's ability to skillfully synthesize and interpret scholarly research made *The Beauty Myth* both powerful and popular. *Misconceptions*, however, is based on a loose compendium of random research and anecdotal evidence drawn from Wolf's personal experience and undocumented conversations with her friends. While she condemns the omnipresent *What To Expect When You're Expecting* for its "drawings of suburban white women in rocking chairs" (23), Wolf does not broaden her focus to include a more diverse group of women. If Wolf, a woman of privilege by any measure, had such negative experiences during pregnancy, how does she envision the pregnancy experiences of less privileged women?

Part three, entitled "New Life," would seem to offer Wolf the greatest potential "to show how the experience of becoming a mother, as miraculous and fulfilling as it is, is also undersupported, sentimentalized, and even manipulated at women's expense" (2). But rather than serve as a revolutionary cry, "A New Life" reads as a lament for feminist principles, each of which is sacrificed at the alter of "fairness" (237) as woman after woman Wolf interviews resigns herself

to becoming the primary caregiver in her household. In "A Mother's Manifesto," five short pages in a book of 287 pages, Wolf does little more than compile a "wish list" of demands such as "real Family Leave," "on-site day care," and "tax deductions and benefits" for family members who care for "the new mother and baby" (284). Ironically, the same woman who "helped to launch a new wave of feminism" – according to the dust jacket of her book – offers a "motherhood feminism" (284) that looks more like a consumer-rights than a feminist movement. Unfortunately, Wolf's book will do little to overturn the misconception that motherhood is not a feminist issue.

Naked Motherhood: Shattering Illusions and Sharing Truths

Wendy LeBlanc
Sydney, Australia: Random House, 1999

Reviewed by Shelley M. Park

Naked Motherhood alludes to the story of the emperor who had no clothes. As Wendy LeBlanc suggests in her introduction, "[a]ll of us collude with the conspiracy by pretending we can see [mother] fully clothed in all her mythological finery. We fear we will look foolish and inadequate if we admit we find motherhood difficult or cry out for help when we feel we can cope no longer on our own. Our mothers walk naked – and they do walk alone" (1). As the mother of two elementary-school age daughters, I often have bemoaned the lack of social support for mothering, as does LeBlanc. Although the mothers whom LeBlanc surveys in this social scientific study of mothering are from Australia and New Zealand, the notion that effective mothering is easy is an illusion that needs shattering in North America, as well. The demythologizing of motherhood begins, as LeBlanc suggests, by sharing our struggles as well as our joys. Mothering is a humbling experience. And we need to share these truthful, sometimes painful, sometimes embarrassing, stories of humility.

LeBlanc's book is divided into eight chapters, each intended to expose the "gulf between [a woman's] expectations and the actual experience" of motherhood (13). The first four chapters are arranged, roughly, in the chronological order of a new mother's experiences. Chapter one explores the difficulties mothers may face with pregnancy, birth, breastfeeding, and sleep deprivation; chapter two examines loss of freedom and spontaneity; chapter three surveys post-partum changes in (physical, emotional, and social) self-image; and chapter four discusses the mother's "emotional roller coaster." Chapters five

through seven examine a mother's relationships with other persons, exploring respectively a (married) mother's relationship with her partner, a single mother's relationships with ex-partners, other caregivers, and men she is dating, and all mothers' relationships with "the greater world," namely extended family, other mothers, other children, friends, co-workers (or ex-co-workers), and childcare workers. Each chapter ends with a section entitled "Help for Hanging in There." These sections (along with the contact information for social service agencies provided for Australian and New Zealand mothers) are useful anodynes in an otherwise depressing book. It is not until the final (eighth) chapter, that the rewards, privileges, and joys of mothering are discussed.

As I have suggested, *Naked Motherhood* tilts heavily toward a discussion of the negative aspects of mothering. As a welcome alternative to works that seek to romanticize mothering, this book overcompensates by failing to tell enough about positive mothering experiences. Other limitations of this book include its almost exclusive focus on the mothers of newborns (none of the stories shared here concern teenagers, nor even toddlers), on heterosexual mothers (all of the partners here are either husbands or they are referred to by the gendered pronoun "he"), and on middle-class mothers (poverty is discussed primarily in the chapter on single-mothers, thereby implying that only single-mother families are poor). An additional difficulty with this book concerns its methodology. LeBlanc's book is based on quantitative and qualitative data obtained from surveying Australian and New Zealand mothers. Nowhere, however, does she indicate how many surveys were distributed, to whom they were distributed, how they were distributed, nor does she provide the response rate to these surveys. This methodological flaw may well be related to the apparent biases noted above. Qualitative data gleaned from these surveys is used effectively, as a means of women sharing stories about motherhood. But it is hard to know whether these stories collectively reflect demographic biases, and – without also knowing the methods used to gather data – how to appropriately theorize the narratives.

Nonetheless, LeBlanc's first book does succeed, in part, at doing what it sets out to do, namely, shatter some of the more prevalent and dangerous myths surrounding motherhood. Chief among these myths is the fiction that having a child will not change one's life. As LeBlanc states, "[m]otherhood alters a person at such a fundamental level. It exerts influence on the way she relates to herself, other people, the world and on her very experience of existence" (333). For first-time, middle-class, heterosexual mothers of newborn babies experiencing the shock of these changes, this book promises to assist with consciousness-raising. Like Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* that (despite its limitations) inspired a generation of 1950s and 60s suburban women to abandon an identity steeped in the functionalist ideology of the housewife, LeBlanc's *Naked Motherhood* will teach important feminist lessons to a generation of women raised on the ideologies of motherhood perpetuated by 1970s

and '80s sitcoms such as *The Brady Bunch, Family Ties,* and *The Cosby Show,* ideologies that falsely led women to believe they could have it all and be it all. In fact, effective mothering is neither easy, nor natural; raising healthy, happy children without losing one's own identity and sanity requires systems of social support.

From Grandmother to Granddaughter: Salvadoran Women's Stories

Michael Gorkin, Marta Pineda, and Gloria Leal
Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000

Reviewed by Kathleen L. Ward

From Grandmother to Granddaughter offers more than life stories of nine Salvadoran women. Embedded in the narratives are cultural traditions and values characteristic of El Salvador. In addition, the stories give evidence of the changing roles and status of women in a strongly patriarchal society and insight into the civil turmoil of El Salvador's recent past. These are ample reasons to read this rich collection of oral histories. But the primary reason to read this volume is for the opportunity to meet the women themselves: worth knowing and akin to the carefully constructed characters of good fiction, they tell us far more than we might realize.

Featuring three generations of women from three different family lines, the book conveys each woman's perspective on her life experiences: childhood, marriage, virginity, birthing, feminism, machismo, motherhood, war, and opportunities (both realized and lost). The book records the complex interplay of generations and, although intergenerational tensions exist and are discussed openly, affectionate respect connects the women across generations, particularly granddaughters and grandmothers: "You've been talking to her, right?" says Sara Gutierrez Rivas of her grandmother, Niña Julia. "So you know how hard her life was ... Others devalued her, but she never lost a sense of her own worth. I can feel this when she talks. She has this composure, this understanding about things."

Paulina Solares Nuñez, also a granddaughter, claims, "Actually, the one adult I can talk to about these things is my grandmother. She's cool. She's sort of modern.... I've asked her whether she was a virgin when she got married, and she said yes. But she didn't stop there and refuse to answer any other questions. She told me how she felt, how it was for her."

Class standing is central to the lives of these women. Niña Cecilia Nuñez's

life of relative ease, and the subsequent ease of her progeny, differs markedly from the struggles of campesina Niña Delores García who "went without eating so there'd be enough for the kids." The Rivas family is an example of the emerging middle class who, at times, expresses greater affinity with the peasant population than the landed gentry. Each woman views the nation's Civil War (and the United States involvement) largely in terms of economics, her own sympathies determined by access to or lack of opportunity and resources.

While women's lives are the focus of this fine ethnography, another relevant narrative emerges, that of the interviewing team, all psychologists with their own backgrounds, motives, and political leanings. Their unique collaboration—a working-out of gringo and local, female and male, socialist and conservative intersectings that inevitably complicate and enliven the text – is a story of its own. Fortunately, the authors were persuaded early on to include a dialogic addendum in which they speak candidly of their undertaking. Michael Gorkin also provides introductory commentary on the ethical dilemmas inherent in the gathering of life stories across national, class, and gender borders. In the case of *From Grandmothers to Granddaughters*, the border crossings are successful and serve to open the lives of nine women and their ordinary, yet quite remarkable, lives.

Lifeline

Ruth Panofsky
Toronto: Guernica Editions, 2001

Reviewed by Marion Gold

My writing had come to a halt. A proverbial brick wall over which I could not clamber had erected itself. Then Ruth Panofsky's *Lifeline* arrived as a welcome diversion and an excuse to avoid writing. I would read another woman's words, perhaps derive inspiration, and be moved to fill the blank computer screen with words of my own.

