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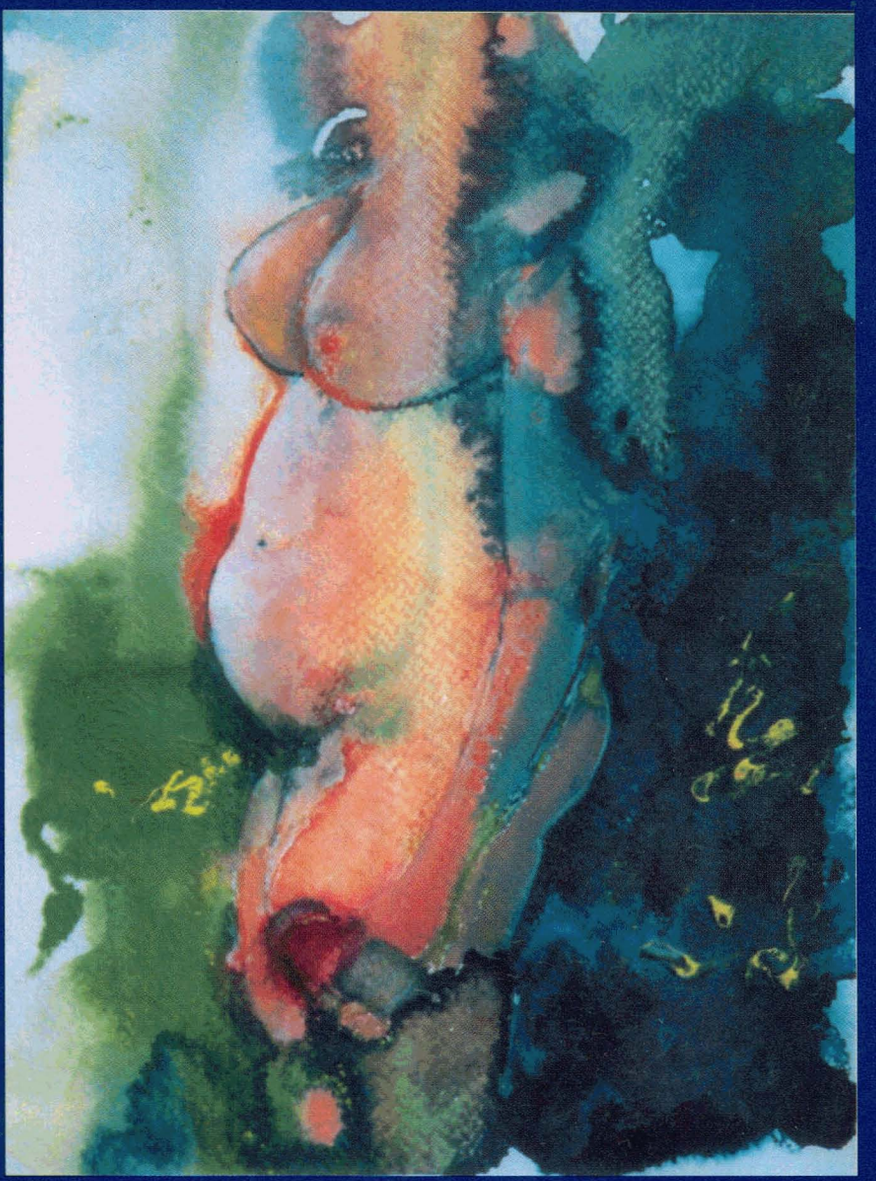

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Association for Research on Mothering
Room 726, Atkinson College, York University
4700 Keele Street, Toronto, ON M3J 1P3
Tel: (416) 736-2100 ext. 60366 Email: arm@yorku.ca;
Website: www.yorku.ca/crm

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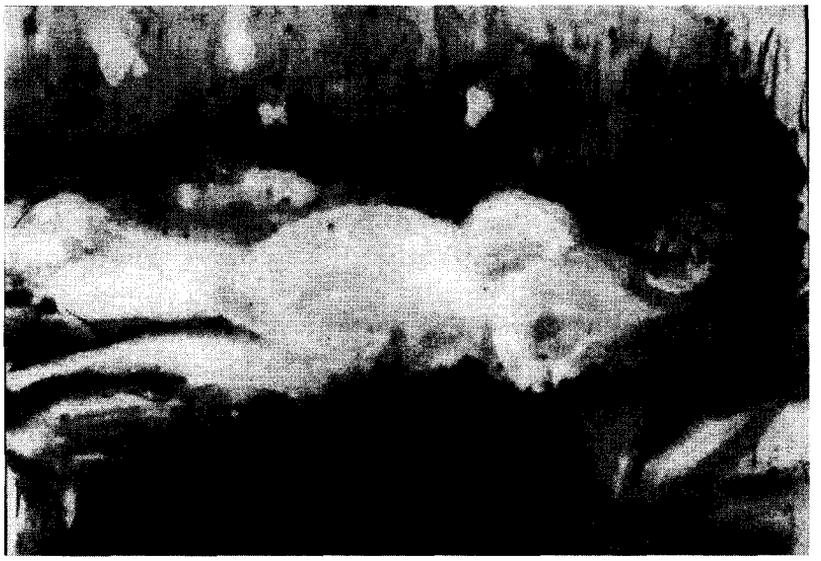

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Sharon M. Abbey

Deconstructing Images of Mothering in Media and Film
Possibilities and Trends for the Future

> In the collision of reality with mythology, it is the mythology that tends to prevail, as the language and the conventions of the story shape not only what is thought but also what can be said, not only what is heard but what can be understood. (Pope, Quinn, and Wyer, 1990: 445)

Over the past two decades, feminist researchers have persuasively argued that representations of the mother in popular culture shape our complex feelings about motherhood (Bassin, Honey and Kaplan, 1994). In fact, the "ideology of mothering can be so powerful that the failure of lived experience to validate often produces either intensified efforts to achieve it or a destructive cycle of self- and/or mother-blame" (Pope *et al.*, 1990: 442). From June Cleaver to Murphy Brown, television has obviously had a powerful impact on how maternal roles are valued and played out. These images have been well analyzed and deconstructed. In addition, the film industry and Hollywood directors have also had a significant part to play in what we value and expect of motherhood in North America. However, these big-screen mothers have not been as carefully scrutinized as their television counterparts. This paper explores the mother-as-subject as depicted by the film industry over the past 40 years. In particular, it will outline a cross-disciplinary undergraduate course on *Mothering and Motherhood: Images, Issues and Patterns* that I have developed and teach in the Women's Studies program at Brock University, St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada.

This course is always well received and enrollment reaches capacity very quickly. The majority of the students who attend each session are fulltime second to fourth year sociology majors, several are part-time working mothers

or grandmothers and a few are males. During the 12-week course, students are expected to: (1) keep a scrapbook of media clippings about mothers and prepare a summative reflection about predominant issues addressed; (2) interview their own mother and write a personal narrative about their experience mothering or being mothered; and finally (3) critique 14 American, Canadian, British and Australian films with prominent mother characters: *Stella Dallas* (1937), *Mildred Pierce* (1945), *One True Thing* (1998), *Ordinary People* (1980), *Beloved* (1998), *Mommie Dearest* (1984), *Margaret's Museum* (1995), *The Piano* (1993), *Kramer vs. Kramer* (1979), *Steel Magnolias* (1989), *The Joy Luck Club* (1992), *Losing Isaiah* (1995), *Winter Guest* (1997), and *Terms of Endearment* (1983).

As a feminist study, this paper advocates the development of a deeper consciousness about women's identity with specific reference to mothering experiences. I will consider various definitions of mothering and summarize topics and theories addressed throughout the course. Topics such as "gynocentric vs. patriarchal images" (O'Reilly, 1998: 70; O'Reilly and Abbey, 2000: 7); biological, social construction and "object-relations" theories (Chodorow, 1978); "matrophobia" (Rich, 1986: 235); body politics and state policy (Ruddick, 1989); race, class and sexuality (Bell-Scott, 1996); stories from the "motherline" (Lowinsky, 1992: 12); and comparative relationships with sons and daughters (Abbey, Castle and Reynolds, 1998; O'Reilly, 2001) highlight the major themes that emerged from students' assignments and in-class discussions.

My objectives are two-fold: (1) to offer a workable structure for other women's studies educators who may be interested in developing a similar course and (2) to explore the use of media as an effective way to apply and compare theories of psycho-social constructions of maternal images and ideologies. My intention is to argue that although contemporary Western society validates a legitimate meaning for motherhood that includes feminine fulfillment representing "something beautiful which leaves women consumed and replete with joy" (Spender, 1985), this meaning has been created largely by males who live outside the experience and is narrow, misguided or even false. Historically, male authors, script-writers and film producers have misrepresented women's narratives in order to play out their own needs and interpretations (Heilbrun, 1988). By attempting to replicate this type of unrealistic conceptualization, many women are left feeling inadequate, guilt-ridden or confused. It is important for women to name realities that are more consistent with their experiences, redefine motherhood and challenge this conspiracy of silence (Abbey and O'Reilly, 1998).

This paper is intended to open up challenging conversational spaces to confront maternal myths, unrealistic ideals, ethnocentric stereotypes, suppressive repetitions and even silences and lies that, although oppressive and limiting, have come to be naturalized as normal patterns of motherhood over the last forty years. Through this course, I try to create a site for resistance and celebration of reclaiming the mothers' voices as we interrogate and reconstruct ideological discourses and socially constructed patterns of mothering and being

mothered. As a new course, I also learned along with my students and I will conclude by sharing my own personal transitions and insights.

Theoretical perspectives

From a feminist perspective, this course seeks to uncover contradictions in traditional thought and to root these in the realities of male experience. Although such traditional thought might have provided valid contexts for film in specific historical circumstances, such images must now be questioned. The course was designed to examine the historical, socio-cultural and psychological constructions of "motherhood' within the patriarchy that determine how women mother and to contrast these essentialist discourses with what Adrienne Rich (1986) considers to be the more empowering and diverse potentials of authentic "mothering' and its shifting meanings within feminist praxis. Following Sara Ruddick's (1989) premise that "maternal work demands that mothers think," and Maureen Reddy's (1994) conclusion that "much mothering work is mental, not visible from the outside, and the strength for it comes from women's feeling, memory, judgment, and faith" (313), this course addresses gender discriminating trends in the media highlighted by the Canadian National MediaWatch Centre in Toronto, Ontario. Such trends include portraying women as passive, silly, weak or sexual; treating women's bodies as products; negatively misrepresenting self-assured women as aggressive or strident; suggesting that the only valued accomplishments of women are those that serve the needs of men or children; limiting the voice of women; and stereotyping women based on race, class or sexuality.

Defining the concept of "mother"

There is no shortage of definitions for "mother." More than any other field of human endeavor, motherhood is like the air we all breathe. Because it is clear, transparent and readily available, we often take it for granted. Motherhood is a "heroic quest"—a journey into selfhood and ultimate meaning that cries out to be chronicled, celebrated and shared (Estes, 1992). Although it has become an issue, it still is not a valued narrative and the lived experiences of mothers still undocumented, marginalized and silenced. The "masks of motherhood" (Maushart, 1999: 3) conceals the tension between the maternal power of creation and the dependencies that this power engenders. Yet, as Susan Maushart (1999) points out, it is not the tension but the attempt to deny the tension that creates the need for pretense and silence. Largely, mothering is an unexplored frontier of thought and emotion, according to Adrienne Rich (1986) that we try to tame with rules, myth and "authorized" knowledge. In addition, under patriarchal capitalism, she claims that white motherhood is largely about private property (ownership, competition and power). Traditionally, the children are the property of the father who "loans" them temporarily to the mother, whose duty it is to raise them according to the father's law (placing her own children above other children.) In contrast, mothering in

other cultures is more about collective responsibility and equal entitlement (Bell-Scott, 1996). To alter our narrow ethnocentric perception, Patricia Bell-Scott (1996) encourages all mothers to free themselves from arbitrary, culturally imposed restraints that suggest there is only one correct way to mother. To this end, mothering might be better viewed as a verb, something women *do*, rather than something they *are*. By unmasking the idealized image of motherhood and sharing what we really experience collectively, Maushart believes that women can break the cycle as willing conspirators and take the first steps toward reconciling reproductive power with social rights and responsibilities.

In her attempt to define mothering as a discipline, Sara Ruddick (1989) points out that the mother's voice is absent in psychoanalytic theory. She emphasizes that mothering is about a set of culturally learned values, attitudes, competencies and skills developed over time primarily in relation to the demands and needs of children. According to Sara Ruddick (1989), the practice of mothering involves interconnected reciprocal relationships arising out of a primary interest in the growth of a human infant, unequal in terms of power and status, from childhood to a socialized adult. "To be a mother," Ruddick (1994) suggests, "means to see children as demanding protection, nurturance, and training and then to commit oneself to the work of trying to meet these demands" (33). She describes mothering as a social discipline involving unconditional attachment and attentiveness as well as certain reflections, judgments and emotions that require thinking. It involves transformation, adaptation and sacrifice while continually struggling with autonomy, boundaries and a sense of self. However, Ruddick stresses that the work of mothering must also emphasize the role of empowering the self as well as others and shifting the shared responsibility for the well-being of children to other family and community members. Only by creating purposeful, livable space for oneself will a mother offer choices, possibilities and freedom to her children. There is a glaring need, she concludes, to restore to mothers their own presence and to understand that they are persons entitled to their own subjectivity, not merely caregivers of their children.

Research questions, data sources, methodology

As the course instructor and participant observer, this study is qualitative and inter-relational in nature. It is intended to examine how film and media can be used to enhance women studies students' ability to deepen and transform their own understanding of mothering roles and how these concepts have been shaped and biased by media messages. I recorded weekly anecdotal observation notes regarding small group discussion of assigned readings and scrapbook collections as well as individual presentations of film reviews. In addition, students were asked to complete a personal inventory at the beginning of the course and a survey of mothering practices as the end of the course. This data was used to develop a demographic profile and define the cultural and maternal contextual background of participants. Finally, the written narrative assign-

ment, the reflective commentary on their media scrapbook collections, as well as weekly written questions on readings and film critiques were used to identify emerging themes and patterns about mothering images influenced by popular culture.

An overview of films and related theories: The image of the all-sacrificing mother

In the film *Stella Dallas* (1937, remake 1990, directed by King Vidor) Stella is an independent free-spirit who raises her daughter on her own. She is portrayed as a neglectful mother because she is fun-loving and wants to go out to parties after her child is born. Mothers, is would seem, are to have no interests of their own and never want to leave their child. Stella is portrayed as unstable and unreliable and is befriended by a man who is overweight and drinks heavily. Although he loves Stella and loyally stands by her and her child, he is made to appear less desirable than the ambitious biological father who left Stella and moved into a higher social status with a new love interest. In the end, although Stella loves her daughter, she deliberately drives her away to her father so that she may reap the advantages of a higher social position. By deliberating making her daughter angry and ashamed, Stella sacrifices all for her daughter, caters to her and tries to make all her dreams come true. Who would expect a "good" mother to do anything less in 1937!

Pregnancy, childbirth and infancy are non-issues or taboo subjects at this time in history. However, once the child is a grown-up person, the father steps back in. The mother is financially dependent on the father and his affluent white upper-class life style is valued. The father is viewed as the stable parent—well grounded, educated and able to provide more opportunities for the daughter. The mother flirts with other men but is never allowed to date seriously or remarry in this script. She stays interested in her husband and fusses over him when he visits. Other women in the film seem cruel and judgmental while men appear to be loyal and good. The daughter is able to accept her father's new partner but not her mother's. Clearly, the script-writers advantage the male's point of view.

Similarly, the film *Mildred Pierce* (1945, directed by John Erman) takes the ill-favoured image of the independent woman one step further. Mildred supports her unemployed husband by holding down two jobs. She finally tells him to leave and starts a successful restaurant chain. While she is away on business her younger daughter dies of pneumonia while in the care of the father and his female companion who is caring and nurturing. Mildred is blamed for leaving her child and neglecting her maternal duties. Career women can't be "good" mothers. As a result, she spoils her older daughter who becomes more selfish and demanding. In the end, this daughter flirts with her mother's second husband and murders him for not returning her affections. When Mildred learns the truth she willingly tries to sacrifice herself by confessing to the crime herself.

This film suggests that to succeed financially a woman must be shrewd, bossy and cold as well as totally committed to working day and night. The message in this film is that women who are outspoken and take a stand on their own behalf are dangerous and will suffer the consequences. However, although she appears capable, Mildred is still silenced and men do the talking, controlling and negotiating for her. She is objectified by her second husband who is attracted to her appearance, not her capabilities. She feels fulfilled because she is "wanted" by a man. In the end, good mothers simply can't have careers.

Popular culture implies that our children are exquisitely delicate creatures, hugely vulnerable to our idiosyncrasies and deficits, who require relentless psychological attunement and approval. The researchers who deconstruct this sentimentalized image of the perfect mother, one who finds passionate fulfillment in every detail of child rearing (Daly, 1982; Rich, 1986; Faludi, 1991; Kaplan, 1992; Maushard, 1999), emphasize how a long, guilt-inducing shadow is placed over real mothers' lives. This ideology of "good" mothering, they contend, is oblivious to a mother's desires, limitations and context, and when things go wrong, she tends to be blamed. They point out that the successful socialization of children by acceptable standards of the day becomes the final judgment on women's identify as mothers.

Using these films as a starting point, I challenge my students to consider their view of an "ideal" image of mothers as well as how their own mothers have complied with these traditional expectations. As might be expected, older women in the course who are mothers themselves are often able to step back and deconstruct maternal patterns more critically. In contrast, younger students tend to praise their mothers for "staying at home," "giving up their jobs," "looking after everyone else's needs in the family," "putting themselves last," or even "forgetting about who they are as persons." Although they might recognize that these expectations are unfair, they justify such maternal sacrifices by emphasizing how much they recognize and appreciate all that their mothers gave up and hope to be just like them someday. I challenge the hegemonic position of these students and encourage them to think about how they will reconcile giving up their own personhood, when this transition is likely to take place and how they might begin to plan for an alternate, more equitable lifestyle.

Gynocentric "mothering" vs. patriarchal "motherhood"

Adrienne Rich (1986) draws a distinction between the male-defined institution of motherhood from the outsider's perspective of authority figures, experts and family members and the concept of mothering from the perspective of those who live within the experience. She points out that the patriarchal notion of a mother's role works to disadvantage women by setting impossible standards for them to live up to, by isolating them and devaluing their work, by imposing a binary distinction between those who mother and those who don't, and by exploiting the caretaking jobs in an under-paid workforce. In contrast,

gynocentric perspectives of mothering emphasize the potential relationship of any woman to her powers of reproduction and to children from within the experience. From this perspective, the role is viewed as only one temporary aspect of a woman's life rather than her whole identity and poses the question of who takes care of the mothers (Abbey and O'Reilly, 1998; O'Reilly and Abbey, 2000).

In the film *One True Thing* (1997, directed by Carl Franklin) the issue of who takes care of the mother is addressed. A young woman (Ellen) reluctantly interrupts her budding career as a journalist to move back home—at her father's request—to take care of her dying mother (Kate). Although she always admires her father's career as a language professor and trivializes her mother's role as a housewife and a community volunteer, in the end, she learns to respect her mother's life and her values. The story is told by the daughter, first as an outsider who resists becoming like her mother (matrophobia) and then as an insider, as she shadows her mother in her final months. The initial impression of this silly woman who dresses up for Hallowe'en and focuses on decorating her house for each holiday changes to that of a women who is deeply loyal and tolerant of a cheating over-dependent husband who is cold, condescending, insensitive and judgmental.

In the end, Ellen comments that "being my mother is very tiring" and asks her mother "how do you do this every day?" And she admonishes her father, pointing out that "you need her to keep your life running smoothly." Before she dies, in a private conversation with Ellen, Kate points out that "no one lets me talk. I'm tired of being shushed. I want to talk before I die even if the things I say hurt you. Love what you have instead of yearning for what you imagine you are missing." The audience gains a sense that Ellen's life was far more than caretaking, as it would appear on the surface but the film still honours complacency and compromising with patriarchal values for the sake of harmony. As her parting advice to her daughter, Ellen points out that "your husband is your life and everything is built around him. If you take him out of the picture, just a big hole is left!"

In contrast, the film *Ordinary People* (1980, directed by Robert Redford) is told from the teenage son's (Conrad) point of view as an outsider. He portrays his career-oriented mother (Beth) as cold and aloof as she struggles to come to terms with the accidental death of her older (and presumed favoured) son. The males (father, psychiatrist) are portrayed as the nurturers and, like *Mildred Pierce,* children's lives are in danger when mothers fail to stay at home. Nancy Chodorow's "Object-Relations" theory is exemplified in Conrad's need to separate from his mother in order to attain his masculine identity. One wonders how Beth would have told her own story of coping with loss and grief.

Mother-blame, matrophobia and daughter-centricity

As Ladd-Taylor and Umansky (1998) point out, instead of harshly criticizing mothers for child neglect we might become more consciously aware

of how social systems often prevent mothers from balancing child care and work and from being paid for looking after their own children. They point out that the profiles of "bad" mothers (those who don't live by "traditional" nuclear family patterns and white middle-class standards, those who can't protect their children from harm, and those whose children commit crimes) often mask society's ambivalence. Criticizing mothers allows society to avoid confronting some of the painful, socioeconomic and emotionally induced conditions that women endure. In addition, the dominance of child-rearing experts and media messages in recent decades makes it impossible to follow all the advice. Mothers are too smothering and dominant if they stay at home and too selfish if they pursue careers. Furthermore, double standards are imposed on affluent women who don't stay at home and poor women who do. The growth of state power with new policies regarding fetal rights, legal custody, pensions, reproduction technology, immigration and public health increases the opportunities for mothers to be criticized and reprimanded. Such powerful influences often overshadow the real problem for many mothers of how to survive emotionally with little or no support. Emotional deprivation brings on rage, self-hatred and the desire for revenge. Although we can tolerate men who have difficulties with intimate relationships, we struggle to acknowledge that women can also have problems with the closeness that young children need. It is supposed to come naturally. Instead of perpetuating mother-blame, we ought to look for the deeply rooted issues that can be addressed.

To address this issue, Paula Caplan (2000) proposes the "scapegoat theory," stating that the less a group is valued, the easier it is to blame. She argues that since maternal work is largely invisible and instinctive, it is viewed to inferior to the work of men. On the other hand, she points out that mothers are viewed as dangerous when they are ambitious, outspoken and independent. As one case in point, Caplan refers to mother-bashing jokes, emphasizing the general acceptance of maternal weakness and how easy it is for women to internalize these societal viewpoints. In every culture on historical record, mothers are "wicked" if they dare to violate the gender norms of their time. I point out to students how this has significant implications, for example, in the court system with respect to child custody decisions for lesbian mothers (Nelson, 1996).

We look at the film *Beloved* (1998, directed by Jonathan Demme) in which a young pregnant woman (Sethe) escapes slavery by fleeing to Kentucky after the Civil War. Rather than risking her children being captured by the same white men who enslaved and tortured her, she kills her baby. Years later, the ghost of this baby (Beloved) returns as an 18-year old girl to live with Sethe and her younger daughter (Denver). When Sethe becomes obsessed with indulging Beloved's every pleasure and too demented to work, Denver must take on the responsibility of caring for her mother.

This powerful story raises the complex issues of mother-blame and role-reversal. Was Sethe justified in killing her baby to save her from slavery? Was

her ultimate guilt and self-condemnation warranted? Who was available to provide her with emotional support and assistance? Was Sethe, in fact, a "bad" mother? How valid is the interpretation of this mother as portrayed by a jealous daughter for the most part? Similar questions are raised in the film *Mommie Dearest* (1981, directed by Frank Perry). After her mother had died, the daughter of the actress Joan Crawford wrote this very critical story about being abused by her mother as a child, providing the basis for the film. It is not uncommon for daughters to be publicly critical of their mothers but are their memories infantile and egocentric, the product of vindictive, spiteful anger? It is never difficult to find stories in the news about mothers who are harshly judged or vilified for committing acts of neglect or violence against children (drowning their children, throwing themselves with child in arms in the path of a train, abandoning a newborn on a cold sidewalk or colluding with partners who batter their children to death). Through a critical analysis, I encourage my students to refrain from placing all the blame on these desperate women and also to look beyond these horrific acts at the lack of crucial social support structures and to the governments who fail to provide them.

The (m)other side of the story

Multiple identities of mothering as defined and determined by women themselves with an insider's perspective are addressed in this course. We begin with Sarah Ruddick (1989), who stresses that we must work to transform maternal practices into the work of public conscience and legislation. For her, mothering is a social discipline involving the actual experiences of child rearing that involve the repeated practice of significant traits include preservation, responsiveness to change, acceptability, unconditional attentiveness and managerial capacities. She emphasizes that these are learned skills that can be acquired by anyone (male or female) who is involved in the primary care of children. Likewise, Greta Nemiroff (1994) emphasizes that participating in child-care helps the caregiver develop a sense of intimacy and a reconnection to the child within each of us. As a result, one becomes more receptive and accepting of life changes, more aware of tactile communication and more strongly focused on future realities. Finally, we address Judith Butler's (1990) theory of "subversive repetitions" in which she questions the ideal of a unified continuous self. Instead, she suggests that mothering is composed of multiple identities and that being a mother is a cultural performance that creates the illusion of naturalness and coherence. In fact, it is an identity tenuously constructed in time through stylized repetitions that daughters often struggle to subvert. Many students can easily make connections to their own lived experiences.

Adrienne Rich (1986), speaking as an insider with a tacit knowledge of maternal embodiment, acknowledges that her memories of motherhood were not always idyllic and there were times when she envied childless women to live a life of privacy and freedom. To confess that "my children cause me the most

exquisite suffering of which I have any experience" does not make her a "bad" mother or "a monster of selfishness and intolerance" (21-22). In fact, these feelings are realistic and need to be voiced. The construction of maternal knowledge involves an ongoing internal negotiation between what mothers think they know, what they know they know, and who they are.

Walkerdine and Lucey (1989) argue that class distinctions play another significant part in maternal identity and the telling of mothers' own stories. Growing up as daughters of working-class mothers, they point out that most maternal accounts are told by mothers who are middle-class intellectuals. From this limited and biased perspective, working class mothers are often viewed as inadequate and insensitive and it follows that their children are deprived and disadvantaged. In defense of their own mothers, Walkerdine and Lucey point out that middle-class mothers who are generally at home and available to their children at all times might not always provide the most ideal environment for children. Although their domestic life appears to centre around their children and they transform domestic routines into playful educational learning, a false sense of democracy often results. By appearing to put their child's needs first, these mothers often become trapped into suppressing and hiding conflict but not eliminating it. Rebellion goes underground and harmony becomes a superficial sham.

In contrast, working-class mothers who may appear to lack sensitivity, are actually providing their children with realistic coping skills, according to this research. These mothers work outside the home and, as such, their domestic duties must be accomplished in a limited amount of time. Children are not expected to interrupt and learn to rely on themselves. These children can voice their conflicts and anger overtly and their mothers create a space for this to be expressed safely. In addition, Paula Caplan (2000) points out that few middle-class mothers tell their children how difficult mothering can be. In a culture in which mothering is generally undervalued, chances are slim that anyone outside mother is going to teach children how much effort and uncertainly are involved in the job. As a result, both sons and daughters grow up thinking mothering is natural, instinctive and easy.

Margaret's Museum (1995, directed by Mort Ransen) is one of the few films to depict a working-class mother/daughter relationship and to tell a realistic story from inside a mother's experience. Mothering is not romanticized in the harsh reality of life in eastern Canada where a bitter widow (Katherine) resigns herself to the coal-mining deaths of her husband and two sons. She does not support her daughter's (Margaret) marriage to Neil, professing that all men are unreliable—"He'll make you cry and then you'll have children to add to the suffering.... The world is a bad place. He'll put you in the nut house." In fact, Margaret ends up learning from her mother and repeating oppressive social norms even though Margaret openly resists becoming like her mother (matrophobia) and resisting her ways (subversive repetition).

Unfortunately, there are few films featuring a mother's life that is both

written and directed by a woman. Happily, Jane Campion has both written and directed *The Piano* (1993). The story is narrated by the mother (Ada) who is mute—a striking commentary on the silenced voices of women in this turn-of-the-century era. The audience hears what she is thinking which offers a very intimate perspective of her life as a mail-order bride who travels with a young daughter (Flora) from her privileged life in England to the harsh reality of the Australian outback. She becomes a prisoner in a loveless marriage and seeks company in an extramarital relationship. She is never free of her child and must conduct her liaison with the child in tow. On many occasions, Ada seeks to satisfy her own needs at the expense of her child and the audience must confront the justification of such self-indulgence. Many of her actions go against the notions of the ideal mother. In the end, the child betrays her mother and colludes with the male in power. After Ada is severely mutilated as her just punishment, Flora becomes the caretaker and their roles are reversed. The issue of subordination of mothers and socialization of daugthers by the patriarchy is clearly confronted in this film.

The politics of reproduction: Whose body is it?

Mary O'Brien (1981) questions why society fails to take reproduction seriously. She points out that, ironically, it is the only natural function that has not been studied and theorized by men. She suggests that the reason why a female "reproductive taxonomy," including such embodied moments as menstruation, ovulation, copulation conception, gestation, labour, birth, lactation, nurturing and menopause, is devalued is because these moments are largely invisible and involuntary and they happen only to women. She argues that "labour" requires analysis and compares productive labour with reproductive labour, concluding that reproduction (along with women's bodies) has become a commodity and childbirth has become medicalized and institutionalized in a male-dominated arena. The health and legal industries are controlled by experts who stand to gain financially. As a result, child birth, originally celebrated as a social rite of femininity is concealed and reduced in value. Issues of custody, paternity, and spousal support as determined by state policy and court procedures are discussed in this section of the course.

The film *Kramer vs. Kramer* (1979, directed by Robert Redford) is told from the male perspective in the judicial court system of the '70s. Joanna is portrayed as a "bad" mother because she left her family for the sake of personal fulfillment. As a single parent, Ted experiences the intolerance of a workplace that cannot accept a working parent. He is fired for putting his child's needs first. Although Joanna wins custody in the end, she makes the ultimate sacrifice (much like *Stella* and *Mildred Pierce* of earlier decades) in order to allow the strong bond between father and son to continue. She does what is best for her child, by leaving him with his father, ignoring her own needs. We are left to wonder how Joanna would have told this story herself and how the male-dominated court room manipulated the outcome.

In contrast, the film *Steel Magnolias* (1989, directed by Herbert Ross) is told from the perspective of privileged white Southern women. Shelby, a severe diabetic, is advised not to get pregnant. She resists her controlling mother's wishes and gives birth to a son, only to die of complications shortly after. The audience is taken into the indifferent world of the hospital where the insensitive businesslike manner of the staff is contrasted to the emotional dimensions experienced by Shelby's mother. The men all appear aloof and irresponsible (excessive to the point that they cannot be taken seriously) while, once again, women are prepared to make ultimate sacrifices—Shelby to risk her life to have a child and her mother to risk her life by donating a kidney to her daughter. O'Brien's theory of the invisible reproductive taxonomy is exemplified in this film even though women act and the men stand by and watch.

From margin to centre: Race, class and sexuality

In this class I raise awareness about marginalized women and alternate patterns of mothering related to class, race and sexuality (e.g. Afrocentric, lesbian, foster and adoptive mothering). As Adrienne Rich (1986) considers her lesbian identity, she points out that when those who have the authority to name and determine what will be valued (such as teachers) choose to ignore or mistreat minority groups (including women) or describe the world without you in it, a process of psychic disequilibrium is created. Patricia Bell-Scott (1991) extends this observation to the mothering experiences within the white and black cultures. She points out that while white women traditionally gain status as stay-at-home mothers with the economic security provided by husbands and are afforded the time to focus their care-taking responsibilities, black women are concerned about supporting their families, education, independence and control over their own bodies. Mothers in black cultures are often more central and powerful figures in the family and rely more on themselves for economic security.

The frustrations of other marginalized positions are addressed as well in order to heighten awareness of students to alternative viewpoints. According to Coll, Surrey and Weingarten (1998), adoptive mothers often feel devalued and worry about the valuing of blood relations and genetic endowment over environmental nurturing and about the psychological pathologizing of the wellbeing of their children. Likewise, as Bo Miedema (1998) points out, foster mothers are often exploited, unsupported and even resented for performing a crucial child-care service—often with little preparation time and a high degree of risk and emotional tension. Finally, we consider Katherine Arnup's (1998) perspective on lesbian mothering in which she stresses how her children often struggle with the pressures to conform to traditional norms. She points out that lesbian couples, in contrast to ill-intentioned stereotyping, provide stable and secure homes in which decisions to conceive and raise children are made with thoughtful care and deliberateness by both parents.

In the film *Losing Isaiah* (1995, directed by Stephen Gyllenhaal) an

abandoned baby is found by a social service agent (Margaret) and adopted into her white middle-class family. The young birth mother (Khaila), a black drug addict, initiates a court battle to reclaim her son and challenge the adoption process. After winning the case she quickly realizes she cannot sever the strong emotional bond her son has build with his adoptive family. She realizes that she needs emotional support and agrees to allow her son to return to Margaret's family if she can remain a part of his life. Racial stereotyping is very evident in this film as is the Hollywood image of beauty and success. A black single mother (unemployed and drug addicted) is portrayed as inferior to a white mother living in a nuclear family with a double income.

In contrast, the film *Joy Luck Club* (1992, directed by Wayne Wang) depicts the lives of eight Asian women—four mother/daughter pairs, who struggle to hold onto strong cultural practices while assimilating into American norms and values with more authenticity. As women and mothers, these women were disempowered and forced to make significant sacrifices for their own survival as well as the welfare of their daughters. The stories are all told in the first person, as insiders although the perspective continually shifts between these eight storytellers. In the end, they all find their voice, overcome their submissiveness and claim their rightful space.

The motherline Generational stories

Naomi Lowinsky (1992) reminds us that what is often forgotten is that mothers are people with their own lives, who are profoundly affected by the experience of having children. She describes the "motherline" as stories of female experience—physical, psychological, and historical patterns emphasizing "the oneness of body and psyche ... a life vessel" (4). She points out that the grand narratives of the patriarchy do not reflect female experiences in their full sense. All of us, she argues, need access to our biohistorical sense of continuity to be fully, creatively alive, to face our own mortality and to honour life in all its forms. She explains the process of "looping" in which women pass through their own experience of mothering in order to fully understand the experiences of their own mothers and grandmothers. Through a series of visualization exercises, I begin this section of the course by asking students to imagine they are stepping back into the lives of their mothers, grandmothers and foremothers ... into the "underworld in which our mothers sit with the ghosts of lost human meanings" (Lowinsky, 1992: 6).

Two films are viewed that illustrate the power of motherline stories. The first, set in a seaside town in Scotland on a cold winter day, is *Winter Guest* (1997, directed by Alan Rickman). It portrays the "motherline" tale of Frances, a woman who has recently lost her husband, and her elderly mother Elspeth who tries to support her. The story reveals the altering life changes that occur beneath the surface of ordinary people of different ages as they struggle with their own identities. Throughout the circle of life, mothers never stop needing and wanting others to need them as well. We get through life by leaning on each

other. The second film, *Terms of Endearment* (1983, directed by James Brooks) depicts the lives of three generations of mothers—neurotic, controlling Aurora, her free-spirited daughter Emma and her grandchildren. Looking backward to our mothers and forward to our daughters, compels us to face our own mortality and to honour life in all its forms. When she sees her granddaughter for the first time, Aurora says that "it is like looking in the mirror." I encourage students to gaze into their own maternal mirrors.

Conclusions

An intensive examination of film and media representations of mothers indicates that most of the films and articles about mothering are still written and directed by men. Several other significant revelations confirmed the current research on popular culture (Arnup, 1994; Bassin, Honey, and Kaplan, 1994; Hirsch, 1989; Umansky, 1996; and Walters, 1992). Firstly, students admit that they do not give much thought to the messages delivered through the media about acceptable and valued mothering practices and that they were generally surprised at how predominant and powerful this mode of communication can be. Narrow and hegemonic images of white middle-class mothering were conveyed in most of the films studied and most students assume these to represent "typical" family patterns until they are challenged to reexamine these assumptions. By the end of the course, students feel much more aware of persuasive tactics and hidden messages conveyed in film and begin to resist and question what is portrayed.

Students' analysis of media clippings from newspapers and magazines also resulted in clearly defined themes and patterns. Foremost, was the impression that the majority of news articles portrayed mothers negatively as bad or irresponsible, emphasizing actions that tended to disrupt the ideal patriarchal standards and blame mothers for everything that went wrong with society (Caplan, 2000; Ladd-Taylor and Umansky, 1998). The media tended to focus on sensational crimes or traumas that mothers were seldom able to cope with. Students pointed out that mothers were seldom given credit for the complex roles they undertook and that fathers were rarely mentioned or expected to be held accountable.

Equally obvious was the unrealistic image of the super-mom, held up as the validated ideal for society. While this selfless and other-focused care-giving role is inferred on the one hand, ironically it is seldom taken seriously or given powerful status on the other. Students come to realize how easily daughters could be persuaded to replicate these limiting maternal behaviours and that rigid gender divisions of labour were being perpetuated. It is assumed that mothering just came naturally to women, rather than profiling it as a genderless, learned behaviour. Many students remark that the course has "opened my eyes."

In their final course assignment, in which students wrote personal narrative about their experiences of being mothered or being mothers, significant themes emerged. Changing family structures resulting from a mother's ill-

ness, premature death, divorce or remarriage resulted in intense learning experiences for many students. Mothers who returned to work or gave up jobs to stay at home were frequently mentioned as well. Interrupting goals or restricting personal development seemed justifiable and warranted in most narrative portrayals. Focusing their attention on others at the expense of self appeared to be a valued maternal pattern of behaviour that daughters often required, craved and intended to follow in their own lives. Suprisingly few students questioned this giving up of personhood or matrophobic tendancies to resist or fear becoming like one's mother. Family secrets were often disclosed in the narratives themes as well—adopted siblings, unwanted teen pregnancies, or half-siblings with different fathers were often not confronted until daughters were adults or parents had died. In many of the stories fathers were absent or insignificant. Mothers were remembered as the dynamic force holding the family together, making the major decisions or being available unconditionally.

Educational relevance

Through the use of powerful film and media examples, this course sensitizes students to the many challenges and complex layers of mothering and media awareness. They become more aware of misrepresented binary dichotomies constructed mainly by those outside the experience itself and, for the most part, become committed to making more conscious choices about their own maternal behaviours in the future.

As the course progresses, students also gain more confidence in speaking out and sharing their feelings as well as more cautious about expressing opinions and judgments that might involve hegemonic bias. They begin to look for deeper meanings and persuasive implications in the media and also to question the standpoint of the "knower" and the "known" (Code, 1991). As a result of their new insights, many students have begun to question the role schools might play in media literacy as well as in changing and redefining maternal patterns for the next generation of parents.

In the end, however, this course forced me to confront my own assumptions about "typical" families. I have come to appreciate that very few students who sit in my classes come from problem-free, traditional nuclear family structures. Once a trust is established between us, they write about incest, abuse, jealousy, resistance and rebellion, childhood illness, alcoholism, adoption, premature death of a mother, infertility, single parenthood, teen pregnancy and giving up their babies, conflict and estrangement, fear, isolation and grief. While many students describe their mothers as "best friends," others admit that they have never established close maternal bonds and a few address their regrets or secret wishes to be hugged or respected by their mothers. This personal writing is therapeutic and emancipating for many and provided a way to confront and question significant maternal issues deeply and authentically.