Lifeline records experiences of family, of parenting, and of being parented. Panofsky's poems cover a range of subjects, from the mundane to the sacred. The curve of the poet's words rising and falling on the page communicate meaning so strong that it erased the sense of nothingness I had been confronting in my own attempt to describe decades of family life and imbue them with significance.

"Curbside Embrace" brought to life an old photograph of me as a sturdy two-year-old standing amidst a bed of flowers, barely visible through the encircling, protective arms of my late father. Panofsky's Bolshevik grandfather eating a banana—peel and all—is an exact replica of my fifteen-year-old

mother eating her first banana in Toronto in 1926, just after her arrival in Canada from a Polish village.

"Firstborn," wherein the father is redeemed and blessed through the birth of his grandson, brought to mind that there were no grandfathers to greet my own sons and daughters at their births. But a great-grandfather welcomed my first-born daughter with a blessing recited in Hebrew, and a blessing upon himself—so privileged was he to have been granted a great-grandchild at the age of sixty-seven.

Lifeline limns the landscape of a woman's life. It evokes a life shaped by the vicissitudes of childhood, imperfect parents, and the gift of an infant's trusting, clinging fist curled around a mother's reaching finger. And this trust is complicated by a tapestry of knots and loose threads. A son with Tourette Syndrome, soon no longer a sweet-smelling babe in swaddling, interjects a note of harsh reality that threatens to unravel the stitches of a life.

In *Lifeline*, Ruth Panofsky travels back to the past of her childhood, links past and present, and portrays the life of a woman—as daughter, wife, and mother—in spare, beautiful poetry. The volume is brief enough to be read in one sitting, but profound enough to make a lasting impression. Panofsky's poems may revive memories that have blurred into the grayness of forgotten time.

Bearing Life: Women's Writings on Childlessness

Ratner, Rochelle, ed.
New York: Feminist Press, 2000

Reviewed by Monika Elbert

Luckily, I came of age in the 1970s when women did not seem to need excuses for not wanting or not having children. I went to Douglass College, an all-women's college, in the heyday of feminism, when most of my peers looked ahead to lives unlike those of our mothers, when many of us did not have the urge to have a baby. At that time, a book like Rochelle Ratner's collection – an apology for childlessness—would have seemed superfluous. I think it is a sad testament to the present, conservative times that a book like Ratner's has to exist at all – to explain away the phenomenon of childlessness, to make it seem less aberrant in the face of the witch-hunting advertising and consumerist media which pressure women to reproduce and which place as much value on "the baby" as it does on the husband, the house, and the car. Ratner's book is meant for "the next childless woman not to feel so alone."

Fortunately, Rochelle Ratner has put together a fine collection of essays,

poems, and stories written by contemporary American and Canadian women (mothers and non-mothers). These texts trace the psychological attitudes of women in three stages of life: "Facing Choice," "Knowing Loss," and "Bearing Life." The first section concerns itself with a woman's decision whether or not to have children and her need to defend her choice to others. In this section, as in the others, the most interesting works are the essays. Especially compelling is Irene Klepfisz's lead essay, "Women Without Children; Women Without Families; Women Alone," in which she arrives at the realization that having a baby is not the solution to existential angst, that one can still feel alone and afraid with children. In "Meditations on Childlessness," Vicki Linder is deeply aware of the loss of community and friends that results from her choice not to have children. A wonderfully satiric essay by Joy Williams, "The Case Against Babies," suggests that Americans are smitten with the idea of fertility (and the drugs and treatments that go along with it), partly in response to Hollywood hype about older movie stars who find salvation through having babies and who thereby contribute to the global baby glut.

In section two, "Knowing Loss," the tone of the fiction and non-fiction grows dismal. In "Outside Pisa," not having a child is especially painful for author Chitra Benerjee. Paulette Bates Alden's excerpt from *Crossing the Moon* reveals the sadness and nostalgia a woman experiences when fertility treatments do not work. Tory Dent's "Deferred Dreams" discusses the anguished decision of a pregnant woman with the HIV-virus to abort her fetus. In "Mother of Nothing" and "The Childless Woman Poems," Naomi Shihab Nye and Becky Birtha show childless women fantasizing about their maternal relationship to other mothers' children and lamenting their own barrenness. The protagonist in Pamela Walker's "The Wash House" goes mad when she loses a baby.

The third section of the book, "Bearing Life," is uplifting. In this last section, texts are showcased to explore women's capacity to create artistically rather than to reproduce biologically. Julia Alvarez, in "Imagining Motherhood," realizes that though her sisters have decided upon actual mothering, she can imagine and write about motherhood. bell hooks's essay from *Black Woman Artist Becoming* discusses writing as a "lonely process" and mothering as a communal "unifying experience," but she finds the act of artistic creation life-affirming. Molly Peacock's poem, "Upbringing," discusses the need for a woman to mother herself, to let the child in her reign. Rather than lament her failed maternity, the protagonist celebrates her wisdom in Valerie Miner's "You Remember Sophia."

Bearing Life includes material written since the start of second-wave feminism (from the 1960s onward). Ratner does not include earlier "childless" texts by nineteenth-century or early twentieth-century women writers such as Alcott, Davis, Freeman, Gilman, Jewett, and Wharton, although she refers to several of them in her introduction. I cannot help but think that these earlier writers recognized the problems of and expressed the concomitant social stigma associated with childlessness more poignantly than the contemporary women

writers in this collection. Moreover, I cannot help but think that we have not advanced much in the last one hundred and fifty years if childlessness is still perceived as a problem today.

Ten Good Seconds of Silence

Elizabeth Ruth
Toronto: Dundurn, 2001

Reviewed by Rita Bode

Elizabeth Ruth's debut novel, *Ten Good Seconds of Silence*, makes a memorable contribution to the eccentric characters who populate Canadian fiction. Although she acknowledges her debt to Timothy Findley's Lilah Kemp, Ruth's Lilith Boot emerges as a unique creation. We first meet her in Toronto's Allan Gardens Conservatory, a "perfect compromise" between "wilderness and civilization," a spiritual and mental space that Lilith has spent most of her life negotiating. Lilith is a clairvoyant; she sees things that others do not see. Her special gifts are particularly evident in her relationship with the natural world which Ruth, in rich, textured descriptions, brings intensely and joyfully alive as she traces Lilith's slow acceptance of herself and her place in the world as clairvoyant and mother: "Clairvoyance is a vocation. *It's who I am*, Lilith thinks. *Not just what I do*. It's like motherhood."

From the opening scene in Allan Gardens, Ruth moves skillfully back and forth in time. Lilith's current job is to assist Sergeant Grant of the Toronto Police Department to find missing children, but we move back to her painful childhood relationship with her parents, her time as an adolescent patient at the Bridgewater mental hospital, and forward again to her own complicated relationship with her daughter, Lemon, who Lilith claims was an immaculate conception. Through memories, visions, and dreams, Ruth validates her characters' struggles to harmonize their inner sensibilities with the outer world, and to gain social acceptance while retaining their individual identities. She effectively employs a multi-voiced narrative, alternating Lilith's and Lemon's voices with a third-person narrator whose access to and insight into the inner lives of all the novel's characters add further depth and understanding to the first-person voices. Moreover, Ruth's alternating narratives move the novel with ease and grace between the two main plots that she establishes, both of which, in different ways, revolve around missing children. The scene in which she reveals the connection between the two plots provides a particularly satisfying moment in the novel.

Least satisfying is Ruth's handling of her younger characters who seem case studies of troubled individuals. At times, their dialogue lacks immediacy.

The two young women, Jan and Lemon, are distinguished, especially in the third-person narrative sections, more by their situations and circumstances than by individualized characterization.

At the novel's centre are lost children, but Ruth suggests that there are no missing children without absent parents. She explores and probes a range of parent-child—especially mother-child—relationships, suggesting both their strengths and their vulnerabilities, their creative potential as well as their threatening limitations. Ruth eschews maternal stereotypes (even that of the wicked stepmother). Through Lilith's relationship with her own mother and her daughter, Ruth dares to confront the fine line between a maternal love that nurtures the child and a maternal love that functions to save the mother herself. In *Ten Good Seconds of Silence*, Elizabeth Ruth faces the complexity of motherhood, for mothers and their children alike.