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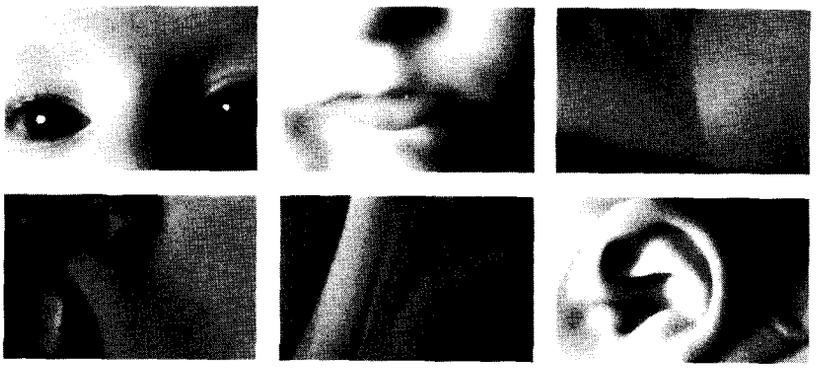
Myrel Chernick

Maternal Metaphors
Artists/Mothers/Artwork

The exhibition Maternal Metaphors approaches the mother/child relationship from multiple viewpoints, in work that ranges from drawing, painting and photography to video, sculpture and installation. Medium, however, is less the focus than motherhood, for when an artist chooses to become a mother, she makes a difficult decision that further complicates her already complicated existence. "Busy" becomes "frantic," passions are divided, financial and time constraints multiply.

Our culture publicly celebrates motherhood to such an extreme that any form of ambivalence—mother-toward-child especially—is difficult to express. Some artists, particularly women whose work already grapples with issues of identity, feel compelled to incorporate the concerns and conflicts, as well as the passions, of motherhood into their work. The conflicts of the mother-child relationship are compounded for the deeply committed artist. She finds herself in a continual struggle to meet the demands of her art and her family, as well as those of the dominant culture. The artwork included here reflects this struggle, seeks out and examines these conflicts, rather than celebrates the traditionally depicted image of the most perfect dyad.

The visual art world appears particularly ambivalent toward mothers, who have been known to conceal the existence of their children. This is a serious lack in a culture that reproduces itself on many levels through visual imagery, for both women and men need to see expression of these complex issues as well as read about them. The treatment of the subject matter in this exhibition as well as its presentation vary greatly, from the theoretical to the social, examining daily routine as well as unconscious choices, and is not afraid to address aberrant behavior that is rarely discussed until it flares up in the form of infanticide or child abuse, resulting in sensational headlines and brief public outcry.

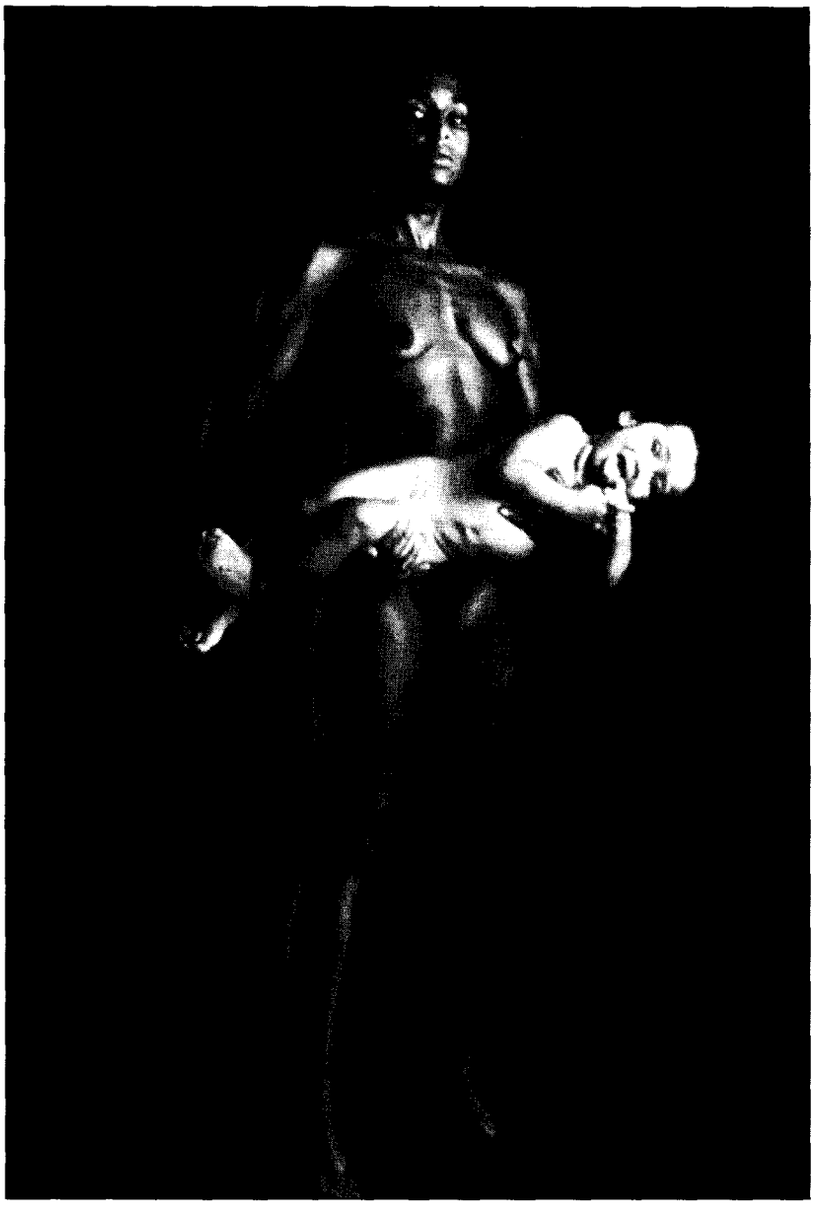


Mary Kelly, "Primapara, Bathing Series."
12 black and white photographs, 7.5 X 11 cm each

Mary Kelly's seminal work, "Post-Partum Document," brought many issues of motherhood into public debate. Here we see her series of photographs "Primapara," intimate records of the rituals of the infant's life, which address the representation of the mother's desire.

Aura Rosenberg, "Laurie Simmons/Lena, 1998." C-print, 16" x 14" and 40" x 30"

Aura Rosenberg paints children's faces and costumes their bodies so that her striking and startling photographs raise issues not of horrific babies but of manipulative parenting.

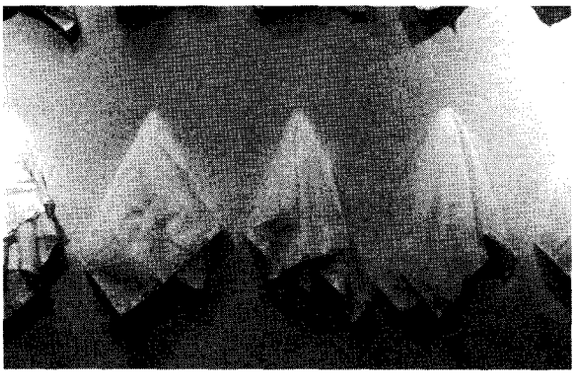


Renee Cox, "Yo Mama, 1993." Silver gelatin print.

Renee Cox's dramatic and unconventional projections of herself as mother (both pregnant and postpartum) from her "Yo Mama" series challenge the depictions of mother and child that range from medieval Madonnas to Mary Cassatt.

Marion Wilson, "Playing War," two room installation at Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center, 1999

Marion Wilson's "Playing War" incorporates sculptures of armored babies, antique guns and abstracted photographic images of children's faces to contrast brutal reality with glorified motherhood. Simultaneously alarming and beautiful, the work confronts both the fear and acceptance of violence in contemporary culture.



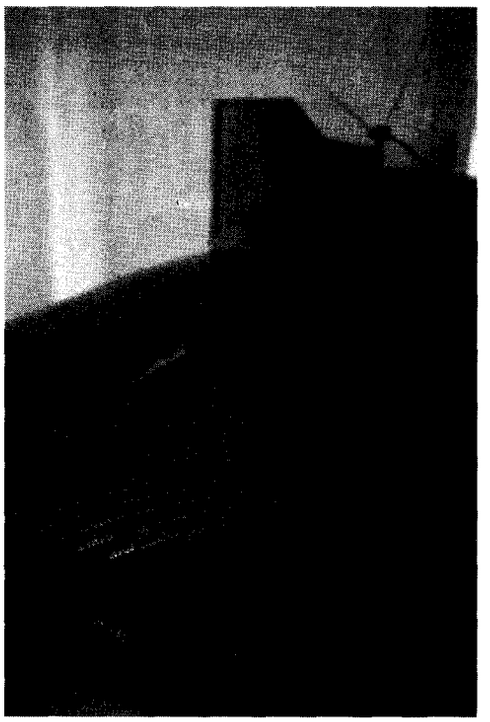
Sarah Webb, "Milk and Tears, 2000." Birdseye weave cloth diapers, embroidery.

Sarah Webb's fragile installations (piles of eggshells, squares of silk, handsewn diapers) are produced with repetitive movements that mimic the mother's touch, nurturing as well as potentially destructive. Her recent installation of embroidered cloth diapers, "Milk and Tears," focuses on the non-sexualized (maternal or cancerous) female breast.

Myrel Chernick

Monica Bock, "Maternal Exposure (don't forget the lunches) 1999-2000," embossed and folded sheet lead, cast glycerin, each bag 11" X 5" X 3"

Monica Bock also works with repetition and vulnerable materials in her installation "Maternal Exposure (don't forget the lunches)" where 418 folded lead lunch bags and an equal number of bags of glycerin soap are spread out across the space. Inspired by the daily ritual of exposing a mother's nurturing skills to public scrutiny, the sheer magnitude of the task, seen as a collective unit, reveals the impossible effort to nurture and protect one's children.

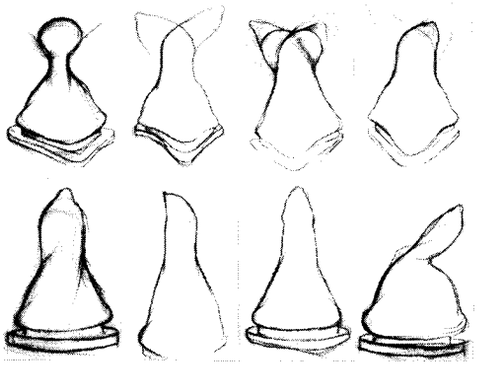


Myrel Chernick, "On the Couch, 1996" Couch 72" X 40" X 30". Installation with couch, monitor, mirror, lamp, slide projection.

Myrel Chernick's mothers are violent, controlling, passionate and self-sacrificing as well as nurturing. In her series of three video installations, "Domestic Interventions," which incorporate dilapidated furniture, videotapes and text, fragmented narratives of and by these "good" and "bad" mothers are provocatively interwoven against a backdrop of quotidian ritual.

Judy Glantzman, untitled, 1999, oil on canvas, 90 x 80 "

Judy Glantzman's paintings and drawings of layered and fragmented bodies (hers and her daughter's) convey a fluid and nearly erotic entanglement.



Ellen McMahon, "Suckled Series (group of 8)," charcoal on paper, 20" x 13" each, 1996

Ellen McMahon's sensually executed charcoal drawings of mutated synthetic nipples and syringes are part of her "Maternal Alphabet," a pre-linguistic symbol system that addresses the mother's conflicted feelings of intimacy and longing, satisfaction and emptiness, humor and sadness in her relationship with her child and the outside world.

The artists in this exhibition "re-conceive" the idea of motherhood. Confrontational and analytic, personal and passionate, their at times beautiful, at times horrific, always provocative work evokes a full range of contemporary "maternal metaphors" by women who seek to give artistic expression to one of the most mythologized and misappropriated chapters in a woman's life.

Laurie Kruk

Poem for September 13th, 2001*

While the ashes still fell
jumbling DNA dreams:
faith-crazed, headline-effaced
attackers and victims
hanging from the sky...

while the darkness roared
blanketing September gilding,
paralysing our vision
while reasonable men and women
lost television tongues,
returning our eyes again and again to
the fallen towers
bearing fragments of fate
named in the thousands....

and as the rain descended after, drops
crawling for the ocean—

You crashed through, baby woman:
violet-limbed, still trailing the knotted tie,
like a parachute;
piercing the pall with knife-edged cries,
carried to your mother's aching
emptied belly and cut into history.

Survivor's guilt or not,
your wrinkled, furious brow
took nine months to mould
with each cry a triumph, each angry lifted
fist, pummelling the alien air,
a claim on our hearts.
The fall is made new, and this aging green century
watered by rivers of a returning spring
this September 2001
carrying away tears and fingerprints
as the nurse presses your dyed sole
to the identification form, entering
your name as others
are finally written in stone services.
Fifteen-minutes-breathing, you
root for the maternal ocean, meeting
sustenance of milk, rising warm
to the surface of my numbed openings.

We are born into loss
as we are opened by love:
"It's a game of inches and seconds," the grey-suited man
draped in the dust of friends, enemies, strangers
tells the hope-hungry world
in the same paper that declares your arrival.
He escaped the fireball down 78 stories
breathing soot and screams and the ceaseless quest
for ground. Ran into the embrace of strangers,
keening of sirens. And found his way home, an unfamiliar
four-miles walk
out of yesterday.

Laurie Kruk

And as you are born into tomorrow
season of loss and uncovering
for always
suddenly we are rooted to the same page;
sharing both beginning and ending
the tenacious grip of a tiny hand, latching on
like my heart, pulsing
hope and despair—
like the foreign grip on familiar controls
which may bring us back to
earth, together
if only to be claimed by its gravity

Second daughter, this day you fly
the present forever into the past
astonishing, terrifying, marking us
for this moment, a lifetime's
opening

**two days after the terrorist attacks on the U.S.A, in New York and Washington*

Jenny Lawn

Born Under the Sign of Joan
Margaret Atwood's Lady Oracle, Mommie Dearest, *and the Uses of Maternal Ambivalence*

> I think Joan really did go a little batty in the '50s—that is when most of the really bad stories are told about her. I think she kind of mellowed out in the '60s and was finally at peace w[ith] herself in the '70s. But oh, those '50s....
>
> —Darwin Bell, e-mail to *Joan Crawford Digest*, 6 October 1999

> When bad women get into literature, what are they doing there, and are they permissible, and what, if anything, do we need them for?
>
> —Maragaret Atwood, "Spotty Handed Villainesses," 1994: n.p.

In Margaret Atwood's parodic romance *Lady Oracle* (1976), the protagonist, searching for a clue to the meandering fortunes of her life, ponders her mother's purpose in naming her Joan.[1] Perhaps, like Miss Haversham of Dickens's *Great Expectations,* Frances Delacourt instrumentalizes her daughter to wreak revenge upon men: "Did she name me after Joan Crawford because she wanted me to be like the screen characters she played—beautiful, ambitious, ruthless, destructive to men [...]?" (Atwood, 1976: 38). Or perhaps Frances is upholding Joan Crawford as the model of success in clambering up the social ranks: "Joan Crawford worked hard, she had willpower, she built herself up from nothing, according to my mother" (38). Conversely, perhaps her mother foresaw unhappinesss: "In fact there was something tragic about Joan Crawford, she had big serious eyes, an unhappy mouth and high cheekbones, unfortunate things happened to her" (38-39). Thus the iconic moment at which identity is conferred—the naming of the child—simultaneously endows and strips Joan of her "proper" name: "Did she give me someone else's name because she wanted me never to have a name of my own?" (38). Endowed with this name,

the infant Joan enters into the treacherous world of duplicitous signs that is Atwood's post-war suburban Toronto, where Brownies turn terrorist, "good men" flip into "bad men," nightmares stalk little girls, and WASP families implode in the self-amassed gravity of resentment and frustrated ambition.

The fact of being named after someone else, someone who is herself an actress playing many roles in both on and off screen, propels Joan into what Eleonora Rao terms the "polyhedric" subjectivity of multiple identifications (1994: 144), both lived and fantasised. Variously persecuted victim, Gothic heroine, trapeze artist, butterfly, ill-fated dancer, spy, adultress, mistress, and wife, Joan's development from childhood to adulthood represents a kind of parodic *bildung* achieved through the textual imbibing of popular culture and escapist fantasy. In separate articles John Thieme (1992: 72) and Kim Worthington (1996: 295) have suggested that the naming foregrounds the necessity of acting, fantasy, and self-concealment in women's lives under patriarchy, though neither critic pursues the fact that numerous male characters equally engage in impersonations of various kinds. After all, any actress might stand equally well for the principle of dissimulation. Why not call the daughter Bette [Davis], for example, or Moira [Shearer], actresses who both starred in cautionary Hollywood tales about the proper role and destiny of daughters (*Now, Voyager* [1942] and *The Red Shoes* [1948])? Or indeed, perhaps Frances should have called the baby Shirley [Temple], whose mother also "professionalized" her relationship with her daughter from an early stage (Atwood, 1976: 68). Furthermore, these commentators elide the gender specificity of Joan's naming. It is Joan's mother, not her father, who tries to possess her with the name—a name that, in later revelations about Joan Crawford, would itself become the emblem of possessiveness and hostility between mother and daughter. What seems to be at issue, in other words, is not the duplicity of identity but the interfolding of identities in the moment that could be punningly termed, in response to Lacan's "nom du père," the "nom de la mère," a name which functions simultaneously as incentive, blessing, curse, gift, and weapon of reproach.

My project in this paper is to intensively study from a synchronic perspective this textual conjunction of Margaret Atwood and Joan Crawford within the context of popular representations of monstrous mothers and resisting daughters in mid-1970s North America. If film stars expose ideological contradictions (Robertson, 1996: 87), how exactly does this process occur in one specific, highly charged textual example? For "Joan Crawford" is not merely a polysemic sign (Dyer, 1979: 3)—one with many meanings, some of them contradictory—but a sign of changeableness itself, most particularly in the domain of motherhood: "When [her public] tired of Joan, the Blue-Collar Goddess, she gave them Joan, the Domestic Martyr [*Mildred Pierce,* 1945], and when that image ran out of vim, Crawford restyled herself as the Untamable Shrew [*Queen Bee,* 1955]" (Pardi, 1997: 265). In a further, posthumous twist, one of Crawford's most famous "roles," that of controlling, abusive mother, was

created by her adopted daughter, Christina. With its relentless scenes of domestic terror, from Joan's notorious "night raids" and regimented routines to sexual jealousy and forced ingestion of raw meat, the first edition of *Mommie Dearest* (Crawford, 1979) stayed on the *New York Times* non-fiction best-seller list for 42 weeks, was translated into six languages, and in 1981 was released as a "super campy" film (Bouldry, 1998), directed by Frank Perry and starring Faye Dunaway as Crawford.

To read *Lady Oracle* through "Joan" is thus to engage with a complex of meanings exposing contradictions of both mothering and what I will term "daughtering," the daughter's narrative struggle to negotiate her subjective autonomy following her mother's death.[2] Barbara Johnson has brilliantly speculated that self-narration may adhere to matricidal impulses: "Is autobiography somehow always in the process of symbolically killing the mother off by telling her the lie that we have given birth to ourselves?" (1987: 147). In a kind of zero sum game between competing subjectivities, the mother whose originary presence relativises the daughter's autonomy must first be magnified and then rejected as monstrous. In contrast, my analysis suggests an oscillating tension between impulses of love and hate on the part of both mother and daughter. Rather than addressing the level of representation (what happens in the story) or narrating instance (what emotional processes the narrator undergoes), I ask what model of psychic functioning emerges from the Joan Crawford intertext. At the level of a textual unconscious (rather than the representational or narratorial levels), the "Joan function" in *Lady Oracle* acts as a kind of textual introject, layering, splitting, and populating the subjectivities of the fictional mother and daughter, with implications for how we might theorize, and evaluate, the negative pole of ambivalence in this relationship. Simultaneously Good Mother and Bad Mother, Joan Crawford serves both as a figure, and a symbolic mediation, of this necessary ambivalence.

Lady Oracle and *Mommie Dearest* could be described, in terms of narrative genre, as Cinderella tales without a prince, and with the protagonist's mother replacing the evil stepmother. *Lady Oracle* consists of the retrospective first-person narration of novelist Joan Foster, writing in the mid 1970s at the age of around 30. Joan writes costume Gothic romances for a living, and the developing plot of her current manuscript, "Stalked by Love," counterpoints events of her own life, equally enmeshed in complicity and intrigue. Of particular interest here is Joan's childhood battle with her controlling mother, in which she compulsively eats, using her body as a weapon of reproach (Restuccia, 1996: 367). However, in a comic peripeteia, after leaving school she loses 100 pounds to meet the terms of her Aunt Lou's will (Atwood, 1976: 117).[3] Following her mother's death, Joan experiences four visitations, culminating in a conciliatory fantasy and the understanding that "[my mother had] never really let go of me because I had never let her go" (Atwood, 1976: 331).

To start unravelling what "Joan" might mean, consider, for a moment, the idea that Joan Foster's fortunes in *Lady Oracle* reproduce in a bathetic, inept,

and Canadian manner the biography of Joan Crawford's life. Both Joans are redheads who do not bear their "own" name. Joan Crawford was born Lucille LeSueur, but knew herself only as Billie Cassin until the age of seven (Raeburn, 1986: n.p.). Her on-screen name was decided by a public competition held by the Metro Goldwyn Meyer studio, though even then the name "Joan Crawford" was second choice: Joan Arden was preferred, until it was discovered that another actress already bore that name (Raeburn, n.p.; Robertson 90).[4] Like her namesake in *Lady Oracle,* Joan Crawford loses weight (Raeburn, n.p.), suffers an apparent confusion of life and art (Crawford, 1979: 23), and confess to a tendency to embellish and distort events of childhood (Guiles, 1995: 29). Both have multiple sex partners. And, curiously, both Joans cut their feet on glass (Guiles, 1995: 25; Atwood, 1976: 335-36).[5]

Yet Joan Crawford was known less as a daughter than as a mother, and in many ways it seems more appropriate to align Frances Delacourt herself with the celebrated actress. Closer in generation and socialization, Frances aspires to the glamour and public success of the actress.[6] In the 1940s, the period of Joan Foster's childhood, Joan Crawford was cultivating an image as the model mother of four adopted children, Christina, Christopher, Cathy, and Cynthia. "We were paraded out one by one, in our darling little starched outfits and pseudo-British manners," complains Christina in *Mommie Dearest,* adding, with sardonic reference to one of her mother's roles: "We were the best-mannered, best-behaved, most perfect child-mannequins the queen bee could produce" (1979: 182). The publicity shots included in *Mommie Dearest* confirm the careful staging of the family at the hands of "pandering publicity hacks" (182): again and again the composition of the shots reinforces symmetry (Joan with a child on each arm) or mother-daughter identification (Joan and Christina in parallel poses with matching costumes).

Details of some photographs, however, show that even the publicity stills could not gloss over the unhappiness between mother and daughter. In one shot, Joan holds her son by the hand on one side but her daughter by the wrist on the other. In another, taken at a toy store opening, Joan leers like a sideshow clown-mouth while Christina stares unhappily into the middle distance; in the background, slightly out of focus, we see an actual clown with his eyes downcast, reinforcing the grotequesness and pathos of this forced moment. And as details unfold, we discover further parallels between the mothers of *Lady Oracle* and *Mommie Dearest,* suggesting certain set scenes of 1940s-style domestic tyranny. Both mothers develop a fanaticism for cleanliness, covering furniture with plastic wrap and insisting on white gloves; Frances won't even touch her own daughter without her gloves as a protection against defilement. Both characters rip out the faces of former boyfriends from photographs, an act seen by their respective daughters as a threatening expression of omnipotence ("Somehow my Mommie dearest could make grown people like Phillip [Terry] disappear. That thought scared me so much it was like falling into eternal darkness" [Crawford, 1979: 42-43]). Both Frances and Joan Crawford disliked

their own mothers, detest fat people, refuse counselling, cover up suspected sexual improprieties in their youth. And both, in middle age, begin to drink "more than just socially" (Crawford, 1979: 83).

Thus the namer becomes the named: in a rebounding, ironic prolepsis it is Frances, and not her daughter, who ends up "becoming" Joan Crawford, for the glamour mother of 1940s Hollywood was really the bad mother that Frances herself is. The fairy godmother screen star who presided at the daughter's christening in *Lady Oracle* has flipped into the wicked witch, and in naming her daughter, Frances names disavowed parts of herself—her possessive mothering and her hatred of her daughter. Equally, the mother's barbed ambition for her daughter functions also as a reproach against her own lack of advancement and frustrated desire: where Joan Crawford as success figure was not (Frances's own failure to "work hard" and "build herself up from nothing"), Joan Crawford as monster will be.

Thus the circulation of this split signifier "Joan" serves simultaneously as mechanism, symptom, and effect of the multiple transfusions of desire passing between mother, internalized mother, and daughter. Through a process of projective identification, the mother's projections in *Lady Oracle* become absurdly somatized in her daughter's ballooning weight:

> I swelled visibly, relentlessly, before her very eyes, I rose like dough, my body advanced inch by inch towards her across the dining-room table, in this at least I was undefeated. I was five feet four and still growing, and I weighed a hundred and eighty-two pounds. (Atwood, 1976: 67)

The inept genius of the daughter's resistance lies in her very passivity: Frances's psychic incursions into her daughter are absorbed, like punching a giant marshmallow or, more aptly, the psychological equivalent of a tar baby. The more Frances "offloads" her internal bad objects onto her daughter, the more bloated and intolerable (to Frances) these objects become, fuelling a further defensive round of projections as "the interior which is expelled and located in others is *still* attached to the self" (Ian Parker, 100).[7]

One possible answer could now be advanced in response to Atwood's question posed in the epigraph above: "When bad women get into literature, what are they doing there.... ?" Bad mothers, at least, foreground the fact that aggressivity, as well as nurturance, structures mother-daughter relations at the ineradicable level of the unconscious. The most influential psychoanalytic theorist of this dialectic of love and hate is Melanie Klein, who asserts that the newborn infant, unable to integrate its mother's alternate gratification and frustration of its needs, fantasmatically splits the mother into "hating" and "loving" selves, which are respectively hated and loved by the child. As the infant gradually becomes aware that the good and bad object adhere to the same identity, reparatory impulses come into play to compensate for the

perceived harm done to the mother. Infantile hate, from this point of view, is not simply a "disagreeable passion," to use Burack's phrase (1994:71), but a family value, serving as a developmental waystation toward the infant's integrated subjectivity:

> Ambivalence carried out in a splitting of the imagos [into "good" and "bad" objects] enables a small child to gain more trust and belief in its real objects and thus in its internalized ones—to love them more and to carry out in increasing degrees its fantasies of restoration of the loved object. (Klein, qtd. in R. Parker, 1995: 92, with Parker's insertion)

Although Western representation polarizes these "good" and "bad" objects into idealized and demonized mothers (Kaplan, 1992; Caplan, 1989; Thurer, 1994), in fantasy both are necessary for the development and maintenance of the self, not merely in infancy but throughout life (Burack, 1994: 78). However, "full and permanent integration is never possible" between these extremes (Klein, qtd. in R. Parker, 1995: 6). Rozsika Parker's mother-centered revision of Kleinian principles extend categories of infantile fantasy to the mother, asserting the "creative role of the mother's hatred in the development of maternal thinking, not restricted to its role in the infant's capacity to think" (63). While not condoning abusive hatred—"hatred outside of ambivalence"—hatred "accompanied by terrible shame and fear, fostered by a culture which cannot bear to contemplate maternal ambivalence" (136) can also be destructive.

The figure of Joan Crawford maintains these polarities in tension, implying that the Good Mother and the Bad Mother are not mutually exclusive positions but rather implicated in each other. Joan Crawford tried so hard to be good, according to her values of cleanliness, order, and discipline, that she was bad: "[Crawford is] providing her kids with the perfection she yearned for," writes Pauline Kael of Dunaway's interpretation of Joan, "and they don't appreciate it. So she blows sky-high and shows them real disorder—the mess [she feels] they deserve" (1996: 906). This paradox of the mother who is perfect to a fault was presaged in Crawford's Oscar-winning performance as Mildred Pierce (1945), the mother-martyr bearing a "halo of face powder and pastry flour" (Pardi, 1997: 265). When her marriage fails, Mildred starts working outside the home in what proves to be a highly successful catering business. To compensate for her domestic absence, Mildred sacrifices herself to indulge her daughter, Veda, to the point of making a loveless marriage and covering up Veda's murder of Mildred's second husband. "It's your fault I'm the way I am!" screams Veda in the film's denouement, and plot causality and a series of parallels established between mother and daughter in the *mise en scene* encourage the audience to take the same point of view (Haralovich, 1992: 44, 46).

As an unconscious process, ambivalence cannot be expunged but rather managed and adapted through the capacity to "accept responsibility for the destructiveness that is part of life" (R. Parker, 1995: 95). Now the Good Mother turns bad to the extent that she denies—to herself and to her daughter—the cycles of aggressivity, guilt, and reparative acts of kindness that Kleinian theory foregrounds. Indeed, part of the rage of the "angry young women" of the 1970s is to smash the lovely surface of the Good Mother image, a motivation which perhaps propelled subsequent feminist theorising of maternal ambivalence more than detractors such as Marianne Hirsch (1989: 192) and Paula Caplan (1989: 7) allow. Nancy Friday's *My Mother, My Self* (1977) depicts a daughter in search of a maternal ambivalence as expressly felt, acknowledged, owned, and stated, as she feels her own to be. Friday's text represents, in one sense, an extended chastising of her mother for failing to say expressly to her daughter (I am paraphrasing here), "Sometimes I am incompetent, sometimes I hate you, and I actually cannot meet all your needs." This failure, as Friday sees it, would ease the pressure on both mother and daughter to make perfect the one relationship that popular object relations psychology posited as essential to the well-being of all other relationships ("virtually all psychologists agree that you cannot hate your mother and love yourself," as Victoria Secunda sums it up [1993: 265]). Finally, after her mother's death, "anger [on Friday's part] broke the pane of glass between us," a barrier established by the self-imposed, controlling "myth that mothers always love their children" (28).[8]

Christina Crawford meets an embarrassed silence when she attempts to expose what Secunda (1993) has called "the Bad Mommy taboo." Complaining of migraine headaches, Christina is referred by her school first to a medical doctor and then a psychiatrist:

> She [the psychiatrist] asked if I knew what might be causing my headaches.
>
> I looked her squarely in the face and said to her directly: "Yes, I hate my mother."
>
> That was the end of the interview. That was also the end of my visits to the doctor. That was not the end of my headaches. (Crawford, 1979: 206)

In Christina's depiction, psychiatry seemed to have no tools, in 1956, to manage the adult daughter's assertion of hatred and her self-diagnosis (implicitly accurate, given the persistence of the purported symptom). Film stars were good mothers, and good mothers simply could not be hateful, so no hatred could be owned to exist between daughter and mother.

The advantage of Kleinian accounts of ambivalence is that they maintain elements of unconscious desire that tend to be omitted from more cognitive, dialogic, mediatory, or "mental-health"-oriented accounts of the mother-

daughter bond, and help explain both the persistence and power of fascination maintained by the Joan Crawford mythology.[9] The restless circulation of desire means that daughters will never fully "write off" the maternal introjections passed on as an unconscious legacy from their mothers (this, no doubt, is the force of the ending of *Mommie Dearest,* in which Christina and her brother are cut off from Joan's legal inheritance, but overwhelmed with her emotional legacy). The process of "daughtering" thus becomes one of negotiation and balance with the "internal presences" (Pruyser, 1975: 38) constituting the daughter's subjectivity, rather than self-extrication or an impossible symbolic annihilation of the internalized mother.

Finally, the coalescence of Good Mother and Bad Mother inheres in the double-voiced title of Christina Crawford's memoir and the film derived from it, a phrase which becomes voiced and revoiced between the daughter and the mother in an attempt to gain control of its meaning, rather like the children's game of topping hands. In the funeral sequence that frames the (auto)biography, the daughter addresses her mother's corpse: "We had so much pain together, you and I, but now, Mother, God has set us both free.... God has set us free, Mommie Dearest. Go in peace" (Crawford, 1979: 17). Christina appears frankly to bless her mother, assuming the power to absolve her in a conciliatory manner. A later comment reveals, however, that the endearment is compulsory: "I had to say 'Yes, Mommie dearest' so many times that the very sound of it made me vomit. She made me call her 'Mommie dearest' now whether I wanted to or not" (141). Perhaps the daughter's address to her dead mother nonetheless constitutes a final attempt to please her with one last verbal gift—a final request to be loved, or to be redeemed rather than to redeem. Yet as the narrative develops further, the phrase increasingly picks up sarcasm. While Christina is at high school, Joan signs her letters with "Mommie dearest" in inverted commas, an act interpreted by the daughter as an unconscious acknowledgement of fraudulence: "Usually she signed 'Mommie' with quotation marks as though it were a pseudonym. Perhaps it was" (208).

The screen adaptation of *Mommie Dearest* renders this determination to finalize meaning through a final twist, in which Christina's controlling focalization is retrospectively imposed on the film:

> CHRISTOPHER CRAWFORD: As usual, she has the last word.
> CHRISTINA CRAWFORD: Does she?

This moment loops us back to the beginning, recasting the events of the film as a motivated, tendentious representation designed to get back at "Mommie." Yet the very attempt to exorcise "Joan" only makes her stronger, as through the film vehicle she rises magnificently, regally, in a sublime reincarnation of the Bad Mother: "Dunaway sees a grandeur in Joan Crawford, and by the size and severity of the torments she acts out she makes Crawford seem tragic" (Kael, 1996: 908). The negative pole of maternal ambivalence cannot be

broken (or repaired) by words, as the persistance of the mythology emerges from that of the Kleinian unconscious.

[1]Grateful thanks are due to Bronwyn Beatty (1999), who has kindly allowed me to develop an intriguing footnote in her work on *Lady Oracle.*

[2]On the use of the verb "daughtering," see van Mens-Verhulst *et al.* (1993: xiv); Walters (1992:10).

[3]Atwood (1976) thus plays upon the narrative convention, established in films such as *Now, Voyager* (1942), that the intervention of a male suitor (and/or male psychiatrist) is necessary to break the excessively close psychological bind between mother and daughter; see Walters (1992: 20 and passim). Rozsika Parker (1995) also discusses the capacity for mother-child relations to be worked through on their own emotional and psychological resources, without resorting to the mediating male "third party" posited by Freud and Lacan (135). The protagonist of *Lady Oracle* encounters three such "would be" male rescuers, all of them too feckless or self-absorbed to play the role of rescuing prince, a role fulfilled more by Aunt Lou.

[4]David Houston (1983) ends *Jazz Baby,* a biography of Joan Crawford's childhood and youth, on the day on which her screen name was assigned, implying that the moment of naming is both an arrival and a departure: after searching desperately for her true father throughout her youth (in Houston's depiction), the young woman finally takes on the name endowed by her substitute "daddies" at Metro Goldwyn Meyer, and from there her identity as a "star" can coalesce. See further Allen and Gomery (1985: 180).

[5]When she was eight Joan Crawford jumped off a porch, landed on a broken milk bottle and severed an artery. The fictional Joan Foster dances through a plate glass window, with an allusion to *The Red Shoes* (see Emily Jensen's [1986] extensive commentary in "Margaret Atwood's *Lady Oracle*: A Modern Parable").

[6]Frances also emulates Betty Davis, suggesting her self-division: "[Frances's] lips were thin but she made a larger mouth with lipstick over and around them, like Bette Davis, which gave her a curious mouth, the real one showing through the false one like a shadow" (Atwood, 1976: 65). Davis was Joan Crawford's arch-rival at Metro Goldwyn Meyer studios.

[7]Other "ballooning" characters who are psychically victimized and inhabited by parental introjections can be found in Sarah Paretsky's "A Taste of Life" (1995) and William Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" (1992). Frances Restuccia (1996) argues that at the point of narrating, the "depressed" Joan psychically retains her dead mother through melancholic introjection: "Joan embeds Frances within herself so as not to lose her" (Atwood, 1976: 366), and thus she symbolically "kills off" herself, rather than the maternal introject, through a series of identities that are cancelled and then reproduced.

[8]In *Lady Oracle's* dominant mode of bathos, this failed "I hate you" on Frances's

part is displaced into threats of retribution by a punitive God and an ineffectual attack with a kitchen knife, immediately foreclosed by Joan's reaffirmation of the good mother-good daughter scenario: "'I think I'll make myself a cup of tea,' I said conversationally, 'Would you like one, Mother?'" (Atwood, 1976: 124).

[9]By "cognitive approach" I refer to such self-help texts as Paula Caplan's *Don't Blame Mother: Mending the Mother-Daughter Relationship* (1989). Caplan argues that "the biggest reason daughters are upset and angry with their mothers is that they have been *taught* to be so. Largely unaware that our culture's polarized mother-images create barriers between mothers and daughters, we have held each other responsible" (2). She advocates a series of tasks, such as guided interviews with one's mother, to enhance the daughter's capacity to understand the constraints on, and motivations for, mothers' behaviour. For an example of a mediatory approach, consider Suzanne Juhasz's (2000) theorizing of daughters as authors who employ language as a transitional space to both establish their own autonomous subjectivity and—as a corollary—that of their mothers. The intersubjective, playful elements of language itself are held to facilitate emotional process as the "daughter will write the mother into subjectivity, and she will write herself into subjectivity" (174).

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Carol B. Duncan

Black Women and Motherhood in Contemporary Cinematic Science Fiction

Since the introduction of Lieutenant Uhura (Nichelle Nichols), the communications officer in the original *Star Trek* TV series in the 1960s, black female characters have been included, increasingly, in contemporary television and cinematic science fiction. Characters such as Guinan[1] in *Star Trek: The New Generation*, represent an incursion into the usually male, and almost exclusively white, world of contemporary science fiction. This paper will explore the emergence and significance of images of black women and motherhood in contemporary apocalyptic science fiction film paying particular attention to gendered and raced social relations. My analysis suggests that black female characters in these films are usually represented as "heroic mothers" whose portrayal draws on the long-standing mammy stereotype and occasionally as hypersexualized victims. I will focus on images of black women in a sub genre of science fiction, apocalyptic science fiction, which has become popularized in recent Hollywood movies such as *X-Men* (2000), *Strange Days* (1999), *Star Trek: First Contact* (1996) and *The Matrix* (1999). I have selected these films because they represent points of contrast in their portrayal of black women as mothers who are pivotal to development of the apocalyptic storylines. I suggest that the popularity of these films, in particular, like other contemporary science fiction, is linked to their speculation on the nature of contemporary reality and their mirroring of the fears, joys and aspirations expressed in contemporary popular culture about gender, "race," sexuality, consciousness, religion and identity.

Black women in science fiction films

As a genre associated primarily with a white adolescent male audience in its development in North America, science fiction along with other s/f

(speculative fact and fiction) narratives has undergone a noticeable transformation both in terms of the kinds of stories that are told, as well as authorship, in recent decades. Stories by and about women and people of colour have become a part of the terrain of contemporary s/f. Toronto-based Caribbean writer Nalo Hopkinson and African-American Octavia E. Butler are examples of black women science fiction writers whose works have been critically well-received and whose stories emerge from specifically black, female, Caribbean and African-American historical experiences and perspectives.[2] My primary concern in this paper is the way in which black women are portrayed in mainstream s/f. In this regard, in mainstream contemporary s/f films and novels, black women characters are usually portrayed as "mothers," in particular, what I call, "heroic mothers." These are women whose embodiment of the "hero myth" as discussed by Joseph Campbell[3] in the development of the story is refracted through stereotypic cinematic images of black motherhood. As heroes, they go out into the world, usually reluctantly, to face a foe (whether physical or ideological), do battle (using an assortment of techniques on physical and psychological terrains), and although they do not necessarily "return," to either a physical, geographical or psychological place, they themselves and others with whom they interact are transformed by their actions. As mothers, they nurture the male hero as sage, confidant and rescuer. Their portrayal as lover of the male hero is very rare. As Helford (2002) notes, black women in science fiction movies are usually portrayed as "mystic mammies" or the hypersexualized and usually victimized "mocha-chocolata-ya-ya" objects of male desire .

The films *Star Trek: First Contact, Strange Days* and *The Matrix* provide a view of black women as ethical and moral compasses whose wisdom mediates their relationships to white, male protagonists. In these Hollywood science fiction films, the audience is presented with black women whose visual representation is largely in stark contrast to the long-established, Hollywood depiction of black mothers as mammies. However, the emotional and affective characteristics of mammy remain, in many instances, firmly in place. In *Strange Days*, for instance, Mace (Angela Basset) is a black leather-clad, muscular, athletic, driver and bodyguard. She provides counsel to Lenny Nero, an amoral ex-cop who traffics a type of cerebral narcotic based on illegal tapes of other people's experiences directly from their cerebral cortex which is then "downloaded" into the user's brain via a mechanism that fits over the top of the head that is referred to as a "squid" in the film. She not only repeatedly rescues the male anti-hero, Lenny Nero, played by British actor, Ralph Fiennes, she also uncharacteristically "gets the guy" in the film's conclusion when they share a lingering kiss thereby making the transition from mother to lover.

Echoing Guinan, the centuries' old bartender in the Ten Forward lounge who provides sage advice to Captain Jean-Luc Picard and the other denizens of the Enterprise in the *Star Trek: The New Generation* television series, these women frequently act as confidants who either directly or indirectly sort out morally ambiguous predicaments for other characters. Along with ethical,

spiritual and philosophical nurturance and advice, they sometimes offer physical protection which serves to further the (usually) white, male protagonist on his heroic quest. For example, Mace, the bodyguard in *Strange Days,* saves the anti-hero Lenny Nero numerous times throughout the film, supposedly on the basis of her love for him. It is not until the final scene of the film that the nature of this love is fully revealed as "romantic." Another example which more closely conforms to the mammy stereotype is the figure of The Oracle (Gloria Foster) in *The Matrix.* She is a cigarette-smoking, middle-aged, light-skinned black woman who serves up esoteric, metaphysical wisdom that helps the hero, Neo/Thomas Anderson (Keanu Reeves) understand his destiny as the saviour, "The One." Significantly, Neo meets the Oracle baking cookies in the kitchen of her inner city apartment. This scene provides an obvious parallel to the historic cinematic mammy's physical and metaphorical location firmly rooted in the kitchen and in the performance of mothering work.

One of the most blatant examples of the portrayal of black women as sage, confidant and rescuer in contemporary science fiction film is the character of Lily Sloane (Alfre Woodard) in *Star Trek: First Contact.* Lily becomes the first twenty-first century earth person to see outer space from the deck of a twenty-fourth century space ship. The plot of this film involves saving twenty-first century earth from an invasion by the Borg, who in the *Star Trek* universe are the ultimate villains. A civilization based on privileging a collective rather than individualized consciousness, the Borg are a composite of organic and computer-based technology whose existence is sustained through systematic conquest of other civilizations and "assimilation" through implanting computer technology directly into the body and the absorption of the individual into the consciousness of the collective. Highly successful as signalled by their motto, "resistance is futile," the Borg represent a dystopian vision of human/technological interaction.

In *First Contact*, the Borg plan to conquer earth by intercepting the first communication in the year 2063 between humans and other worldly beings. In this way, the course of human history would be irrevocably altered thereby making the twenty-fourth century Enterprise and the technology that created it null and void. Violating the "prime directive,"an ethical principle of non-interference with the development of less-technologically advanced societies, the Enterprise crew "beams" itself down to 2063 Iowa where they meet Zephram Cochrane (James Cromwell), the pioneer of "warp" space travel on the eve of his historic April 4th rocket launch. Significantly, Lily is this man's partner. When she becomes hurt and needs medical attention, she is transported aboard the twenty-fourth century Enterprise with Dr. Crusher (Gates McFadden). She regains consciousness unexpectedly while onboard and is subsequently drawn into the action that unfolds aboard the Enterprise in the twenty-fourth century.

In a critical sequence in which Captain Jean-Luc Picard (Patrick Stewart) must make a decision of whether or not to abandon the Enterprise in the face

of a Borg invasion of the ship, Lily does what neither Mr. Worf (Michael Dorn), Picard's trusty Klingon strategic military advisor, nor Dr. Crusher, the medical officer, could pursuade him to do: change his mind and abandon the ship. In sequences reminiscent of Mace in relationship to Lenny Nero, she clearly articulates the moral dilemma with which Picard is faced, outlines his choices and convinces him in no uncertain terms about the moral right of abandoning ship. What Lily offers Picard is "common sense" served up using verbal and communicative performance styles of late twentieth-century African-American females. In doing so, she literally serves as the gut for Picard's head. Picard ultimately changes his mind and issues the order to abandon ship; however, he himself stays behind and has a show down with the ultimate symbol of evil in this film, the Borg Queen (Alice Krige), the bad mother of them all. Making her entrance, memorably, as a human-machine hybrid head and torso with a writhing, twitching spine which is dropped into an awaiting lower body, the Borg Queen is Lily's good mother antithesis. Her insatiable quest for power symbolized as galactic domination is underlined with a not-so-subtle subtext of bad mothering. This bad mothering is underscored by the Borg Queen's orders for death on a grand scale and her subversion of the will of the individual as the Queen of Borg who are symbolically her children in the bee hive-like organization of Borg society complete with "drones" who act as soldier-protector-children of the Queen. Acting supposedly for the good of the Collective, it becomes apparent that the Borg Queen's actions may, in fact, be ultimately self-serving and self-aggrandizing. The Borg Queen is Lily's contrast and a representation of an iconic science fiction bad mother. The creature with whom Ellen Ripley (Signourney Weaver) does battle in the *Alien* movie series, represented in the second film, *Aliens* (1986), as a monstrous queen/mother, represents the quintessential bad mother. She is parasitical, manipulative, destructive and ultimately self-serving. The films climax features Ripley, now a surrogate mother to a young girl, Newt (Carrie Henn), in a dramatic show down with the alien queen.

Noticeable in these apocalyptic science fiction films is the absence of sexuality in black female characters in the presence of the white, male protagonist if playing supportive mother. Unless the female characters are victimized in their relationships with the white, male, characters they remain asexual. For example, in *X-Men* (2000), Storm (Halle Berry) is the single black, female mutant who is a member of Dr. Charles Xavier's (Patrick Stewart) inner group of mutants. The character is dressed in brief, revealing outfits in keeping with the comic-book tradition of sexualized female superhero characterization. Unlike the white female heroic characters, Dr. Jean Grey (Famke Janssen) and Rogue (Anna Paquin), she is not romantically partnered with any male character. She is however victimized sexually in her interactions with the character, Sabre Tooth. Storm also plays mother in one scene when she appears, almost magically, to comfort a dying white man, a previously anti-mutant United States senator who has been turned into a mutant.

Mace in *Strange Days* appears exceptional in that the character forges a relationship with the white male lead. However, this does not take place until after what appears to be years of unrequited love on Mace's part for Lenny. Mace is involved in an emotional triangle with Lenny and his former lover, Faith. Lenny's real-time relationship with Faith is long over but he relives their relationship through "play-backs" which are the taped memories from his cerebral cortex. It is only by the end of the movie, after Lenny has released his relationship with Faith, that Mace's and Nero's love for one another is eroticized and revealed in the final frames of the movie through a kiss on the streets of Los Angeles on New Year's Eve.

In these films, it is apparent that the emotional-affective characteristics of the mammy have been melded with the physical characteristics of the hypersexualized stereotype of black womanhood to yield a hybrid creation. Black women who are nurturers of white males (even if that nurturing is portrayed as a gun that is trained on those who threaten him as in the case of the bodyguard Mace) are almost always cast in the role of protective mother. Mainstream science fiction as a genre is particularly notorious for the hypersexualized, vacuous "babe" roles to which female characters are often confined. Black women in science fiction when they have escaped the "babe" role have been relegated to that of "mom" (or is that "mammy"?).

Considering "race" and gender

In the *Star Trek* universe, human beings have supposedly resolved racism, sexism and classism. *Star Trek* creator, Gene Roddenberry, set out to create multi-cultural, multi-racial crews in his series to reflect his vision of a united humanity. Nevertheless, race is implicitly coded in the alien bodies of the Star Trek crew and the different civilizations with whom they interact. *First Contact* presents a late twenty-first century America in which inter-racial marriage is a taken-for-granted occurrence. Lily is, in fact, the partner of a white male who is destined to become the first inter-galactic traveller whose voyage precipitates human beings' first contact with another off-world humanoid species. As the audience we know that "race" is insignificant by the fact that it is never mentioned in the storyline.

In *Strange Days*, set during the last two days of 1999, "race" is significant even though Lenny Nero and Mace never discuss their relationship in terms of their own racialized identities nor is it implicit in the way the story unfolds. Relationships between black men and white women are problematized but between white men (represented by Lenny) and black women (represented by Mace), the narrative of a de-racialized romantic love predominates. Race seemingly never enters the picture in the characters' dialogue with each other save for their visual representation on screen.

Strange Days is an apocalyptic film in which the revelation is the possibility of resolving racial inequality in a race-torn Los Angeles through the disclosure of police brutality caught on a "play back" tape depicting the murder of a

prophetic rapper named Jericho One. The final cataclysm heralding the dawning of a new age in the year 2000 is not an external event controlled by an other-worldly god, but like other contemporary apocalyptic films, the threat and its avoidance rests largely in the decision-making and actions of ordinary people (Ostwalt, Jr., 1995). In *Strange Days,* armageddon is envisioned as an all-out race war that would transform Los Angeles on the eve of the second millennium should the disclosure of the murder of Jericho One by two Los Angeles Police Department officers be made public. The naming of the rapper Jericho One symbolizes the pivotal role of this character as a kind of biblical Joshua figure of. The representation of Jericho One as a black American man strongly resonates with the spiritual "Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho" from the sacred music tradition of the Black Church. Jericho One's ability to effect change is greatest after his death as Lenny Nero's moral dilemma revolves around the disclosure of murder caught on "playback" by a friend of his, Iris, a young woman who works the streets as a prostitute.

One way of accounting for the portrayals of black women in contemporary science fiction, in ways which draw on cinematic tropes of both mammy and the ass-kicking, hypersexualized, avenging 1970s blaxploitation "sheroes" embodied by Pam Grier in *Foxy Brown* (1974) and *Coffy* (1973) and Tamara Dobson in *Cleopatra Jones* (1973), is to place these films within a wider trend of images of feminine rebellion in contemporary science fiction. In an article of the same name, Joel Martin points to what he sees as a disturbing trend of "anti-feminism in recent apocalyptic film" (Martin, 2000). Martin notes that "[a]ccording to the politics of these films, to avoid the apocalypse, women must be re-subordinated" (Martin, 2000: paragraph 2). In the films that Martin analyzes, which feature white female leads, he notes that there are scenes which function to "return a single, professional, and in this case romance-resistant woman to a traditional role" (Martin, 2000: paragraph 41).

Black women in contemporary apocalyptic science fiction films both conform to, and challenge, the trend outlined by Martin. While they never ultimately escape the bonds of conservative gender definitions as mammy/nurturers, they nevertheless challenge them in their roles as confidant, rescuer and sage, and, though rare, as in the case of Lenny and Mace in *Strange Days*, in relationships that move from mother-protector to lover. These definitions of womanhood are rooted in one of the oldest cinematic tropes[4] in which black women as mammies provide care and nurturing for individual white men and women and their extended families. This mothering support has been interpreted as mammy's allegiance with the *status quo* while her own black family is neglected. These women both conform to and subvert the stereotype in that they care about their own families while their alliance with the hero is an extension of this caring. Even in brave new worlds with intergalactic travel old tropes reveal themselves.

The science fiction novels of Octavia E. Butler present an alternative view of black women in apocalyptic science fiction. In Butler's novels a view of black

motherhood is presented through a reflexive reference to African-American historical as well as contemporary post Second World War religious, cultural and political experiences. In *Parable of the Sower* (1993), Butler presents a critique of contemporary America through the journey of female protagonist, Lauren. In her northward quest, after the destruction of her walled community in a post-apocalyptic 2020s United States, teenaged Lauren Oya Olamina develops a new religion, Earthseed, based on the notion of "God as Change." In this way, Butler's novels offer a vantage point on black American historical and contemporary experiences of migration, community development and mothering as well an important critique of black, specifically African-American, Christian theology.

In the novel, Lauren becomes the leader of a group of people who escape this post-apocalyptic nightmare of rampant drug addiction, poverty and environmentally unsafe food and water in the early twenty-first century by making their way north to found a new society based on the principles of Earthseed, Lauren's religious philosophy revealed in her journal writings. Matriarch? Semi-divine Prophet? Messenger of the apocalypse? Womanist theologian[5] revisiting Christian sacred text from the historical and contemporary experiences of black women? Hero? Lauren is all of these in Butler's overtly feminist critique of late twentieth century American society which holds an eschatological vision of hope firmly in place with that of violent cataclysm. Like other novels and short-stories in Butler's *oeuvre*, the destiny of humanity lies in the choices made by wise women characters who literally or figuratively play the role of mother (see, for example, Butler, 1980). What remains to be seen is whether characterizations like that offered by Butler can be translated into cinematic storylines that both challenge and engage black female subjectivity.

[1]Though characterized as alien, "non-human," and one of the only surviving members of a "species" destroyed by the intergalactic villains, the Borg, Guinan's portrayal by actor Whoopi Goldberg and her feature in an episode about travel to the United States in the 1890s where she was identified as a black woman, position her as black and female. She works as a bartender on the U.S.S. Enterprise where she dispenses advice along with aperitifs to crew members.

[2]Hopkinson has coined the term "fabulist fiction" to describe Caribbean s/f which draws on the tradition of fables in constructions of the fabulous. Both Hopkinson and Butler are included in Sheree Thomas' edited collection representing twentieth century s/f from the African Diaspora, *Dark Matter*.

[3]The hero myth, as outlined in the work of mythology scholar Joseph Campbell in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* and developed in Hollywood cinema by filmmakers such *Star Wars* (1977) creator George Lucas, is an essential element of most science fiction movies. The contours of the hero myth include a quest for a desired object by a reluctant hero, the struggle for its obtaining, and the return

of the hero. It could be argued that the hero myth is one of the dominant narratives of Hollywood cinema since as it is essential to plot and characterization in westerns, war movies and even musicals.

[4]Black women actors were largely restricted to mammy and servant roles in Hollywood cinema. Hatty McDaniel (1895-1952) won the first Oscar presented to an African-American for her role of Mammy in the 1939 film production of *Gone With the Wind.*

[5]Womanist theology is explicitly concerned with articulating a hermeneutical approach to biblical literatures and Christian thought and ethics within the historical and contemporary experiences of African-American women. Womanist approaches include not only theology but also frameworks in social sciences and humanities.

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Mary G. Parham

Swimming with My Daughters

I'm lurching into menopause;
my daughters meanwhile start their first periods.
Our bodies are obsessed with bleeding and breeding.
Some of us are drying out, some flooding red.
I sweat and plod and my girls rage and rush,
all servants of the same ancient master.

They used to dress up in my hats and heels;
now they imitate me and my mothers
in a much more serious game,
that game no woman sits out.

So we're all three in there now, swimming hard
through a heavy green sea of ova.
Sometimes we sink and gasp, but
our uteruses fill with air and float us up
like air bladders inside fish.

My youngest daughter stands on the shore
playing keep-away with the long-fingered waves
that grab at her teasing feet.
Her small hand rises to wave,
her high thin voice ripples out to us:
"Wait for me! I want to go, too."
Her lifetime's million eggs already squirm urgently within her,
dear child. I call to her, wave her back to land:
"Put on your life jacket, sweetie, and rest up."

Christina Halliday

Dancing the "True Story"[1]

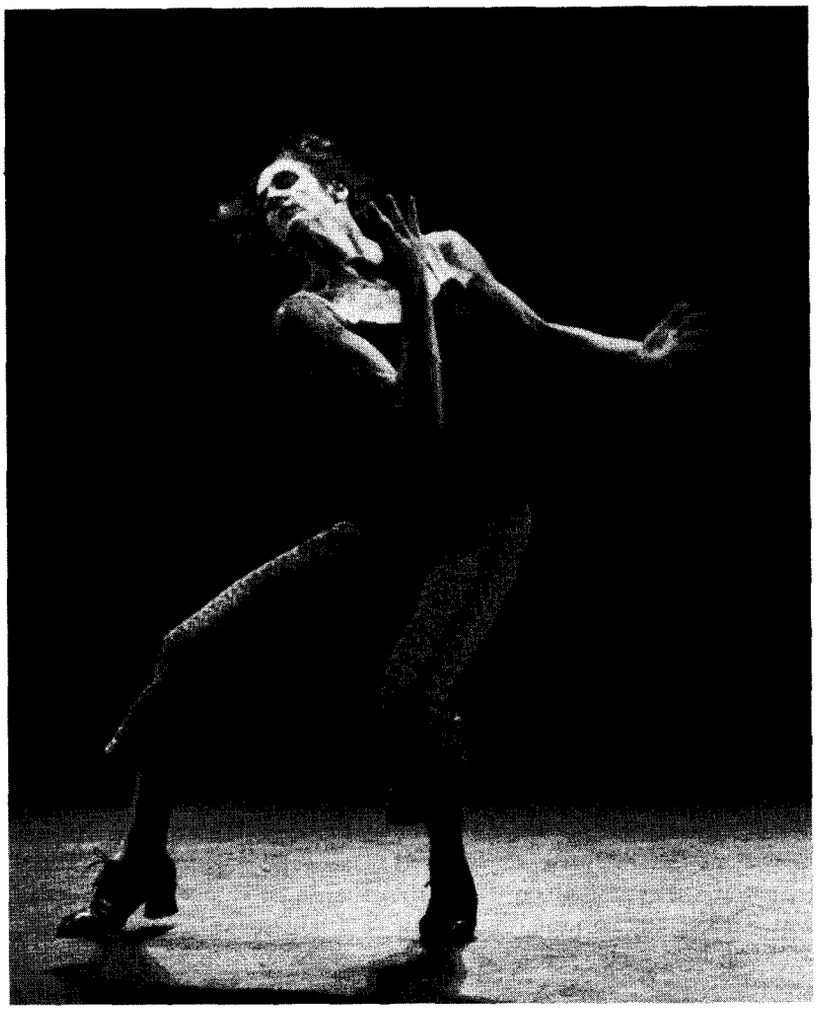
(prelude)

To speak of housework, or childbirth, or sexuality, or rape in the form of the essay represents, in each instance, a crumbling of the fortifications erected by a masculine world against the feminine world. But still, in each instance, the sensual reality of these phenomena are stripped away so that they may enter public discourse. (Griffin, 1995: 165)

a true story of the sensual reality of mothering and becoming a mother. this story is not a stripping away but a solid, breathing, fluidly moving insistence of Peggy's body (my body) in discourse, subjectivity, and making sense of

you and me, Veronika
our dance together
and my own search for names
which has gone something like this

At the beginning:
She performs the adolescent girl practising names for her new mother. Long arms gesturing wildly—"she wrote down the woman's name"—now cutting the air away, palms flat down—"crossed it out"—now waving hands softly, painting something onto the space in front of her—"and wrote 'mom' instead."



"a true story," Choreographer and Dancer: Peggy Baker. Photo: Cylla von Tiedemann, Courtesy Dance Umbrella of Ontario

She playfully throws her left arm over her head. The danced word for "mom": she didn't call me "mom" for a long time. instead she called me "Dad!" urgently and in high-pitch. "D" for Dad a heavy crushing weight. a surge of electric sharp to my mother-heart. in the gentle liveliness of her calling eyes and mouth and hands I put my own hand softly to the warmth in my chest and said, "Veronika, I am your mummy." my hand the healer. performing a resuscitation. a resurfacing.

She performs the rigid gesture for the name "parent":
anxious. haven't experienced a delicious deep sleep since her arrival. because the responsibility to guide another life is too much. its too much and I know this because the ugly moth-wings of my breath are always fluttering nervously at my shoulders. because I can't protect her from crashing planes, people who kill, disappointment and sadness. because I can't be sure she will always be with me.
She performs the serene, contented, dance-word for mother, "woona."
want to find this and capture it for myself. own it and nourish it but not perfectly—that would require too much. no. it is an imperfect word, a word formed with the breath and body of a child. it has mystery in it and formlessness and potential. to help me breathe, a deep, comfortable, pulsing.

There were five pieces on the program for Peggy Baker's performance series, Interior View, including "*a true story.*"[2] All of the other dance pieces were very thoughtful, evocative movement interpretations of the piano playing of Andrew Burashko, who appeared on-stage with Baker. *a true story* stood out for me from amongst the other dance pieces on the evening's program. It drew me into a process of interpretation, inquiry, and sensing in a way that was different and possibly not surprising. That is because I am also becoming a mother in all the many ways I perform mother in my everyday, lived and discursive relations with my child, partner, extended family, friends, writing, and research in education.

a true story is a performative exploration of becoming a mother, and more specifically, of the formation of mother-subjectivity, as a lived, embodied, and socially-negotiated experience, both limiting and liberating. The story that Baker tells in this performance is about an adoptive mother coming into the role of mother in almost mid-life and to an adolescent girl. It is a story of this new mother and daughter searching for a way to name their relationship with each other—and, in particular, of the adoptive mother's process of "trying on" different senses of herself as mother (parent, mom, stepmother). It is a story about the lived, embodiedness of the mother-child relationship and how this embodiedness shapes the adoptive mother's sense of herself as a woman and as a mother in a profound and meaningful way.

a true story is also a danced exploration of the threshold between word and gesture, discourse and embodied life, sound and silence, names and what in our

experience eludes naming. The exploration itself creates a sense of the non-separation of these categories in experience and knowing.

a true story is a narrative told three times and in two different ways. First, as danced gesture. Second, as gesture occurring simultaneously with spoken words. And finally, Baker concludes the piece by again moving in silence and "telling" her tale of becoming a mother through danced gesture. The title of the dance performance itself, which is also an element of its theme, performs the first transgression of dualities. *a true story* is an evocation of opposites (truth vs. fiction) as well as a simultaneous joining of opposites (truth and fiction) with its own complexity in meaning. By claiming that there is such a thing as "a true story," the title of this dance performance participates in the calling into question of the distinctions between true or "real" experience and fictional representations of experience. Further, the claim to tell a true story also compels the questions: Is a true story ever really true? And, what are the dimensions of truth in a story? *a true story* adheres to this posture in the interrogative by juxtaposing two modes of narrating "a true story" of becoming a mother: a story told in spoken words and another in danced gesture.

This juxtaposition of stories represents a second way in which *a true story* transgresses dualities and proposes a sense of relationality in experience, knowing, and representation. *a true story* asks: Which of the stories performed is true? The one told in danced gesture of spoken word? Does one story, perhaps, relate more truth than the other? By exploring two modes of knowing and representing the experience of becoming a mother, and by suggesting that each mode has its own relationship to the "real" experience, *a true story* searches for what can be learned about mothering, knowing, and subjectivity through a comparison of this discursive difference. Moreover, *a true story* opens up the category of mother and the experience of becoming a mother to multiple interpretations and modes of knowing. Mother-subjectivity emerges as an unstable category—a position from which to tell many "true" stories.

In this article, I examine how *a true story* performs the instability of the categories of "mother" and "true story." Drawing on Judith Butler's (1993) formulation of the role of performance in producing the effects of discourse—these effects being, naturalized, material aspects of selfhood such as gender and sex—I examine *a true story* as a performance of the instability of "mother" and "mother-subjectivity" as naturalized categories. To support this exploration, I look closely at the self-conscious attention to the body and gesture in *a true story* for how this attention evokes a sense of embodied life, and specifically the profound sensuality of the mother-child relationship. Turning to phenomenological explanations and accounts of the body in experience and knowing, I suggest that the danced story in *a true story* creates a discursive context where language, as a way to name and know the experience of mothering, is inadequate. Rather, the dance of embodied relationships and expression captures the ambiguity and complexity of becoming a mother. As a result, the danced story in *a true story* emerges as a space of critique and

production in the dance—a space where the performance of 'mother' is open to reformulation, resignification, and profound meaning.

The Performance of discourse

> *She says that this is a story about a woman who has adopted her new husband's adolescent girl. She says that the girl is ecstatic with her new mother and practices various names for her—that is, the adoptive mother's actual name but also 'mom!:'*
>
> *A jutting movement with the left arm, over the head, with the torso definitely following and the pelvis only making a gesture to follow. This performed with an active, happy, playful smile. In fact, her whole body is smiling.*
>
> *She says that the young girl's interest and concern with names and naming sparks a similar process in the woman. She begins to think about the names that she now "owns" as the adoptive mother to this girl. For example, "stepmother":*
>
> *Both hands and arms punching downwards repeatedly, and then the whole torso moving to the side in a gesture that seems angry and hurt.*
>
> *And then "parent":*
> *Standing very tall. Both long, long arms held out to the side, palms and hands flat. The posture is imposing. It says, "Stop. Don't go there." It says, "This is a limit and a boundary."*

a true story can be thought of as an explicit performance of the performativity of the subject position "mother." Because it is a danced and bodily performance of the performativity of mothering, where the articulations of the body are emphasized aesthetically and juxtaposed with a story of becoming a mother that is more typically discursive, a true story critiques the relationship between discourse and the language of the body. In so doing, *a true story* presents the possibilities for play and resistance that such a critique might encourage. It suggests a telling difference between embodied knowing and discursive knowing, by paying attention to embodied life versus what can be known through language and names.

In *Bodies that Matter* (1993), Butler considers the relationship between performance and subjectivity, and performance and materiality, to focus on discourse itself as performative. Her concern is to develop a reconfiguration of the concept of "construction" as a significatory practice that delimits and names the "real" or the "natural." She argues that sex (as natural) and gender (as the constructive and constitutive force) are the important categories to think about

in terms of this problematic. This is because to think of gender as the constitutive force that constructs and names the real, material body (sex) similarly posits a foundational or pre-existent domain in relation to discourse and signification. This reproduces a set of binary relations that typically find themselves implicated in current theoretical debates about discourse and the body.

Butler understands performativity to be, not "a singular or deliberate 'act,'" but a "reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names" (1993: 2). Within this context, sex is conceptualized as a performance, a "regulatory norm" that operates in a "performative fashion to constitute the materiality of bodies, more specifically, to materialize the body's sex, to materialize sexual difference in the service of the consolidation of the heterosexual imperative" (2).

What this means for the relationship between materiality and discourse is that they appear together. Sex, often posited as a material category, is "not a site or surface" but "a process of materialization that stabilizes over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity, and surface we call matter" (Butler, 1993: 9). This "process of materialization" is a performative one—a collection or repetition of acts that sediment what become naturalized categories—sex, heterosexuality, woman, mother. But for Butler, the body is always in excess—not an excess that is an outside to discourse, but an excess that is constitutive, a force on the threshold of the performative "process of materialization." Butler argues that because the performativity of discourse is necessary to materialize naturalized categories, performativity itself is "a sign that materialization is never quite complete, that bodies never quite comply with the norms by which their materialization is impelled" (2).

Butler identifies gay, male, drag balls—represented in the film *Paris is Burning*—as explicit performances directed at undermining the regulatory regimes that materialize sex. Because these explicit performances highlight the failure of discourse to produce coherent and stable effects, Butler argues that they provide spaces for ambivalence where the materialization of the material can be mimed, reworked, and resignified. She states:

> There is no subject prior to its constructions, and neither is the subject determined by those constructions; it is always the nexus, the non-space of cultural collision, in which the demand to resignify or repeat the very terms which constitute the "we" cannot be summarily refused, but neither can they be followed in strict obedience. It is the space of this ambivalence which opens up the possibility of a reworking of the very terms by which subjectivation proceeds—and fails to proceed. (1993: 124)

In her view drag performance is a mode through which hegemonic categories—male, female, heterosexual—can be opened up for critique and re-reading.

a true story is not a drag performance for obvious reasons as well as less obvious ones. Most importantly, Baker is not seeking to have her performance on the theme of becoming a mother evaluated on the basis of how "real" or effective it was (as in the case of the drag balls depicted in *Paris is Burning).* As an example of choreography by a highly trained, professional dancer/choreographer working within the technique and discourse of modern/contemporary dance, what *a true story* wants is far away from the desire to approximate a "real" mother on-stage.

However, as a performance of the performativity of being a mother and mothering, *a true story* does create a space of possibility and subversion for the subject of the dance and the viewer. That is, a place of possibility where one is both implicated in the regimes of discourse that subjectify (mother, woman), as well as performing where the performitivity of these discourses break down.

a true story thematizes those moments where the performance of discourse breaks down by juxtaposing two stories—the story of an adoptive mother and child searching for ways to name their relationship to each other (mom, stepmother, woman, parent) through words, and this same story of names and naming told in the silence of Baker's dance of gestures. The latter is the story of our embodied and lived relation to names, naming, and children—interpreted with and through Baker's body. It is the story of how "mom" feels in the exuberance of a young girl's address. It is the story of the difficulty, physically, in occupying the position of "stepmother." These embodied repetitions of names and naming provide their own resonances in meaning. In the context of "a true story," they are meant to extend, exceed, and re-work the discourse of motherhood. Our embodied relation to names and children emerges in "a true story," as the space of possibility and critique—that place where the performance of becoming a mother and mothering can be reformulated and resignified.

Embracing the embodied "Woona"

And then, the woman in the story is woven into another story.

She says that not long ago, the woman went to visit a friend with a very small boy. At this friend's house the woman had a bath and the boy walked in as the woman emerged from the bath naked.

She performs the boy exclaiming 'Mummy!' and the mother of the boy laughing and saying kindly, "No, she is not your mummy. She is a woman."

She performs the boy exclaiming again, reaching up to the woman, "mummy!" "No she is a woman."

She performs the boy embracing the woman's naked legs—saying slowly and deliberately—"woona."

The woman in the story drying off after a bath. The small boy who happens upon her. His effort to name. In words and danced gesture, *a true story* rehearses, over and over, the effort to name and what challenges this effort to name. That is, lived experience. To search for ways to put words to experience is a commonplace dilemma.

What is unique (but not new) in *a true story* is that it is a dance performance with an explicit, nuanced, thematic and discursive attention to the expressive life of the body. As such, it foregrounds a phenomenological sense of identity and identity-formation. In other words, *a true story* asks us to consider that the formation of mother-identity—and how we locate ourselves in language more generally—is an effect of a performance and practice of the lived life of our mothering bodies in relation to our children. By calling attention to the lived life of mothering through idiosyncratic yet highly meaningful danced acts—the performance of an adolescent girl's exuberant, full-bodied address ("mom"), the performance of a small child's embrace, and the force of tension in the body when performing 'parent'—embodied meanings emerge as the necessary, productive, but also poignant echo in how we make sense and name the experience of new motherhood.

To explore the hermeneutic effects of this embodied echo in meaning, I want to focus on a specific moment in "a true story." That is, the moment in the piece (in the story) when the name "woona" emerges for the woman as the name she wants to embrace in her new role as mother. This is the performance of a name formulated in a lived, embodied conversation between a child and two adults. It is a name spoken by a child—imperfect, somewhat unintelligible, unfinished. Its sense is elaborated in danced gesture—giving it its own unique and powerful pulse and kinesis. This moment in *a true story* rehearses where discourse performs, producing naturalized effects, and where discourse meets lived life, embodied life, and struggles to produce names and subject-categories. This moment in *a true story* focuses on the other constitutive force in how we name—our lived, in-relation, embodied experiences. And because this moment is explicitly danced and performed, it helps us linger longer in the place of embodied experience—of gesture, of affect, and the inter-play of motion and sensibility, where the known (what we can name) is given another kind of sense.

I must make a point here, since I have implicitly introduced it, of outlining how I imagine bringing concepts from phenomenology and post-structuralism—in the guise of Merleau-Ponty and Butler—into conversation. These two theorists might seem at first to have nothing to say to each other. In fact, Butler (1993) and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962) share some similar commitments in terms of thinking about the relationship between the lived body and discourse, more broadly defined as the realm of the social.[3]

Butler says of her project in *Bodies that Matter* that she is neither "*presuming* materiality, on the one hand" nor "*negating* materiality, on the other" (1993: 30). She argues that "bodies live and die; eat and sleep; feel pain, pleasure;

endure illness and violence; and these 'facts,' one might skeptically proclaim, cannot be dismissed as mere construction" (xi). Her aim is to "free from its metaphysical lodgings" the either/or of the matter versus discourse binary in debates about the body, identity, and language by claiming that the body and discourse appear together. Further, discourse materializes and produces the body. The body can only be made sense of as an effect of discourse—it is, in relation to subjectivity, how the "'one' becomes viable at all" (2).

The difference between Merleau-Ponty and Butler resides in a matter of emphasis. Merleau-Ponty (1962) offers an explanation of the lived body as a socially constituted phenonomenon in *Phenomenology of Perception.* Merleau-Ponty's foundational argument here is that the body is our insertion into the world—that is, it is because we live as sensing, acting, moving bodies that we have a world, and meaningful experience, in the first place. Of the relationship between the body and knowing, Merleau-Ponty writes:

> The thing is inseparable from a person perceiving it, and can never be actually *in itself* because its articulations are those of our very existence, and because it stands at the other end of our gaze or at the terminus of a sensory exploration which invests it with humanity. To this extent, every perception is a communication or a communion, the taking up or completion by us of some extraneous intention or, on the other hand, the complete expression outside ourselves of our perceptual powers and a coition, so to speak, of our body with things. (320)

Merleau-Ponty's (1962) point is that the body and the world it inhabits are wholly relational and mutually specifying. This world would include the world of discourse, of language, of symbols. I believe that these two theories of the body and the social are not so very far apart from each other. Like Butler (1993), Merleau-Ponty proposes that the body and discourse as a social category appear together. Merleau-Ponty's crucial difference of perspective, however, is his inclination to suggest that the material materializes discourse on some level.[4] How does *a true story* thematize and perform the appearance of the body and discourse together? To address this, I want to return to the small body and the woman in "a true story."

> *This incident with the small body made the woman in the story think about the girl and names. She performs the names, "mom!," "stepmother," "parent" and then performs putting these names away, and choosing "woona" instead*
>
> *Woona:*
> *Facing the audience, body proud and gentle at the same time, she draws her thumb down the centre of her face. She lets her other hand travel over her solar plexus and lets it rest there, where the breath comes.*

At this juncture in "a true story," the small boy is trying to make sense of the physical presence of the naked woman standing before him. He recalls, from his still small repertoire of names for describing lived experience, the word "mummy." And this is what he names the naked woman. His actual mother, drawing from her more sophisticated repertoire of names, corrects her son—encouraging him to call her friend "woman." But the child is not physically able to make this name yet. He has not learned to hear the word "woman" nor is his mouth able to shape the world correctly.

Lending his whole body to this expression (as Baker dances it) he calls the woman "woona." This word, this danced articulation, is not only physically marked by the imagined body of a young child and the real body of Baker, but also has a sensibility to its meaning that is derived from and enriched by an imagined encounter where two adults address a child's perception of a woman's naked body. "Woona" is language in its embodied, nascent state. It is this sense of the word "woman" as "woona" that *a true story* relishes performing. The sense of an embodied echo in naming and the possibility of a new name for a mother. The sense that meaning, names, and language are all anchored in our lived life and embodied experiences. The sense that the lived practice of mothering, in particular, formulates a unique subjectivity for a woman.

Mielle Chandler (1998) offers a perspective on mother-identity as being a deeply relational subjectivity. Drawing on the work of Butler in the area of gender and performance, Chandler asserts that "To be a mother is to enact mothering" (273). Mothering is a "multifaceted and everchanging yet painfully repetitive performance" (273) that promotes an:

> ongoing in-relation of wiping up vomit and taking temperatures, rocking to sleep, being interrupted, taking a shower only when the baby is asleep and then doing so very quickly lest it wake up, the act of being so in-relation to and with that one wakes up as one's milk begins to let down a minute before the baby wakes up to nurse, constructs one as something both more and less than an individual. (273)

Chandler (1998) asserts that any theory of subjectivity is one that must acknowledge the relationality that constructs our sense of ourselves and others. However, in the case of the practice of mothering where one is involved in the "dressing, undressing, dressing, undressing, dressing, undressing and painting of face (or, rather, the washing of paint off of face) of another..." (274) it is a matter of degree. The practice of mother is a performance of a subjectivity that is so profoundly in-relation to another that the mother '*is simultaneously more and less than one*" (274).

Although she does not explicitly take this up, Chandler's (1998) powerful meditations on the lived, banal experiences of mothering speak to their embodied nature. They are, from my perspective, phenomenological medita-

tions. Merleau-Ponty (1962) provides a theory for identity as phenomenological and in-relation, the theory of being-in-the-world, which complements and extends what Chandler describes and what *a true story* tries to evoke both discursively and thematically.

Merleau-Ponty (1962) parallels the task of defining "being-in-the-world" with a search for a theory of subjectivity, of the "I," that is between the psychic (or empirically psychological) and the physiological. More specifically, Merleau-Ponty is concerned to avoid describing the "I" as simply mental/subjective consciousness or simply a connection of the "I" with the body as object. Merleau-Ponty writes that "as soon as there is consciousness, and in order that there may be consciousness, there must be something to be conscious of, an intentional object..." (121). Further, Merleau-Ponty asserts that "consciousness is being-towards-the-thing through the intermediary of the body" (138).

What this suggests is that there is no "I" apart from its embeddedness and relationality with and in the world of things, and further, that this embeddedness and interplay between self and world is grounded in our bodies. Elizabeth Grosz (1994) simplifies this complex idea when she says that the body provides "a structure, organization, and ground within which objects are to be situated and against which the body-subject is positioned" (87). In some respects, our bodily-being-in-the-world as anchor for and ground of our perception and consciousness is also at a basic level on the order of sense-making. Our being-towards-the-world and the way the world meets our being is a complex embodied dance of, as Grosz suggests, "sense-bestowing" and "sense-making."

a true story proposes that motherhood, and the subject position "mother," is an enacted, embodied relationship that exceeds and disrupts naturalized, sedimented categories—those of mother, parent, stepmother. This discursive disruption occurs in the reflexive, aestheticized attention to the mother-child-body-word in making meaning. Precisely because Baker first performs *a true story* silently, as a dance of the body that can tell its own peculiar, evocative story, there is a recognition in the piece that the construction of mother-identity cannot escape the body in action and in-relation. The part of the story about the child naming the woman "woona" suggests that there is indeed something about the lived relation between woman and child and mother and child that informs a mother's subjectivity and sense of herself—something about my mother-body receiving the outstretched arms of my child, about the tension held in my body as I look into the wide eyes of my toddler who is emphatically saying "No," about the smell of her new skin and the pain of her little hands pushing me away in the midst of an embrace—that *a true story* wants the audience to engage with in their sense of what mother is and what mothering means.

[1]The woman took on the motherless
no
the motherless
no
the birth mother absent daughter
of her lover
when she was 38 and the girl was 13.

At the wedding
the girl took the woman to be her father's wife
and her own mother

Mom! Mom! Mom!
You're my mom!