Having Faith: An Ecologist's Journey to Motherhood

Sandra Steingraber
Cambridge: Perseus Publishing, 2001

Reviewed by Moriah Hampton

Near the conclusion of *Having Faith*, Sandra Steingraber recalls preparing for a 1999 United Nations discussion on breast-milk contamination: "I know that I want to speak as a nursing mother. I know also that I want to speak dispassionately, as an ecologist, about the evidence. But how to strike the right balance between the intimate and the empirical?" (361). Steingraber strikes that balance when she introduces U.N. delegates to breast-milk contamination by first passing around a jar of her own breast milk and then proceeding to discuss the effects of toxic chemicals on breast milk and a suckling daughter. A balance between personal and empirical knowledge shapes Steingraber's book.

Part one chronicles Steingraber's pregnancy: nine chapters describe the changes that each month of pregnancy brings to mother and fetus. Intimate disclosure and empirical analysis intertwine and inform one another. Steingraber, the scientist, lucidly discusses menstrual cycles, organogenesis, fetal brain development, among other biological functions. On the other hand, Sandra, the pregnant woman, vividly recalls suffering through morning sickness and feeling her body changing. Steingraber also discloses her own life circumstances: she is a cancer survivor and adoptee. In one scene, she lies on the same examination table for cancer screenings and amniotic fluid testing. An obstetrician charts the fluid surrounding the fetus, while Steingraber's own

adoption papers remain sealed by the state. Her life circumstances and scientific training provide Steingraber with a unique vantage point for analysis, one that melds inner and outer worlds.

Steingraber melds inner/outer divisions most poignantly when she describes the porous placenta that connects the fetus to the outside world. As Steingraber explains, toxic chemicals that pass "into the mother's body pass also through the placenta" (35). Thus, toxic chemicals such as pesticides permeate the placenta and fetal environment and often strengthen to more concentrated forms. Similar synthetic analysis characterizes part two, which concerns breast development and milk production. Following birth, the breast milk "takes over" (234) for the placenta, providing nourishment and strengthening an infant's immune system. Yet, this life-sustaining substance also carries the toxic chemicals women absorb throughout their lifetimes; hence, dioxin-tainted eggs, gasoline vapors, and DDT-treated fruit all flow through mothers' milk.

Steingraber's analysis inspires imagination and fuels faith: "*May the world's feast be made safe for women and children. May mothers' milk run clean again. May denial give way to courageous action. May I always have faith*" (283). *Having Faith* is an important contribution to the study of ecology, globalization, motherhood, and environmental literature. It also is a moving memoir. Readers concerned about pollution and pregnancy will be inspired by Steingraber's faith.

Finding Strength: A Mother and Daughter's Story of Childhood Cancer

Juanne Nancarrow Clarke with Lauren Nancarrow Clarke
Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1999

Reviewed by Helene A. Cummins

Few books have been written on the subject of the sick daughter who is cared for by her mother. In *Finding Strength: A Mother and Daughter's Story of Childhood Cancer*, Juanne Nancarrow Clarke describes a painful journey of three years when her daughter Lauren Nancarrow Clarke was suffering with acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL). As a sociologist, Nancarrow Clarke takes the reader through the challenges a mother faces as she watches her daughter move through illness. She describes sharing the news of illness with family and friends; starting the treatment cycle of radiation and chemotherapy; assessing medication information; receiving poor medical treatment; and enduring

severe cutbacks in the medical system. She notes that mother and daughter used a convenient, local outpatient clinic and eventually returned to a more normal life. Nancarrow Clarke describes national and international cancer charities and she documents the meaning of her daughter's life with cancer.

Finding Strength meshes current research and literature reviews. Nancarrow Clarke cites current statistics on cancer and hospital bed accessibility. She includes an appendix of resources on childhood cancer that includes books, web sites, leisure activities, sponsorships, and advocacy resources available in North America and other continents.

Daughter Lauren weaves her own story alongside that of her mother. In footnotes, Lauren renders her experience as a teenager living with cancer. She describes the teen cancer magazine that she initiated and writes a personal reflection that forms an epilogue to the book. That Lauren survived is testament to her faith and the nurturing she received from family and friends.

This book asks hard questions about medical treatment: it highlights issues such as patient care; access to information; health care alternatives; medial and hospital bureaucracy. *Finding Strength* will be accessible to lay readers and students of sociology, psychology, and medicine. A must-read for families, it will impart hope.

Motherloss

Lynn Davidman
Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000

Reviewed by Gill Rye

Personal experience led to the writing of *Motherloss*. The early death of Lynn Davidman"s mother resonates throughout her analysis of interviews with 60 men and women who, between the ages of 10 and 15, experienced the premature loss of their mothers. As one would expect, this study attests to the trauma of motherloss. It examines "biographical disruption" (Davidman"s term) in children and young people, which occurs when a family is suddenly and irrevocably altered by the death of a mother, and it confirms the ongoing impact into adulthood of the early loss of a mother.

Davidman's interviewees range from 20 to 70 years of age and are drawn from a variety of social and ethnic backgrounds, although the majority are classified as North American white middle class. Her study identifies commonalities and differences in the experience of early motherloss. One common result is that early motherloss creates "lasting barriers to intimacy" (108). Many of Davidman's respondents, for example, are unable to trust other people. Most poignant is Davidman"s observation that siblings cannot offer

one another comfort and support: "Too caught up in their own pain" (98), they survive individually rather than together.

Davidman explains that individuals" experiences of motherloss are "shaped by our social conceptions of women's roles in the family and society" (inside cover). Her sociological approach (she pays special attention to gender, social class, ethnic and cultural backgrounds) attends to the historical and social contexts that influence the experience of loss. The ideal of the "always there," irreplaceable mother is shared by Davidman"s respondents. If the classic nuclear family is disrupted by the premature death of the mother, it must also be held accountable for much of the pain experienced by bereft children.

A strength of Davidman's book, however, is its foregrounding of the silences—and silencing—that surround motherloss: the traumatized silence of denial; the silence that is supposed in many cases to protect children from their mother's illness and death but which, in the long run, adds to their pain; the silence that results from the pathologizing of grief as a period of mourning that includes first "letting go" and later "moving on"; the silence that comes from the lack of a "readily available script" (212), indeed any vocabulary, with which to articulate the experience of motherloss; and, more generally, the silence that today makes the subject of death taboo. Davidman's book helps break through that taboo, not only through its testimonies of motherloss but through its challenging of such silences.

A Good Birth, A Safe Birth: Choosing and Having the Childbirth Experience You Want

Diane Korte and Roberta M. Scaer
Boston: Harvard Common Press, 1992

Reviewed by Deborah Davidson

In this age of highly medicalized and technologized pregnancy and birth, the authors of *A Good Birth, A Safe Birth* start with the premise that pregnant and birthing women, given sufficient information, will make their own good, safe choices. In fact, Korte and Scaer acknowledge what women have been doing since time immemorial and they offer readers an abundance of information necessary to make informed choices, to advocate for themselves within the complex and biomedical amphitheater of contemporary obstetrics.

The authors describe two opposing trends in contemporary childbirth: an increase in out-of-hospital birthing centres and hospitals that provide home-like settings for birthing, coupled with a focus on high-technology, and a trend

toward medical tests and procedures throughout pregnancy and birth. It is the latter high-tech model that continues to dominate obstetrical care in North America. The authors also report a substantial increase in the use of the doula, a woman who offers support and comfort during labour. This increase could be understood as the need for the "human touch" in response to the machines and gadgetry that dominate most women's birthing experiences.

Korte and Scaer demystify obstetrical terms and procedures and they debunk some popular and medical myths about how to achieve a safe birth. As well, they show that little medical evidence exists for even the most common obstetrical practices. Do note, however, that the text is not a mere disparaging of technologized births, designed to instill guilt in mothers who have availed themselves of technology during birth. Rather, as its title so aptly states, the book focuses on the information necessary to make choices for a "good birth, a safe birth."

The work is accessible and well-organized. It includes appendices with contact and reference information, some of it, however, more relevant to the American reader. Moreover, as a mother myself, who soon will be leaving behind her reproductive years, the book provided answers to many of my own questions.

Pregnancy the Natural Way

Zita West
New York: DK Publishing, 2001

Reviewed by Maria Mikolchak

Pregnancy the Natural Way is a program for pregnant women. It starts as early as planning for conception and ends with the postpartum period. In many ways this is a traditional guide: the author divides pregnancy into three trimesters and provides information on mother's and baby's development, accompanied by advice on nutrition, exercise, common ailments, and specific pregnancy-related problems. What makes this book different from numerous other guides on pregnancy, however, is its focus on natural treatment options. The author, herself a midwife and acupuncturist, strongly advocates natural products, non-invasive treatments, and drug-free methods of pain relief that are harmless to mother and baby.

Each of the first six chapters of the book ("Planning for Conception," "The First Trimester," "The Second Trimester," "The Third Trimester," "Preparation for Labor and Delivery," and "Postpartum Period") starts with conventional information on pregnancy and ends with complementary treatments.