The girl would write down the woman's name, cross it out and write Mom instead.
The girl would write down the woman's name, cross it out and write Mom instead.
The girl would write down the woman's name, cross it out and write Mom instead.
The girl would repeatedly write down the woman's name, cross it out and write Mom instead

Well, you're probably my real mom anyway.
The girl would write down the woman's name, cross it out and write Mom instead.
The girl would write down the woman's name, cross it out and write Mom instead.
The girl would repeatedly write down the woman's name, cross it out and write Mom instead

Well, you're probably my real mom anyway.

The woman felt herself to be
a parent
A parental unit she joked.
A stepmother she thought.

The woman went to visit a friend
a close friend, now far away, and the mother of a small boy.
One morning, the boy watched the woman dry herself after a bath.
Mama! he cried, recognizing a body like his mother's.
No! laughed his mother she's a woman.

Mama!
No! laughed his mother she's a woman. Woman.
Woona? Asked the boy grasping the woman by the legs.
Woona! he called reaching to be picked up.

Woona said the woman scooping up the child.
Yes, Woona.

The woman thought about her husband's daughter.
She thought about the names: parent, mother, stepmother, mom.
And then she put down the names
and chose instead Woona, instead.

—Peggy Baker, (text for "a true story," courtesy of Peggy Baker and the Dance Umbrella of Ontario)

[2]I attended this performance presented by "Peggy Baker Dance Projects" in November 2000 at the Betty Oliphant Theatre in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. I am indebted to Peggy Baker for very generously (and informally) speaking to me about her artistic work and this dance performance piece in particular. I am also grateful for the loan of a video of *a true story* from the Dance Umbrella of Ontario (DUO) and for other information and literature both DUO and Peggy Baker provided me about this piece.

[3]Butler's (1993) account of the ontology of subjectivity. Suzanne Monique Jaeger (1998) argues that a more adequate account of personal identity can be constructed by looking at the "bodily character of dancerly activity" through the lens of Merleau-Pontian (1962) phenomenology. Butler's explanation of the relationship between the body and discourse can be extended through this work.

[4]Merleau-Ponty's (1962) work is not about arguing that our physical presence and our specific capacities to sense shape *all* discourse and meaning. He would agree, for instance, that at some point the meaning of language is produced by virtue of its movement and operation in a system of signs and referents. In this way he can be aligned with poststrucuralists and structuralists like Ferdinand de Saussure, Charles Peirce, and Jacques Derrida. For Merleau-Ponty, phenomenology is directed at "re-achieving a direct and primitive contact with the world, and endowing that contact with philosophical status" (vii). Moreover "To return to things themselves is to return to that world which precedes knowledge, of which knowledge always speaks, and in relation to which every scientific schematization is an abstract derivative sign-language, as is geography in relation to the countrywide which we have learnt beforehand what a forest, a prairie or a river is" (ix). His project is, therefore, to investigate the place of making sense—of the relationship between the lived body and the realm of discourse—before reflection and abstraction.

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Rosita Georgieva

On Mother's Day

I remember that noon - I was turning 12
and I believe that 12 is a magical number –
we gathered in the dining room without any noise,
the table was silently set - the silk and silver, scented candles, grapes,
the heavy decoration over the mahogany
was ready for years for my mother's return,
the crystal was taken out but no one dared to touch a glass,
my little brother forgot about his bottle of milk,
there was thirst in the dried, scented air
but no one asked for water, no one complained,
my older sister was not in a mood to tease, the twins were simply
a mirror reflection, without his chronic cough
my father was a wax weird figure leaning over the table
when the clock struck and everyone's heart counted
the miraculous 12, and I saw the two "imaginary" cats
under the big mahogany chair arching their backs
and running down the stairs one second before the door-bell rang,
and the stairs creaked and her figure - exacting and fast
shook the house, shot the everyday irreality,
and her voice came from my throat
so dry that I pictured her as a thirsty explorer
coming from a desert,
I couldn't see the face - only her rusty-orange hair
flaming the stairs, flaming the air, flaming years of waiting.
In the fire of my mother's return
no one cried out for water.

Michelle Moravec

Mother Art
Feminism, Art and Activism

> The public perception of white feminism is that it was antimother, antiman, antimarriage, and procareer and focused on abortion rather than childbirth.
> —Rosalyn Baxandall, (2001: 239)

> It's interesting to me that most books on the women's liberation movement neglect the early feminist day-care efforts. Is one reason the resistance of women like me to being stigmatized as mothers?
> —Rosalyn Baxandall (1998: 218)

Several factors are responsible for the characterization of the women's movement of the 1970s as anti-motherhood. To many people, this position seemed to follow from the rejection of patriarchy and compulsory heterosexuality and from efforts to legalize abortion and legitimize careers for women. More recent analyses of the women's movement have solidified this interpretation. The most vocal proponent of this viewpoint, Sylvia Ann Hewlett, has consistently blamed feminism for failing to address motherhood (Hewlett 1986, 1991, 2002). However, as the above quotes from Rosalyn Baxandall, an activist in and a scholar of second wave feminism, indicate, the relationship between feminism and motherhood is a complex one. While Baxandall herself was a commited feminist activist, her ambivalence about the role of "mother" comes through in the latter quote. While Lauri Umansky's excellent book, *Motherhood Reconceived: Feminism and the Legacies of the Sixties* (1996) analyzed feminist discourse about motherhood, this paper argues that what feminists did is as important as what they said about motherhood. I focus on the activities of one group, Mother Art, active from 1974 to 1986, to explore the ways that grassroots feminists

combined motherhood and activism. By embracing the radical feminist slogan "the personal is political," the members of Mother Art collapsed the distinction between the private world of motherhood and public realm of activism to create art works that brought their perspective as mothers to feminist causes.

The first members of Mother Art, Christy Kruse, Helen Million, Laura Silagi, and Suzanne Siegel, met as students in the Feminist Studio Workshop (FSW), an alternative feminist art school located in the Woman's Building in Los Angeles California.[1] The Woman's Building, founded in 1973 and closed in 1991, was a center for women's culture that grew out of the first experiments in feminist art education. While training in the FSW focused on helping women to locate their own voices and to express this in the content of their art, members of Mother Art initially felt that motherhood was not recognized. Mother Art member Suzanne Siegel (1992) remembered dogs were allowed in individual artist's studios, but not children. Siegel recalled that when one of her friends brought her daughter to the Woman's Building so that she could view art made by women, the gallery attendant cautioned the mother not to let the little girl touch anything. The Woman's Building was supposed "to be an open space for everyone," yet Siegel remembered, there was "this immediate kind of negative response that ... [women] felt as mothers." To make the Woman's Building more hospitable for children, in 1974 Mother Art created the Rainbow Playground. Laura Silagi (2002) saw the Rainbow Playground as "a way of asserting that the ideal of feminism needed to include childcare and a place for children, because children are part of society and women's lives and that you can't really divorce that fact from being a woman, being a feminist and being an artist."

The members of Mother Art also worked to counter the idea that a woman could not be both an artist and a mother. As Siegel recalled, "[a]lthough it seems strange today, at the beginning of the Women's Movement in the early seventies some feminists considered being both a serious artist and mother to be in conflict" (Mother Art, 2000). Thus, Mother Art curated two art exhibitions, *By Mothers* in 1975 and 1976, at the Woman's Building. The announcement for the second *By Mothers* show expressed Mother Art's commitment "to taking the private, personal aspects of the traditional female experience of nurturing and making it the valid content for our public art" (Mother Art, c. 1976). Members of Mother Art also hoped that *By Mothers* would offer a more complex depiction of motherhood by exploring "the pain anxiety, anger and guilt of mothers" in addition to "the delight, the strength, the care in nurturing" (Mother Art, c. 1976). As part of the first exhibition, Mother Art organized a month-long series of events for mothers and their children in order to reach out to "a part of the community we felt had been neglected" at the Woman's Building (Siegel, 1992). While many of the pieces in *By Mothers* included images of mothers and children, they differed dramatically from the sentimental portraits common to art history. In describing the images, Silagi (2002) characterized them as "grotesque, not sentimental ...

ironic ... opposed to anything romanticized ... .humorous, although some of them are very sweet."

For example, Gloria Hadjuk, who joined Mother Art in 1976, created *Application For Prospective Mothers* (1976), which de-romanticize motherhood by posing a series of 30 questions to prospective mothers. Some questions emphasized the life-altering aspects of motherhood, such as "are you aware that the decision to have a child is virtually irreversible?" Other queries focused on the lack of control women have over the experience of motherhood, such as "are you willing to forego a full night's sleep for however long your baby(s) determine?" Some inquiries were humorously tongue in cheek, like "Are you willing to instruct, repeat, answer questions, repeat, read bedtime stories, repeat and repeat?" while "do you have sufficient motivation to learn and grow so that your child will have a solid role model to follow?" and "Are you secure enough in your personhood so as to establish the security of your child?" are frankly poignant. Hadjuk created 15 illustrations for the various questions on her application. Hadjuk interspersed her own personal experiences of motherhood, with analyses of the institution, such as Erich Neumann's *The Great Mother* (1995), which she used to create collages. For example, for the image associated with the question "I would like to experience pregnancy" she overlaid an acetate image of her pregnant body on the text of her journal in which she considered becoming pregnant. Hadjuk does not posit her experience of motherhood as that of all women. She noted that "these questions are based on my knowledge and experience, and in no way represent a comprehensive list." Nor does she assume that only women might ponder parenthood. She stated "I would be most interested in seeing the counterpart application by a male artist/father." Rather, *Application for Potential Mothers* is designed to raise consciousness and invite dialogue about motherhood.

As Mother Art developed as a group, the members began contemplating ways to broaden the public's understanding of the role of mothers. Siegel recalled, "[w]e were interested in the work women do in the home that is not acknowledged. We wanted to put that private activity into public space" (Mother Art, 2000). In addition, the members of Mother Art wanted to offer "the public contemporary artistic experiences usually accessible only to those who frequent galleries and museums" (Mother Art, c. 1977). As Hadjuk explained "we can create art from our everyday lives with everyday materials" (qtd. in Alexander-Leitz, 1979: 20). Therefore, in 1976 Helen Million wrote a proposal to the California Arts Council for a $700 grant to fund Mother Art performances in laundromats, which the members of Mother Art viewed as "one of the major extensions of woman's role in the community" (Mother Art, c 1977).

Laundryworks (Mother Art, c 1977) involved a performance timed to a wash and dry cycle and a pamphlet in English and Spanish that explained the project. In *Laundryworks*, the members of Mother Art entered the laundromat, put an item in to wash, strung a clothesline across the room and hung individual

artworks from it. Gloria Hadjuk's piece played with the parallel notions between the wash cycle and life cycles. Suzanne Siegel created a xerox series that transitioned from a clear image to one almost completely faded, equating colors fading in the laundry and the invisibility of women's work. Helen Million's photographs of women doing laundry and of the actual items laundered juxtaposed an "inner and outer world" (Mother Art, c. 1977). Laura Silagi created an ironic image of washing photos of water. Velene Campbell-Keslar, who joined Mother Art in 1976, created random poems composed with words silk-screened on to pillowcases.

While the task of cleaning clothing might be mundane, the members of Mother Art sought to alter perceptions of this experience. As the members of Mother Art explained in the introduction to the *Laundryworks* pamphlet: "[w]e are interested in transforming the tedium and drudgery of the work by providing fresh visions in an effort to bring about an awareness of ourselves as human beings sharing a common task with the community" (Mother Art, c. 1977). In an effort to create dialogue among the community of laundromat patrons, the *Laundryworks* pamphlet posed 12 questions about the experience of doing laundry. Some questions pondered the more profound aspects of this everyday chore, such as "what in your life could the different cycles of a washing machine (soak-wash-rinse-spin-dry) be compared to?" (Mother Art, c. 1977). Other questions were humorous such as "when you look inside of a machine before putting in your clothes, what do you expect to find?" and "do you ever have the urge to put an obnoxious child through a short rinse cycle?" (Mother Art, c. 1977).

Laundryworks and Mother Art became a *cause celebre* in 1978 during debates in Los Angeles over Proposition 13, a ballot proposition to reduce property taxes. The *Los Angeles Times* cited the funds given by the California Arts Council to Mother Art as an example of wasteful government spending (Rodd, 1978). Ronald Reagan, then working as a talk show host between his stint as governor of California and his election to the presidency, repeated the *Los Angeles Times'* dismissal of *Laundryworks* as an effort to bring culture to housewives by staging plays in laundromats (Reagan, 1978). Members of Mother Art were angered particularly by the implication that women doing laundry did not deserve or need exposure to culture. As Deborah Krall (2002) recalled "[t]his was one of the first attacks on government support of the arts. Mother Art responded by organizing with other Los Angeles artists to protest cuts, but the controversy continues today in terms of NEA funding" (2000). In response, Mother Art helped to organize Art for Public Consumption, a dialogue and potluck dinner that brought public officials and artists together to discuss government cuts to arts funding. Approximately 300 people attended, including the aide to a local city council member (Hadjuk, 1978).

While Mother Art's early artwork focused on making the personal political, Mother Art now aimed its artwork at the traditionally political arena. In two performance pieces, *Mother Art Cleans Up the Banks* and *Mother Art*

Cleans Up City Hall (Mother Art, 1978), Mother Art attacked the sites they saw as the real locations of government waste. Playing off "both a verbal and a visual pun about the role of women as purifiers and domestic sanitation workers of the work," Mother Art "cleaned" these sites with brooms, mops and dusters (Mother Art, 1978). As Siegel explained "[t]he large institutions in this country are still dominated by males ... [a]nd they make decision affecting millions of women without giving women a voice in the process" (Hathaway, 1978: 41). An installation based on *Mother Art Cleans Up the Banks* and *Mother Art Cleans Up City Hall* appeared at California State University Los Angeles Gallery and in the window of an appliance store in Santa Monica, California. The installation consisted of life-size blowups of Mother Art engaging in household chores, accompanied by statements of the skills and values Mother Art members developed from their experience as mothers that they thought needed to be included in public life. For example, Gloria Hadjuk's statement about things "the experience of being a parent has given me" included "a clue that threats, bluffs, bribes and blackmail can backfire" and "a lesson in power struggle." (Hadjuk, 1979).

In 1978, Mother Art began a series of art works addressing abortion. Deborah Krall (2002) recalled the impetus to address abortion: "We felt that there was a generation of younger women who had come of age never experiencing abortion being illegal and that they were forgetting about it. We felt a need to remind them of what that was like so they would feel a sense of urgency about fighting to keep abortion legal." *Not Even If It's You*, performed at the Church on Ocean Park in November 1981, began with the shadow of a pregnant woman standing behind a scrim as a woman outlines her silhouette and draws a fetus within the abdomen. A woman dressed in a man's suit comes on stage and stencils the words "government property" across the outline. As the lights go out, the members of Mother Art began chanting "No legal abortion, not even in the case of rape, not even in the case of incest, not even when the woman will die, not even when it's a child who is pregnant, not even when the fetus cannot survive, not even when the fetus is defective" (1982). The Suit and the Pregnant Woman carried a naked corpse on stage. A tape narrated the true story of the corpse's illegal abortion, which cost her life. Slides illustrating her story interspersed with abortion facts appeared on a screen during her narrative. The performance ended with the suit and the pregnant woman repeating the chant.

As with *Laundryworks,* Mother Art developed an installation based on *Not Even If It's You* (1982). While a tape of women recounting their illegal abortions played, viewers at *The Museum of Illegal Abortions* (November 1981) viewed implements women had used over the centuries to induce abortions, as well as a timeline of efforts to legalize abortion. Silagi (2002) recalled: "we allowed people to come in to this space one at a time and they could listen to these stories. It was very personal for them because they were alone with these stories." At a second installation, *Liberty of Choice,* members of Mother Art

dressed as the Statue of Liberty. One member posed as a corpse under a bloody sheet, surrounded by the museum artifacts. In the background tapes played the stories of women's experiences with abortion, as well as some men telling about their involvement with their girlfriends' illegal abortions.

The fight against abortion represents resistance to society's effort to cast all women into the role of mother. Although the members of Mother Art wanted to celebrate women's role as mothers and believed that the culture should value women's work as mothers, they never argued that all women should be mothers. Members of Mother Art saw efforts to restrict abortion as yet another way society attempted to control women's experience of motherhood, and used their art to draw attention to these efforts. As Laura Silagi (2002) explained:

> We decided that we wanted to deal with issues that effect women.... [C]hoosing whether you are going to have a child was very important to us. Some of the women in Mother Art had abortions, but also it was just an issue for women. We wanted to expand what we did to deal with political issues, not just domesticity per se, but things that affect women in various ways.

During the early 1980s, members of Mother Art addressed a variety of political issues, including the threat of nuclear war, homelessness, and Central American refuges. In *L. A. Guernica* (1982) Mother Art took Picasso's famous mural and recreated it as an image of Los Angeles devastated by nuclear war. For *Homeless Women* (1984) Laura Silagi and Suzanne Siegel created an installation that told the stories of homeless women in Los Angeles alongside pictures of the women. *Flowers for Four Women—Flores para Cuatro Mujeres* (1984) and *Gloria* (1984) explored the lives of Central American refugee women in Los Angeles. Although these art works addressed different political concerns, the approach was the same: "issues were personalized by incorporating women's oral histories into installations and performances, which included photographs, assemblage, sound and text" (Mother Art, 2000).

In 1985, Mother Art once more turned to the topic of motherhood because, as Laura Silagi (2002) recalled, "[w]e were interested in doing something that was more positive about women being activists." *The Dining Room Table* commemorated the founding in March of 1967 of Another Mother for Peace at the dining room table of Barbara Avedon, a television screenwriter and political activist. Another Mother for Peace sought to end the war in Vietnam through a variety of strategies. The organization coined the slogan "war is unhealthy for children and other living things," organized a consumer boycott and worked to elect anti-war candidates. Laura Silagi's son knew Barbara Avedon's son and as Deborah Krall (2002) explained, "[w]e loved the idea of her working from her dining room table. Women could be powerful from within the home." The installation of *The Dining Room Table*, which

occurred in several venues, mixed images of domesticity, such as toys and coffee cups, with the tools of political activism, like a typewriter and letters to politicians. In one incarnation, the installation also included Barbara Avedon's recollections about the founding of the organization.

Although the members of Mother Art officially stopped collaborating in 1986, Deborah Krall, Suzanne Siegel and Laura Silagi once again joined forces in 2000 to mount a Mother Art retrospective exhibition that documented the group's 14-year history. As part of this retrospective, the three women created one final Mother Art piece, *Running Out Of Time.* Utilizing the strategies developed in previous artworks, Mother Art addressed the dichotomies of middle age. In *Running Out Of Time* many pairs of shoes, which represent the steps in women's lives, surrounded a clock that read "mid life". Inside shoes words described members reactions to middle age, such as "useful" and "weary," "happy" and "depressed," and "experienced" and "wise." *Running Out of Time* was a quintessential Mother Art Project, as Laura Silagi (2002) explained: "basically we [Mother Art] are part of our times. We tried to deal with issues of our times ... so we decided to deal with the dichotomy or ironies different facets of being older."

> First we clean up the world and then we take it over.
> (Mother Art, 1980)

As the above quote reflects, the strength and power of Mother Art derived both from the members' role as mothers and their collective action. While it has become commonplace to dismiss second wave feminism as hostile to mothers and motherhood, the example of Mother Art illustrates the ways in which mothers combined activism and art to offer feminist perspectives. While critics have pointed to the essentializing of motherhood as one of the factors that contributed to the rise of cultural feminism and the decline of radical feminism in the early 1970s, the activism of Mother Art stands in stark contrast to this judgment (Echols, 1989). Although Mother Art insisted that the women's movement make room for mothers, they saw motherhood as part of their identity as feminists and connected to multiple feminist issues. As their activism on behalf of women's work, abortion, nuclear war, homelessness, and refugee women testifies, the members of Mother Art embodied the ideal that "the personal is political." And members of Mother Art were only one group among many in the women's movement that worked to transform both the experience and institution of motherhood. Because the true impact of the second wave of feminism lays in the radical changes it wrought in the every day lives of women, more specific studies of grassroots activism are needed to fully understanding of the role of motherhood in the women's movement.

[1]Although the members of Mother Art were all Euro-American, it would be

inaccurate to depict the group as homogenous. Mother Art included single, married and divorced mothers. Some mothers identified as lesbians. Some mothers had their children young and other mothers were "older" when they gave birth. Members' children ranged in age from toddlers to fully-grown.

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Isabella Colalillo Katz

A Woman's Identity

they wanted to marry me off
I was barely 14
a young man from the old village
came to visit
three weekends in a row
all the way from Hamilton

part of me was intrigued
another part scared to death
in my room,
I studied my French grammar
ignored him

he talked to my parents
in the welcoming kitchen
I felt funny
a bit like a good horse at a fair
my tender years my only defense
against any kind of quick agreement

as I studied the pluperfect subjunctive
I set my mind the task
of finding a loophole in his plans
I already understood the trap of marriage
the role it played in their traditions—
marriage was all they seemed to plan for

to talk about—
interminable Sunday afternoons,
evenings of *paesani*
talking about who had married whom
who had established
what relationship with what family
over the past hundred years
they remembered everyone's name,
date of birth, death and marriage dates
all offspring were known by name
family lineage
carefully tracked for several generations
and even those who went to America
the promised land of peasants,
were not lost to the tribal stories.
repeated in these conversations

Identity 2

that afternoon and every Sunday
that followed
my parents claimed the purity
of my lineage: it was,
they assured the young man,
more elevated than some
honourable pedigrees on both sides
no scandals of any consequence,
my father descended from Spanish blood,
my mother from French aristocracy
landowners, travellers
all good stock and traceable

I was more saleable than some
a good catch—
pretty, smart, educated

a promising cook
and even though
I could be headstrong
and too forthright
too English
I could be counted on
to do the right thing
especially in a family crisis
for three weeks,
each sunday, the boy came to visit
he was twenty or so
and though anxious to marry
he promised to wait for me
if they agreed to the match

and so, they went over my pedigree
counted my wifely attributes
and each Sunday
the visitor asked my parents about marriage:

She's keen on her studies,
said my mother wistfully,
not too loud,
with the voice of a proper woman

She's keen to study all right,
added my father,
ignoring my mother
but she'll soon be ready,
she'll make some paesano a good wife.

Identity 3

Not me, said I to myself
listening from behind the closed
door of my bedroom

I'm leaving this transplanted village life—
leaving it far behind—
one day it will be a part me
like this physics I don't understand.
I'll pass the test tomorrow,
and then it will be gone.

I'll become someone else
someone
even the familiar stars won't know
more than marriage
and housework
I want to discover
myself,
learn everything,
go everywhere
become the one
I still don't know
the one they don't suspect
me of being
the woman
they can never
never
sell into bondage.

Margaret Morganroth Gullette

Can America Catch Up to the Wonderful Midlife Mother?

Postmaternal Characters in Contemporary Culture

I Judging Amy's Mother

In 2000, CBS started running a dramatic/ comedy series called *Judging Amy,* about a postmaternal woman (played by feminist icon Tyne Daly) with three adult children. It is still running strong three seasons later. When it started, it was a fascinating but in some ways depressing representation of relations between adult children and their mother. It demonstrated what a vigorous life postmaternal stereotypes lead in the U.S. despite three decades of feminist activism around motherhood and the midlife.

"Amy's mother" was a widowed social worker who made room in her Hartford home for two of her three children: one, a newly divorced lawyer (Amy, in her 30s), appointed as a family-court judge, and Vincent, a would-be writer. Gathering the clan animated family dysfunction—more specifically, the failures of a midlife mom with regard to her adult children. It wasn't Amy we were judging, but Amy's mother. Early episodes fixed her character as an infantilizing nag with a superior air. She scolded the judge for not eating enough lunch, called the cops when Amy was speeding back to court. Undervaluing Vincent's creativity, she stole hours from his work and had the nerve to complain, "You don't thank me for raising you!"

The director put Daly's hair in an old-fashioned bun, made her stiffen her cheek muscles to look rigid. Vincent and Amy hid together to talk her over, but she had no ally to complain to about them. Old as they were—long as they had known her as adults—they still hadn't adjusted to her brusque style. Despite her 28 years of work experience, she was supposed to be just another Ever-Ready Mom whose worth is measured by how well she serves *their* needs. Judges relied on Maxine's experience but her kids never asked about her work. Several episodes required "Vincent's mother" to apologize, the first time for mistakes

she made raising him. She had depended on him too much and protected him too much—prosecutorial contradictions that would seem utterly irrational if they didn't describe mothering from a child's-eye view. When she came running into Vincent's hospital room after he was shot, he rolled away from her, saying wearily, "I'm sorry they told you."

I wrote an analysis of the show cum cultural complaint, which was published at the end of the first season (in an article in the *New York Times'* Arts and Leisure section (Gullette 2000a). Since then, "Maxine Gray" has had a character make-over. Slowly, producer-writer Barbara Hall and the other writers have reduced her defects and given her more selfhood. We hear people call her by her first name. As a social worker, her sweetness comes out with child clients; her lofty tartness is admirable in dealing with abusers. She inspires respect in her boss, a younger man who increasingly relies on her advice to run their agency. The writers gave her a rich lover, and therefore, occasionally, a more glamorous wardrobe and hair worn loose. (She still has no close friend, nor, in a town where everyone knows her, any drop-in neighbours.) Maxine smiles more, and she has various kinds of smiles. They're giving the expressive Daly a fuller range of emotions to play through.

Maxine's relations with her children and with a troubled charming nephew have become closer in important ways—ways that recognize the value of the "matriarch." Maxine can still be brusque, but when this happens the audience is plainly shown that she too is hurting. She handles her pert loquacious grandchild better than Amy does. She can sometimes advise her daughter and son Peter well, and sometimes refrain. Her children would *not* be better off as orphans. They all argue with each other better—an important skill for families of adults. They have grown up enough to attune themselves to her more. Psychoanalytic theorist Jessica Benjamin says that a child begins to recognize the mother as a separate being at age two. At times Judge Amy can now manage this at age 35. At her law-school reunion, mocked by her classmates as someone who still lives with her *mother*, Amy turns on them and defends the situation: "I want my daughter to know her." Amy tried an apartment but they are now happily back in the family house together. Sometimes, at the end of a separately dreadful professional day, Maxine and Amy pig out on ice cream in wordless sympathy side by side. In rare moments, they reach a goal that I believe is current in postmaternal and some young-adult thinking and dreaming: they become equally adults together.

In an era of niche marketing by age and gender, the writers of this TV show aimed to expand the midlife share of their female audience, which includes many social workers. But even though they wanted to give a midlife mother a life, they could not at first manage it. They could not help identifying with the children-of-30, an identification that produced the cliches of generational warfare. On their side, Amy and Vincent were always going to "grow": that's what kids and sympathetic protagonists do. Producer/writer Barbara Hall had already determined that they would have "arcs," script-lingo for psychological

development or change. Giving Maxine her own arcs was probably an afterthought, or an effect of *that* process. Perhaps my article hastened the process.

Dramatic soaps mimic "reality," or rather, they try to keep moving closer to the space where the writers think a (desirable) consensus about the real lies. It's our good fortune that the consensus on Maxine Gray, Postmaternal Working Woman, seems to lie where anti-middle-ageism in the women's movement and feminist social criticism have brought it: to a midlife character who is multi-faceted, complex, interesting, determined, and self-determining.

II Postmaternity in the Comics

The comics pages can be much less constrained by reality checks than social dramas. There the historicized unconscious bubbles up, sometimes in fear, sometimes in happy desire.

One of my favorite strips, by Nicole Hollander, is *named* after a postmaternal woman, a sarky cultural critic, a gourmandizing, navel-gazing, wise-ass freelance writer, schemer, and self-publicist: no other than Sylvia herself. When she isn't doing cats and dogs, Hollander often uses this character for progressive political satire and belly-aching. This side of her work heavily depends on the relationship between Sylvia and her adult daughter, Rita. Over the years, I have closely watched her develop it. Nobody grows, exactly, but the implied situation emerges more clearly.

Sylvia is the center, quite obliviously self-centered. Rita is often a room away or a voice off, but that's a minor material subordination in a realm where voice counts more than anything. Rita has as big a voice. (Comic characters—if you've never noticed the caps—shout.) Rita, like Amy, now lives in, and they share a bathroom. But this implies no comment on Rita's psychic dependency or inability to pay the rent. It's an opportunity to let dialogue spark. Sometimes Sylvia mock-orders her daughter to fetch something.

> "RITA! GET MY SMELLING SALTS!"
> (Offstage:) "MA! YOU USED THEM UP WHEN YOU DISCOVERED THAT REPEAL OF THE ESTATE TAX BENEFITTED ONLY THE VERY VERY RICH." (Hollander, 2001)

Sylvia squeezes political implication out of every repartee.

Sylvia the character (and what a character!) spends her time typing and snacking, in the tub or in front of the TV, inventing scams, writing preposterous serials, commenting on life in America. Rita can be her mother's straight-man, feeding her lines for Sylvia to top. Or she can tease her mother's absurdities, sass her about not exercising. She has no inhibitions because there's no fear of losing her mother's love. There's no meanness on either side; it's all benign. When Sylvia gets truly irritated by the outrages of contemporary capitalism, government, and patriarchy, Rita is right there offering her comfort food. They both

wear big hair and big earrings: they *look like* a wild mother-and-daughter pair. Their persiflage is an everyday pleasure. There are hints about the child-rearing that brought them to this point on the stage of life—it was slapdash and not overclean but must have been lively. Their joking would not be possible if the characters were not always already performing equal-adulthood together. Hollander's feminist unconscious—I would argue— enables Sylvia to enjoy some benefits of age-hierarchy that most readers never notice and Rita doesn't resent. Madcap Mouthy Mother, Dutiful Daughter: Each winds up *voluntarily* playing her shtick.

On the same comics pages in my newspaper, *Dilbert* occasionally gets a middle-aged mother. This strip has been the typical parent-free, child-free workplace of alienated and resentful anomie. "Mom" wears a prim, scallop-topped dress and glasses like her son's. (Mother and child are also alike in having eyes set too close together and no necks). Unlike Dilbert, notoriously mouthless, Mom has a lip. In one strip she tells Dilbert over and over about the successes of "Norma's son." ("HIS CUBICLE IS DOUBLE-WIDE.") In the final frame, she concludes, "THANKS TO YOU, MY 'SCRABBLE' NIGHT IS A LIVING HELL" (Adams, 2002a). Scott Adams, probably now the best-known comic-strip creator in America, has picked up on the competition of the 1990s between working young-adults. Employees (whatever their age) were finding their working conditions steadily worsening, while the business media published articles about how rich "Generation Xers" in the New Economy were getting to be. "If you're so young, why ain't you rich?" was the implied taunt until the stock market crash of 2000. With Dilbert's Mom, Adams has displaced this competition—which certainly puzzled and saddened many parents—onto chagrined postmaternal women.

Adams has recently pitted mother against son in a weird direct battle. Mom decides to sue Dilbert's company, which they both rightly understand is run by "weasels." In typical corporate fashion, the weasels enlist her son, their employee, as a "goon" to force her to back down. In another strip where the two are arguing about her lawsuit, in the final frame she doubts her parentage of a son capable of such betrayal: "I DEMAND A DNA TEST" (Adams, 2002b). One can scarcely imagine more open references to young-adult fears of (post)maternal rejection. If Mom wins her righteous suit, Dilbert says, he will lose his job. There's no win-win imaginable here. The dog-eat-dog world of postindustrial capital will have degraded all human relationships, even the one that Freud said was the tenderest, that of a mother toward her son. Adam's readers may be able to seethis, but a sloppier readering would consider Mom a mean nold mother who makes her son's life harder. If Adams is actually distracting attention from the powerful corporate forces he usually excoriates, that would not be the first time that the postmaternal woman has been blamed for not being able to rescue her children (see Gullette, 2000b).

If we hypothesize a spectrum of existing popular-culture attitudes toward the postmaternal, *Dilbert* and *Sylvia* might be at opposite poles of it. *Sylvia*

represents a feminist fantasy, in which postmaternal and (female) young-adult desires for the ideal relationship just—wonderfully—happen to coincide. *Dilbert* may develop "Mom" in unexpected ways, but so far she is the far side of North American unconscious fantasies of mother-responsibility: she seems to represent the (male) adult child's dread of powerful midlife motherhood: out to get him, never satisfied by what he accomplishes. The Superego as Postmaternal Woman. For myself, I think any loving son could imagine himself saying Rita's lines, and any unloving daughter could fit herself inside *Dilbert's* mindset, but in the strips the adult children's natures are gendered just as Nancy Chodorow, over twenty-five years ago, expected them to be.

In between *Dilbert* and *Sylvia* is *Judging Amy*, whose evolving situation is being developed by writers who seem to be working their way out of a hostile and self-centered young-adult subject position toward a more self-conscious, cross-generational, egalitarian, and feminist, point of view. Would that more Americans could follow this trajectory.

*

This may be the point at which to note how ubiquitous postmaternal figures are in contemporary culture—although feminist cultural critique and mothering theory have been slow to discover them. Where ever (female) gender, (middle) age, and the coming-of-age of adult children coincide, there stand imaginary postmaternal figures in wide array. Literature has long been fascinated by the broad range of ethical, psychological, familial, social, and dynastic relations between midlife mothers (and fathers) and their adult offspring. Mainstream culture worries the dyadic personal relation as endlessly as the Greeks did. But this doesn't mean that the issues are "universal." Our own socioeconomic and political issues remain hidden behind stereotypes.

Postmaternal matrophobia lives

The contemporary cultural problem for women whose children are independent is often represented in pop psychology books as "empty-nest syndrome." I believe that this was once a common subjective/ historical emotion, constructed for those women in advanced patriarchal societies who had fewer children than in the past and thus finished their child-rearing too early, before being legitimately old. Since women in the middle-classes couldn't work for pay outside the home, their major identity as mother ended without there being many alternatives (see Gullette, 1995). This was so in the U.S. at about the time Mother's Day was invented, a century ago.

Now, there should be fewer mothers likely to suffer from it. Most women-who-raise-children also work while their children are still young; they experience the resultant stress. In the new paradigm (which I have described elsewhere [Gullette, 2002]), the postmaternal period is far likelier to be anticipated as a space of relief, and subsequently lived as a space of freedom and/ or growth, with revolutionary consequences for mothers and their adult children and society at large. Thus "empty nest" feelings may affect only the first

ten minutes of the new postmaternal story, if that.[1] Many women, like Maxine, have nests that are quite full.

The real problem for American mothers at midlife is not empty rooms but "matrophobia" or mother-blaming. Feminists have studied mother-blaming as directed at the mothers of *young* children, but at least in America today the type that targets the mothers of young adults is probably more frequent.

Postmaternal matrophobia is a psycho-cultural disease still acquired by adult children. They are trained to stop listening to their mothers and to blame them for "hovering," bossiness, "Oedipal" failure to detach, "overinvestment" or inability to help with problems of love and work. In an era of heightened youth-cultism, the remedy prescribed is to "back off" and renegotiate on the terms the children set. Postmaternal matrophobia wars against the idea that mothers are people, or that adult children might be responsible for treating them with consideration, as they themselves expect to be treated.

In movies as in TV, adult children can be as selfish as babies. In *Steel Magnolias*, Shirley Maclaine's mother is about to donate a kidney to save her adult daughter. Playing "Go Fish," her grown children laugh uproariously at the line "Give me ... all your internal organs." Only if a mother is dying—now I'm thinking of *One True Thing*—can she get her daughter's attention. Only if she is caring for her dying daughter—*Terms of Endearment*—is she worthy of ours. Postmaternal women are exposed to meanness, even contempt, they *deserve*. Think of Woody Allen's huge mother floating over New York City embarrassing him in *Oedipus Wrecks*. Even in *Modern Maturity*, the journal of the American Association of Retired People (AARP) (which might be expected to be sensitive to sexist ageism), mothers-in-law are patronized as "buttinskies" and patronizingly lectured to remember "there is more than one way to make potato salad" (Grieder, 2000: 57-58).[2] It's as if the entire culture empathized only with adult children, and then primarily during that brief developmental stage when the young fear that they will never be independent and blame their parents for infantilizing them. Cultural amnesia to this degree requires not only dissing mothers and sometimes fathers, but also forgetting the other young adults who have more easily become less dependent and who remain (for the rest of their lives) in the stage of being—or working toward being—equally adults together with their parents.

Adults should start asking, of all the "Amy's mothers" and "Dilbert's mothers" dumped on us: When will they give us fictions and documentaries for wide-spread popular consumption, starring women who have a full subjective world, and whose adult children are "best supporting actors" who like, respect, and rely on them? Not to have such worlds depicted is cruel to women with adult children and terrifying to women whose children are younger and being dosed with these slow toxic drips.

*

Each era of literature uses the postmaternal to explore certain problems most relevant to that interesting phase of family life and national needs when

two (and sometimes three) generations of the family are adult at the same time. And each artist who uses a postmaternal figure takes a stance in relation to that problematic. Postmaternal women have been compelling moral figures since Clytemnestra [3] killed her husband Agamemnon for sacrificing their daughter Iphigenia to the gods of war. Isak Dinesen (1942) recounted the tragedy of a woman forced to work herself to death trying to save her adult son in the feudal conditions of "Sorrow Acre." Virginia Woolf (1981) showed how fully Mrs. Dalloway was invested in life even though her daughter was momentarily in love with a mother-substitute. The term *postmaternal* is capacious enough to be applied to, among other twentieth-century figures, Mrs. Robinson, Ms. Klein, and Mrs. Bridge, Ma Joad and Ma Barker, Mildred Pierce and Stella Dallas, Mother Courage and the mother betrayed in *The Iceman Cometh.*

There is material enough to teach a course in postmaternal heroines (I have). Contemporary artists too sense that the lives of midlife mothers intersect with high themes. Many find their subjectivities more absorbing than those of young-adult protagonists: Pearl Tull in *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant* (Tyler, 1982), Sethe in *Beloved* (Morrison, 1987), and Avey Johnson in *Praisesong for the Widow* (Marshall, 1983). In two post-apartheid novels, Nobel Prize winner Nadine Gordimer (1998, 1994) has chosen to portray aspects of the postmaternal situation, most notably in the austerely intense *House Gun* (1998). In Mary Gordon's divertimento about the perfect midlife, *Spending,* when cocky painter Monica Szabo gets in trouble with the religious right, daughter Rachel "organized her friends from Brown to come and picket for her mom. Filial devotion takes many forms; this was a new one" (1998: 192).

Foreign film-makers with progressive agendas have captured the political bravery of women whose boys are old enough for conflict. In *Any Mother's Son,* Hellen Mirren becomes the activist arms and voice of her imprisoned IRA son. *Prisoner of the Mountains* confers legendary stature on all the Russian mothers who went to Chechnya to rescue their sons in the first phase of that war, and by extension, all midlife women who fight state power.

*

The actual conditions of postmaternity—which include women's new freedoms, energy, and power, and changes in the parent-child dynamic—are well-kept secrets outside of a few excellent surveys in anthropology, psychology, and sociology. Why?

Postmaternal matrophobia may be easier to understand if we treat it as a historically separate phenomenon from mother-blaming. We could reserve the term "mother-blaming" for what patriarchy says about women raising *younger* children. It's another way of constructing younger women in traditional ways as instinctively maternal and wholly responsible for child-rearing. This construction helps determine the values and personality-types that dominant society wants mothers to inculcate or reproduce. Patriarchy uses female responsibility to scapegoat mothers and avoid blaming fathers.

Historically, postmaternal matrophobia kicks in whenever young adults rather than dependents are seen as "in crisis" and when midlife mothers are imagined to be getting too much power. Both were true in the flaming 1920s, right after women won the vote, when young adults were experimenting with sexuality, booze, drugs. Midlife mothers were portrayed as idle, unwanted, and out of a job, as well as "Victorian" in opposing their children's sexual interests and need for independence.

The postmaternal matrophobia of our time is more puzzling. I would almost say it is anachronistic. Many of us—I include myself in here—raised our children to be eventual friends. Helped by the women's movement, we had respect for ourselves. Of all generations of women, we best know the working world. We can recognize that many adult children joining the workforce are in real trouble. Despite the past triumphalism of Wall Street, we see them overworked and mostly underpaid, without secure futures or pensions, and, as a result, delaying marriage, children (and, for us, grandchildren). Unconsciously, I think, we expected to grow into a friendly, sensitive, upper position in the family age hierarchy—accomplishing something thereby that most of our mothers were unable to accomplish.

But this has not always happened, or not fully enough. I suspect hidden disappointments, mainly unspeakable. Otherwise empowered and experienced, with our children we may feel more estranged than we should be. How can we speak for their interests when we're not supposed to speak "for" them at all? Silencing serves political needs: to diminish our potential influence, to keep us from unifying as "mothers of kids working 24/7," "mothers of economic victims," "mothers of Iraq-bound soldiers," women who identify with any of the above.

This brief essay is intended to highlight problems and point directions, not to answer all the questions. To raise postmaternity as a central issue in the analysis of culture has been my main goal. What is clear is that writers in all media need to take more advantage of the vast unexplored territories here. Hypotheses such as mine need to be disconfirmed or amplified by qualitative interviews and by the production of more autobiographical narratives by diverse postmaternal women. On the heels of the United Nation's Year of the Older Woman, I have some free script advice. Grow up, America. To overcome the unconscious cultural identifications with youth, give us deep stories about whole women who happen to have adult children. Let a few juicy drops of our diverse realities leak into representation.

[1]Nevertheless, 30 years into second-wave feminism, this tired-old "empty nest" fantasy plays out in not just in cartoons, nonfiction books, and TV but in movies and novels. It's driven by "news" features about "Boomer"—women's maternal "dread" and "depression" in the autumn, when the next batch of kids trudges off to college. The Library of Congress still uses "Empty Nesters" as the subject

heading for a group who would be better off if more neutrally termed "postmaternal."

[2]Even in *Sylvia*, an adult daughter once told her mother that she'd rather "eat glass" than move back home. Now Rita seems to be settled in pretty comfortably.

[3]Clytemnestra is a character in many Greek plays, including Aeschulus's *Oresteia.*

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Jillian Duquaine-Watson

All You Need is Love
Representations of Maternal Emotion in Working Mother *Magazine, 1995-1999*

On the surface, it seems like the realization of a liberal feminist dream. First published in 1978 and with a turn-of-the-century subscription rate of just less than one million (*Ulrich's National Periodical Directory*, 2000: 7527), *Working Mother* supports those who are both mothers and work outside the home. The magazine constructs working mothers as particularly skilled and capable, "superwomen" who simply need a little advice to achieve a healthy balance between motherhood and career. Yet at the foundation of this ideology of "having it all" exist carefully constructed representations regarding the "good" mother.

This paper interrogates representations of maternal emotions in *Working Mother* and illustrates how the romantic ideal of the all-loving mother is central to definitions of "good" motherhood. Through a reliance on iconic images and advice-centered articles, the magazine defines such emotions as inherent to "good" mothering and a necessary foundation that enables mothers to achieve "superwoman" status by "having it all."

In this essay, I offer a rhetorical analysis of *Working Mother*, focusing on the five years (50 issues) from January 1995 through December 1999. I argue that the magazine, through visual imagery and reliance on romanticized discourses, constructs a narrow representation of motherhood that promotes the utopian archetype of the all-loving maternal figure. Subsequently, "negative" maternal emotions such as anger, jealousy, resentment, hostility, and frustration are not only deemed insignificant, but almost entirely ignored (Parker, 1995).[1] As a result, the magazine contributes to what Shari L. Thurer has termed a "cultural conspiracy of silence" (1994: xiv) that pervades American cultural understandings of motherhood. At its best, this contributes to the shaming and admonishment of mothers who articulate "negative" maternal emotions. At its worst, it renders

certain maternal emotions virtually unspeakable and, thus, an important aspect of women's experiences invisible.

Employing a feminist images and representations approach (Rakow, 1986), I first offer a brief description of format, organization, and content of the magazine. Then, I conduct visual and textual analysis of magazine covers and selected articles. This dual approach illustrates how the cover images and written content complement one another to produce a powerful representation of maternal emotion. It is through reliance of particular representations that the magazine contributes muted alternate representations while simultaneously reinforcing cultural ideals of "good" motherhood.

Feminist scholars have illustrated the myriad ways motherhood is socially constructed, as both "experience and institution" (Rich, 1976), within mainstream American culture. These analyses have demonstrated how beliefs and behaviors concerning motherhood are composed at the intersection of cultural political, scientific, philosophical, social, economic, and religious ideologies and discourses (Grant, 1998; Heffner, 1978). A related subset of theories of social construction concerns notions of the "good" and the "bad" mother. As Jane Swigart (1991) explains, this binary produces complex American cultural myths:

> Imagine a woman who wants only what is best for her children, whose needs she intuits effortlessly. This mother adores her offspring and finds them fascinating. She is exquisitely attuned to her children and is so resourceful that she is immune to boredom. Nurturing comes as naturally as breathing, and child rearing is a source of pleasure that does not require discipline or self-sacrifice. She is the Good Mother.
>
> Now imagine the opposite: A woman easily bored by her children, indifferent to their well-being, a mother who is so narcissistic and self-absorbed she cannot discern what is in the best interests of her children. Insensitive to their needs, she is unable to empathize with them and often uses them for her own gratification. This woman damages her children without knowing it. ... She is the Bad Mother ... and is known by many names: The Castrating Mother; the Smothering, Intrusive Mother; the Cold, Rejecting Mother . (6)

It is tempting to dismiss these descriptions as caricatures and, therefore, insignificant. However, a growing number of scholars have begun to argue that "cultural obsessions" with mothering function as a "collective wish for *perfect* mothering" (Thurer 1994: xvi).[2] Ladd-Taylor and Umansky (1998) argue that these myths are key contributors to mother-blaming which is so prevalent in American society. This involves not only labeling mothers who do not fit the "good" mother ideal; it also has a material impact on the lives of mothers and their children in legal, political, and social arenas and "can be found in custody disputes, political speeches, and parent-teacher conferences"(2).

During the past century, women have been targeted as "bad" mothers for a variety of reasons. Often, they are branded on the basis of specific behaviors. These include women who don't have children, surrogate mothers, and non-custodial mothers as well as mothers who work outside the home, mothers who do not work outside the home, mothers who breastfeed, and mothers who do not breastfeed (Ashe, 1992; Boris, 1994; Edwards, 1989; Ginsburg, 1998; May, 1988; Ragone, 1994; Weiner, 1994). In addition, "bad" mothers have been labeled on the basis of certain identities including race, age, class, marital status, and sexual orientation (Kunzel, 1998; Lewin, 1993; Luker, 1996; Roberts, 1999; Ross, 1993; Solinger, 1992).

Maternal emotion has also been a central in the construction of "good" and "bad" mothers. In fact, as Swigart's above definitions indicate, maternal emotion is a central component of these categories, particularly that of the "bad" mother. That is, even when maternal actions or identity are the primary basis upon which a mother is labeled "bad," maternal emotion is always a consideration. For example, when college student Donna Sloan delivered what she determined to be a dead fetus in her dorm bathroom and then placed it in the trashcan and went back to bed without telling anyone, it was not only her actions which were the basis of her being labeled a "bad" mother. Concerned with the difficulty in controlling Sloan's public image, her attorney stated, "She was expressing no emotion, no grief. She didn't seem to be grieving at all" (qtd. in Tsing, 1990: 287). Thus, while Sloan's actions initially made her suspect, her lack of "appropriate" maternal emotion confirmed her guilt in the court of public opinion.

Similarly, actions are the primary basis upon which rock singer Courtney Love has been targeted as a "bad" mother. These include her admitted heroine use during pregnancy—during the first month, before she knew she was pregnant (Coates, 1998: 328)—sexual persona and activities, and stage antics. As Coates explains, the mainstream media focuses on these behaviors almost exclusively and, in doing so, "posit Love as a poor behavioral model for her daughter" (324). Judgments regarding Love's maternal emotions, however, are integral to these concerns. By focusing on these particular behaviors, those critical of the singer also attack her emotional stability, depicting her as a selfish mother, one who places her own needs above those of her child and fails to show proper maternal concern.

Of course, expectations regarding maternal emotion are operative not only in critiques aimed at specific "bad" mothers such as Sloan and Love. They are also key components in a variety of popular cultural sources including newspapers and mass media (Coward, 1997), advertisements (Bassin, Honey, and Kaplan, 1994), parenting books, and baby manuals (Grant, 1998; Hays, 1996). Not surprisingly, they also permeate mothering-related magazines, including *Working Mother*. Initially, this magazine may seem rather benign, a periodical that simply addresses and attempts to provide support for working mothers as they encounter the many challenges of their personal and professional lives.

However, through its representations of maternal emotion via cover images and articles, the magazine reinforces a fairly narrow definition of "good" motherhood while simultaneously banishing so-called "negative" emotions to the realm of "bad" mothering.

Owned by MacDonald Communications Corporation, *Working Mother* is published ten times annually, with a new issue arriving on newsstands and in subscriber mailboxes each month of the year except for January and August. Readers are greeted by a "cover mom," generally pictured with her child or children, although the cover mom is occasionally absent and replaced by bold text and headlines for special issues or collector's editions.[3] The magazine is explicitly organized via the following categories: work, children, mother's concerns including beauty, health, relationships, food, and a buyer's guide and editor's notes.

The text of a full-page subscription advertisement from the April 1995 issue indicates the magazine's overall philosophy:

> Discover the magazine that helps you bring balance to your work and family life.
>
> *Working Mother*—the "Voice of Authority™" for America's career-committed mothers.
>
> How successful are you—juggling home, kids, work, fun? We understand your challenges, show your options and support your choices. Working Mother: making your impossible dream possible... ("Subscribe Today!" 1995).

The ad juxtaposes juggling with balance—juggling to warn of the potential chaos that can accompany the range of responsibilities which working mothers face, and balance to indicate that such chaos can be avoided through appropriate actions. In addition, it affirms the importance of women's employment and conveys to its readership that working mothers can achieve their highest goals. More specifically, because mothers with careers as "committed," they can make possible their "impossible dream," particularly if they rely on the magazine's "Voice of Authority™" to guide them. Finally, through the rhetoric of options and choice, the ad emphasizes individuality in decision-making as well as autonomy and self-determination for women. The resulting message is that women, if they choose, can achieve balance and have a satisfying career without sacrificing the rewards of motherhood. In short, working mothers *can* have it all.

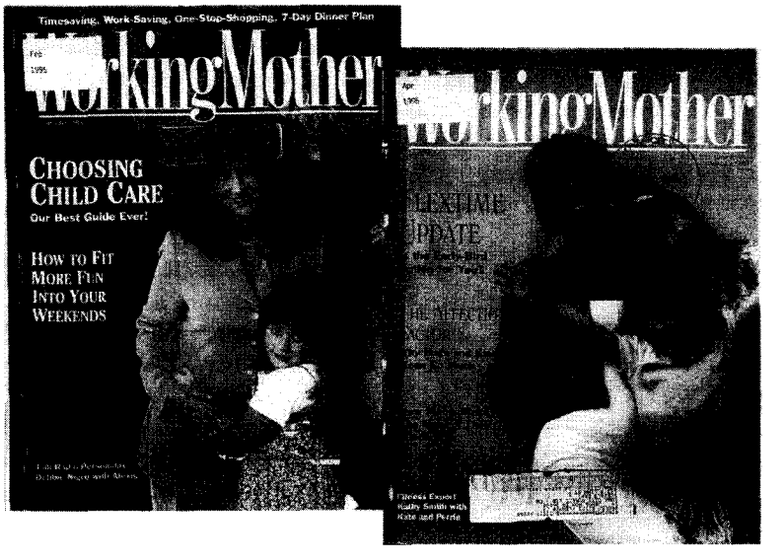
It is important to recognize that *Working Mother* supports working mothers in a variety of ways. First, it recognizes the struggles women face as they balance career and family and attempts to help women be successful in those struggles. Second, it values women's paid employment, indicating that in their roles as executives, managers, administrators, supervisors, directors, overseers, and bosses, they make a significant contribution to the American

corporate and economic landscapes. In addition, it provides information on topics relevant to several areas of working mothers' lives as well as ideas and suggestions for dealing with work, family, and personal issues. As such, it is a source of information, a resource which working mothers may find helpful. Finally, the magazine does challenge some cultural stereotypes of "good" and "bad" motherhood, specifically by illustrating the gender bias central to these stereotypes as well as their personal (Shelton, 1999) as well as legal (Holcomb, 1995) consequences.[4]

Despite these challenges to cultural norms and ideologies of motherhood and the variety of ways it celebrates the efforts and lives of working women, however, the magazine also performs a kind of surveillance function. Through this, appropriate (and, by implication, inappropriate) practices of mothering are publicized in an explicitly didactic way. More specifically, *Working Mother* both constructs *and* comments on ideologies of appropriate and acceptable maternal emotion. In doing so, it reinforces dominant discourses of "good" motherhood while simultaneously obscuring alternate discourses of motherhood, specifically those regarded as "bad." This is evident in both the magazine covers as well as articles.

The magazine's cover images frequently rely on the Madonna/Child archetype so widespread in Western culture, thereby accentuating a close emotional and physical bond between mother and child. Representative of this is the February 1995 cover, featuring "Talk Radio Personality" Debbie Nigro who is pictured with Alexis (see Figure 1). Although the cover does not indicate that Alexis is Nigro's daughter, the relationship is implied by the image. Nigro and Alexis are standing close to one another, the top of the child's head just level with her mother's breast, their arms wrapped around one another to create a circle of affection. Both are smiling softly, their expressions conveying feelings of contentment and serenity, again indicating a strong maternal-child emotional bond. This atmosphere is reinforced by the lush, abundant foliage that surrounds them, lending an element of "natural-ness" to this portrayal of maternal love.

Not all covers, however, rely on this serene ideal. Others issues publicize a more active view of motherhood, one which celebrates enthusiasm and excitement as central components in a successful mother/child relationship. This is evident on the April 1995 cover featuring "Fitness Expert" Kathy Smith with Kate and Perrie (see Figure 2). Again, the text does not indicate that the children are Smith's. The relationship, however, is implied through the proximity and positioning of Smith and the girls. This image of mother and daughters is a lively one, with the younger child occupying the foreground, arms stretched wide, while the older child stands close to Smith, leaning her head on her mother's shoulder. Both children are smiling. Smith is also smiling, although hers suggests open-mouthed, spontaneous laughter. While this cover touts a more active and enthusiastic type of motherhood, one based on elation rather than serenity, it is similar to the Nigro cover in its position that the



From left to right, "Talk Radio PersonalityDebbie Nigro with Alexis," and "Fitness Expert Kathy Smith with Kate and Perrie."

mother/child relationship is based solely on affection and love.

In addition to the professional and celebrity working moms such as Nigro and Smith who appear on the cover of the magazine, the magazine cover also features its annual "Working Mother of the Year." These mothers are distinguished by their intense self-sacrificing nature. For example, JoEllen Barnhart is featured on the May 1995 cover after being named the magazine's "Working Mother of the Year." A departmental director at Hagerstown Junior College, Barnhart is the mother of two children, Michael and Andrew. At the time of the award, she is expecting her third child. What earned Barnhart the award was her ability to overcome challenges, specifically in relation her children. Her first son, Michael, was "a special baby" (Cartwright, 1995: 24) who was diagnosed with Down's Syndrome at birth. Her second son, Andrew, was born two years later, and presented a "new challenge" (25). He was born with a cleft lip and palate.

The accompanying article classifies Barnhart as uncommonly strong in the face of adversity. After Michael was born, this mother "found herself on an emotional roller coaster," but "it didn't take long ... for JoEllen to put her grief and disappointment behind her" (Cartwright, 1995: 25-26). She located a caregiver, arranging for relatives to "fill in as needed," hired a therapist for Michael, and arranged for counseling for herself and her husband (26). Reflecting on Barnhart's success in overcoming these and related challenges, the author announces:

> Today, Michael is a happy, active child, says JoEllen. "He runs, he swims, he hops and skips—he's learning all the time!" He is now flourishing in a half-day Head Start program, and may start kindergarten in the fall (Cartwright, 1995: 26).

Michael's "happiness" and "flourishing" are attributed to his mother's strength. More specifically, they are presented as direct results of Barnhart's willingness to get off her "emotional roller coaster" and put the negativity of "grief and disappointment behind her" and dive headfirst into parenting a child with disabilities. To emphasize this point, the author closes with the following paragraph:

> JoEllen says her strength comes from her children. When Michael was born, she wrote in her journal that if she was sad or tired, all she needed to do was look into his eyes. "When his little hands wrap around my fingers," she wrote, "I feel I can move mountains" (Cartwright, 1995: 26).

In addition, the article emphasizes maternal sacrifice while it celebrates Barnhart's ability to balance work and parenting. Readers learn of a working mother who is determined in a seemingly super-human way. When her second son, Andrew, was born, "the room fell silent. I couldn't see my baby, but I could see the looks, and tears, on everyone's faces" (Cartwright ,1995: 25). Barnhart's seemingly composed reaction to the situation is described in the following way, "In her usual style, she researched Andrew's condition thoroughly, asking countless questions so she could help her son get the best possible care" (26). While engaged in these tasks, Barnhart also remained devoted to her professional life, developing a childcare center for the college's students and employees, an element which she believes will "increase access to education" in the community (26). Through its focus on these specific aspects of Barnhart's personal and professional lives, the article leaves little doubt that she will continue to conquer whatever challenges may lie ahead of her. Indeed, she is the magazine's quintessential working mother—professional, successful in both work and family life, and selfless in her devotion to her children.

While emphasis on selflessness is standard fare for the annual "Working Mother of the Year" issues, this theme is prevalent throughout all issues of the magazine, including articles that focus explicitly on maternal emotion. Serious consideration of this aspect of maternal experience, however, is quickly dismissed as mothers are instructed to turn their attention to the emotions of their children. As a result, maternal emotions are dismissed as peripheral. Not surprisingly, mothers are offered "quick fixes" to help them get over their own feelings, maintain a "selfless" attitude, and get on to what should be their real focus—their children.

Articles typically conform to what Helena Michie and Naomi R. Cahn

have described as a simple "problem - advice – resolution" format common to parenting texts (1997). In this genre, authors address a particular issue that a working mother might face and offer specific, often expert, advice on what to do. As with all advice-oriented texts, the reader is tacitly assured that following the advice will ensure a successful resolution. For example, in her article, "The Juggling Act," author Dana Friedman (1997) addresses the problem of evaluating a job-share partner. Friedman first defines the problem: "How do you evaluate a job-sharing partner?" (11) Next, she offers expert advice: a list of "traits and qualities to consider" when evaluating a potential partner (11). Finally, Friedman assures readers that if her advice if followed, a suitable job-sharing partner will be found. While this particular article relates to work, the pattern is evident throughout the magazine and includes not only work-related articles, but also those regarding family, personal time, and food.

This pattern, as well as an emphasis on maternal selflessness through the writing off of maternal emotions, is illustrated in Julia Martin's 1999 article, "I Like Daddy Best." Martin explores the favoritism that children often express toward one parent. Claiming authority through her own experience as a mother, Martin recounts the first year of her daughter's life and says that she "bonded in a big way" (50) with Tess. However, the child would cry whenever her father, a business executive who worked long hours and was seldom home, came near her. As a result, Martin was responsible for the majority of the parenting and child care responsibilities. She says this situation made her feel "frustrated ... (and) I also found that Tess could seem like a pint-size tyrant when I needed a break. When I was home, she always wanted me—and only me" (50). Despite this problem, Martin assures the reader that there is a happy ending to this tale. At present, she says, Tess enjoys a close relationship with her father, "and I'm the one who feels slighted" (50).

Although the essay begins with the recognition of two so-called "negative" maternal emotions—frustration and jealousy—Martin quickly shifts from her own feelings to those of her daughter, and struggles to understand why Tess exhibits favoritism. In doing so, she dismisses her own emotions and, relying on the "expert" opinion of Carole W. Morgan, Los Angeles psychologist and psychoanalyst (Martin, 1999: 52), advises other mothers to do the same. The resulting message is that "good" mothers deny their own emotions and focus, instead, on the emotional well being of their children.

While "negative" maternal emotions are dismissed in some articles, others erase the very idea of them as they focus on "good" mothering. For example, Jacquelyn Mitchard, author of *The Deep End of the Ocean*, emphasizes motherhood as an always and entirely rewarding experience in her article, "Each Day's Joy" (1998/1999). Reflecting on her relationship with her own mother and what it taught her, Mitchard advises readers to "find the jewel in the ordinary clay" (56) of daily life and appreciate simple things. To gain this sense of appreciation, according to Mitchard, mothers must slow down long enough to enjoy "light traffic, spaghetti for dinner, a good book waiting upstairs ... the

look of the sky before a storm. Getting all the laundry done" (56). Adopting this philosophy, she says, has allowed her to maintain a positive outlook, for "even (during) the blackest periods of my life, there always was the chance that something could turn out interesting—tomorrow" (56).

Mitchard's article is joined by a companion piece, "Count Your Blessings" (1998/1999), written by Senior Editor Catherine Cartwright. Examining the infant, toddler, and preschool stages, this collection of testimonies indicates that the small things in everyday life are what (should) mean the most. These small things, of course, are children, little blessings that "have the wonderful ability to comfort us when we're feeling down" (58), and teach "how to enjoy life and try new things" (60), thereby overshadowing even the possibility of negative emotions. One mother tells how "a hectic workday would fade into the background as my son and I shared those precious moments alone in the rocking chair" (57). Another says that if she started feeling down, all it took was one moment with her child to "make the blues vanish" (58). Emphasizing the positive emotional aspects of motherhood, Cartwright closes with the unambivalent words of one mother: "I wish I had known having a child would be so wonderful! I would have done it a long time ago!" (60).

Two things are particularly noteworthy here. First, Mitchard (1998/1999) idealizes the experience of mothering without recognizing that mothering activities, duties, and responsibilities have the potential to lead to frustration, anger, and other "negative" emotions. For example, even though laundry is a daunting task for many that requires hours of labor, typically by women (Hochschild, 1989), Mitchard presents it as an entirely pleasurable activity. And mothers, like "cheerful robots" (Mills, 1959: 171) are expected to find joy in completing this task. Second, the mother-child relationship is portrayed as always-loving, never angry, selfish, or frustrated. In fact, the only pressures mothers face according to these articles originate *outside* the mother-child relationship. This treatment denies the existence of "negative" emotions a mother might experience as a result of her mothering responsibilities and, in doing so, again emphasizes the all-loving maternal ideal.

While the above articles implicitly regard "negative" maternal feelings as irrelevent, others explicitly condemn mothers for daring to express these maternal emotions. Yet again, the mental health and emotions of the mother are less important than the negative influence those feelings are thought to have on the child. In her article, "Depressed Moms, Depressed Newborns" (1998), Sarah Hutter warns, "A bad case of the blues during your pregnancy may also be bad for your baby" (54). Citing a recent child-development study, Hutter describes how elevated stress hormones during pregnancy can lead to infants who "show little facial expression and exhibit other depressive symptoms such as loss of appetite and sleep. Untreated, these newborns can grow into depressed infants" (54). While Hutter does advise mothers to see a therapist to deal with depression, her concern here is not with the well-being of the mother but, instead, that of the child. She suggests mothers learn infant massage to help

ensure their child's well-being (54). Mothers who do not "deal with" their depression (54), it seems, are "bad" mothers whose emotions can result in irreparable harm to their children.

Many articles, however, focus solely on the feelings of children and do not consider maternal emotions at all. In "A New Twist on Tears" (1999), Mary Ellen Mengucci tells mothers that rather than being alarmed and frightened by a child who won't stop crying, they should recognize it as a normal way to express emotion. She advises:

> The best way to soothe a sobbing child may be simply to let her cry, while holding her and letting her know you love her. That's because crying is actually a healthy and normal way for kids—even infants to relieve stress. Of course, a little one's tears may signal physical pain or an immediate need such as hunger. But tears may also mean a child is angry or upset and needs to blow off a little steam. If parents can begin to look at crying as a stress release mechanism that allows children to heal from the effects of a frustrating day, fearful moment, or difficult situation, they'll see a variety of benefits (42).

Here, mothers are instructed that crying is a normal, healthy expression of human emotions. This position seems particularly ironic coming from the same magazine that advises mothers to simply "deal with" their own depression lest they somehow damage their children.

As I was writing this article and heading toward the conclusion, a student brought me a tape of the September 17, 2002, episode of the *Oprah Winfrey Show*. It was called, "What Your Mother Never told you About Motherhood." Focusing on myths of motherhood, the episode sought to "break the silence" about so-called negative maternal emotions in order to let viewers know that they were "not alone" in experiencing these feelings. The show generated so much response—nearly 20 times that of any other episode in the show's 17 year history—that the producers responded with not one but *two* follow-up episodes.[5] While some viewers empathized with those who expressed frustration, anger, jealousy, and similar emotions, many others vilified and condemned them for daring to expose such feelings. In both cases, respondents demonstrated fluency in cultural definitions of "good" and "bad" motherhood.

These responses indicate how heavily invested the American public is in motherhood as a political issue. They also illustrate the pervasiveness of the ideal of the "good" mother while simultaneously revealing the risk women take if they dare suggest motherhood is anything but emotionally rewarding. Furthermore, they are a clear indication of the power of cultural representations of the mythical "good" mother, such as those analyzed in this essay. If feminists are serious about challenging these cultural myths, we must continue to identify and interrogate the variety of cultural sources that contribute to them. We must also identify and discuss sources that challenge them. Both are fundamental in

the move toward a different kind of society: one in which mothers are supported as they articulate a full range of emotions and where "mother-blame" and the resulting "mother-guilt" (Eyer, 1996) are but distant memories.

[1]I do not believe these or similar maternal emotions are "negative." However, they are most often characterized as such. Thus, I use "negative" for lack of a more accurate term.

[2] Emphasis mine.

[3] For example, see the October 1997 special issue. This particular cover heralds the results of the twelfth annual survey, "100 Best Companies for Working Mothers" and does not include a cover mom. Similarly, the June 1999 collector's edition, celebrates the magazine's twentieth anniversary. It does not include a cover mom.

[4] In her article, "The Bonding Myth," Shelton (1999) discusses how cultural ideals of the mother-child bond often lead to intense feelings of guilt among mothers who regard themselves as "bad" when returning to work after the birth of a child. Holcomb's (1995) article, "Working Mothers of Trial," addresses how cultural ideals regarding the "good" mother often result in the unfair judgment of working mothers during custody disputes.

[5] The first follow-up, "What Mothers Honestly Think About Motherhood," originally aired October 8, 2002. It was followed on October 17, 2002, by, "More Mothers on Motherhood."

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Renee Norman

Travel

It hardly seemed worth all the bother, but still she checked the time when she woke, tired from another night of wakeful, thought-full sleep, and insisted that they all rise, dress appropriately and hurry down to another rushed, cold-cereal breakfast.

Rushed so they would be ready in good time: teeth brushed, hair brushed, lunches in hand, boots and raincoats donned, umbrellas open, rushing down the driveway past two perfectly presentable and working vehicles to walk the path in a relentless downpour.

Hurry up, please, girls! Why don't you wear pants, it's raining heavily?
Oh, do we have to? I hate wearing pants. I want to wear a dress.
Fine, but you'll have to wear tights.
Oh, I hate putting tights on! Will you do it for me?
No, I hate putting tights on, too, and I have to do the baby's.
She's not a baby anymore, you know.
She is to me and so are you.
Then put my tights on, too!
Ha! Clever! You can always wear pants like I suggested, you know.
See you downstairs in five minutes flat, dressed, please.
I don't know why we have to walk, anyway, nobody else does, it's dumb, and look at all that dumb rain.

At first such protests by the children had been vociferous and relentless on the wettest days. They were tired, they protested, couldn't they just be driven to school, there wasn't enough time to play before it was time to leave, and so on...

But she persisted, driven by some unconscious need to prove to them that there was another way to travel, that there was a whole life outside that they would never know about if they didn't walk it, see it close up, feel it in the wet downpour which threatened to soak them through their nylon coats and umbrellas.

The sunny days were never a problem. It was easier to wake in the sun-filled rooms and the children were eager to slip light shoes on their feet and bask in the comforting sunlight which countered even the most biting cold or wind. Those days they counted themselves lucky to rush past the neighbouring houses on the crescent, up the walkway to the stairs which led to the path in the woods—with thick, dense forest brush on one side, where bears were sometimes known to come foraging for food, and polite, clean-looking townhouses uniformly arranged on the other side. Leaving those townhouses far behind, they followed the trampled weeds of their favorite shortcut through the woods, the surrounding brush lush with pussywillows and hot pink salmonberry flowers in early spring. Through this forest trail they would walk, eventually scaling a rocky, earth-filled hill which led them to the pedestrian light across a busy street, continuing up another hill where they breathed and coughed and sputtered in the exhaust fumes of cars speeding by much too fast. Then they turned past the corner gas station and car wash—which always halted their journey if there was a car being washed. They loved watching the large blue mops spitting soap suds and water in a wet dog-haired spun frenzy. Up the parking lot of a large apartment building they would continue, where they had to be cautious of the occasional car bursting unseen out of the cave of the underground garage. Then they strode across the church parking lot where the preschool teacher's maroon van was always parked, up one final street of newish, pink-stuccoed houses. Finally, they picked their way through the gravel-filled schoolmade walkway between a canopy of overgrown undergrowth and across the top field of the schoolground to their ultimate destination.

They had discovered much on these foot adventures, which she felt certain they would have missed if they joined the others barrelling past (often waving to them or offering them a ride which they declined) in familiar, popular cars. They now knew the names of many colorful flowers, found earthworms and snails and odd-shaped rocks. They lunged for and fought over lucky pennies, or nickels, and once, a quarter. They had taken home for washing the lost bounty of dropped childhood treasures: pretty hair barrettes, small, flat plastic dolls once part of some dollhouse or other, a small, red-striped doll dress, and other finds.

Look, Mommy! I found a lucky penny! That's the third one I've found so far.
I'll give it to you, Mommy, for all of us to share, but you
keep it in your pocket and don't take it out ever, all right?

A little plastic doll! Can I take it home and keep it, please, please?

I'll make little clothes for it out of construction paper and a kleenex bed, and can I maybe use a washcloth, too, Mommy? Oh, isn't she sweet? If you look really carefully, you can see she has little eyes under all the dirt.

No, you can't have it just because you're the youngest, right, Mommy? I found it. Finders, keepers, losers, weepers. Oh, stop crying, I'll let you have a turn, but *not* until I have first, okay?

So it began that eventually when they reached their destination, whether their journey had been smoothly sun-warmed or intrepidly rain-pelted or even beautifully snow-drifted, they felt some inner sense of accomplishment, confirmed by the satisfied looks on their faces, the refusal to even consider some alternative mode of transport, the disappointment when occasional illness prevented them from setting out upon their daily adventure.

One gray mist-enshrouded morning, she woke with a sense of foreboding, a presentiment that no matter what, she should change the rules and not allow any departure by foot, and she quietly mentioned this to the children.

I think we should consider scrapping our walk today, and just go by car.

The noisy protests weakened any resolve arising out of her inexplicable fears.

That's not fair! You said we *had* to walk, no matter what the weather. We want to do it, we'll just take umbrellas. You're the one who always says not to back down from things when they seem a little hard. We *like* to walk, it's fun.

"All right then," she replied, defenceless against their righteous onslaught. "Dress quickly, and come down for breakfast."

But as she poured that morning's choice of dry cereal into brightly coloured plastic bowls, she could not shake the feeling that there was something terribly wrong, that she should just insist they all stay home.

By the time everyone assembled for their usual cold-touched, warm-voiced morning meal, she felt she was powerless to prevent the day from proceeding as usual, just as she had implemented and structured it not so long ago, following instincts that at the time had been strong in her and true.

As they trooped up the street to the walkway which led to the forest, chattering happily about the purple and white crocuses, warning each other boisterously to avoid the dog poo, she tried to shake off the sense of doom and gloom which was so strong it was a presence walking nonchalantly right along with her family, sidestepping the dog droppings.

Everything seemed normal. It was another rain-encased day, and their colorful, closely held array of umbrellas accidentally bumped and brushed the

water off the hanging branches of cherry blossom trees. The umbrellas seemed like little colored parachute-shaped bumper cars driving haphazardly up the roadway of plants and flowers that lined their course.

By the time they scaled the walkway stairs and arrived at the foot of the woods, her breathing was quick and panicky, and the force of the rain seemed to quicken with each new puff and pant. She scrutinized the woods through the raindrops blinding her view, dripping off her glasses. A wind blew up, and they all concentrated on holding on to the blowing umbrellas. The pelt of the rain intensified, and her children giggled, delighting in being blown along by the wind and rain.

Look, Mommy, my umbrella's turning inside outside and I can hardly hold it any—

A strong gust carried the ruined umbrella off, and the cries of delight changed to dismay, and tears.

Oh, no! Oh, no! It's blowing away!

Before she could even bend to console that disappearing umbrella's small owner, or offer the shelter of her own apparatus, the rest of all their umbrellas flipped their spokes upward like crazed flowering creatures, and an even stronger gust blew them off, one, two, three...

Now all of the children were crying, and getting very much wetter with the force of the buffeting wind and the pounding downpour. She quickly decided they should turn around and head for home, as they were all far too drenched to even consider completing the walk to school, and this time there were no noisy protests at her suggestion. But they could not find the walkway stairs, even though they had just entered the woods up those stairs only moments ago.

Panicked, she tried to seem calm, so as not to alarm the children, but they immediately sensed her concern and pinpointed its cause.

Mommy, where's the walkway? It should be here, shouldn't it?
It doesn't quite look the same. How will we get home?

She quickly allayed their fears, fighting her own rising sense of dismay, saying that they would simply find another way out of the woods, up by the end of the path toward the pedestrian light.

She turned and guided her small troop towards the direction of the busy street which signalled the end of the footworn path in the woods. They briskly quickened their pace in anticipation of the sight of the cars speeding by the road as seen through the spaces in the overhanging tree branches.

They marched on, wet and disheartened by the ceaseless rain and wind, the children soaked through and crying loudly now, and she knew that they should

have reached that light by now, were walking on and on far too long, but said nothing, silent and growing more alarmed.

The children's wails grew louder, longer, siren-like, blending into one long sustained minor note whose sound was held by a foot on a loud pedal, an eerie, other-worldly sound in the pummelling rain of the forest. Suddenly the children's forms rose in the air like their blown-away umbrellas, and coats flying up like the fabric on the upside-down spokes of those broken umbrellas, their small bodies drifted upward.

Horrified, she stood frozen for several seconds, rooted to the ground like one of the old trees of the forest, watching dazed as her children seemed to float away. A flood of energy surged through her, maternal instinct maneuvering her into motion, and she desperately clutched at the little feet rising higher and higher in the air. With that chorus of high-pitched cries ringing unmistakably in her ears, she clawed at air, and her hands sliced through no substance at all, the children a hallucinatory vision of small legs and flapping coats and waving arms, dear little balloon faces recognizable from within the centre of each wafting image. As suddenly as their ascent began, the children's forms (or, what she had believed to be the children) disappeared from view, the caterwauling wails winding down to one last despondent note cut off in mid-stream.

The rain stopped abruptly. A great silence punctuated the forest floor with its exclamation of possibility. The sun shone through the leaves of the dripping tree branches. Puffs of rising, smoky drying air rose from flattened treetrunk stumps scattered here and there throughout the woods. She felt warmed by the sun filtering through the foliage.

It was then that she began to understand, and feeling relieved that the children were actually quite safe, warm, and dry, knowing that the ordinary morning ministrations were very likely being continued right at this very moment somehow, she relaxed somewhat and began to enjoy being by herself in the woods.

Soon her clothes began to feel less sopping wet and simply cool and soft upon her skin. She breathed in the worm-scented, pinecone air and closed her eyes, standing quite still for a few seconds, contemplating.

She sensed that her next move when she opened her eyes would bring her to some trail which led out of the woods, but stalling, she delayed, and instead, lifted her face, eyes still closed, to feel the warming air lick her face.

When she opened her eyes at last, she was not the least surprised to see the concrete walkway stairs, full of small puddles leftover from the downpour. She lingered for a minute longer, secure in the thought that these sturdy stairs descended to the walkway and eventually would lead her home when she was ready. She perceived that they would be there even if not in full view, even if she chose to descend them later, even if she decided to explore on her own some more and stroll in the forest.

Feeling confident, alive, and very much in control of herself, she walked past the walkway stairs in another direction, towards the deepest growth of the

forest, eschewing the pedestrian light and busy street which was at the opposite end of the woods' path. Delighting in this unexpected turn of events, she continued her travel, walking, seeing a whole outdoor life close up, feeling it with her clearheaded senses, relishing her solitude. She did not even look backwards once at the vanishing walkway, knowing she could find it again easily when it was time, understanding and accepting her own adventure in time, her earlier sense of fear and foreboding evaporating as hastily as the rain had stopped.

In the distance several small umbrellas lay turned inside out, ruined, their parachute colors streaked with ribbons of still-wet material.

Diana L. Haleman

Old Photograph

Pictures capture faces like words capture thoughts,
Scraps of paper holding fragments of time.
Your eyes piercing blue, my dress flowered and lace-trimmed.
One kiss among thousands captured forever in ink on paper.
Where do moments go?
Do kisses disappear somewhere between a mother's lips and her baby's hair?
How could I kiss an infant then and turn around and kiss a nineteen-year old
With just a breath between?

Leslie Reid

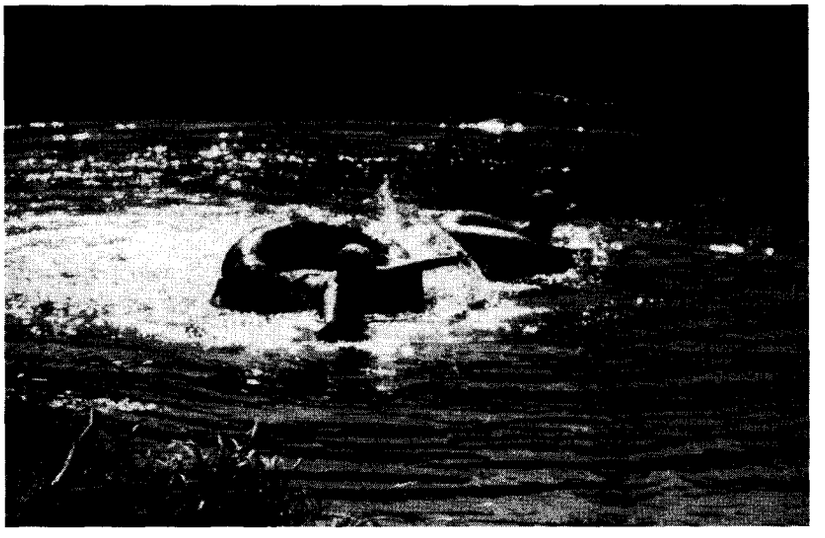
Afterimage
A Photographic Journal of Making Art and Mothering Teens

For the past few years in my work as an artist and photographer, I have been looking at issues of motherhood and in particular maternal ambivalence. I turned to these ideas at a time when my two sons were getting a little older—a time when I finally felt confident enough to look at my life as a mother in my art. In their early childhood, I had little energy, less confidence, and even less desire to think about motherhood as an issue in my work—any work at all was a major achievement—and I clung to the belief that my art had not changed just because I was a mother. I lived through a long period of denial and self-censorship in my work.