These treatments include acupuncture, acupressure, reflexology, yoga and meditation, homeopathy, western herbalism, and hypnotherapy. In addition, chapter seven deals specifically with complementary therapies and outlines the treatments suggested in the first six chapters. This is a very informative chapter and it addresses concerns women may have about the safety and suitability of complementary treatments.

Despite the merits of the book, it has several problems. The cover misleadingly advertises the book as "ideal either as quick reference or a complete guide." The book certainly cannot serve as a "complete guide," since information on mother's and baby's development is sketchy and will not satisfy women who want a detailed week-by-week, if not day-by-day, description of pregnancy offered in other pregnancy guides. Another difficulty is the author's excessive optimism about natural remedies. For example, West states unequivocally that "stretch marks can be prevented by consuming food sources of zinc, such as ginger, cheese, and wholegrains" (80). If it were that simple, stretch marks would have been eliminated long ago. The major problem with the book, however, is that it prescribes specific medications for complications in pregnancy such as high blood pressure, protein in the urine, and visual disturbances (84), and asserts that "if your pregnancy is normal and healthy, self-help remedies are safe" (149). Some of the conditions mentioned can hardly be considered part of a normal and healthy pregnancy and would certainly require professional attention. Thus for "sudden onset, protein in the urine, and symptoms that are worse after 3 p.m." (85) rather than taking Belladonna 6c, as the author suggests, the pregnant woman should see her doctor.

Some advice in the book might seem inappropriate in many parts of the world, including the United States. Such advice would include the "key tip" to give up work by the 32nd-34th week of pregnancy (94), which for many women is not possible because of inadequate maternity leave provisions.

Pregnancy the Natural Way will be interesting and entertaining reading for women who rightly consider pregnancy a natural physiological event and who seek non-conventional treatments.

Surrogates and Other Mothers: The Debates Over Assisted Reproduction

Ruth Macklin
Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994

Reviewed by Robin L. E. Hemenway

In 1884, in a secret procedure, a Philadelphia physician named William

Pancoast used a rubber syringe to successfully impregnate an unconscious—and unwitting—woman with the semen of one of his medical students. When the case was revealed in 1909, some observers celebrated the technological advances in the fight against infertility. Many others, though, were horrified by a procedure that they considered, as historian Elaine Tyler May writes, "socially repugnant, religiously unacceptable, and morally outrageous" (69).

Ruth Macklin's *Surrogates and Other Mothers: The Debates over Assisted Reproduction* explains the current status of these ethical debates, demonstrating that while technology and society may have changed dramatically since 1884, assisted reproduction remains caught in the same sticky ethical web. Macklin, a bioethicist at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine, describes the ethical dilemmas that confront a fictional couple, "Bonnie" and "Larry," in their quest for parenthood. As they seek out a gestational surrogate for their biological child, Bonnie and Larry and their fellow characters encounter ethical questions about a wide range of issues, including artificiality and reproduction, embryonic freezing, genetic screening, the commodification of children, and class exploitation.

Macklin's characters serve as mouthpieces for the myriad arguments in the assisted reproduction debates. Church leaders discuss the immorality of "artificial" reproduction. Legal experts explain how courts have addressed the thorny issues surrounding surrogacy, custody, and "procreative autonomy." Feminists argue over the danger to women's autonomy when female bodies become reduced to their reproductive capabilities. Task forces, hospital ethics committees, and administrators wrangle over policy ramifications.

The book's quasi-fictional narrative is both its greatest strength and its primary weakness. The narrative does not undercut the rigorousness of the research—and it serves to make complicated ideas readable and understandable. Macklin knows her subject, and she succeeds in making it accessible to a wider audience. Moreover, the story allows her to evoke the real emotional impact—so often absent from theoretical discussions—of difficult issues on the lives of individuals.

The book is less effective, however, in explicating the social and political contexts of the changing debates over assisted reproduction. Arguments are often presented with little contextual information. Too often, readers must refer to endnotes for key information. The sometimes disjointed structure of the narrative leaves key questions unanswered. How, for example, have the debates over assisted reproduction evolved over time? How have they intersected with changing laws, court decisions, and political movements? How have courts and lawmakers sought to ethically reconcile the criminalization of commercial surrogacy arrangements on the grounds that they commodify children with public policies that punish poor women for having children at all?

Also puzzling is Macklin's tangential discussion of issues peripherally related to "the debates over assisted reproduction." She veers off into discussions about HIV and pregnancy; Pre-Menstrual Syndrome; the control of

psychiatric patients; and patients' rights. These tangents only serve to muddy the waters of an already complex subject.

References

May, Elaine Tyler. *Barren in the Promised Land: Childless Americans and the Pursuit of Happiness*. Harvard University Press, 1995.

A Social History of Wet Nursing in America: From Breast to Bottle

Janet Golden
New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996

Reviewed by Denise R. Shaw

In *A Social History of Wet Nursing in America,* Janet Golden traces the changing role of the wet nurse from the colonial period into the twentieth century. Golden examines the tensions between public and private discourse in hiring a wet nurse, taking into account the changing economic, medical, and technical advances that have affected the American family. Of interest to Golden is the changing relationship between families, wet nurses, and the medical community. She notes that the demise of the wet nurse began when childbirth, motherhood, and childrearing practices became "medicalized" and breast milk alternatives (formulas, etc.) became available. Since they were "less expensive or . . . more convenient," wet nurses were not "defeat[ed]" by the introduction of artificial feedings. Their defeat came out of "growing social class divisions between the women who were employed as wet nurses and the families for which they worked, the changing cultural perceptions of motherhood and infancy that were linked to the rise of America's middle class, the growing authority of medical science, the expanding role of physicians in shaping childrearing practices and the profound ethical dilemmas raised by the practice of wet nursing in the nineteenth century." Following the "gradual medicalization of motherhood that began in the nineteenth century," the demise of the wet nurse was sealed in the twentieth century when "scientific mother[hood]" was celebrated.

Golden explores several themes, beginning with the "negotiated professional authority" between women and physicians. Interestingly, as physicians gained authority over childbirth and childrearing and mother's milk was deemed "best" for infants, there was no place for milk supplied by the wet nurse. Secondly, Golden explores the "changing meaning of motherhood" which

evolved over the centuries as physicians became a "social authority" on childrearing practices. Social opinion followed the lead of physicians and wet nurses, once considered a vital element in the nursery, soon were seen as "moral lepers." Once employed by upper class women or by women whose health required the use of a wet nurse to feed a newborn infant, the wet nurse was seen as intrusive and disruptive.

Golden examined letters and diaries to compile firsthand, personal accounts of the employment of wet nurses, and the emotional aspects surrounding the need for and utilization of a wet nurse. She also examines newspaper and magazine articles that contain ads for wet nurses, as well as editorial comments that shed light on the cultural debates and social mores pertaining to the use of a wet nurse. As Golden points out, these mores changed drastically with each passing century. As Richard A. Menkel of Brown University notes, Golden's exhaustive and comprehensive research helps "illuminate the complex and multilayered social, medical, domestic and labor relationships that constituted wet nursing as a practice." *A Social History of Wet Nursing* is a must read for anyone interested in the changing cultural, social, economic, and medical influences on mothers throughout American history.

Mother Time: Women, Aging, and Ethics

Margaret Urban Walker, ed.
Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999

Reviewed by Emily Jeremiah

Common to all the articles in this volume is a freshness that reflects the book's novelty. As editor Margaret Urban Walker claims, *Mother Time* is "a sampler, an experiment" that charts "initial and exploratory journeys" (4, 1). As Walker argues persuasively in her introduction, the enmeshed issues of aging, gender, and ethics barely have been touched upon in any discipline, and they demand investigation. This collection offers a range of possible starting-points for such an investigation.

For theorists of maternity, the collection is significant in two important ways. First, several of the articles are concerned with the nature and status of work that traditionally has been performed by women, in particular the issue of care. Martha Holstein, for example, provides a subtle analysis of the gendered nature of caregiving. And Sara Ruddick, characteristically rigorous and inspiring, develops new insights into the ethics of such caregiving. Her

understanding of "virtue" as "an ongoing and relational process" (51) is especially suggestive in this context.

Second, several of the authors deal with ideas of autonomy and relationality, also issues of concern to contemporary theorists of maternity. Walker's admirable discussion of the notion of autonomy poses a formidable challenge to the concept of the "career self" held dear in individualistic, capitalist societies, a challenge echoed elegantly by James Lindemann Nelson and by Ruddick in her conception of virtue as relational. Susan Wendell also is excellent on the individualistic "illusion of control" that we maintain collectively (138).

But the collection—too dense and varied to be summed up – offers many other intriguing titbits. Hilde Lindemann Nelson's examination of the "narrative figurations" which shape self-identity is interesting. Also of note are articles by Peggy DesAutels and Walker that investigate the often overlooked significance of religion and spirituality in women's lives. In addition, the issues of appearance and self-image are dealt with powerfully by Frida Kerner Furman, in particular.