Many of our difficulties in addressing our roles as mothers stem from the fact that we are, not surprisingly, fearful of the deep and unspoken ambivalence we experience as mothers. We fear also the effects, both private and public, of our acknowledgment of this ambivalence. As well, the discipline of visual arts does not particularly encourage such an exploration. For artists, the representation of motherhood is difficult as it is coloured by its association with essentialism, sentiment, and autobiography. My exploration of maternal ambivalence in my work began with a serendipitous moment of revelation while sorting through family photographs—snapshots, really—and led to an urgent desire to examine my reluctance to dig into the center of my life—digging into the wreck, as Adrienne Rich (1986) calls it.

I have always used photographs as source material for my painting but consciously eliminated all reference to my maternal life in work that dealt with physical, perceptual, and psychic effects of light. It was photographs of my two sons swimming in a pond—a pond image used in many un-peopled paintings—that triggered my recognition of the need to turn to my motherhood as a focus in my work. The intensity of my response to these photographs took me

Leslie Reid, "Cantley VI," 1993, 56" x 85", oil on canvas.



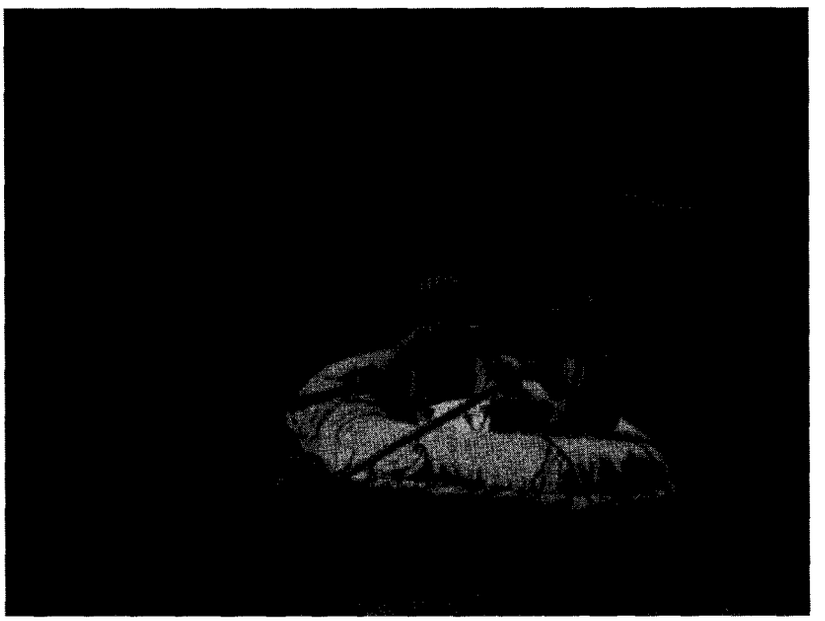
Leslie Reid, "Cantley VI," 8" x 12", Cibachrome.

by surprise. They revealed the darker side of my connectedness to my sons, one of anxiety and dread, and a recognition of both external and internal danger, and led me to explore maternal ambivalence as subject in my art.

In the photographs of the children these ambiguities are evidenced by shadow and by absence—my absence. The figures are often held transfixed in rings of water; faces are obscured, lost in patterns of light and shade. Connec-

tion seems tenuous at best, fragile and threatened—I am present only as watcher. Subdued colour, low tonality and a flattened unknowable space heighten this sense of anxiety. The photographs are more direct in their depiction of motherhood and ambivalence; the paintings developed from them are subtle and somewhat destabilizing.

The idea of afterimage comes from thinking about the positive and negative, light and shadow character of mothering, how these qualities are



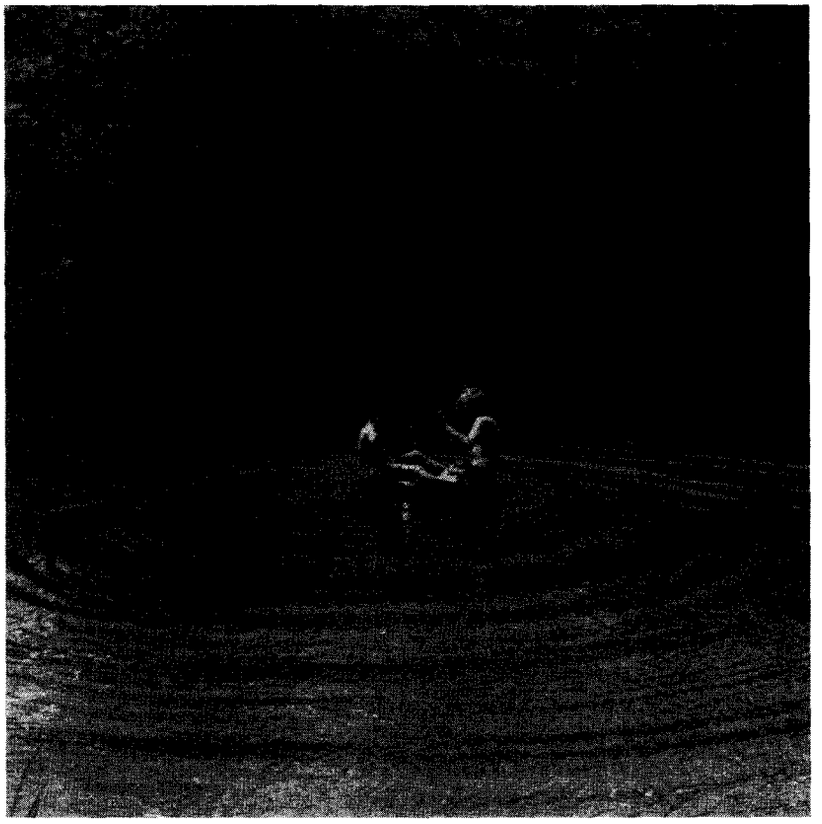
Leslie Reid, "Cantley XII," 1995, 24" x 36", oil on canvas.

exacerbated in mothering teens, and the parallels in the light/dark qualities of my work that has always referenced the positive/negative of the photograph as a continuing metaphor. As my sons grow closer to adulthood, my perceptions of them, of myself, of our constantly shifting and often-fraught relationship have, of necessity, changed, and are moving into and transforming the paintings. The distancing devices I had found necessary in earlier works with the children—were they defenses against fear and foreboding?—have begun to dissolve, and I am looking more directly at the tangled child/parent/adult image. The narrative, like the boys themselves, is becoming more assertive. Often conflicting perceptions of our changing roles are bringing new emotions to the surface, appearing, almost literally at times, in the images of my sons and the ponds and rivers that occur repeatedly in my work

I am now dealing with these new concerns—the challenges and perils of making art about mothering teens—and the seeming impossibility of seizing

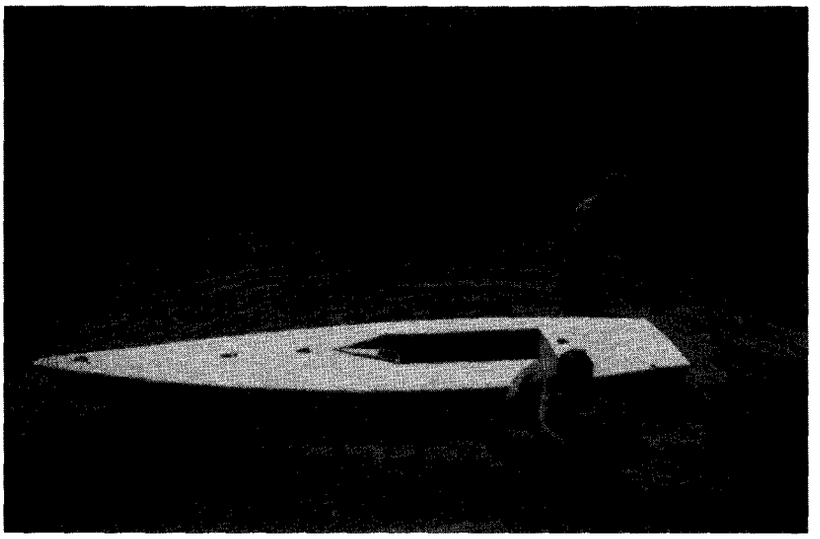
this time, in my life and in my work. I am contemplating the necessity and the resistance encountered in trying to capture the chaotic feelings of release and regret that accompany this time—this period of breaking away and letting go, of stepping back as I continue to reach out a hand. My older son is now 18 years old and a self-declared, legally independent, adult male, although clean socks and a full refrigerator are still issues. I'm still on call.

I have been reliant on my family photographs for painting and drawing for years now. They are a source of reflection and investigation of my changing experience of motherhood and maternal ambivalence. Now there are so few



Leslie Reid, "Cantley XIV," 8" x 8", Cibachrome.

photo opportunities. The boys are more resistant—hardly unusual but so significant for me and my watchfulness. It is harder to mark my presence and absence, my ambivalent feelings about the whole enterprise of mothering. I feel a poignant regret, much stronger than I had anticipated, at this turning point in our lives as mother and sons. I am facing testosterone-driven individuation which, unlike that of infancy, seems to be happening without me, or without



Leslie Reid, "Cantley: Hurricane," 1998, 48" x 72", oil on canvas.

Leslie Reid, "Cantley: Spiral," 1998, 8" x 12", chromogenic print.

my influence on how, when, and where it occurs. And it's gathering noisy momentum. I am becoming someone other.

Are these changing relationships affecting my work? It seems harder to deal with than I expected. Perhaps it is because I am living the changes even as I paint and write. My mothering role is more tenuous and contingent than ever as a result of their growing separation from me—and so is my presence as artist.

Leslie Reid, "Calumet: Dive," 2002, 8" x 12", chromogenic print.

Leslie Reid, "Calumet: Splash," 2002, 8" x 12", chromogenic print.

Can I continue to work with these issues of maternal ambivalence as the relationship changes so dramatically? My work now seems coloured by a longing for a time available only in memory. The present asserts itself with harsh insistence. Their startlingly deep voices and large bodies fill the house.

I am more and more the watcher, a presence less visible. This has created a disturbing shift in my work. I seem to be editing my mothering relationship

out of the visual field in so many ways. Not only do we aging mothers of adolescents become invisible, we are supposed to accept this as inevitable and desirable.

No one can truly describe the extraordinary rush of emotion that comes with birth; equally, none of the stories I heard prepared me for the teenage individuation mothering experience. I find myself resisting while dealing with great need, impatience, hostility, grandiosity.

I am searching for the parallels in my work

Leslie Reid, "Calumet: Salute," 2002, 8" x 12", chromogenic print.

I have found little to dispel my growing discomfort at the seeming inevitably of my disappearance. Not only am I destined to bow out or be pushed out, but I will be viewed as the all-engulfing monster no matter what I do. The psychoanalytic literature is not very encouraging for mothers of teens. (Even Freud chose to ignore mothers and teens. I think he had an eye on his career.)

Teens are everywhere in the culture—driving it in many areas such as in music, film, video, fashion—and I watch helplessly the consumerisation of an entire age group. Yet, other than teen-management and tough-love help books (which don't seem to help anyway) it is hard to find a serious study of what is arguably the most turbulent and contradictory period of our mothering lives.

Delving into issues of maternal ambivalence in my painting was intensely affirming when dealing with my sons when they were younger, but as our relationship shifts, the ambivalence as I explored it in those works has also shifted, and absence has taken on a very different meaning.

It has become even more urgent to locate myself in my work.

How does this conflicted period translate into work? Much to my chagrin, with as great difficulty as the relationships themselves. I had optimistically

assumed that I could at least hold my own, hang onto what was properly mine—my work. But the struggles of adolescent individuation and teenage separation have accompanied me to the studio, and their images, once viewed more innocently, now seem taunting, challenging—hold onto us if you can.

We grieve as mothers because we know that however loving and close our relationships have been, our sons—and our daughters—are encouraged to discard us, and we let go. Finding the threads that still connect if not bind, before the inevitable feelings of "too late" set in, has become an issue in my work.

Am I moving towards memory or am I already there?

A student once asked me what I would do as my children got older. Would I be doing paintings of my 22-year-old children or would I endlessly rifle through the baby snapshots and relive the past. It was a difficult but reasonable question and one that I now ask myself as my sons at age 18 and 15 are grown up, somewhat allergic to cameras, and never home.

But, of course, my paintings are not a study of them; they are about the critical space of the mother-child relationship. Art about children moves in and out of fashion, but art about the mothering experience has not had much positive critical attention—when it has attracted any notice at all.

I have been sensitive to my sons' reactions to being used so publicly, and while they expressed a certain shy reservation at the outset, though their identities are not obvious, I think that, as well as being reassured that they appear anonymously, they have become increasingly quite taken by the idea of their inclusion in my work—a connection that has taken on significant meaning for them. (They have also mentioned modeling fees.)

At the same time, even as our relationship is intrinsic to my work, the work is separate from them. It is my accomplishment that is visible, and this has the added value, as Babette Smith (1995) has noted, of allowing them to view my accomplishments apart from themselves, unrelated to raising them, and they can thus avoid the ambivalence of assessing my success in raising them.

It is critical for me to acknowledge my lived experience as mother in my work as painter. Acknowledgement of that experience is essential to the understanding of why art is made at all. As for my teenagers and me, I know our relationship will endure, altered but ongoing. Perhaps it will exist as what anthropologist Sarah Hrdy (1999) has likened to a phantom limb.

It is up to us as mothers to reclaim connection, and in the new paintings of transition, it is that connectedness, mercurial, paradoxical and essential, that I will continue to explore.

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Joyce Harries

How to Leave Mothering

You can't
when all of a sudden
your children age
you've stopped buying
baby powder pablum diapers
you've stopped folding piles of bluejeans
and listening for teenage nighttime footsteps

Bite your tongue
you can't say you forgot your mittens your homework your manners

Only think of the sweet smell of a tiny baby fresh bathed pajama-clad bodies
reading aloud giggles from tickling goodnight kisses
think of a door bursting open "I'm home I've brought a friend any cookies?"
think of their glowing faces after they jumped in a jolly jumper first drank through a straw
printed their name hammered a nail skipped bounced a ball played Twinkle Twinkle
Little Star on the piano rode a wobbling two-wheeler watched fireworks made Rice Krispie squares put a pony over a jump emerged from puberty played old maid
monopoly poker got their drivers license went on their first date graduated from high school from university married gave you grandchildren

Quote anything correctly to them shorten your stories don't talk about *your* life unless you've been robbed taken to the hospital won a lottery or award preface statements with "dear"

Think about Christmas when they were young how tired you were bite your tongue in daughters' or sons' kitchens where turkey is still turkey on someone else's platter

Think of those late night talks at the kitchen table with tea and cookies when *they* asked *your* advice now *they* dispense it bite your tongue smile and thank them

Remember measles chicken-pox band aids crutches vomit diarrhea earaches hospital emergency line ups but remember rocking humming stroking patting laughter joy

You still can visit give them jars of homemake soup marmalade flowers and books worry about them love them their spouses and children

and bite your tongue

This poem was written after reading "How to Leave Saskatchewan" by Ruth Anderson Donovan

Caitlin Hewitt-White

The Stepmother in the Grimms' *Children's and Household Tales*

> No German childhood without fairy tales; no folk-specific and racial education without them!
>
> —from *The Application of Racial-Political Teaching* (a teacher's manual published in Leipzig, Germany in 1938, qtd. in Bottigheimer, 1987: 22)

Fairytales tell us that women are good only when they are beautiful, hard-working, submissive, and naïve. Women often find themselves in difficult predicaments—locked in a tower, banished from the home, or lost in a forest—only to be rescued, usually by royal men who want to marry them. The evildoers who make life difficult for them in the first place are usually strange old women, witches, stepmothers, or some combination thereof.

The figure of the stepmother has been commented on within academic studies of children's literature, yet these comments seem to focus on her gender alone. This essay is an attempt to overview some ways in which the stepmother is racialized in Jacob and Wilhelm Grimms' *Kinder- und Hausmarchen. (Children's and Household Tales) (CHT).*[1] I write this essay as a white non-Jewish woman who is interested in questioning interlocking binary constructions, especially in child-oriented cultural media that educators and parents often treat as benign.[2]

I build upon the Grimms scholarship of Ruth B. Bottigheimer (1987), John M. Ellis (1983), and Maria Tatar (1985) to show how the stepmother can be read as a convergence point for the Grimms' historically situated anxieties about an imaginary threat against the family and nation. The stepmother represents feared social forces that threaten to destabilize imaginary family and national bonds established through an ideology of biological sameness. She is

a feminized and racialized Other constructed through misogynist and anti-Semitic stereotypes. I offer a framework within which *CHT* can be read and provide some examples of how I have read the stepmother in some of the tales.

German nationalism and anti-Semitism

The Grimms maintained that their stories were pure expressions of German culture, collected directly from the mouths of authentic German peasants, free of "whatever might be suspect, i.e. what might be of foreign origin" (qtd. in Ellis, 1983: 92). The "authenticity" of this German culture (or of anything for that matter) is deeply disputable in many ways, only two of which I will discuss here. First, the Grimms were committed to the German romantic nationalist project that aimed to construct a central German identity by racializing Others. Secondly, the Grimms were committed to a moralistic valorization of the biological family—a unit of sameness and belonging that can be understood as a microcosm of the nation.

The Grimms wrote *CHT* at a time when the Atlantic slave trade was at its height and what Paul Gilroy calls "raciology" had already been established (2000: 58). Hatred of Jewish people as a primarily religious group was transforming into anti-Semitism—hatred of Jewish people as a primarily "racial" group (Jakobowicz, 1992: 22). The relationships between slavery, colonialism, nationalism, and anti-Semitism are of course too complex to address here, but I will attempt to note some basic interconnections. Nation-building in Europe and in the colonies relied upon both wealth reaped from slavery and colonization, and the raciological philosophies elucidated by enlightenment intellectuals in order to rationalize white domination. Nation-hood was materially and conceptually fashioned out of the exclusion of enslaved Africans from white nations, cultures, and political spheres (Gilroy, 2000: 54-96). Black agency and resistance brought about the loss of benefits gained through slavery and colonization. One way of guarding against such rebellion (and support for it) was to justify white domination by racializing enslaved people: ideologically constructing their skin colour as an indicator of physiological subhumanity, deviance, and inferiority in opposition to the constructed superiority of the whiteness of slavery and colonization's beneficiaries (Gilroy, 2000: 58). Raciology of course did not only target Black people: it served to constitute and reconstitute entire social hierarchies of race according to changing hegemonic interests.[3] In early nineteenth-century Europe, it was in the hegemonic interest of building a Christian German nation that Jewishness became racialized as a *biologically* determined Otherness in opposition to what was assumed to be standard whiteness. Increasingly, Jewish Otherness was located in the blood—not so much in Jewish culture or faith, both of which could be theoretically renounced through assimilation or conversion.

Jewish people in Europe first achieved formal equal rights with the French Edicts of 1792; most European states gradually followed suit thereafter

(Arendt, 1979: 11; Jakobowicz, 1992: 19-20). These first steps towards legal emancipation were met with violent resistance. When the German states came under the control of Napolean in 1806, non-Jewish Germans received Jewish legal emancipation as another Napoleanic imposition of (alien) French values. Reactionary anti-Semitic violence was part of a larger movement to unify disparate Germanic territories under the banner of "nationhood." German romantic nationalism—rediscovering, preserving, and producing "purely" German cultural projects—had begun in the last half of the eighteenth century. It gained momentum, in part, as a form of resistance to Napolean and all the "alien" political and economic conditions associated with him—liberalism, steps towards formal equal rights for Jewish people, and capitalism (Almog, 1990: 13-14; Ellis, 1983: 3). The Grimms actively participated in romantic nationalist projects, including but not limited to their work with German fairytales and legends (Ellis, 1983: 100).[4]

German romantic nationalism helped mobilize older Christian myths about the Jewish person as a dark eternal outsider within new social conditions for the continuous purpose of deflecting attention away from actual causes of economic strife and loss of power amongst white Christian Germans. The centuries-old persecution of Jewish people in Europe was overtly Christian and in part rested upon interpretations of Biblical passages in which Jewish people were read as closely associated with the devil, the murder of Christians, and generally all evil (Trachtenberg, 1983: 20-49). The stereotypical "Wandering Jew" of Christian myth, punished for the murder of Jesus and the crime of Judas, never to be at home anywhere in the world, appears continually in various European literary and popular cultures (Felsenstein, 1995: 32-36, 62, 92).

In the Grimms' era, popular opinion—especially the opinion of anti-Semitic nationalist intellectuals with whom the Grimms socialized—falsely associated both capitalism and liberalism with an imaginary Jewish conspiracy. Over the centuries, the economic survival of Jewish people in Europe had been relegated and restricted to the margins of the official economy as they had been banned from settling, farming, or entering professions. Some Jewish people engaged in money-lending, sometimes providing credit to monarchs and nobles during the Middle Ages. In return they were granted precarious protections as a vulnerable "nation within a nation" (Jakobowicz, 1992: 21; Arendt, 1979: 11, 14). As legal emancipation eroded these protections, the Middle Age myth of Jewish people as usurers became reconfigured as the stereotype of Jewish people as capitalists. They became blamed for spreading economic inequalities under early capitalism, associated by reactionary forces with the same universalist liberal-democratic changes that had granted Jewish people formal equal rights (Jakobowicz, 1992: 8, 19). They also became associated with another universalist political formation that was seen as a threat to the nation: socialism. Jewish assimilation was caught up in a contradictory double stereotype. Jewish people were seen as either too Jewish or strayed too far from their permissable cultural grounds; either international capitalists or

internationalist socialists (in either case bent on world domination); but they were never understood as part of the nation (Almog, 1990).

By mobilizing these older myths, nationalists could define the German nation as a central closed entity of whiteness and Christianity in *opposition* to marginalized unruly Blackness and non-Christian faiths such as Judaism. The Grimms appropriated the figure of the stepmother, already understood as an Other to the family by virtue of her lack of biological/ "authentic" family ties, inserted her body into their texts and then inscribed other signifiers of Otherness onto it. This had the effect of compounding the pre-existing constructed inferiority of the stepmother (contrasted with the biological mother and father) and the pre-existing constructed inferiority of Jewishness and Blackness (contrasted with Christianity and whiteness).

The authentic mother/family/nation

The Grimms wrote in an era that also saw changes to the conceptualization of reproduction, domesticity, and their relationship with emerging nations. To a large extent, capitalism removed economic production from households where it once co-existed with social reproduction. This intensified the imaginary divide between the allegedly apolitical female-dominated domestic sphere and the allegedly political, male-dominated public sphere (Collier, Rosaldo and Yanagisako, 2001: 16; Fox and Luxton, 2001: 27). Women's reproductive capacities were increasingly charged with the duty to reproduce racially pure progeny for the nation. Women's proper domestic sphere—like the racialized nation—was romanticized as a familiar and biologically united solace from the competitive dangers of a newly capitalist and liberal world (Collier *et al.*, 2001: 16). Of course, this conceptualization was incorrect for many reasons.[5] For one, most families have been riddled with the opposites of what is believed to be biologically imperative love: economic exploitation, incest, rape, abuse, and other forms of violence.

Family and mothering can be understood as ideological constructions whose meanings and functions can be created and manipulated for the purpose of gaining, maintaining, exercising, and diminishing different types of power. Assuming this definition, it makes sense that the Grimms' representations of family and mothering would be constructed in concordance with their nationalist aspirations that used and facilitated various racializations including that of Jewish people. By making the stepmother responsible for evil deeds in many of their tales, they implied that the only authentic mother is the biological mother, and the only authentic family bonds are biological ones. If the authentic, biologically-constituted family is a safe solace from the conflicts of the world that originate from "foreign" incursions into the nation, and if the family is also understood as the most natural and basic unit of social organization, then it is not difficult to posit that the safest social bonds are biological ones. Biological ties presumably indicate authentic unity, if not uniformity, which is threatened by (non-biological) difference. This understanding of the authentic family

empowers raciological classifications and arrangements of people into hierarchies by making claims to the biological basis of "race," origins, and belonging.

The Grimms' editing of what they claimed to be "authentic" German folklore is one example of their deep investment in constructing a stable German national identity. In his book *One Fairy Tale Too Many* (1983), John M. Ellis examines how the Grimms themselves wrote most of *CHT* or withheld information about the origins of the tales. In the prefaces to subsequent editions, the Grimms reluctantly admitted to having had written and changed the text (Ellis, 1983: 13-19). Despite their admissions and the obvious changes made to the text between editions, the Grimms and many scholars continued to emphasize that *CHT* was "pure ancient Germanic myth" (qtd. in Ellis, 1983: 107). From comparing printed versions of the tales with pre-publication manuscripts, Ellis concludes that many of the tales were of non-German origin and were rewritten to render the textual style more literary, and to make plot, characters, and motivations less violent and immoral (Ellis, 1983: 11, 72, 92). The Grimms never published exact details of the people from whom they collected these tales—aside from Dorothea Viehmann, who became known as the Marchenfrau ("fairy tale woman") of popular German nationalist pride (Ellis, 1983: 26). The Grimms described her as the quintessential German storyteller: an old peasant woman living in a cottage who recited tales from memory. However, subsequent research about the Grimms' sources revealed that Viehmann was a French-speaking, middle-class, literate woman of French Huguenot origin, as were the friends and families from whom the Grimms collected the bulk of their tales (Ellis, 1983: 26-33).

If we are to accept the notions of "authenticity" and "purity" at all, Ellis makes clear that the Grimms' allegedly "authentic German" sources were "inauthentic" Germans/"authentic" Others. Their allegedly "pure" stories were extensively tampered with in order to mask the real "impurities." Upon reading only a few tales from *CHT*, the violent Others that emerge are marked by non-biological/"inauthentic" motherhood, femininity, non-Christian faith, and Blackness—motifs all linked in some way to anti-Semitic ideas about Jewish people. In contrast, those who are exonerated from violence are marked by biological/"authentic" family relations, masculinity, Christianity, and whiteness.

Exonerating biological parents

The Grimms knew that the family was not an idyll of love as it was mythologized: many of their stories tell of poverty and the relentless menial labour in family homes that marked the first decades of Europe's shift to capitalism (Bottigheimer, 1987: 123-142). However, this instability was blamed on a feminine outsider—the stepmother. In her analysis of the stepmother in *CHT*, Maria Tatar argues that "Enshrining the stepmother as villain brings with it the added advantage of exonerating both biological parents from blame for the miserable conditions at home" (1985: 38). Biological mothers in *CHT* are usually good-hearted but ill, silent, or dead. As Bottigheimer explains:

> Snow-White's mother thinks to herself but never speaks, and when her daughter is born, she dies. The same is true of Cinderella's mother, who first adjures her to be good and pious—and then dies. Hansel and Gretel's mother is entirely absent, while the mother in "The Twelve Brother" speaks once before disappearing forever from the tale, a pattern which recurs even in that ultimate tale of powerful womanhood, "The Goose-Girl." (1987: 53)

In contrast to the passivity and silence of the biological mother, stepmothers are living, active antagonists who use speech as their weapon against the family (Bottigheimer, 1987: 53). In the home they harshly nag at their innocent stepchildren and husbands; in the forest they cast spells; by the end of the stories their true evil natures are revealed and are somehow punished, usually with violence if not death (Tatar, 1985: 30). We can read from these tales the chilling message that the only good mother is dead and silent.

It is likely that the Grimms, through their editing, intentionally enhanced the stepmother's evil attributes. This is true in at least one case. In an 1810 working manuscript of "Hansel and Gretel," both the mother and father share responsibility for abandoning the children, and no mention is made of whether the mother is a stepmother. Changes were made to the story so that, in the first edition, it is the mother alone who suggests and then pursues abandoning the children (Ellis, 1983: 64-65). In the fourth edition, the content was changed again and the mother was clearly identified as a *stepmother* (Ellis, 1983: 73). What began as a story about a couple's mutual abandonment of their children was gradually rewritten to blame only a non-biological mother for this violence.

This exoneration of biological parents is gendered. In *CHT*, there is only one story about a father who persecutes his daughter in contrast to twelve tales about a stepmother persecuting a daughter (Tatar, 1985: 38). The father in "Hansel and Gretel"—like almost all the husbands in *CHT*—very reluctantly agrees to participate in the wicked stepmother's plan. He assumes a passive role in abandoning the children, and expresses great joy when his children find their way home to him (Tatar, 1985: 29; Ellis, 1983: 64-65). His innocence is rewarded with treasure brought by the children, and they live happily (and richly) ever after. In contrast, "it is probably not merely coincidental that the two siblings return home to find that their cruel stepmother has vanished once they have conquered the evil witch in the woods" (Tatar , 1985: 29).[6]

At a time when the family and nation were being romanticized and idealized as units of biologically-driven love and harmony, it is not surprising that the Grimms wrote into "Hansel and Gretel" a blame for violence on the outsider—blame that in reality was routinely and violently marked onto the bodies of Jewish people.

Exonerating Christians

The Grimms inscribe anti-Semitic stereotypes onto the body of the

stepmother not only to emphasize her as an "inauthentic" outsider to the family(/nation). They also mark her with heresy to emphasize her as an outsider to Christianity. The tales "Hansel and Gretel," "Twelve Brothers," "Six Swans," "Brother and Sister," and "Snow-White" each present the stepmother (or mother-in-law—another inauthentic mother) as a witch in disguise or as a cruel woman who uses magical powers against the children (Tatar, 1985). In historical practice, the lines that demarcated the identities of witches and Jewish people in white Christian European consciousness are, in some ways, obscure.

Christian ignorance and fear of Jewish rituals etched within white European culture the myth of Jewish people as sorcerers (Trachtenberg, 1983: 67). Throughout the Middle Ages, Jewish customs—such as blessing crops and various mourning rites—were taken as evidence of Jewish plotting with the devil to curse or poison Christians (Trachtenberg, 1983: 83, 90). A plethora of laws based on these myths regulated the lives of Jewish people.[7] They were seen as inherently predisposed towards the kidnapping and murder of usually young, virginal Christians for their use in what was imagined as anti-Christian, devil-worshipping rituals at Passover (Trachtenberg, 1983: 124, 138, 145; Felsenstein, 1995: 35, 148).

There are noteworthy similarities between the persecution of Jewish men and women and the persecution of non-Jewish or -Christian women in the Late Middle Ages. Women's knowledge of medicinal arts was interpreted as a dangerous connection to nature and the devil not shared by Christian men. Jewish men and women were frequently accused of the same crimes as were non-Jewish or –Christian women believed to be practising witchcraft: host and image desecration, poisoning wells or food, illegally practicing medicine, cursing, and anything involving blood (Trachtenberg, 1983: 212). Graphic representations of the bodies of both female witches and Jewish people employed symbols such as "horns, tails, cloven hooves, and the attendant demon or devils" (Trachtenberg, 1983: 208). Both were constructed throughout European history in law, Christian customs, and popular culture as biologically deviant, demonically linked to nature, unpredictable, and eternally preoccupied with the destruction of Christendom. Located within a patriarchal social order that establishes femininity as inferior to masculinity, these graphic and textual representations feminized Jewish men and non-Christian women and thus marked them as inferior.

Anti-Semitic fears are clearly at work in the representation of Christian children in *CHT* who often face displacement, incarceration, impoverishment, or death, usually at the hands of stepmothers. For example, the stepmother in "Little Snow-White" orders a huntsman to take the young and beautiful Snow-White into the woods, kill her, and bring her lung and liver back to the stepmother as evidence of her death. The huntsman instead pities and frees Snow-White (men, after all, are noble and brave) and brings the stepmother the lung and liver of a boar, which she salts, cooks, and eats (Grimm and Grimm,

"Little Snow-White," 1985: 127). Anti-Semitic notions of Jewish people as wandering, elderly, and cunning pedlars, and also as sorcerers who want to poison Christians, are at work as we read about the stepmother's attempts to kill Snow-White, now living with the seven dwarves in the forest. She disguises herself as an old peddler-woman and "beguiles" Snow-White into buying a poisoned comb and then a poisoned apple (Grimm and Grimm, "Little Snow-White," 1985: 129-132).

Similarly, in "Hansel and Gretel," the witch in the woods (who we are to assume is the stepmother) deceives the children in order to kill and eat them:

> The old woman had only pretended to be so kind; she was in reality a wicked witch, who lay in wait for children, and had only built the little house of bread in order to entice them there. When a child fell into her power, she killed it, cooked and ate it, and that was a feast day with her. (Grimm and Grimm, "Hansel and Gretel," 1985: 46-47)

The stepmother deceives the children, just as anti-Semitism ascertained that Jewish people at this time deviously feigned assimilation, only to infiltrate and destabilize the Christian German nation. Both Jewish people and witches in real life were often accused in blood libels of using the organs and blood of Christian children in sacrifices to Satan, medicinal concoctions, and in the preparation of Passover food (Trachtenberg, 1983: 124, 138, 144; Felsenstein, 1995: 148, 214). The stepmother eats children on her "feast day"—possibly a code word for Sabbath.

In "Rapunzel," an old "enchantress" terrifies Rapunzel's father into promising to give her his first child in exchange for the rampion plant that his wife so craved. Implicit in this tale is the fertility-inducing power of rampion, as the couple had been hoping to God for a child before the mother began craving it, and has a child shortly after the deal is made with the enchantress. Both witches and Jewish people were credited with the power to make fertility-inducing potions in the Middle Ages (Trachtenberg, 1983: 57). The enchantress quickly takes newborn Rapunzel away from her parents and locks her in a tower in the woods (Grimm and Grimm, "Rapunzel," 1985: 38-39).

Indicative of anti-Semitic loathing of usury, sometimes there is a financial exchange for children initiated by the evildoer in *CHT*, such as in "The Girl With No Hands" and "The King of Golden Mountain." In "Little Briar-Rose" and "Hansel and Gretel," witches/stepmothers have caches of jewels that are stolen back by the protagonists (Bottigheimer, 1987: 131-132). This expropriation is not problematized but is rather assumed as justified—the implication here is that the goods originally belonged to the Christian protagonists and were then stolen by the Jewish witch/stepmother.

Exonerating whiteness

The relationship between Blackness and Jewishness lies not only in shared

African heritage and histories of oppression, dispersal, and resistance but also lies in shared constructed Otherness. As such, graphic representations of Jewish people in the Middle Ages depicted them as friends of the devil or the devil himself, and furthermore emphasized what were understood to be distinctly Sephardic characteristics such as dark skin, dark thick hair, and dark eyes. Blackness, Jewishness, and evil were equivocally imaged as irrevocably belonging to the same dangerous, foreign bodies (Felsenstein, 1995: 86-87).[8] In *CHT*, metaphorical or actual Blackness is ascribed to the stepmother.

Examples of the use of Blackness as a signifier for outsider evildoers can be found in "The King's Son Who Feared Nothing" and "The White Bride and the Black Bride" (Bottigheimer, 1987: 138). The former is about a king's son who tries to save a maiden from a curse placed on her by a group of devils—a curse that has made her skin black. The latter tells the story of a stepmother, her daughter, and her stepdaughter, whom God approaches in the form of a poor man asking for directions. The stepmother (who we later learn is in fact a witch) and her daughter are rude to the poor man, and are punished by God:

> When the step-mother came home with her daughter, and they saw that they were both as black as coal and ugly, but that the step-daughter was white and beautiful, wickedness increased still more in their hearts, and they thought of nothing else but how they could do her injury. (Grimm and Grimm, "The White Bride and the Black Bride,"2002: np)

Objects that are instrumental in the conquest over evil are described as literally white, such as the white pebble-stones Hansel throws behind him as he and his sister are led into the forest by the stepmother. These white stones, like the white duck that appears later in the story, help the children find their way out of the dark woods (the stepmother/witch's lair) and back to their father's home.

Blackness if associated with deceit, the unknown, loss of home, displacement from (or contamination of) family through the inauthentic/non-biological mother, and godlessness. Whiteness is associated with luck, return to home, return to the authentic/biological father, and salvation by God.

It is not enough that the Grimms tell their readers that the stepmother, who I read as a Black Jewish outsider to the authentic family/nation, is bad. Accompanying this is the moralistic message that outsiders will not get away with their "crimes"; that God, the authentic/biological father, the white man, he who belongs, will righteously bring punishment and death to her. In *CHT*, wicked women—the bulk consisting of stepmothers—are routinely punished, sometimes with death, and usually by means of heat or fire on the spot (Bottigheimer, 1987: 27, 97). This can be explained by collective memory of witch-burning times (Bottigheimer, 1987: 101), but also alludes to mass burnings of Jewish people in the Middle Ages, especially during times such as

the "Black Death" when plagues were sometimes interpreted as the effects of mass poisoning committed by Jewish people (Trachtenberg, 1983: 100-105). In contrast, men's punishments in CHT never involve fire, are often doled out to them only after going through juridical proceedings, and lack the gory descriptions that typically accompany women's punishment (Bottigheimer, 1987: 98-99).

Conclusion

The Grimms wrote *CHT* at a time when both the family and the German nation were primarily understood as groups of people linked by biological, loving, and necessary bonds. In the Grimms' tales, fear of invasion and contamination were embodied by a wide range of Others of whom the stepmother was only one. In children's stories, the body of the stepmother is an ideal candidate for the embodiment of Jewishness, Blackness, and unruly non-Christian femininity because of its *a priori* status as an inauthentic mother, an imposter, a biologically different outsider. The reader knows already that stepmothers do not authentically belong to the family: when signifiers for Blackness, Jewishness, and heresy are ascribed to her, we are told that these attributes do not belong either. We can read from the German nationalist context of the tales that what these various forms of Otherness do not belong to is the nation. Like the family, the nation is a closed central entity of biological sameness, the borders of which must be fortified against incursions, crossing, mixture, and contamination that will bring loss, displacement, and death.

The 210 tales in *CHT* are rich and disturbing sources of insight into the myth of biological sameness that empowers various oppressions such as racism, anti-Semitism, and misogyny. These constructions of the sanctity of the white nation and the biological family are not archaic, static evidences of a sad chapter in Germany's history. They are active pieces of literature that continue to instill racist fears of Blackness and Jewishness, and mythological love for whiteness, into the imaginations of children and adults alike. If we do not make the (valid) decision to not read these disturbing tales, they can at least assist us in interrogating and destabilizing our own racialized and gendered imaginings of belonging and Otherness.

I would like to thank kheya bag, Marc Bernhard, Dr. Rozena Maart, and Ali Sauer for their comments on earlier versions of this paper.

[1]This essay deals with the tales in *CHT* that do *not* specifically identify characters as Jewish. There are several tales with clearly identified Jewish protagonists and antagonists in earlier editions of *CHT*, such as "The Good Bargain," "The Jew Among Thorns," and "The Bright Sun Brings It to Light." In these tales, the male Jewish character, because of his greed or foolishness, ends up being punished for his striving for wealth (Bottigheimer, 1987: 123-

142). The Grimms also reprinted German legends in a separate work published in 1816, *Deutsche Sagen (German Legends)*, which were overtly anti-Semitic, usually involving blood libels (accusations of ritual murder by Jewish people). See Grimm and Grimm, "The Jews' Stone," "The Girl Who Was Killed by Jews," and "The Eternal Jew on the Matterhorn."

[2]My interest in this topic first formed during a workshop on sexual assault facilitated by Dr. Rozena Maart at the University of Guelph's Women's Resource Centre in January 2002. Maart presented a slideshow that included images of male predators and/or rapists in fairytales. The authors and illustrators of these tales racialized these figures as Black men. I began asking myself, among other questions, how evil female figures in fairytales are racialized.