The volume showcases the diversity and sweep of contemporary feminist scholarship. Many of the articles are stringent and passionate, and the book frequently is moving. Very occasionally, I was troubled by the anecdotal quality of some of the pieces, and by the "othering" potential of anecdotes told about (or on behalf of?) other individuals. Also, I detected the odd generalization and momentary lapses into "self-help-speak." I wonder if the novelty of the book led to these lapses—which I note unwillingly and with the discomfiting idea that perhaps I am imprisoned by traditional, masculinist notions of scholarship. It remains to be seen how thinking in the enmeshed areas of aging, gender, and ethics will develop to become more assured. This volume, in general stirring and impressive, no doubt will play a vital role in furthering such development.

Our Mothers' Spirits: Great Writers on the Death of Mothers and the Grief of Men, An Anthology

Bob Blauner, ed.
New York: Regan Books, 1998

Reviewed by Gill Rye

Our Mothers' Spirits is an anthology of poetry and prose, some previously published, some commissioned or written especially for this volume. Although he acknowledges the influence of Adrienne Rich's writing on the mother-son relationship, Bob Blauner's selection is limited to writing by men. Here, men

from a range of social and ethnic backgrounds write about the deaths of their mothers. This is an unusual collection: it gathers personal, emotional narratives by men on the subject of their mothers. The accounts reveal an array of emotions—idealization, ambivalence, anger, and regret towards mothers—so readers will discover work that touches a chord or offers insight into the power of the mother-son relationship, from the son's perspective.

Much of the writing included here—especially where it has been written for the book—attests to an ongoing connection with the dead mother experienced either positively (effective mourning, a return to the mother) or negatively (incomplete mourning, depression, resentment). Psychoanalytically, Blauner identifies this return to the mother as "a man's midlife task" (xvi), undertaken either before or after the mother's death. Blauner is all too aware of difficulty in negotiating the all-powerful archetypes of the Good Mother, the Bad Mother, and in dealing with the "backlog of repressed emotion" (xv) a mother's death uncovers.

John Updike's piece describes how the older and frailer his mother becomes, the younger grows his image of her (taken from photographs rather than his own memory). Both Gus Lee and Norman Sasowsky, whose mothers died when they were children, explain how as adults they set out to learn about their mothers' lives, in order to discover who their mothers were "other than dead mothers." T. S. Matthews charts the "physical labor" of dying and attests to the coping difficulties of families. One of the most powerful contributions—by Nick Davis—takes the form of a letter refusing Blauner's offer to write a piece for the collection because he is unable to make sense of his fragmented memories. By far the most painful image in the book is Wallace Stegner's "mind clenched like a fist" following his mother's death (164).

On the whole, the anthology avoids sentimentality. A pleasant touch are the photographs included as centre pages to give a human face to the mothers who, in death, become the objects of so much rarely voiced male emotion.

Interwoven Lives: Adolescent Mothers and Their Children

Thomas L. Whitman, John G. Borkowski, Deborah A. Keogh, and Keri Weed
London: Lawrence Earlbaum Associates, 2001

Reviewed by Dawn Zinga

This book examines the interrelated development of adolescent mothers and their children. Unlike many studies that focus exclusively on the risk factors and potential developmental deficits faced by children of adolescent mothers, this book also explores the developmental changes experienced by adolescent mothers.

I agree with the authors: that adolescent mothers and their infants must not be considered in isolation from one another. This volume charts a comprehensive, longitudinal study of adolescent mothers and their children.

The book describes the findings of the Notre Dame Parenting Project. This intensive study followed adolescent mothers and their children for eight years. In the second chapter, the authors provide a model of adolescent parenting as a framework for their research findings. In a later chapter, a model generated from the gathered data identifies the central role of cognitive readiness in successful parenting.

This book is unique in its ability to balance traditional quantitative data analysis with qualitative understanding of individual differences. The authors take great steps toward banishing simplistic conceptions of adolescent mothers and their children. They examine the sensitive and complex issues inherent in adolescent parenting and they accurately report on risk factors, deficits, and other problems identified by their research. In addition, the authors consider the implications of their research for designing assistance programs to adolescent mothers and their children; for examining resilient versus non-resilient mothers and children; and for identifying high-risk mother-infant dyads.

This book offers important insights and, while written largely for a graduate audience, portions of the text will be readily accessible to undergraduate students and lay readers, as well. Of particular interest to a wide readership are the sections on adolescent mothers' life stories and social policy implications. *Interwoven Lives* lives up to its intriguing title: it describes accurately how the developmental outcomes and trajectories of adolescent mothers and their children are intertwined.

The Girlfriends' Guide to Toddlers

Vicki Iovine
New Y ork: Perigree, 1999

Reviewed by Andrea Riesch Toepell

Vicki Iovine writes a humorous guide with down-to-earth, practical advice for parents of toddlers. An expert on the subject, having had four children in nine years, she does not assume a voice of authority. Rather, she writes from the position of experience – her own and those of her girlfriends. Iovine illustrates her book with examples, many of which belong to her girlfriends. Readers will feel reassured that their feelings about parenthood are not exceptional and will take comfort in the toddler stories of Iovine and her girlfriends.

I especially enjoyed Iovine's use of humour. Sometimes the examples she

gives are so amusing, the reader will forget her reasons for seeking advice. The most memorable chapters are "The Comfort Zone," about "blankies," "soothies," and stuffed pets; "Sleepy Time," about difficulties that can occur when toddlers do not sleep (and Iovine confesses to giving nighttime bottles of water to cranky children); and "Fashion," which describes the typical toddler's understanding of colour, style, and wardrobe. Iovine does not make light of any issue. She does, however, see things in the context of the larger life, a perspective that will be appreciated by struggling parents.

Iovine makes every effort to comfort and reassure parents: that their toddler's behaviour is not abnormal; that other toddlers may behave worse than their own (always a comfort); that their own feelings of insecurity are normal; and that self-doubt is part of parenting a toddler. Her sage advice and her delivery—straightforward, supportive, and funny—will lift the reader's spirit.

The book is designed as a guide for caregivers of toddlers. Its 11 chapters address specific topics that concern every parent of a toddler, for example, discipline, eating, and toilet training. The book includes a useful index, designed to encourage browsing. This is a worthwhile book to give to your girlfriend!

Jewish Mothers Tell Their Stories: Acts of Love and Courage

Rachel Josefowitz Siege, Ellen Cole Ellen Cole, Susan Steinberg-Oren
New York: Haworth Press, 2000

Reviewed by Rivka Greenberg

All mothers are challenged daily to address multiple forces in their lives. These forces include their children, partners, families, society, religion, work, and social issues, as well as their own, individual needs. For many Jewish mothers, defining the place of Judaism as a significant value in their lives, responsively and proactively, is an enigmatic and perplexing struggle. For earlier generations, the primary sources of support for mothers were the women in their extended families: mothers, grandmothers, sisters, aunts, and cousins. Increased mobility, economic shifts, and work outside of the home have diminished the influence of the extended family and mothers have had to find new ways to meet their need for support, guidance, and community. This is particularly true within the context of Jewish community, where many Jewish

mothers struggle to find a place for Judaism in their lives. Today, many Jewish women—unaffiliated, Reconstructionist, Reform, and Conservative – seek community outside of synagogues and other Jewish institutions. Moreover, Jewish women and their families are no longer living in "Jewish" sections of cities, lessening their opportunities for connecting with other Jewish women. So how can Jewish mothers find the communal support they need? *Jewish Mothers Tell Their Stories* provides that much needed sense of community.

This book promotes connection among Jewish mothers throughout the world. Thirty-five chapters offer thirty-five insights from Jewish mothers worldwide who share their thoughts and experiences and, in the process, serve as role models and provide support. The six section topics – tradition; love; Jewish values; Jewish identity; spirituality and religion; and the real world – address key aspects of women's lives. The editors have succeeded in moving beyond the stereotypes of Jewish women. The women gathered here represent young and old, secular and orthodox; they speak of life and death experiences, ritual, joy, and sadness.

This book is introductory and suggests future volumes that might continue in the voices of Jewish women from Arabic, Asian, and Balkan countries who could share their experiences and traditions, present dialogues between mothers and children, as well as intergenerational stories of other family members.

Errata

1. Permission for the image that accompanied the article, "Mammy in the Erotic Imaginary of Anais Nin," which appears on page 149 of Vol. 4. No. 1, was granted by Professors John Thorp and David Pilgrim of Ferris State University. This image appears on the online website for the Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia at Ferris State University <http://www.ferris.edu/news/jimcrow>. The article cited by Maria St. John was published in 1999 and not 1991 as the citation appears in the text of the article.