[3]Thus we can look at how, for instance, at one time Eastern European immigrants to North America were not considered white—and how they came to be considered white when it was in the interest of the ruling class to do so.

[4]Jacob produced original work on the German language, *German Grammar* and *History of the German Language* (Ashliman, 1999; Ellis, 1983: 5), and helped found Wollzeilergesellschaft, a small group of German folklorists. Wilhelm was closely associated with the Christlich-Deutsche Tischgesellschaft (Christian-German society), which Grimms scholar Ruth B. Bottigheimer has described as an anti-Semitic, sexist, and "reactionary group of hereditary nobles, higher bureaucratic functionaries, and a few scholars and artists" (1987: 141). Amongst the members were intellectuals such as Johann Fichte whose work helped lay the theoretical foundations of anti-Semitic fascism (Bottigheimer, 1987: 141; Cohen, 1962: 294-319).

[5]Households were (and still are) implicated in capitalist political economy in many ways different from those traditionally identified by feminists who tend to focus on women's unpaid reproductive labour in the home. One example of this is that within communities marginalized by slavery, ghettoization, dispersal, economic exploitation and other effects of colonialism, many women and children have worked for pay or as slaves both inside and outside of the home. Social reproduction was not reserved only for biological mothers but was carried out by men, women in caregiving roles not established through heredity, and the broader community.

[6]Although this example does not involve stepmothers, "The Girl Without Hands" was the result of the Grimms splicing together two slightly different versions of the same story in order to censor out the first half of the version that very clearly implicated a father in incest. The omitted storyline tells of a man who cuts off his daughter's breasts and arms because she refused to "marry" him (Ellis, 1983: 78). In its place, the Grimms inserted a storyline in which the father promises the devil whatever is standing behind his mill, which happens to be his daughter. The daughter, in an incoherent twist of the plot that bespeaks of editorial intervention, loses her hands when her father tries to remove her from the bargain (Ellis, 1983: 77-78).

[7]Some examples of this are: Jewish people were often forbidden to attend

coronations out of fear that their alleged "evil eye" would curse the king (Trachtenberg 70); Jewish people had to wear horned hats or badges picturing horns (symbols of the devil) to identify themselves in public (Trachtenberg, 1983: 44, 46, 67); Jewish people were often depicted in political pamphlets and religious literature with goatee beards, symbols of the goat, understood to be the devil's favourite animal (Trachtenberg, 1983 46-47); Jewish people were forbidden to practice medicine out of fear that their medical practices were in fact magical rites used to kill, maim, or poison Christians (Trachtenberg, 1983: 93); and Christians were forbidden to buy or consume wine made by Jewish people, and Jewish people, in turn, were forbidden to touch food sold at the market place (Trachtenberg, 1983: 100).

[8]In "Little Red-Cap" (also known as "Little Red Riding Hood") and "The Wolf and the Seven Little Kids," shrewd, dark wolves eat (actual or metaphorical) white Christian children. "Wolves amongst sheep" can be seen as a metaphor for historically marginalized communities—Black people, immigrants, and Jewish people (these communities are of course not mutually exclusive)—constructed as "dark" outsiders by white people (Felsenstein, 1995: 79). Both Black people and Jewish people have been represented in racist texts, laws, graphics, and discourses as "beasts": a particularly disgusting example of this form of oppression is the fact that Christians in certain parts of Europe in the Middle Ages were forbidden to marry Jewish women and faced excommunication as well as charges of "bestiality" should they breach this law (Trachtenberg, 1983: 187).

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Jodi E. Vandenberg-Dave

Mama Bear as Domestic Micromanager

The Evolution of Cultural Ideas of Motherhood in Berenstain Bears Book Series, 1960-2000

As research expands on the history of social constructions of motherhood in modern North America, the scholarship points toward an overarching recurring theme: the tension in maternal ideals between "overinvolvement" and "underinvolvement" (read neglect). During the Second World War, for example, in his famous book, *Generation of Vipers*, Philip Wylie condemned mothers for indulging their "temptation to pour all your extra energy and affection into Peter and Polly. After all, you rationalize, I have to take the place of two parents now ... This is a dangerous assumption." The dangerous assumption led to what Wylie termed "Momism," an overinvolved pattern of mothering that invariably turned would-be men into sissies and generally disrupted family life (qtd. in May, 1988: 74-75). Just two years later, Federal Bureau of Investigation director J. Edgar Hoover, in an article entitled "Mothers ... Our Only Hope" insisted that children would fall into "perversion" and "crime" if mothers left the home, indulging "quite understandable desires to escape for a few months from a household routine or to get a little money of her own ... There must be no absenteeism among mothers. Her patriotic duty is not on the factory front. It is on the home front" (qtd. in May, 1988: 74). Mothers could not be underinvolved either.[1]

These conflicting messages stem from the nineteenth-century cultural definitions of motherhood that not only elevated mothers to the status of the only important parent, but also exalted women's superior morality and ability to teach by example. Women's superior morality was, in the popular view, defined by their self-sacrificing role as mothers (see Lewis). In the twentieth century the ideals were further developed through the rise of medical science—about which "good" modern mothers must always be up-to-date—and psychology (Apple, 1997). As popularized, modern psychology has contributed to

the dilemma of modern mothers. On the one hand, twentieth-century mothers have faced the injunction of constant surveillance. On the other hand, they have faced damning criticism for "momism." Still, mothers had to be highly involved in their children's lives in order to follow the dictates of modern consumerism, medical and psychological advice. A mother was offered so much potential through scientific information, especially after World War II, with the burgeoning availability of expert counsel in the form of pediatricians, psychologists, and the homey advice now available in the post-war "baby book" popularized by Dr. Benjamin Spock.[2] Now, as Brett Harvey noted, a mother wanted "perfect children—with unblemished bodies, high intelligence, and 'normal personalities" (1993: 105).

While scholars have examined the tensions in cultural ideals of motherhood largely from the perspective of advice literature to women, television, and widely influential cultural commentary, less attention has been paid to the role of maternal images in literature directed to young children. Children's literature is replete with powerfully stereotypical gender images that are encoded at an early age, when children are forming gender identity and are especially receptive to images (Chatton, 2001). Gender bias in general has been the subject of many interesting studies of children's literature, most of which confirm the persistence of gender stereotyping of girl and boy characters in spite of feminist calls for change (Louie, 2001; Maxwell, 1994). Moreover, as Barbara Chatton has observed, "Even when girls themselves are portrayed more positively, parents, teachers, and neighbors who might serve as role models are often more stereotyped with stay-at-home moms in dresses doing housework and errands, while fathers go off to work" (2001: 62).[3]

Part of the challenge of investigating mothers in childrens' literature is finding the mothers. As Chatton says, "A long tradition in children's books that plays to children's egocentricity consigns parents to little or no role in some stories" " (2001: 62). There is also a common theme of parental death and a subsequent lost orphan experience that pervades the history of children's literature. A review of *Publisher's Weekly* (1996) best-selling hardcover children's books revealed that Mother Rabbit in the Beatrix Potter books (who after all was not around when Peter got into the most trouble) was the only significant mother character in the top 50 books. The underlying assumption seems to be that a child cannot have a good adventure with a mother around.

But when one looks at the paperback book market, a notable exception to the rule of maternal absence can be found: Mama Bear, in the Berenstain Bear book series by Stan and Jan Berenstain, directed primarily at children aged four to eight. This is the longest-running children's book series in history, beginning in 1962 with *The Big Honey Hunt*, and continuing to the present with more than 90 books, as well as coloring books, film strips, videos, and audio cassettes. The series and the authors have won numerous awards for the books, including a Ludington Award in 1989 for "contributions to children's literature"(*Major Authors and Illustrators for Children and Young Adults,* 1993). Fifteen of the best-

selling children's paperback books of all time are Berenstain Bears Books (*Publisher's Weekly)*. Parents, myself included, who have used the books to help explain to children basic concepts of responsibility and self-restraint, or to dispel worries about visits to the doctor have often appreciated aspects of these books. Yet the character of Mama Bear has not yet been examined in terms of her contribution to the social construction of motherhood.

Mama Bear is a character that may seem predictable and changeless to parent readers who possess a passing familiarity with the book series. She seems to solve every household problem imaginable, using good the techniques of modern psychology. It is Mama Bear who calls family meetings, organizes action plans, elicits cooperation, and teaches the little bears, and more belatedly the rather slow-witted and ineffectual Papa Bear, a lesson that the whole family needed to learn. How could they ever have managed without her?

My research into the history of this series, based on examination of more than 60 of the Berenstain Bears books, reveals that in the 1960s and 1970s, the Bear family more or less did manage without her. In contrast to what we might assume about the continuity of the "involved mother" since the postwar Dr. Spock era, Mama Bear's story between 1962 and the present is a tale of transformation, from obscurity to center stage, from passive presence to household micromanager. Mama Bear expands her role in the domestic realm, beginning in the 1980s. Yet in spite of the dramatic changes in the lives of real mothers, Mama Bear's confinement to the domestic sphere presents a striking continuity. Even in books published since 2000 we find her in relentlessly unthreatening and anachronistic presentation, in ankle-length dresses and in scenes outside the household in which her subservience to Papa Bear is reinforced. These themes are portrayed in storylines, dialogue, and in memorable and highly stereotypical images.

In the 1960s and 1970s, Mama Bear's version of maternal involvement is to simply be available at home. The theme of the 1960s Bears books is that Papa Bear tries, but usually fails, to teach Little (boy) Bear lessons. (Sister Bear does not arrive until the 1970s.) Papa Bear always messes things up in a humorous way. Mama Bear is generally merely pictured at home at the beginning and end of the book. She is outside the adventure, and she never interferes. In *The Bike Lesson* (1964), she appears on the first page, witnessing the new bike. She is then waiting to see the final result, achieved after many misadventures: "Look, Ma! Now I can ride it! See! Dad had some very good lessons for me."

Mother Bear rarely even speaks in the 1960s books, though one rare image of her initiating action establishes her role as the smarter of the two parents. "Go get some honey. Got get some more. Go get some honey From the honey store," she says (1962). Papa tries the shortcut to her suggestion (chasing bees), only to wind up in the end taking her advice. More typical of Mama Bear is a passive role. She is long-suffering in *The Bears' Picnic*, (1966) as the bumbling Papa Bear takes Mama and Little Bear through a wide range of unpleasant locations, until they all wind up back at home. Papa is clearly in charge here, but

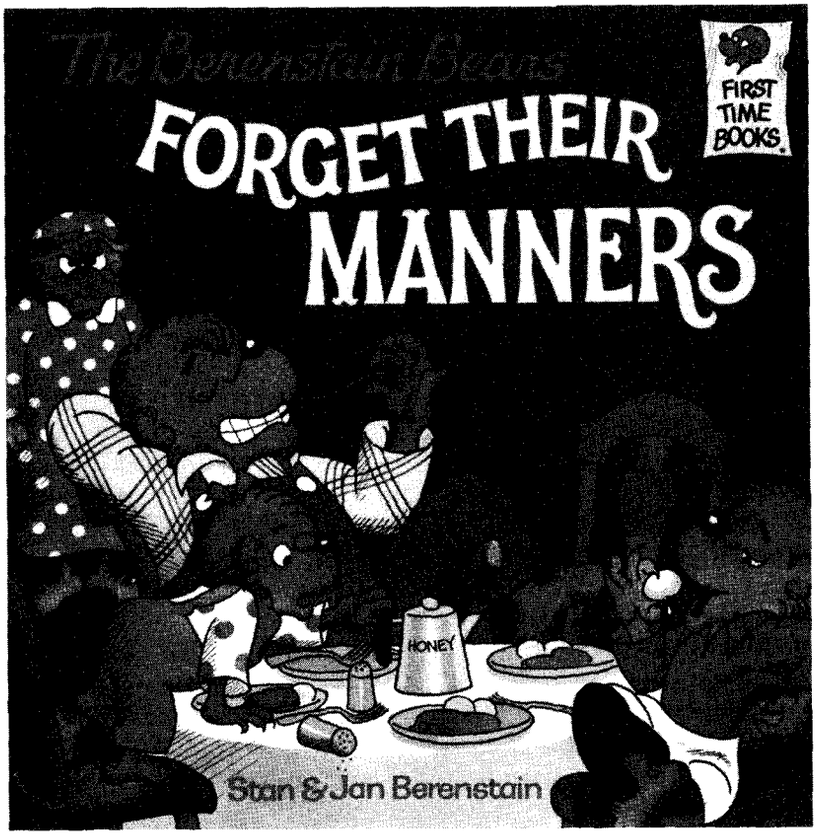
generally has a bad idea. His character seems to be modeled on the working-class buffoon of television sitcoms from the 1950s, as exemplified in Ralph Kramden of *The Honeymooners*, whose wife Alice was regularly depicted as more intelligent and wise than her husband, especially in matters of common sense.

The image of Mama Bear by the 1980s and up to the present is a striking contrast to the Mama Bear character of the 1960s, though we also see some marked continuity of her domestic role. Two books with the same theme clearly illustrate both the differences and the continuity: *The Bears' Vacation* (1968) and *Berenstain Bears By The Sea* (1998). Mama Bear's dependence and her secondary role outside the household are evident in both books: She sits in the back of the car in her long dress, with Papa Bear and Brother Bear in front in 1968 *and* 1998. But here the similarities between the two vacations end. In the 1968 book, Mama bear quickly finds her place in the seaside cottage, uttering only one warning, "Small Bear! Small Bear! Don't you go too far. I want to see you wherever you are" (1968). Not to worry, Papa Bear assures her, though Mama looks a little worried. She probably knows that all Papa's safety tips will be comically dangerous, and indeed, this comedy makes up the story. Mama Bear appears again only at the end of the book, when it seems that Papa Bear and Little Bear have just barely arrived safely back from their adventures.

In the 1998 version of the vacation, *By the Sea*, the little bears are continuously hampered by Mama's interference with their plans to leave the vacation cottage and go to the beach. First they must clean up, then unpack, make beds, clean closets, rake walks, have a snack, wait until their food digests, and put on suntan lotion. Mama Bear's moralizing insistence on duty, responsibility, and safety *is* the story. The cubs do not have the opportunity to swim until the final page of the book. And in this story, it is Papa Bear who appears in the background.

By 1998, the theme I knew from the Berenstain Bears books in my house was well established: Mama Bear expressed her love for her children not just by being available and stable, but by serving as the manager of all household affairs and nearly all the emotional and functional problems of the family. In and of herself, she provides most of the socialization her children seem to need to take their place in the world. For example, in *The Berenstain Bears Forget Their Manners*, published in 1985, Mama is shown presiding over an unruly, backwards family epitomized by the recalcitrant behavior of her husband. Mama tries numerous strategies, including "going to Papa for help (though it sometimes seemed to Mama that he was part of the problem)." Eventually, Mama devises a bad manners consequence chart. Specific types of unmannerly behavior earn a bear a chore. As is typical in these stories, it is Papa Bear for whom the lesson is the hardest. In a sense, Mama Bear must mother him as well as the cubs.

Mama Bear's role as emotional manager emerges rather suddenly in the 1980s. In *The Berenstain Bears's New Baby*, published in 1974, Mama is still a



passive character even in what psychologists have long recognized as a major transition in the life of a first child expecting a new sibling. The story focuses on the fact that Little Bear had outgrown his bed, and Papa Bear, taking up his ax, will have to go make him a new one. All Mama Bear has to say in the whole book is that Little Bear has outgrown his bed just in time. As late as 1978, in *The Berenstain Bears Go to School*, Mama Bear says and does very little to ease Sister Bear's obvious anxiety about starting school. Though Mama visits kindergarden with Sister, when Sister Bear later asks, "Mama ! What if I don't like school? What if I just don't like it?" there is no response from Mama. "Just then" the bus pulls up; Brother Bear pulls Sister toward the bus, saying, "Stop worrying. School is fun. You'll like it."

In sharp contrast, in the 1986 book, *The Trouble With Friends*, Mama Bear takes a proactive role, noticing problems and involving herself closely in the emotional lives of her children. She talks patiently with Sister Bear about her problems with "braggy and bossy" friends: "It seems to me, said Mama,' taking Sister on her lap,' that Lizzy isn't the only cub that's braggy and bossy sometimes....'" And in *The Birds, the Bees, and the Berenstain Bears*, published

in 2000, Mama Bear carefully talks Sister Bear through the transition to big sisterhood in a way she never did when she was expecting "Sister" in 1974. The Mama Bear of the 1980s and 1990s has dramatically increased her role within the family.

But Mama Bear's continued confinement to the home also raises questions. Was there no accommodation to Second Wave feminist critiques of domesticity in this popular book series? How does Mama Bear survive the 1970s and 1980s "intact" in her confinement to the home and the back seat of the car, and intact in her overall image except for some obvious weight gain that only softens her domestic image? In fact, there were a few challenges to the hyper-domestic image of Mama Bear during the1970s and the 1980s. Those challenges simply appeared, made a point, and were not integrated into subsequent plotlines. For example, in the award-winning 1974 book, *He Bear She Bear*, the two genders of bear are portrayed in non-stereotypical roles. Non-traditional female roles, however, seemed to be primarily confined to female bears not occupied with child care. The book begins with the children's gender identification with father and mother. Mother is carrying firewood, but is in closer physical proximity and a more compromised pose than Papa Bear when she asserts, "I'm a mother. I'm a she. A *mother's* something *you* could be." The bear cubs learn that they could build bridges, climb poles, race cars, or dig holes, regardless of gender. Similarly, in the 1987 book *The Berenstain Bears On the Job*, female bears (again not visibly mothers, and much more gender neutral in their appearance than Mama Bear) are shown doing non-traditional work such as mechanics and plumbing.

Perhaps the most interesting and quite temporary departure from Bear gender roles occurs in 1984 with the publication of *The Berenstain Bears and Mama's New Job*. "The Bear family," we learn on the first page:

> ... was a very happy family. One of the reasons was that they were all very *busy*. Each member of the family had work to do. Papa Bear cut and split logs and made the wood into handsome furniture which he was proud to sell. Mama Bear not only took care of her family, but she managed the whole tree house and tended the vegetable patch as well.

The story continues, "Yes, the members of the Bear family had happy, busy full lives. Especially Mama." Why would she want a job, we might wonder. In the same page, she appears to be a bit too busy. Mama has visions of "a little more time for her quilts. She had some lovely design ideas she wanted to try." This most feminine and old-fashioned of pastimes could perhaps be parlayed into a business, though Papa objects at first. "Mama in business?" said Papa, "I don't think so. One business-bear in the family is enough." Mama does not look convinced. Sister Bear objects too: "'But you don't want to be a business-bear,' said Sister. 'You're our mama!'" Mama replies,

> "That's no reason why I shouldn't open my own quilt shop. A lot of mama bears have jobs: Mrs. Grizzle is a sitter; Mrs. Honeybear teaches school; [and in a brief nod to non-traditional and well-paid occupations] Dr. Gert Grizzly is your pediatrician...." "Yeah," said Brother, "but they're not our mama!"

Mama assures them that "things aren't going to be all that different." In the long run of the book series, this was certainly an understatement. For a couple more pages we see Mama Bear's success, and the extra help provided by the other three family members. The final page shows the remarkable results: Mama Bear is paying for a celebratory dinner out with *her* money.

As I have already suggested in discussion of Berenstain Bears books of the 1980s and beyond, this episode is not of lasting consequence to the life of the family. Mama Bear does not appear again as a working mother attempting to balance her work with her family responsibilities, and this pattern is another example of what numerous scholars have demonstrated: Working mothers are significantly under-represented in children's literature in light of their actual growing presence in the labor force, though children's literature for young adults has portrayed the actual changes in mothers' labour force participation with much more accuracy that is typically seen in literature for young children (see, for example, Miller, 1996; Maxwell, 1994; Vardell, 2001).

Based on my close analysis of this book series, I suggest that the brevity of Mama Bear's adventure in paid labour can be explained by looking at the evolution of her character. To continue the plotline of working mother would have fundamentally compromised her role in observing problems in her children not noticed by her spouse, providing nurturing but deliberate assistance to the cubs' needs, moralizing, and maintaining family harmony. Her constant availability at home seems to depend on her lack of interest in anything outside the home, and such interest would threaten the family. In fact, the book about Mama's job opens with the all-important question, "When Mama gets home too late for a meal, how will the cubs and Papa Bear feel?"(Berenstain and Berenstain, 1984). It seems that they will feel fine—the first week. Clearly the story of Mama Bear over time is the enlargement of her personal power only *within* the household—an ironic progression when one considers the scarcely acknowledged dramatic expansion of women's role outside the household in these same years. As summarized by Lynn Weiner, "In 1950, fewer than 12 percent of mothers with children under the age of six worked outside the home; by 1960, this had climbed to 19 percent, and by 1970, to 30 percent. By 1980, nearly 50 percent of mothers with children under six were in the labor force" (1997: 377). The Berenstain Bears, along with much of the rest of literature for young children, poorly reflected this important dimension of the lives of a growing number of real mothers.

While Mama Bear's role within the household clearly expands, a few exceptional stories raise questions about whether her pattern might smack of

"Momism," whether her rationality might occasionally be compromised in such a way that masculine paternal authority is needed. In general, Mama Bear manages to contain the potential for Papa Bear to become a family manager like herself. On the rare occasions when he has a plan for a family problem, it usually fails; more often he reacts emotionally, in the moment rather than deliberately. However, there are a few interesting exceptions that suggest the possibility for rationality and managerial abilities in the Papa Bear character. In *The Bernenstain Bears' Messy Room*, published in 1983, Mama does not quite have a grip on a problem, and sulks through much of the story. It is Papa who "got Mama's and the cubs' attention," in a gender-stereotypical and very typical of Papa Bear way, by shouting and worrying the cubs. But Papa calls a meeting, borrowing a technique from Mama, and he briefly becomes the family disciplinarian, though again in a way that elicits fearful looks rather than understanding from the cubs. In an unusual plot twist, a managerial change is instituted by Papa. Mama is happy again, and the cubs benefit too, from the enjoyment of living in a "clean, well-organized room."

In the 1990 book, The *Berenstain Bears' Slumber Party* and in the 1997 book, *The Blame Game*, Papa Bear actually shows some potential to usurp both Mama's authority in managerial matters and her generally calm problem-solving approach. In the *Slumber Party* book, Papa Bear gently reprimands Mama Bear for instituting too harsh a punishment for Sister Bear's misadventure at a slumber party unsupervised by parents. As the parents, he suggests, he and Mama Bear should have taken responsibility for ensuring parent supervision at the party. Mama Bear relents and, still in charge of discipline, comes up with an alternate solution.

A more disturbing image of Mama Bear is seen seven years later in *The Blame Game* (1997), in which Mama Bear's emotionality is contained by Papa Bear's reason, a striking role reversal. Though Mama Bear might brood in previous stories, she rarely speaks until she had a plan to solve the problem at hand. But in *The Blame Game*, we are introduced immediately to the two sides of Mama Bear. Here is Mama Bear "warm, friendly Mama Bear, from whom seldom is heard a discouraging word." And here is her alter ego. "Her smile was gone and she was feeling very discouraged. Why? Because life in the big tree house had turned into one long, miserable, never-ending blame game." This time, when finger-pointing occurs in the wake of a broken vase, Mama shouts "Enough!" Papa Bear hearing the commotion, arrives to calmly solve the problem. "Instead of playing the blame game, why don't we just go to work and solve the problem?" In a pose Mama generally reserves for her forays outside the treehouse, she is shown following Papa's instructions. Papa has solved the problem, leaving us to wonder and raise questions about whether the authors sense a need on the part of their audiences to view an effective paternal figure who can, at least occasionally, offset the intense control exerted by a mother.

Nevertheless, the continuity of contemporaneous books that reassert Mama Bear's wisdom and Papa Bear's ineffectiveness suggest that Mama Bear

is likely to remain the primary authority of the home for the foreseeable future. For example, in *The Berenstain Bears Lend a Helping Hand*, published in 1998, Mama Bear is shown losing sleep over a family problem, the selfishness of her cubs, while Papa Bear snores on. "I've got to find a way, thought Mama, to teach them that it's just as important to help others as it is to help themselves. But how? Lecturing hasn't worked. Nagging hasn't worked. And having Papa 'talk' to them seems to do more harm than good." This suggestion about Papa Bear's inability to communicate with his children echoes nearly two decades of storylines in the series. In a reiteration of the formula introduced in the 1980s, Mama Bear solves the problem by having her cubs learn to help other by helping an elderly woman in the neighborhood. Papa Bear might occasionally step into family problems, but his typical postures persist into books published in the new millennium: Papa Bear yells, engages in the same problematic behavior as his cubs, or simply does not notice problems, in part because he is often absent, or if present engaged in reading a newspaper or other activity that prevents him from close observation of his children.

This study raises interesting questions for scholars of the social construction of motherhood. First of all, we must ask, why was Mama Bear so passive in the 1960s and 1970s and so active in the 1980s and 1990s? It is true that children's literature has been characterized by increasing sophistication and awareness of child development. As one scholar of children's literature, Zena Sutherland, points out,

> Many of today's books are about serious subjects, deal with contemporary problems, and are designed for children whose sophistication has grown with their exposure to a media-dominated world—a world in which the developmental stages and needs of children are better understood and better reflected in their books than in the past. (1977: 58)

Yet psychologists were well aware of, and were widely publicizing, issues related to "ages and stages" by the 1950s (Grant, 1998). And it is clear that in the 1950s, and into the1960s, motherhood was idealized woman's true calling. As Julia Grant described the psychological theories of the 1940s and 1950s in her study of the history of advice literature to mothers, "Motherhood was seen as a defining aspect of female identity; those who did not embrace it could permanently damage their children's psychic well-being" 1998: 211). The historian Stephanie Coontz has also observed that by the 1950s, "child care absorbed more than twice as much time as it had in the 1920s" for women in the United States. Moreover, "for the first time, men as well as women were encouraged to root their identity and self-image in familial and parental roles" (1992: 27).

Thus the culture did not need to invent a devoted, confined to the home mother between the 1980s and the 1990s. This model was well established. In

fact, Mama Bear would seem to have many archetypical ancestors in the late nineteenth century when, as Rhoda Maxwell has observed, "The mother was the central figure in the family" in children's literature, and,

> ...the fathers in the stories exerted little or no moral force. They were dead, dulled by alcohol, or never referred to at all. The family was the social microcosm with the mother being the dispenser of knowledge. All of the stories published in the nineteenth century centered around the children discovering for themselves the truth of the mothers' definition of the world as fundamentally ordered by benign law. (Maxwell, 1994: 19)

Thus when Brother and Sister Bear try to subvert Mama Bear's new "politness plan" in *The Berenstain Bears Forget Their Manners*, their story is only reinscribing old cultural themes of "Mama knows best," the 1950s drama which highlighted Father suggestive of only a blip on the screen.

Yet just as historians have demonstrated that the 1950s model family was as much new invention as Victorian throwback, so Mama Bear also represents something new and something almost deliberately anachronistic (see May, 1988). It seems to me that three major historical developments may be implicated in the keeping of Mama Bear "in her place" barefoot and frock clad (if not often pregnant), and yet enlarged in her sphere of influence within the household. One development is clearly the expanded participation of women in the labor force. In the wake of the 1960s, cultural tensions about working mothers and feminist demands in general probably heightened the cultural interest in "involved mothering" and created an anachronistic space for mothers in ankle-length dresses within literature for young children, as the twentieth-century raced by.[4] Homey images of mothers seem to cushion the change. In this sense, perhaps Mama Bear was a conservative re-invention.

Yet her adherence to popular psychology made her an icon of the latter half of the twentieth-century, for Victorian mothers knew little until very late in the nineteenth century of psychological theories of child development (Grant, 1998: 39-69). The second historical development that helps explain Mama Bear is the popularization and even marketing of psychology towards the anxious consumer. In popular magazines directed at the relatively recent crop of upwardly mobile mothers who begin mothering in their 30s or 40s, mothers are clearly reminded on a regular basis that they need to be up to date on consumer products and expert psychological advice to manage the daunting task of parenting. A recent cover of just one *Parents* (1999) magazine makes the point with the following anxiety-producing headlines: "Stress is Contagious: Don't Let the Baby Catch It"; "Fussy Eater: Is It Your Child's Problem—Or Yours?"; "The Potty Debate: What's the Right Way to Toilet Teach?" and in case a mother wanted to try her hand at medicine or relying on her own judgment as a consumer, a couple of warnings: "3 Alternative

Remedies That Make Kids Sick" and "Must-Read Report: Is Your Child Safe in Her Car Seat?"

Paralleling all these changes has been a decline in community life, recently summarized in the noted book *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, by Robert Putnam (2001). This decline renders the role of parents, but especially ever-available mothers, on high alert for signs of emotional trouble, stranger danger, or junk food all the more important. The Berenstain Bears book series shows mothers as able to solve these problems with minimal support from community members, or, as we have seen, from spouses.

But could a mother be left to rule the roost alone when the stakes were so high, especially with rising cultural anxiety about single motherhood and the overall well being of children? The larger culture has continued to blame mothers (rather than for example, public policy on such issues as gun control or family-friendly workplaces), invoking charges of both underinvolvement or overrinvolvement. Might fears be re-emerging about the latter problem, especially in light of trends since the 1950s of involving "Dad" in critical family decisions? Examining Papa Bear's recent movement towards a new level of familial involvement, we might wonder how Mama Bear's level or type of involvement will shift in the future. As today's parents of young children struggle to negotiate the incredible high stakes of "perfect mothering" alongside "involved fathering," it will be interesting to observe how Mama and Papa Bear evolve as they continue to provide compelling representations of the nuclear family into the new millennium.

[1]For additional examples, see Ladd-Taylor and Umansky (1998).
[2]On the popularizing of psychology in the form of advice to mothers, see Grant (1998).
[3]Similarly, Rhoda Maxwell reported in her study of 46 novels of realistic fiction for ages 12-20 published between 1975 and 1992, "The adolescent literature published during the early 1970s did begin to reflect some of the changes that were occurring in society, but only through the characterization of young women, not adult women" (1994: 23).
[4]It is interesting to note that Rhoda Maxwell found that it was in the 1960s that for the first time mothers also become problematic characters in literature for youth ages 12-20. Mama Bear, aimed towards young children, escaped this fate, but only by remaining extremely domesticated (1994: 20).

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Kathryn Church and Lorraine Church

Needles and Pins
Dialogue on a Mother/Daughter Journey

"Needles and Pins" is an exploration into hearing, supporting and celebrating the public voice of my mother, Lorraine. It emerged over several years as part of our collaboration on "Fabrications: Stitching Ourselves Together." This exhibit featured 22 wedding dresses that Lorraine sewed in her basement for women in central and northern Alberta between 1950 and 1995 (Church, in press; 2001a, 2001b, 1998, online; Church and Martindale, 1999). It opened at the Red Deer and District Museum, Alberta, in July 1998 and toured six other museums across Canada before reaching the end of its unexpected journey in October 2002.[1] My mother and I were present at each gala opening. We presented "Needles and Pins" on four of these occasions to audiences large and small.

Kathryn: A feminist sociologist departs Toronto for her childhood home in central Alberta. In an unorthodox act of research, she designs a museum exhibit that features the work of a local dressmaker. I am the sociologist. My mother, Lorraine, is the dressmaker. The exhibit is a three-dimensional biography of her work featuring wedding dresses that she sewed for family, friends and neighbours. We want to share with you some of the story of how this joint project came to be.

Lorraine: When I was growing up we read the funny papers. That dates me I know. Today, we call them the comics. I remember Tilly the Toiler, Maggie and Jiggs, Ally Oop and Little Orphan Annie. Annie was a little red-haired girl who always wore a red dress. She had a little dog whose name was Sandy. He had big oval eyes and the only thing he ever said was "ARF." One day Annie was asked where she came from. After a long pause she said, "I just growed." Well, Fabrications was like that. It just growed. In that growing, it has given me the joy of seeing garments that I made—some 50 years ago—on

display not just in Red Deer where we began but across Canada. It has been an adventure.

Kathryn: A big part of our adventure has been exploring the differences in our two women's lives. Mom married young and has dedicated her life to the needs of others: husband, children, grandchildren, aging parents. Where in that life, I often wondered, did she find anything resembling Virginia Woolf's (1929) "room of one's own?"[2] Her answer came as a question. "What on earth would I have done," she asked me one day, "without my sewing?"

I never learned to sew. Eager to shed my small town ways, I married young to a man who was on the move; we have no children. I dedicated my life to work, travel and study, becoming the first person in my family to get a Ph.D. It was a strategy that rescued me from living my mother's life. But the process was arduous and alienating. When it was over, I no longer knew who I was in relation to my past. What did it mean that Lorraine's daughter had become Dr. Church? Having reached forty and the end of a postdoctoral fellowship, I turned back to find my mother, to revisit a place and a way of life previously rejected.

Lorraine: From the start, Kathryn has said this is not a story about wedding dresses or weddings. It is a story about women. Probably, the woman who started this story was my grandmother when she taught my mother to sew. My mother in turn taught me. But that is not unusual as one generation taught the next and many articles of clothing were sewn in the home. I took Home Economics in school then in 1947 I enrolled at Vermilion School of Agriculture

and Home Economics. These schools were established to assist farm kids to further their education. Classes started in September after harvest and ended in April before seeding time. When I graduated in 1949, I returned to Grande Prairie in northern Alberta and took a job with the Singer Sewing Machine Company.

As part of my training at Singer I was required to take their sewing lessons. From that point on, I used the Singer method of body measurement for all my sewing — entering the information on the empty pages of my children's used school scribblers. I added a sketch of the garment, a scrap of the fabric, pattern number and size and all alternations needed to make the garment fit. I have been called frugal. I purchased my first sewing machine as soon as I had saved enough money. I still have it, still use it and people are surprised I made all these garments on the same machine.

Kathryn: In May 1996, while visiting my parents, I watched my mother thumb through her sewing scribblers. I knew these booklets very well but for the first time, I really *saw* them. The social scientist in me recognized these rather ragged objects as original data, a priceless case history of skilled domestic sewing. In that moment, the idea of an exhibit sprang into my mind. The next day, while having lunch in the Red Deer Co-op Cafeteria, I spoke to Mom about doing a one-woman show of her work. What I remember of that encounter is her silence, the tiny noise she made in her throat and the way her eyes slid away from mine. "A hair-brained scheme that won't amount to anything." She didn't actually say those words but they hung in the air.

Lorraine: I was on the verge of destroying the scribblers. Who besides me would find them interesting? So I was startled when Kathryn dreamed that she saw the wedding dresses displayed in a large room. "I could see them in a museum," she said. "I'd like to do this. Would you like to be involved?" I instantly saw myself on a pedestal. "No way." I said. "You can't do this to me." Some time later she phoned from Toronto and asked if I had changed my mind. I heard myself saying "Kathryn, if you feel so strongly about this, go ahead." So these old scribblers with the record of years of sewing sparked the formation of this exhibit.

Kathryn: I had never done research that involved material objects. Secretly, I didn't feel very confident about my skills in pulling the exhibit off. But I was sufficiently curious to draft a short description of what I wanted to do and post it on a number of email discussion lists. The response pleased and amazed me as scholars from all over North America urged me forward. Their confidence in the idea helped me to push my mother along. I was also motivated by a strong need to close the gap that time, space and experience had created between her and me. A few weeks later, I called to tell her that the Red Deer Museum had agreed to partner with us. "I must tell you," she confessed, "that when you first told me about this I thought it would never happen. It was beyond my imagination. Maybe I don't consider my sewing as something outstanding that I have done." From that point onwards, my mother has had

to grapple with the public interest in what she has been doing in her basement for almost 50 years.

Lorraine: My first task was to search for "brides" and addresses. There were thirty wedding dresses noted in my books; I made contact with twenty-six of the women who owned them. Some didn't want their dress on display. One dyed hers and shortened it to wear again. One threw hers away after a difficult divorce. One dress was dry-cleaned and sealed in a box for safe storage and we didn't think the lady would want to give it to us. But, she said, "A thing of beauty is a thing to share." This dress just happened to be the last one I made. In the end we had 22 dresses. Kathryn added my mother's because she said it was part of the story.

In the winter of 1997, Kathryn came home for a month to interview the "brides," some by phone, some with a visit. Transcripts of those interviews were sent to them for approval before their stories appeared in the exhibit. A lot of time was spent doing everything correctly. She also interviewed me and had her first contact with the Red Deer Museum. They proceeded to find a space for the exhibit.

Before returning to Toronto Kathryn decided to have a coffee party. "Brides" came from Edmonton to Innisfail. Some came with their mothers; some brought their dresses. I couldn't believe the interest and excitement. The executive director of the museum explained how the dresses would be stored, cared for and insured. I told the women that I had kept their measurements a secret for years and now Kathryn was exposing them to the world. One girl said she wouldn't mind seeing her measurements from way back then.

Kathryn: I was still at sea about how everything would come together but I trusted the process of the research. Mom was somewhat preoccupied through this time caring for grandchildren. It wasn't necessarily easy for her to take the time to talk but we did manage several long conversations about her early life and the evolution of her work. I learned much that I had not known but the most compelling part was teaching myself to attend to what she said. As her daughter I tended to tune her out but as a researcher her words were vital to me. Slowly, almost fearfully, my disregard flipped over.

Interviewing Mom's "brides" quickly revealed the special role that my mother occupied in their lives. Like the sales personnel in bridal stores, she watched them use their dresses to absorb the bridal identity. The important difference was that she wasn't a paid stranger. She accomplished her task in the context of non-commercial, collaborative and personal relationships. The women of Mom's community fed her sewing activities with a nineteenth-century desire for special attention and advice with respect to their clothing. In return, she had a way of making them feel right at home—comfortable with their bodies and how they would look in the dress. They had fun together.

The "brides'" enthusiasm for my mother, her skill and attentiveness, laid down an emotional trail of crumbs that helped me discover/recover my love for Mom. As I studied her work, I felt surges of pride and identification.

Unexpectedly, I saw myself in Mom's record keeping and in the natural way that she linked garments to women's stories. I saw myself in the trust that she built through careful listening, in her attempts to translate other people's visions into reality, and in corresponding attempts to have her say as a woman with considerable expertise.

Lorraine: Kathryn then returned to Toronto to transcribe and write the dress stories and also the story of my sewing life. She made contact with *Elm Street Magazine* and they published a lovely article about the exhibit, nicely illustrated. It was distributed free with the local papers so the news spread across the country very quickly. Kathryn was also in touch with the program *This Morning* and before we knew it a CBC producer came to Lacombe to tape an interview with me (Church and Church, 1998).

Because the resulting radio documentary focused on our relationship, it stirred a lot of emotion in me. Some people got the impression that Kathryn and I didn't get along when she was growing up. The morning the tape was aired, I listened alone in my kitchen. I couldn't believe the impact my own voice had on me. The production was nicely done. It was clear and her point was well made, but it upset me and though I have listened to it several times, I still have trouble. It wasn't until I had talked to other people about it that I understood our situation wasn't unusual. One woman consoled me by saying: "Any woman who has raised a daughter will know that it involves conflict." It is this particular dimension that has touched people the most. So, we have cried a little but laughed a lot.

Kathryn: Doing the radio documentary was a turning point in our story. After I had networked my way to the executive producer of *This Morning*, I had to call Mom and tell her what I had done. It is interesting that she didn't refuse outright. Perhaps her confidence was growing; perhaps she was just curious. I didn't tell her that going on national radio scared me silly. It has always been my role to be adventurous, to seem certain. Mom and I were interviewed separately. I didn't hold much back and my sense is that she didn't either. She didn't ask me what I had said and I didn't ask her. We both spilled our guts and settled in to wait the outcome.