2. The book review of *Special Delivery: Mother-Daughters Letters from Afar*, was co-authored by Ruth Nemzoff and her daughter, Rebecca Berman, and not Rebecca Norman as it appears on page 204 of Vol. 4. No. 1.

3. The book review by Rivka Greenberg, on page 219 of Vol. 4. No. 1, is reprinted in its entirety on pages 249-250 of this issue.

Contributor Notes

Martha Addante will be commencing her Ph.D. in English at Western Michigan University. She is interested in the relationship between technology and women in fiction. Her research will focus on the constructive role of technology in female identity formation, specifically in the fictional work of Angela Carter. She also looks forward to teaching in the Women's Studies department.

Helen M. Bannan is Associate Professor and Director of Women's Studies at the University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh. She has co-edited two books and published many articles, mostly focused on cultural differences among women. This is the first product of her latest research project exploring how grandmotherhood has been variously constructed in North America during the twentieth century.

Patricia Bell-Scott is Professor of Child and Family Development and Women's Studies and an Adjunct Professor of Psychology at the University of Georgia in Athens. She was founding co-editor of *SAGE: A Scholarly Journal on Black Women* and principal editor of the award-winning anthology, *Double Stitch: Black Women Write about Mothers and Daughters*. She is co-editor of the first text in Black women's studies, *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks are Men: But Some of Us Are Brave*, as well as editor of *Life Notes: Personal Writings by Contemporary Black Women, and Flat-footed Truths: Telling Black Women's Lives*. She specializes as a teacher and writer in black women's narratives.

Jill Bergman is an Assistant Professor at the University of Montana where she teaches American Literature and Women's Studies. She is currently at work on

a book entitled "*Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child*" : *Pauline Hopkins's Maternal Redemptive Vision.*

Beth Martin Birky is Associate Professor of English and Women's Studies at Goshen College in Goshen, Indiana, where she also directs the Women's Studies and General Education programs. Beth and her husband balance two careers with caring for their daughter Madeline (seven) and son Hugh (three). Beth's teaching and research interests relate to body, voice, and identity issues for women, particularly as mothers. After leading a Goshen College international study course in Costa Rica in 2001, Beth has been researching Costa Rica's feminist movement and the collaborative model it provides for Western feminists.

Mary Kay Blakely is an Associate Professor at the Missouri School of Journalism. She is the author of three books, including *Wake Me When It's Over: A Journey to the Edge and Back* (Times Books/Random House) and *American Mom: Motherhood, Politics and Humble Pie* (Algonquin/Pocket Books), and her essays have been collected in numerous anthologies. A Hers columnist for the *New York Times* and currently a contributing editor to *Ms.* and the *Los Angeles Times* magazine, she has published essays and articles about social issues in *Mother Jones, Life, Working Woman, McCalls, Redbook, Psychology Today, Self, the Chicago Tribune, the New York Times Book Review,* and numerous other national publications. Her work has been translated and published in Germany, the Netherlands, Japan, England, and Italy. She now teaches Advanced Writing at the University of Missouri and is the director of the New York Summer Journalism Program at the New School University.

Sophie Blanch is currently a Ph.D. student at the University of Warwick, UK, where she also teaches part-time in the English Department. Having received an M.A. in Gender, Literature, and Modernity from Warwick in 2001, her doctoral research explores the intersection between feminist psychoanalysis and female modernism. She lives in Coventry, UK with her partner.

Rita Bode is Assistant Professor in the Department of English Literature at Trent University. One of her interests is the literary representation of adolescent females and their mothers.

Paula Caplan, Ph.D., is the author of *THE NEW Don't Blame Mother: Mending the Mother-Daughter Relationship* and eight other books. She is a Visiting Scholar at the Pembroke Center for Research and Teaching on Women at Brown University and is former Professor of Applied Psychology and Head of the Centre for Women's Studies at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. She is also a playwright, actor, and director, and her play, "*Call Me Crazy,*" includes a monologue delivered by "Amalia Freud"

(Freud's mother) that is partly about mother-blame and being a mother. She lectures and teaches workshops about mothers and daughters, as well as other subjects, and has helped organized social and political action about various matters, including sexism in psychiatric diagnosis and in the use of psychotropic drugs. Her most recent work on the latter is addressed in part in her recent article in the *National Women's Health Network's "Network News."*

Geetanjali Singh Chanda is a lecturer in the Women and Gender Studies Program and the Department of English at Yale University. She has participated in numerous international conferences and published widely in international journals and periodicals. Her "Asian Values and the Export of American Feminism" was published as an occasional paper by the *Centre for Advanced Studies,* Singapore. Most recently she has co-authored a chapter "Suzie Wong in Nobel House" in *Before and After Suzie: Hong Kong in Western Film and Literature,* published by the Chinese University Press, 1999.

Helene A. Cummins, Ph.D. is an Assistant Professor in Sociology at Brescia University College, at the University of Western Ontario. She teaches introductory sociology, sociology of the family, and gender roles. More recently, she helped to develop a new program in Family Studies. She served as Chair of her department from 1998-2001. In 2001 she was the first recipient of the Award of Excellence in Teaching at Brescia University College. Her research interests and publications include farm families, ethics and research with children, and women's work.

Deborah Davidson is a Ph.D. student in Sociology at York University. She is also a feminist mother, step-mother and step-grandmother and a lover of both the canine and feline spirits. Broadly noted, her academic work is in the area of reproduction and health, and more specifically on women's experiences of perinatal death.

Joanne Detore-Nakamura, Ph.D. is an Assistant Professor of Humanities at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach, FL. Her latest essay on teaching feminist theory will appear in *Fractured Feminisms,* forthcoming from SUNY Albany Press in 2003. Currently, she is editing an anthology about working mothers and childcare, and is the mother of her four-year old muse, Emily.

Patrice DiQuinzio is Associate Professor of Philosophy and Director of Women's Studies at Muhlenberg College in Allentown, PA, USA. She is the author of *The Impossibility of Motherhood: Feminism, Individualism, and the Problem of Mothering* (Routledge, 1999) and is co-editor with Iris Marion Young of *Feminist Ethics and Social Policy* (Indiana University Press, 1997). Her articles on philosophical problems in theorizing motherhood and on mother-

hood as a model for citizenship have appeared in *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy and Women and Politics*. She is currently at work on a project analyzing contemporary instances of U.S. women's civic engagement conducted under the sign of motherhood, such as the Million Mom March and Mothers Against Drunk Driving.

Cheryl Dobinson is the Co-ordinator of ARM. She holds an MA in Sociology from York University and her studies have focused on women, youth and sexuality. Her work on sexual identity has been published in *Herizons* and *The Journal of Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Identity*. Her most recent publications include a co-authored article on lesbians and film in *The Journal of Homosexuality* and a piece on transsexual legal issues for *Fireweed*.

Pamela J. Downe is a medical anthropologist interested in various aspects of women's health and maternal care. She is currently an Associate Professor of Women's and Gender Studies at the University of Saskatchewan where she teaches courses on the gendered aspects of addiction, contagion and parenthood.

Rishma Dunlop is a professor of Literary Studies and Fine Arts Cultural Studies in the Faculty of Education at York University, Toronto. She is a poet and fiction writer whose work has won awards and has appeared in numerous books, journals, and anthologies, nationally and internationally. Rishma Dunlop was a finalist for the 1998 CBC/Saturday Night Canada Council Literary Awards for poetry. Her novel, *Boundary Bay*, was a semi-finalist for the inaugural Chapters/Robertson Davies Prize in 1999. She is the author of two volumes of poetry, *Boundary Bay*, (2000) and *The Body of My Garden*, (2002). She is also the editor of *Child: An Anthology of Poetry and Prose (2001)*. She is the mother of two daughters and a frequent contributor to ARM.

Miriam Edelson is a social activist, mother, and writer living in Toronto. Her creative non-fiction and commentaries have appeared in The Globe and Mail, *The Toronto Star*, CBC Radio, *This Magazine* as well as other periodicals. Born in New York, Edelson spent her teens in Toronto and completed graduate studies in political science at Carleton University. She is fluent in French and is currently pursuing doctoral studies in sociology and bio-ethics part-time at the University of Toronto. Her particular area of interest is social policy regarding the care of medically-fragile infants. Edelson has worked in the trade union movement since 1980, specializing in communications and human rights issues. She lives in Toronto with her daughter Emma.

Monika Elbert is Professor of English at Montclair State University, where she recently achieved the "Distinguished Scholar Award." She also serves as Associate Editor of *The Nathaniel Hawthorne Review*. She has published

extensively on American literature and on maternal themes in literature. She is currently co-editing a collection on the Peabody sisters (of Salem) as well as an anthology of short stories by nineteenth-century American women.

Marion Gold is writing a thesis entitled "Narrative Inquiry into a Woman's Life." It is the narrative of a woman transformed through the experiences of marriage, childbirth, child rearing, grandmothering, and great grandmothering, whose past has shaped and informed her personal practical knowledge and serves as prologue to a future devoted to learning, teaching, writing and reflection.

Rivka Greenberg, Ph.D., is an independent consultant working in the field of maternal/child/family education and welfare, which encompasses infant mental health, special needs, and substance abuse. She has worked in educational, social services, and health care programs in the United States and abroad.

Moriah Hampton holds a B.S. and M.A. in English with a minor in Women's Studies. This fall she'll begin a Doctorate program in English at SUNY-Buffalo. She became interested in maternal studies while researching her Master's thesis, which concerns epistemology and feminist utopias. This is her first publication.

Roxanne Harde is a doctoral candidate at Queen's University. Her dissertation research examines how early American women poets write as proto-feminist theologians. She has published articles in the journals *Critique* and *Legacy*, and in several anthologies. She has guest edited, with Donna Varga, the forthcoming special "girlpower" issue of *femspec*.

Robin L. E. Hemenway is a doctoral candidate in American Studies at the University of Minnesota. Her dissertation, "Foundlings of the State: Race, 'Child Saving' and the Construction of the Worthy Family, 1870-1920," examines the experiences of African-American families within the changing world of urban child welfare.

Susan Hennessy is Associate Professor of French and Coordinator of Foreign Languages at Missouri Western in St. Joseph, Missouri. Hennessy earned her Ph.D. from the University of Colorado at Boulder with a specialization in nineteenth-century French literature. Her scholarship focuses on Emile Zola, specifically the treatment of the mother figure in his twenty-novel *Rougon-Macquart* series.

Emily Jeremiah has a Ph.D. in German Studies from the University of Wales, Swansea. She is currently researching and translating the work of the German poet Dorothea Grünzweig, with whom she is also translating poems by Gerald

Manley Hopkins. In addition, she teaches Women's, German and British Studies at the Universities of Helsinki, Jyväskylä and Lapland, Finland, and is a singer/song-writer.

Miriam Johnson is a retired Professor of Sociology at the University of Oregon whose teaching and writing has been focused on gender and the family throughout her career. She is the author of a book entitled *Strong Mothers, Weak Wives* and co-author with Jean Stockard of a text on sex and gender. She and her husband of many years live in Oregon where they both taught sociology. They have two children, one married and one single. Currently she is affiliated with the Council on Contemporary Families, which attempts to get accurate research information out about the many different kinds of contemporary families besides the so called "ideal" nuclear family that now exist in the U.S. and Canada.

Isabella Colalillo Katz is a poet/writer, storyteller, holistic educator, scholar and documentary film maker based in Toronto. She is the co-creator of the award winning children's audio tape: "Crocket, Carob and Crystals : The C3 Trilogy." She is the author of *Tasting Fire* (Guernica, 1999) and *Woman Falling Lightly to Earth* (Guernica, 2003). Her poetry appears in magazines, journals, and anthologies and has been heard on CBC Radio.

Lisa Katz teaches Literary Translation in the English Department of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, where she has lived since 1983. Contributing editor of *The Drunken Boat* poetry website (http://www.thedrunkenboat.com), her "Letter from Jerusalem" appears in *Leviathan Quarterly 4* (England); her translations from Hebrew have been published in The New Yorker and elsewhere. She has two children.

Melisa Klimaszewski recently received her Ph.D. in Literature from the University of California, San Diego. Her dissertation, "Cradle and All: Nursemaids, Domesticity, and Power in Victorian Britain," examines representations of nursemaids in domestic manuals, novels, and working-class autobiographies. Some of her interests are critical gender and race studies, children's fantasy literature, and popular sports culture. In the fall of 2002, she will be teaching at Oakland University in Michigan

Dorothy Agnes Lander is Associate Professor in the Department of Adult Education, St. Francis Xavier University (StFX), Antigonish, Nova Scotia. She teaches in a master of adult education program delivered through a distance education format. Her research focuses on the word and image of mothers' activism throughout history.

Susan MacCallum-Whitcomb spent a decade in academia, teaching Ameri-

can Literature and publishing widely on the subject of Maternity Poetry. Her critical anthology, *'This Giving Birth:' Pregnancy and Childbirth in American Women's Writing*, co-edited with Dr. Julie Tharp, was published by Popular Press in 2000. The mother of two young children, Susan recently moved to Halifax where she works as a freelance writer and reseacher.

Maria Mikolchak is an Assistant Professor of Foreign Languages and Literature at St. Cloud State University, St. Cloud, Minnesota. She earned her Ph.D. in Comparative Literature and a Graduate Certificate in Women's Studies from University of South Carolina and her BA in International Relations from Moscow State Institute for International Relations. Her interests include nineteenth-century European and American literature, history, and women's studies. She is also the mother of four children.

Carolyn Mitchell, professor of English and Director of women's studies, earned her Ph.D. from Boston College, her master's from Michigan State University and her bachelor's from Hunter College. The author of a number of books and articles, her interests include nineteenth- and twentieth- century American literature, African American literature, women's literature, Victorian fiction, women's studies, theory, and criticism.

Michelle Moravec earned a doctorate in women's history from the University of California, Los Angeles, and now directs the Women's Center at William Paterson University. Her research focuses on feminism in the United States. Currently she is examining the concept of domesticity, including marriage, motherhood, and the home, from 1970-2000.

Angela Morsley is a doctoral candidate in English Literature at the University of Sydney, Australia. Her thesis will explore the manifestation of labyrinthine imagery and form in the work of two Australian writers, Elizabeth Jolley and Gerald Murnane. She expects to complete her thesis in 2003 with a chapter devoted to mothering figures in Jolley's fiction.

Ruby Newman teaches women's studies and humanities at York University and lectures widely in the community on literature by and about women. She is the mother of two sons and a daughter.

Renee Norman, Ph.D., is a poet and writer who teaches drama, Language Arts, gender and autobiography courses in the education faculty at the University of British Columbia. Her poetry and essays have been published in literary and academic journals as well as newspapers and anthologies. A piece on writing and mothering was recently broadcast on *First Person Singular*, CBC Radio. Her book, *House of Mirrors: Performing Autobiograph(ically) in Language/Education* was published by Peter Lang, New York. She is the

mother of three school-age daughters.

Andrea O'Reilly, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor in the School of Women's Studies at York University where she teaches a course on motherhood, and the Introduction to Women's Studies course. She has presented her research at numerous international conferences and she is the author of more than a dozen articles and chapters on motherhood and Toni Morrison. She is co-editor of *Redefining Motherhood: Changing Identities and Patterns* (Second Story Press, 1998), *Mothers and Daughters: Connection, Empowerment and Transformation* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2000), and the special 20th anniversary issue of *Canadian Woman Studies* (Fall 1998) on Mothers and Daughters. She is editor of *Mothers and Sons: Feminism, Masculinity and the Struggle to Raise our Sons* (Routledge Press 2001) and *The Legacy of Adrienne Rich's Of Woman Born* (SUNY, forthcoming). Her book,. *Politics of the Heart: Toni Morrison and the Power of Motherhood,* is forthcoming from Ohio State Press. She is currently writing *Reconceiving Maternity: The Empowerment Of Mothering in North American Feminist Thought Since 1976* and *Mothering Against Motherhood: New Visions of Mothering for the New Millennium.* O'Reilly is founding president of the Association for Research on Mothering (ARM), the first feminist association on the topic of mothering-motherhood with more than 500 members from around the world, and is founding and managing editor the *Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering.* In 1998 she was the recipient of the University wide "Teacher of the Year" award at York University. She has conducted numerous community workshops on motherhood, mothers and daughters, and mothers and sons and has been interviewed widely on these topics. Andrea and her common-law spouse of 19 years are the parents of a 17-year old son and two daughters, ages 12 and 15.

Ruth Panofsky is the Journal's book review editor. She is a member of the Department of English at Ryerson University where she teaches Canadian Literature. She is author of *Adele Wiseman: An Annotated Bibliography* (1992) and co-editor of *Selected Letters of Margaret Laurence and Adele Wiseman* (1997).

Shelley M. Park is Associate Professor and Chair of Philosophy at the University of Central Florida. Her intellectual interests include feminist theory and its applications to issues of mothering, adoption, memory, and self construction. She lives in Orlando, FL with her partner, two young daughters, and "Red Emma," a chow dog.

Joanna Radbord is a lawyer with the firm of Epstein Cole, and is a lesbian who is planning a pregnancy with her spouse. Her practice focusses on family law and gay and lesbian equality rights, and she is particularly interested in the legal regulation of lesbian mothering. Joanna was involved with *M. v. H.,* the first Supreme Court of Canada decision to successfully challenge the definition of

"spouse" as restricted to opposite-sex couples. She was counsel to a lesbian father in *Forrester v. Saliba*, which states that transsexuality is irrelevant to a child's best interests. She is currently co-counsel to the eight same-sex couples seeking the freedom to choose civil marriage in Ontario. In that case, the federal government's arguments largely centre on reserving procreation and child-rearing for heterosexuals only.

Bernadette Rosbrook has a Master of Philosophy degree from Australian Catholic University and has completed two years of doctoral studies in the School of English, Media Studies and Art History at the University of Queensland. The focus of her recent research has been maternal experience in texts by early twentieth century American women writers. Bernadette lives in Brisbane, Australia, with her husband Geoff and her two young children, Catherine and Francis.

Rosie Rosenzweig, a Resident Scholar in Brandeis University's Women's Studies, a published liturgical poet, book reviewer, essayist, and author of *A Jewish Mother in Shangri-la (Shambhala)*, an intergenerational memoir about meeting her son's Buddhist teachers, is involved with Jewish Meditation teacher training at the newly funded Chochmat HaLev Center.

Lois Rubin is Associate Professor of English at Penn State New Kensington where she teaches composition and multi-cultural and women's literature. She has published articles about composition pedagogy and contemporary Jewish women writers. Her husband and children, like those of contributors in her study, are supporters and readers of her writing.

Sara Ruddick is the author of *Maternal Thinking: Toward a Politics of Peace.* She has co-edited three anthologies, most recently *Mother Troubles: Reflections on Contemporary Maternal Dilemmas.* For many years she taught at The New School University in New York City where she lives.

Gill Rye is Lecturer in French at the Institute of Romance Studies (University of London). She publishes widely on contemporary French women's writing and is currently preparing a book, Mothering with a Difference, which explores how contemporary literature can help us think differently about mothers and mothering.

Lori Saint-Martin is a professor in the literature department at the Université du Québec à Montréal. She has published two books of short fiction, *Lettre imaginaire à la femme de mon amant* (1991) and *Mon père, la nuit* (1999), French translations of six English-Canadian novels, in collaboration with Paul Gagné (one of which, *Un parfum de cèdre*, a translation of Ann-Marie MacDonald's *Fall on Your Knees*, won the Governor General's award for

translation in 2000), and several books of non-fiction on women's writing in Québec, including *Le nom de la mère: Mères, filles et écriture dans la littérature québécoise au féminin* (*The Name of the Mother: Mothers, Daughters and Writing in Quebec Women's Fiction*), 1999. A book-length feminist study of Gabrielle Roy's fiction, *La voyageuse et la prisonnière: Gabrielle Roy et la question des femmes*, is forthcoming from Éditions du Boréal. Her current research project is on fathers and children in contemporary Québec fiction (supported by SSHRC grant). With Paul Gagné, she has two children, Nicolas, born in 1993, and Anna, born in 1995.

Denise R. Shaw is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of South Carolina where she is also an Instructor in the First Year English Program. Her areas of research interest include the modern and postmodern American novel, contemporary Southern literature, and trauma theory. Denise is also working on her first novel, *A Blood and Salt Earth*.

Brett Sillers is a photographer and narrative artist: "its all art and its all for happiness." She has a B.Ed. in Art Education from the University of Victoria. She is currently living and doing visual research in Bali, Indonesia.

Andrea Riesch Toepell is Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Applied Health Sciences at Brock University, St. Catharines, Ontario. She teaches and does research in the fields of community health, gender and health, women and heart health, women in sport and aging. She is currently researching homeschooling for her two preschool aged children.

Kathleen L. Ward is a Professor of International Cultural Studies at Brigham Young University-Hawaii where she teaches, researches, and write about women and about African American literature and culture. She is mother of five, an active feminist and peace educator, and shares her home with family, frequent visitors, six cats, a lare dog, and peg pig Hamlet.

Kathleen Vaughan is an artist, writer and Ph.D. scholar who currently studies and teaches in York University's Faculty of Education where she is also Artist-in-Residence. Her work in all domains explores memory, imagination, and family history. Examples can be seen on her website at www.akaredhanded.com.

Yi-Lin Yu has recently earned her Ph.D. in English from Lancaster University, UK. Her thesis has concentrated on matrilineal narratives in contemporary women's writing. She has published articles on the use of female body and maternal subjectivity. She is currently teaching at Lan-Yang Institute of Technology in Taiwan.

Dawn Zinga is an assistant professor of Child and Youth Studies at Brock

University where she focuses on cognition and research methodology. She is the mother of two girls, Marina (six) and Victoria (two), and has a very supportive husband. Dawn's research interests focus on women's experiences (i.e. hormonal, emotional, and social) during pregnancy and the postpartum.

Call for Papers

The editorial board is seeking submissions for Vol. 5.2 of the *Journal of The Association for Research on Mothering* to be published in Fall/Winter 2003.

The journal will explore the subject:

Mothering and Teaching in the Academe

The journal will explore the topic of mothering and teaching in the academe from a variety of perspectives and disciplines. We welcome submissions from students, activists, scholars, artists and others who work or research in this area. We also welcome creative reflections such as: poetry, short stories, and artwork on the subject.

If you are interested in writing a book review, we have books in need of a review, or if you know of a recent publication that you think would be relevant, please contact Cheryl Dobinson at cjdobins@yorku.ca

Submission Guidelines

Book reviews are to be no more than 2 pages (500 words), articles should be 15 pages (3750 words). All should be in MLA style, in WordPerfect or Word and IBM compatible.

For more information, please contact us at:

ARM: 726 Atkinson College, York University
4700 Keele Street, Toronto, ON, Canada, M3J 1P3.
Call us at (416) 736-2100, x60366, or email us at arm@yorku.ca
or visit our website at www.yorku.ca/crm

Submissions must be received by **May 1, 2003.**

To submit work to the journal, one must be a member of ARM and memberships must be received by May 1, 2003.

Call for Papers

The Association for Research on Mothering (ARM)
invites submissions of abstracts for our
seventh annual conference on

Mothering, Religion and Spirituality

October 24-26, 2003
York University, Toronto, Canada

Historically and cross-culturally the world's religions and spiritualities have simultaneously restricted mothers' roles and activities while conversely giving mothers some agency and authority. This conference will explore, from a variety of perspectives and disciplines, the impact of religion and spirituality on the experience of mothering and of mothers on religion and spirituality. It will examine mothers' lived experience as well as representations of mothering-motherhood in religion.

We welcome submissions from students, activists, scholars, artists and others who work or research in this area. Cross-cultural, historical and comparative work is encouraged. We encourage a variety of types of submissions including academic papers, workshops, creative submissions, performances, storytelling, visual arts and other alternative formats.

Topics can include, but are not limited to:

•Mothers in sacred texts and oral traditions •Mother figures in religious history •Interfaith mothering •Church mothers •Mother deities/goddesses •Mother archetypes •The Great Mother •Feminist spirituality and mothering •Religious feminisms •The virgin mother •Womanist

Call for Papers

theology •Mothering, religion and ideologies •Childbirth and spirituality •Mothering, religion and spirituality through the ages •Mothering in the Ancient World •Grandmothering and othermothering •Colonialism, religion, and mothering •Mothers and religious education •Indigenous spirituality and mothering •Mothering, sex and spirituality •Lesbian/bisexual/transgender/queer mothering in religious contexts •Dis/ability, mothering, religion and spirituality •Atheism, secularization, and mothering •Religious oppression of mothers •Race, class, mothering and religion/spirituality •Mothering and new religious movements •Mothers of religious leaders •Mothers as religious leaders •Resistance, maneuvering and compliance of mothers in religion •Mothers of the nation •Mothering, reproductive technologies and spirituality •Infertility and religion/spirituality.

There will also be 'Open Stream' Sessions on the general topic of Mothering-Motherhood

If you are interested in being considered as a presenter, please send a 250 word abstract and a 50 word bio by March 1, 2003 to:

Association for Research on Mothering
726 Atkinson College,
York University,
4700 Keele Street,
Toronto, ON, Canada M3J 1P3
Call us at (416) 736-2100 x 60366,
or email us at arm@yorku.ca

One must be a member of ARM to submit an abstract.

Association for Research on Mothering

ARM 2003
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Please indicate your membership option
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Full ARM Membership includes: subscription to the *Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering*) •biannual newsletter • members directory •listserve •reduced conference fees

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Sustaining Full ARM Membership: as a sustaining member, your extra contribution will help ensure that ARM, a non-profit organization, can continue to meet its operating costs. 2003 sustaining members will receive a free copy of ARM's new publication, *Teaching Motherhood: A Collection of Post-Secondary Courses on Mothering-Motherhood.*

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Association for Research on Mothering

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