Well, "settled" is probably the wrong word. Many nights I tossed and turned remembering outrageous bits and pieces of things that I had said, and wondering how they would be used. I suspect Mom did the same. The morning that the documentary finally aired, I listened while the tears ran steadily down my cheeks. What hit me hardest was how clearly and strongly my mother's voice rose to meet my own, this woman who just the previous year was convinced that no one would be interested in her world. Yet here she was telling—and hearing—her story.

Lorraine: The oldest dress in the exhibit is my mother's. Her mother made it for her in 1928. The first wedding dress I made was fifty years old in 2000. I attended the couple's anniversary celebration in Hythe, Alberta. The second and third dresses are 50 this year. One of them is mine. I married young! The

rest of the wedding dresses in the display were made for relatives, friends and Kathryn's school chums. When time came for the dresses to be prepared for display, the museum called me and I spent time helping mend and press and put the dresses on mannequins. This was no easy task.

The mannequins had been used to display a story about nuns of Alberta. They required only shoulders and torso in order to hold the flowing gowns the Sisters wore. But the brides had twenty-four inch waists. A lady spent hours with a heated knife whittling the foam to make a slender waistline. You may be interested to know that the dresses travel on the mannequins. They travel in a special air-conditioned van. Cloth bags were made to slip over them. They are displayed under low lights. People who handle them wear white gloves. In Hull they were displayed behind glass. As someone who has seen and handled the garments so frequently, I find this very curious.

Kathryn: One of my major tasks was to write the various narratives that frame and illuminate the objects in the exhibit—and to generate publicity. I was more successful with this than I hoped. However, the staging of the objects themselves was new to me and I had to rely for that on the expertise of Museum staff. It was a good collaboration but not without tension. For example, when we were still building the exhibit, one of our behind the scenes visitors questioned our use of pastel colors for the text panels suggesting that it was too "Martha Stewart." Were we not re-feminizing rather than liberating these garments, and by implication, these women?

As my mother's daughter the colors of the text panels were not a problem. As a feminist sociologist I agonized over them. Eventually, after intense discussion, the museum staff and I agreed that we could live with the logic of pastel. Pale mauve, pink, and yellow are the colors Mom worked in, the colors that society offers women to express the feminine. We decided, however, to give them an edge of darkness by doing all of the photos in black and white, and to introduce other design elements that would break the "sweetness and light" of the dresses. I felt good about the changes and about working with local ideas and resources. In keeping with the rich legacy of prairie women, Fabrications is homespun. It reflects Central Alberta, not Toronto. Although that decision split me in two, I was happy at that stage to make room for my small town self. Thus, the exhibit is an act of recuperation, of saying, finally, what is here is good enough.

Lorraine: On opening day in Red Deer the display looked lovely. All the hard work was worthwhile. Three ladies from the museum staff arrived at the official opening wearing their wedding dresses—so you see even though we say wedding dresses are not the story, the idea is still there. At the opening, the museum announced the exhibit would go on tour. I started to worry again. I felt this story was popular because it was local so how would it be accepted in the East? The museum staff assured me the interest is national and they were right. We were welcomed warmly in Ottawa. The text was printed in French and English; the dresses sparkled against the background of bright blue walls.

Kathryn: One of the strongest and most frightening aspects of inventing the exhibit was crossing the line Mom and I each draw between private and public aspects of our lives. We had to imagine ourselves as public people. For Mom the change was more pronounced. Sometimes she seemed to experience the interest that I generated around her as a genuine threat. At one point, she expressed concern at what people would think of her because of the exhibit—as if there was an element of shame in her sudden visibility. "I am," she said, "the mouse behind the door." Living the contradiction between this reading of self and the one I was constructing was not easy and she often retreated to the domestic. More then once she exclaimed that it simply could not be her life and work that people found compelling. "You are doing this!" she accused. It was difficult for me to understand why this was a problem—even though I had my own troubles being more visible. So we struggled, alone and together, to make sense of ourselves in the context of our collaboration.

Lorraine: The little town I live in did not pick up on our story very well. We were featured in other newspapers but not in the Lacombe Globe, even though they had the necessary information and people working at the paper knew me. Finally, a reporter phoned asking for an interview. She sat in my living room and asked me where the story started. And so I explained how I began to sew as a young mother, isolated with small children and wanting to make contact with other women. The reporter took everything down and went away to write her story. I could hardly wait for the *Globe* to arrive the following Tuesday. When I opened it there I was on the front page. But the first line described me as "a Lacombe woman who once found herself living in a world of loneliness"! Now, that description came as quite a shock. In fact, when I initially told this story I remembered the headline itself as "Local woman lives life of loneliness." That's how much impact the description had on me.

At the same time, we have been positively recognized from many different sources: from our member of parliament to the little lady who told me that this display of women's work meant more to her than an art display where she couldn't figure out its meaning. We have also had many beautiful cards, letters, phone calls and messages left in the museum. The exhibit has reunited me with people I hadn't seen for years. And it has had a wonderful effect on my family. We are all closer together.

Kathryn: As I watched my mother change, I recognized the many changes that I lived through in the course of fifteen years of post-secondary education. University gave me new ways of being in and interpreting the world that, on my side at least, ruptured and displaced my relationship with my mother. These class-based separations remain but I know now that they are more structural than personal. Working on Fabrications has helped me to both identify and bridge them. It has been a rich and satisfying way to pay attention to my mother's life—and by extension the lives of other women who have been deeply engaged in skilled domestic labor.

I relate to my mother differently now than I did when we first started. I

consciously take pleasure in her creativity, revealed so clearly in the luminosity of the wedding dresses. I have a sense of our common creativity and sensuality that strengthens me. Collaborating on the exhibit has taught me my mother's legitimacy—a piece of my emotional life that had been missing. Politically, it has been very satisfying to bring forward the story of an (extra)ordinary woman, and an invisible social history.

Commentary

To fully appreciate this dialogue, it is important to understand how it came to be. Until her engagement with Fabrications, Lorraine had no experience as a public speaker and no confidence that she had anything significant to say. She made her first speech to the crowd that gathered to mark the inaugural exhibit opening. I am certain she hoped that it would be her last. However, about a year later, when the exhibit was in Calgary, the Glenbow Museum staff asked Lorraine whether she would speak to the mostly-seniors audience who attended a program called "Terrific Tuesdays." What could she say? With me in Toronto, too far away to do the "gig," she was the only choice.

So, she sat at the kitchen table—that taken-for-granted focal point of nurturing where home-cooked meals were consumed and homemade dresses were constructed—and with pencil and paper she took up the unfamiliar work of writing. It was not easy but, leaning on my father's advice to just tell her own story, she eventually produced something she liked. It was a good speech: informative, amusing and delivered with an assurance that startled Margaret, her daughter-in-law (and driver) who stood listening and watching in the wings.

When that event was over, I asked Lorraine to send me her notes. I typed her words into a computer file, initially just to give her hard copy for her scrapbook, but later to play with/against as I wrote about our collaboration (Church 2001a). Something new and exciting emerged as I spliced our accounts together, something I wanted to share with our Fabrications visitors. Quite naturally — but holding hands for courage — we turned to performance.

It was here that Lorraine most surprised me, for she took to the stage with amazing presence—particularly with a responsive audience. The high point for us was at the Museum for Textiles in Toronto where the auditorium was full of my friends and colleagues. The small space filled quickly. It overflowed. It buzzed with rich anticipation. I introduced the talk then paused for her opening segment. "When I was a little girl we read the funny papers," she began, and was met by a warm wave of laughter. From that moment they were with her and she expanded into their approval, delivering her lines like a stand up comic.

At one point, I looked down at my copy of our script in confusion. She was not sticking to the prepared text! Instead, she was making jokes about herself and about me that just came to her in the moment. I rolled my eyes at the audience, pointed to my notes and shrugged helplessly: daughter as straight woman! Similarly, in St. Catharines, she drew a piece of hand-written text out of her pocket and, with a wicked grin, read out a whole new story. I loved the

playfulness of these incidents and the joy she took in positioning me as a stodgy stick-to-the-page academic.

I entered Lorraine's interventions into the evolving text. It improved. And our delivery improved with each outing. We gained a sense of timing and relaxed our pace. The wonder of it has never left me, watching and feeling this 1950s housewife move from silence to speech, from the background to the podium, from invisibility to vibrant and humorous visibility. In the course of introducing Fabrications to visitors across the country, Lorraine stitched herself a whole new persona.

[1]The sites were: Museum of Civilization in Hull, Quebec, Glenbow Museum in Calgary, Nova Scotia Museum of Industry in Stellarton, Textile Museum of Canada in Toronto, St. Catharines Museum and Thunder Bay Art Gallery.
[2]"All I could do," Woolf wrote, " was to offer you an opinion upon one minor point—a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction; and that, as you will see, leaves the great problem of the true nature of woman and the true nature of fiction unsolved" (pgs. 7-8).

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Jill Scott

liquid wisdom

baby birth me,
midwife my soul.
mother me,
smother me,
bathe me
with your glow

radiant light rages
from my womb in
echoes, rippling
on your pond
of love

your liquid wisdom
permeates
my very pores and
seeps under my skin
like rich nourishing
nectar.

your *sagesse*
lines my womb
and you swim me to the
deep
of an ocean floor.

reeling, dizzy with
vertigo
a struggle to maintain
equilibrium
under your tow

Jill Scott

"let go! let go!"
you say
"wave motion
is your anchor
not your woe."

vanquished,
my body cedes
to your delicious flow,
heeds your wishes
and i am washed
crystal crisp
in your splash

water rushing, gushing
in reckless abandon.
this frolic initiates me
to your rhythmic tune.

a hasty
pas de deux,
is choreographed
in your surf.
you be my lead –
wet and dripping –
i follow as you go.

baby,
you rare beauty!
partner me
dance me
midwife my soul.

for you, baby – j.s.
01.05.02

Jennifer Musial

"Pregnancy Chic"
The Marketing of Maternity Wear

Through Mary Russo's (1995)"female grotesque" and Julia Kristeva's (1982) theory of the "abject," the pregnant body can be seen as a site of transgression because it threatens spatial and cultural boundaries. Re-contextualizing the potentially transgressive pregnant body occurs through re*dressing* it. One method of diffusing this corporeal threat is through maternity wear that contains the body and often has the effect of infantilizing or matronizing pregnant women, ultimately serving to efface a pregnant woman's sexuality. As stylized maternity wear becomes increasingly more expensive, class status is an important factor to consider in looking at who purchases maternity apparel and who finds alternatives to buying new, and temporary, clothing. This paper examines the gendered dynamics involved in marketing maternity clothes to women and the underlying social construction of the proper pregnant subject. Using clothing designs and catalogues as the site of study, maternity apparel can be read as a vehicle for containing the abject and grotesque pregnant body; a corporeality which if left unregulated, may destabilize the self/other boundary.

Mary Russo's (1995) study of the "female grotesque" has implications for pregnancy discourse. Borrowing from Mikhail Bakhtin who writes the grotesque body as an "open, protruding, extended, secreting body, the body of becoming, process and change" (qtd. in Russo, 1995: 62-63), Russo reconfigures the "grotesque" as "grotto-esque" which "proceeds quite swiftly to the further identification of the grotto with the womb, and with woman-as-mother" (29). The grotto is a cavernous, inhabited and subterranean spatial geography. These same tropes can be applied to the pregnant body as well, which is said to be a fetal container, appearing distended and occupied. The difference between the grotto and the pregnant body is the former is an inverted

space while the latter is convex and protrudes into public space. The distinction is important because taking up physical space is a transgressive act for women.

In Western culture, the female body is supposed to take up minimal physical space and women are admonished for being "too large." In *The Hunger Artists*, Maud Ellman writes: "The fat woman ... has come to embody everything the prosperous must disavow: imperialism, exploitation, surplus value, maternity, morality, abjection, and unloveliness. Heavier with projections than with the flesh, she siphons off this guilt, desire, and denial, leaving her idealized counterpart behind..." (qtd. in Russo, 1995: 24). The large female body disturbs social norms in part because it refuses to concede to spatial standard—it takes up more than it has been allotted. A link can be made to pregnancy, then, because the pregnant body too violates rules of public space—both types of bodies are public spectacles. Although the pregnant body does not symbolize laziness and greed like the fat body, it does signify sexuality out of control. If fatness is oral excess, pregnancy is vaginal excess. Pregnancy can be read as a sign of failed contraception, the assumption being that if a woman is pregnant, she has had heterosexual intercourse to become so. This is problematic because not only does it reflect a heterosexist culture, it negates women who have been raped, or have chosen to be surrogates. In any event, there are links to be made between the fat and pregnant body: both are subversive forms that call into question corporeal norms.

The fat body is often understood to be pregnant. When a woman is heavier around her abdomen than anywhere else, she is assumed to be pregnant and may be asked, "when is the baby due?" However, conflating pregnancy and fat discourses is not without problems. While both bodies are large, the pregnant body is temporal and therefore accepted. As well, the end result of a pregnant body is a child, which reflects the biological imperative for women. So while pregnancy is sanctioned, fatness is not; the two states represent Julia Kristeva's (1982) "abject" because they are bodies which provoke panic based on ambiguity.

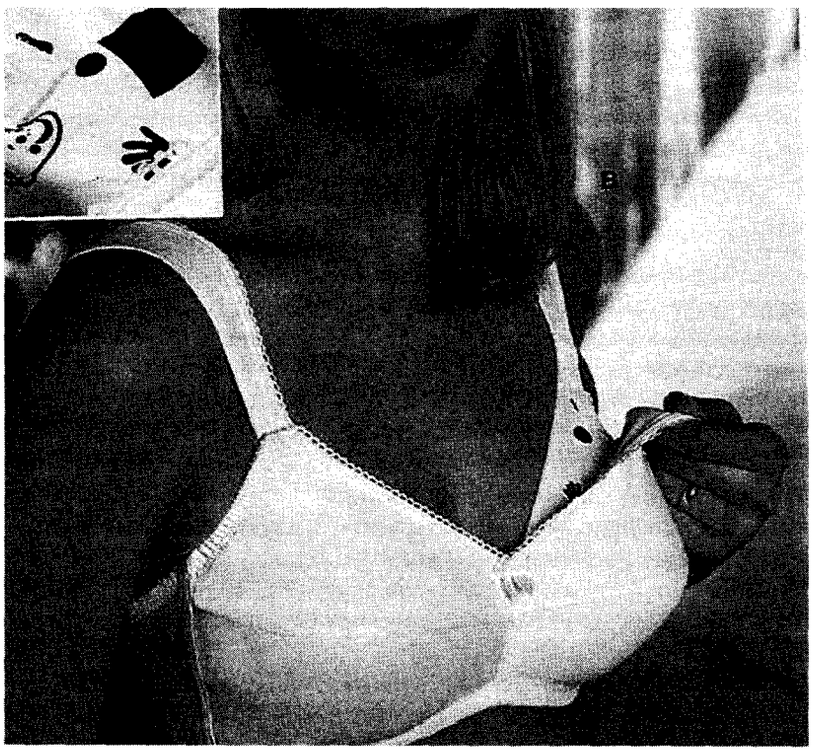
Building on Lacan's "subject" and "object," Kristeva adds a third term to explain another dynamic of selfhood. In defining the abject, she writes: "We may call it a border; abjection is above all ambiguity. Because, while releasing a hold, it does not radically cut off the subject from what threatens it—on the contrary, abjection acknowledges it is to be in perpetual danger" (1982: 9). Abjection is a form of liminality—it is neither subject nor object but a reminder of waste, disease and disorder. Pregnancy is a visual manifestation of this concept. A distended "belly" is a visual reminder that one "came from there"—at one point, there was a symbiotic connection to the female body. Since this association is not healthy or productive for a fully individuated person, the abject is to be renounced.

Another important way of looking at abjection refers to bodily fluids connected to the pregnant body. For Mary Douglas, "what is disturbing about the viscous or the fluid is its refusal to conform to the laws governing the clean

and proper, the solid and the self-identical, its otherness to the notion of an entity" (qtd. in Grosz, 1994: 195) The pregnant body is one that embodies abjection because although it contains, it also threatens to release corporeal flows.

One way of looking at how the "leaky" maternal body is contained is through the representation of nursing bras, as pictured in the *JC Penney Catalogue*. Although most women do not lactate while pregnant, women who have had more than four children or those who become pregnant again shortly after giving birth may. Therefore, it is not uncommon to find nursing bras marketed in a maternity clothes catalogue. In addition to providing easy access to the breast during nursing, these bras contain taboo fluid. Public lactation is a site of embarrassment for post-partum women. Similar to the marketing of feminine hygiene products, advertisements for these nursing bras promise absorbency and padding. Just as the menstruating woman is forbidden, so is the lactating woman.

Representing the lactating woman requires recontextualization. Women in nearly every picture are shown teasing to remove the flap in the bra, but,



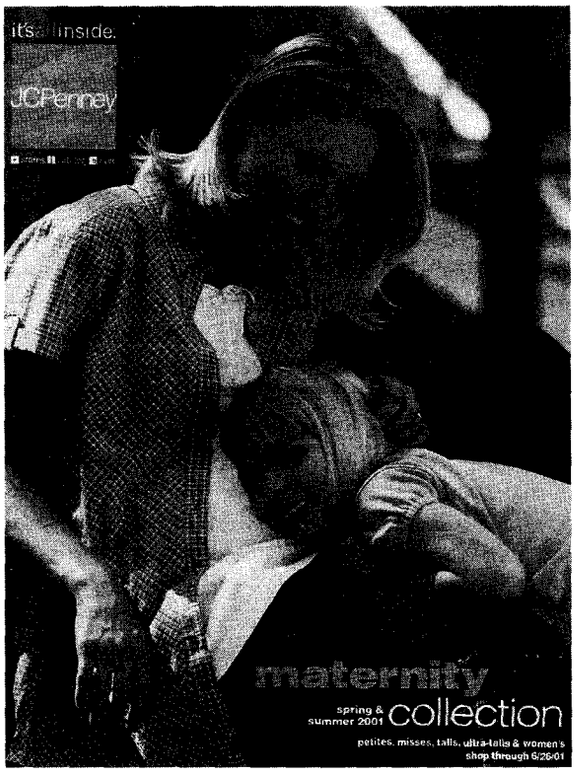
"Love at First Sight Bra." JC Penney Maternity Collection Catalogue. Spring/Summer 2001. Source: © JCP Media L.P. 2002 All Rights Reserved.

whereas the removing of a bra would be a sexualized act in another publication, here is a reminder that a woman's breasts are functional and no longer her own. The "Love at First Sight Bra" features red and black shapes that encourage a baby's focus on the breast during nursing. This product, along with other nursing bras, re-focuses the attention from breast as site of sexual pleasure to breast as nourishment. Interestingly, all the nursing bras in the *JC Penney Catalogue* are white or off- white. Here, the functionality is recalled but a look of childishness is promoted. The "Love at First Sight" bra is interesting because it features black and red, colours traditionally associated with active sexuality. However, these colours serve a function in that they are meant to act as focal points for the baby's attention, thereby promoting intellectual stimulation for the child. So, both the tantalization of bra removal and the otherwise-sexualized colours are refigured in the form of utility; again, a pregnant woman's sexuality is effaced. Denial of adult sexuality will be returned to later. However, it is important to note that the pregnant body's abjection is contained through a disciplinary apparatus, here maternity clothes. Not only does clothing work to regulate the body, but it is also corresponds to a *normalized* gender performance.

If the physical pregnant body marks the sex as female, the clothed body goes one step further to signify its gender as feminine. There are two versions of femininity manifested in representations of maternity clothes. Continually in department store catalogues, like JC Penney, women are both infantilized and matronized. Presented in this way, the pregnant woman is denied agency and mature sexuality. She is also contained within the normalized versions of femininity.

Popular representations of maternity clothes in store catalogues depict women as juvenile and "girlish." Infantilization is achieved through both the design of the clothes and representations of the models. Often, maternity clothes have childish patterns on them such as bows, polka dots or flowers and are frequently only available in pastel colours. This makes sense in light of the fact that recently the maternity buyer at Sears "was promoted from the junior department to draw from the youthful fashion sensibility." (Steinhauer, 1997: 34). There are rarely bold, dark-coloured clothing except in business attire where power-dressing is appropriate. Maternity patterns reinforce femininity because they are light, airy and unobtrusive—as women are supposed to be, according to the beauty myth. It is not surprising that the most popular cut for a maternity dress is an A-Line, commonly referred to as a "baby doll" dress. This style de-emphasizes the protruding tummy while re-emphasizing childishness.

Infantilization appears not only in the styles and patterns of clothing, but also in the representations of the pregnant models. Often, the women are shown to feature a child resting her head on a woman's pregnant belly. All but one of the other images with children in the *JC Penney Catalogue* depict women touching the child in nurturing or guiding manner. This representation



"Front Cover." JC Penney Maternity Collection Catalogue. Spring/Summer 2001 Source: © JCP Media L.P. 2002 All Rights Reserved.

normalizes the ideology that women possess an "innate" maternal instinct to "mother."

If pregnant women are not infantilized through representations of maternity clothes, they are matronized instead. The message to pregnant women is that they should begin to "look the part" and "dress appropriately." Many women report "feeling old" when they become pregnant. In this way, the clothes marketed to pregnant women reinforce pregnancy as a temporal period of maturation—such clothing marks a new stage in life when a woman is assumed to go from being independent and childless to enacting her role as mother. These two stages are generally mutually exclusive.

The matronly look is still present in contemporary clothing designs. A recent visit to the maternity store in Toledo's Franklin Park Mall revealed the majority of mannequins sporting pearl necklaces and scarves, which have come to signify motherhood or grandmotherhood. It is not unusual to find maternity clothes manuals featuring dowdy and frumpy patterns. These types of outfits, or accessories, reflect a pregnant woman's impending "status" as mother-to-be. Some women choose to find alternatives to maternity clothing stores. If the designs do not detract consumers, the prices may.

Often, pregnant women look to plus size clothing as an alternative to designated maternity clothes. This is another way of connecting fat and pregnancy discourses because both types of women shop at similar stores. In fact, Lane Bryant began as a maternity store. Unfortunately, the matronly look is marketed to large woman as well; but, according to magazine *Entertainment Weekly*, plus-size stores are re-vamping their clothing lines. In "Frump Change," Clarissa Cruz writes: "They're not your mother's fashion lines anymore. Matronly brands like Lane Bryant, Naturalizer, and Easy Spirit are revamping their images with trendier fashions and eye-catching ads" (2000: 22). The article goes on to quote Naturalizer's Maggie Laver who says, "We need to ditch the old-lady stuff [to appeal to] a younger audience" (qtd. in Cruz, 2000: 22). It is as if the large body, whether fat or pregnant, signifies motherhood. In a return to Mary Russo's (1995) "grotto-esque," the large body is always a return to the maternal. Ultimately, the matron look functions as a reminder this body is "off-limits." Whether the woman is fat or pregnant, her body is *not* to be read as sexually attractive.

Female sexuality is denied to the pregnant woman as she is no longer a sexy, but instead sexed body—one which is inscribed as female by pregnancy. Woman must renounce her sexual desire while pregnant or risk social vilification as her own needs are to be secondary to that of the fetus. Instead, the pregnant body is a chaste one despite the mark of sex since it is assumed that pregnancy is the result of sexual intercourse. If cultural discourse constructs pregnant women as "mothers-to-be," sexual activity with a man recalls the Oedipal complex of attraction to the maternal which is to be sublimated. Therefore, pregnant women are seen as asexual beings.

One explanation of infantilization of pregnant women relates directly to sexuality. By appearing youthful and innocent, the pregnant body is *desexualized.* Since it is assumed that a woman has been sexually active to become pregnant, making her look like a child erases adult female sexuality—a sexuality that is threatening in Western culture. A pregnant woman is further thought of as asexual because there is the assumption her body has now become that of a mother's. Her body is claimed by the fetus she carries and in a form of projection, the pregnant woman's body becomes that of "her" child.

Lingerie marketed to pregnant woman similarly infantilizes the wearer. LSR Maternity sells "sleepwear with sass" to women who "don't abstain from intimacy during pregnancy" (Rudolph, 2001). According to Laura S. Rudolph, designer and founder of LSR Maternity, the company recognizes that although "maternity clothes in general has seen a major shift in design during recent years from dowdy to chic, maternity sleepwear of other manufacturers has not followed that trend," so LSR Maternity offers "true negligees in styles that range from conservative to alluring to 'shagadellic'" (Rudolph, 2001).

The representation of the clothing follows the same format—pregnant women looking juvenile. The "Shagadellic" outfit is a baby doll negligee available in pastel blue only. It is sported by a woman who looks like a 1960s

From left to right, LSR Maternity, "Shagadellic," www.lsrmaternity.com www.lsrmaternity.com. LSR Maternity, "Flirty." Source: All photographs on the LSR Maternity website © Joshua Sheldon 2002. All layout, garment designs, and content © LSR Maternity 2002.

"flower child," quite literally since she has a flower in her hair. The "Flirty" outfit is only available in white, ironically recalling images of virginity. It is as if the Virgin Mary is remembered—a woman who is pregnant without sexual intercourse. The same model is pictured here also in a very girlish pose.

While such representations lend themselves to an analysis of gender, there is also much to be said about class biases. The decision to purchase maternity clothes, especially speciality apparel such as the aforementioned LSR Maternity sleepwear, is a "choice" only available to certain groups of women. According to maternity clothes manuals, and other clothing advice texts, what is most important for a pregnant woman in choosing clothing is to maintain her sense of "style." "Style" often comes with a hefty price tag, which many cannot afford. Upper class women can afford to be "pregnancy chic" and fashion designers are branching out into the maternity clothes market.

Pumpkin Maternity is one such company that markets designer maternity clothes. Created by Pumpkin Wentzel, Pumpkin Maternity was conceived in the fall of 1996 as [Wentzel] toured Europe with her rock band in a converted fish truck. She thought of her sister and her best friend back home, both

Pumpkin Maternity Catalogue. Fall 2000.Source: © Pumpkin Maternity.

pregnant and complaining that they had nothing to wear. She knew exactly what was needed-a fresh, simple line of maternity clothes for the practical as well as fashion-savy woman. (Pumpkin Maternity, 2001)

According to Wentzel, "Pregnancy should not require a radical break from personal style" (Pumpkin Maternity, 2001). Located in New York's bohemian Soho district, Pumpkin Maternity sells clothing aimed at "chic" women with money to spend.

What is interesting about Pumpkin Maternity is the representation of the pregnant women in both its advertising and website. The models pictured here are neither infantilized nor matronized, as in other publications. The model in this image is especially subversive as she assumes a seated posture associated with masculinity, legs spread and arm between her legs. The picture is recuperated, though, with the attention paid to her high heels—a reminder of her femininity. Perhaps these advertisements assert that only upper class women can afford to be transgressive.

Catalogues, such as *JC Penney*, market maternity clothes to target audiences as well—in this case middle to upper class women. Through these publications, and the products sold, consumers can buy into a manufactured lifestyle. Catalogue shopping is a class signifier because it represents a leisure activity *afforded* to those who have time to browse through the pages. Class status is also represented in these catalogues because some must be purchased, such as those produced by Abercrombie and Fitch. It is an interesting double consumption—one must buy the catalogue in order to purchase the merchandise advertised. The aforementioned department store JC Penney targets a middle-class consumer because the clothes are "reasonably priced" and reflect imitation designer styles that are somewhat conservative in appearance. However, catalogue shopping targets an upper class consumer who can afford the inflated prices caused by shipping and other related charges. In addition to the ideology tacit in catalogue shopping is the class discourse found in the catalogue's visual representations.

In the *JC Penney Catalogue*, of the ten pregnant women used as models, only one model is not wearing a wedding ring in any of her pictures. The ideology maintained in these representations is a heteronormative discourse as the wedding ring signifies a heterosexual coupling sanctioned by religion and/or state. The wedding ring combined with the presence of young children in the *JC Penney Catalogue* also maintains the "ideal" of a nuclear family.

Another lifestyle discourse is presented in catalogues selling specific maternity items. One example is Mothers in Motion—a company that markets exercise clothing to pregnant women. Their catalogue reads:

> Mothers in Motion is driven and inspired by the internal strength that is evident in all women by the magic of the birth process, and the indomitable human spirit. We honor that strength with a patented line of performance-driven maternity athletic apparel that supports a

> woman during the most important time in her life; the anticipation of the birth of her child. (Hilpert, 2001)

Despite the essentialist tone of the introduction, Mothers in Motion is both a progressive and regressive company. The catalogue is one of the few that depict the naked pregnant belly. The front cover presents two obviously pregnant women enjoying the sight of their own and each other's distended bodies. However, as with the *JC Penney Catalogue*, the majority of women are pictured wearing wedding bands signifying heteronormativity.

"Front Cover." Mothers in Motion Catalogue 2000. Source: Mothers In Motion®

Clothing manuals point out that a woman should not lose her fashion sense while pregnant; she should maintain her pre-pregnancy identity as signified through clothing. Cherie Serota and Jody Kozlow Gardner write in *Pregnancy Chic: The Fashion Survial Guide*:

> The main point we stress day in and day out is, at all costs, hold on to your style. Maintain it during your pregnancy. Your style before you became pregnant should continue to be your style during your pregnancy. You are still the same person.... It's probably taken you many years, possibly decades, to perfect your look. (1998: 12-13)

It is not a coincidence that this book points to a sense of "chic" when referring to style. Written by two young urban professionals, these people present themselves as informative—these women are "in the know." There is a perisocial relationship with the reader because both texts address the reader directly. Serota and Gardner (1998) appear as women who have "learned the hard way" how to dress fashionably while pregnant, and they are willing to impart this information to "you," the reader. But again, the "you" interpolated is a class specific one.

Women who cannot afford to purchase new articles of clothing do find alternate sources of maternity wear. One common alternative is sewing and there are many pattern books available at local libraries or fabric stores. Interestingly, these sources, though reinforcing a need for style, promote body image in a different way. For example, *Great Expectations* (Adams and Madaras, 1980) claims to come from the "if you've got it, flaunt it" school. It is one of the only books to include pictures of the naked pregnant body delighting in being nude. Patterns found in *Great Expectations* are "not little-girlish or belly-hiding" and the designers "wanted clothes that would hang well on pregnant bodies ... [and] could be personalized to suit any woman's lifestyle, whether it was urban career woman, suburban housewife, or rural earth mama"(Adams and Madaras, 1980: 5) Patterns in this book are aimed at women with minimal sewing skills so that anyone wanting to could create their own maternity clothes.

Lynn Sutherland's *Pregnant and Chic* (1989), in addition to being a guide to purchasing maternity clothes, offers various alternatives as well. Sutherland suggests visiting thrift and second-hand stores to find clothes that can be modified to suit one's style. A tip Sutherland offers is to "find a good store located near your home or office and stop by often. Because the inventory is one-of-a-kind, you either hit the jackpot or you don't. A perfectly wonderful outfit that's on the racks one day may be gone the next" (1989: 45). In addition to buying clothes to modify, some maternity companies will re-shape current clothes to fit properly. L'Attesa is one such company that offers to "maternalize" Levi 501 jeans. For $19.00, L'Attesa (2001) will insert into a cotton lycra panel with an adjustable elastic waist band and button into a woman's pair of jeans or

trousers. This cost efficient process allows a pregnant woman to wear her current clothing for the duration of her pregnancy.

A final alternative to purchasing new maternity apparel is to borrow clothing from another person. Drop-in centres and social service organizations that help young and low-income pregnant women often collect clothing for re-distribution. Similarly, some will often lend maternity clothes to family members and friends. The passing on of clothing creates a female-centred community. It is in this space that women offer advice to each other on pregnancy, birthing and parenthood. This female-centred activity subverts materialism because by borrowing maternity wear, a pregnant woman opts out of the market.

Maternity clothes are a problematic contestation where women must negotiate both infantilization and matronization, and "style" and budget. In addition, pregnant women contend with the beauty myth that contributes to negative self-image. Adams and Madaras write: "Most of us have enough vanity to enjoy the way we look dressed up in clothing we like. It's especially important to support your vanity when you're pregnant. Our self-images depend at least in part on the messages we get from those around us" (1980: 4). Since the marketing of maternity clothes is a $1.5 billion industry (Murphy, 2000), it is crucial to reinforce positive representations of pregnant women and create mature, and affordable, apparel to clothe them.

Notes:

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Andra McCartney

coiled chalk circles

the mathematics of separation

we started with simple
arithmetic
one family divided
by violence
equals two
remainder one, remainder two, remainder three

mathematics to pacify
- how many? just three
sleeps until you see me
can you count
to three?
one two three
yes, that's it, three, just

we segment life
turn on our heads and repeat
indefinitely. Fractured
patterns form frost on a
windowpane behind plastic and tape,
the wind still whistling through.
This is a hole mathematics
cannot even estimate.

The true mother

Each of the parents claimed them
So the law said
- Divide the living
in two, let
them be pulled to pieces by
the desires of their parents, for
they each have the right
of appeal
the next year, and
the next year, and
the next.
My children
still lived, their pale faces
haunted by court assessments,
counsellors' questions. Lies.
Accusations. Half-truths.
I could not see them
torn apart
- No, give them to him,
then the torture will stop
and the judge in his wisdom said
- Let it be so
Real mothers,
seeing me alone
said I did not care

I. Sunday afternoon, Peterborough
The body of my family
separates today
we're reading a poem
about custody arrangements and my son
says he has four families
not two
- Yours, gran's, dad's
and my friends.
- No, his sister adds. Six.

One! fills my silence. I am tired
of living at the margin
gathering scraps of their lives
too small to hold together,
patterns lost in tears, loose
ends unravelling out of reach

But they are the weavers
only they can darn this cloth
It is a fancy stitch
my mother taught me, to make a web
as good as new, seamless
so no-one could tell. I was never
that careful, never neat enough. With my fingers
I follow their ragged stitches,
help fill the holes

The phone rings.

I hold them, they change
into their Whitby clothes and
open the door.

II. Sunday evening
Abandoned, a
Lego ambushes my stockinged feet as
I head for my desk, prompting
aimless curses

This tranquil island of light
contains a growing world
beneath my searching fingers
dinner will be late tonight
the dishes will not fight with the laundry
for kitchen space
I will not be asked to be
judge or saviour, cook
or nursemaid
I am free again,
free to imagine
the soft weight of
their blond heads against my breasts

Lake Ontario

An apology for a beach. This
is where we went, confined
by the hours we had
left. The brown wind
carried the smell of fish
to the strangled weekend margin.
I was skipping
stones, trying too hard
to be as real as the daily routine
of life with your dad.

- He brings us here all the time, you say.

Frayed Connections

Ten dollars in
quarters by my side
A pay phone and
trembling hands.
I dial, wait
through interminable clicks
Then -

Her voice.
Small, excited, sad
Mummy?
Sweetheart, I love you, I miss you, Remember -
remember when we look into the sky at night we
see the same stars.
Mummy, Daniel can say
Tuktoyaktuk. Listen...
Yes, love, you clever..What's that?
Yes, I...

Hissing, stuttering, clickbuzz click!
Silence.

Andra McCartney

End of summer

Everything has found
its place. GI Joe
glares at me from the
shampoo label as I take
my bath. My daughter has
found her scissors, now
I can find mine.
The soccer ball hides in
a giant terra cotta plantpot
on the front porch. Our
bicycles lean on each other
in the back shed.

They fit now, exactly, in
the crook of my shoulder. When
we cross the street, we automatically reach
for each other. We know
who is next in line for the bath, whose
turn it is to tackle
the dishes. They see when
I need to write, I know
when they are hungry.
We have triumphed
again, learned how to live
smoothly with each other.
I fix this place with
sunny photographs,
avoid stores with back-to-school
sales, shadows
of their father's house

alone in my bath
in the cool morning, I whisper to
a paper soldier
- Hell no, they
won't go.

Twelfth Night.

Led by the nose
to the take-off point, the plane
waits, steaming from the tail.

I saw the flight attendant smile
down at them, take them gently
by the hand.

The tractor rolls away, I gather
my breath, searching faces
at the window, already too distant.

The plane turns slowly, gathers speed and two weeks blink past the
terminal
with a roar, rise and
merge with grey clouds
framed in the grid of the glass, a dot
despite my fixed stare still
disapp
ea
r
s
.

cooperative agreement

I still could not see
him, the antagonist
even after he raked me
naked across the carpet
even after he broke my rib,
even then.
I was happy
the day we signed together
one lawyer, one strategy
we had been a team
together, barn-building,
bridge. He stood by me

as I strained at their
birth. He hugged me
in the bright summer sun on
the main street - I will never
  fuck you around about this
agreement. I will never
keep the children
from you. Holding me still
tighter, his voice shaking
too

first shift

We memorize security codes,
alarm systems. We ask when
to push the panic button,
how to guard the door.

Dierdre brings us tea and
cookies, hot chocolate and
crackers. She shows us
her tattoos, except the little
devil, her old man's pride.

- She is sweet, a counsellor
says, it roots her
victimization.

Carol went home today, to the loving
arms and heartfelt promises of the man
who holds a gun to her head.

Louise leaves too,
tomorrow. She has paid
for power, and rent.
A secret place, alone.
Tonight she chose the movie.

Inside this fortress
We are rewinding the love scene.

Elizabeth Francis-Connolly

Constructing Parenthood
Portrayals of Motherhood and Fatherhood in Popular American Magazines

Currently many family researchers view parenthood as a social construct (Thurer, 1994; Glenn, 1994; Phoenix, Woollett and Lloyd, 1991). Social construction refers to the process by which parenthood (mothering and fathering) is culturally defined within social, economic, and historical contexts (Apple and Golden, 1997). This construction process is affected by the environmental and social contexts in which we live and varies over time and across cohorts. According to social construction theory individuals receive cultural messages regarding the roles they should assume and how these roles might be fulfilled. These messages form discourses, which are ways of representing phenomena in a visual, oral, or written form (Lupton and Barclay, 1997). Social construction theory argues that the discourses represented in a society help construct the manner in which its members will think about and respond to a phenomenon. Thus, the meaning that people give to a particular phenomenon, in this case motherhood and fatherhood, is dependent upon the discourses portrayed within the culture.

Parenting is a topic commonly discussed in the media particularly magazines, books, and television. Parents use these resources to shape their image of what a "good" parent is, how a mother or father should behave, and how a "good" child behaves. They construct an image of mothering and fathering through these media portrayals. Parenting magazines are becoming an increasingly popular source for parents to receive advice and information. These magazines are readily available and commonly line an entire shelf in bookstores. Magazines have advantages over books as they are easy to read and they are inexpensive as well as concise (Luke, 1994). Parents often receive subscriptions from family members or friends and rely on the magazines for reassurance that they are parenting the "right" way.

Interestingly few researchers have examined images of motherhood and fatherhood in popular magazines. Noted exceptions include Abhik, 1998; Book and Penttinen, 1997; Kaufman, 1999; Luke, 1994; and Skill and Robinson, 1994. Abhik (1998) studied the image of mothers in Indian television commercials. He argued that advertisements have the power to shape the opinions and behaviors of individuals and therefore may play a part in what he termed social reinforcement. Abhik's findings suggest that commercials do portray the dominant value system of the culture and present the idea that, to be a good mother, a woman should uphold these values.

Luke (1994) examined the portrayal of childhood and parenting in popular culture. In her study she examined the images and text in American, Australian, and British parenting magazines. She too, argues that popular culture can reinforce behavior and values and that it can provide meaning to constructs such as motherhood and fatherhood. Luke's findings suggest that mothers are portrayed in a traditional role and fathers are rarely shown in a parenting role. Further, Luke found very few women and children of color pictured in the magazines. Similar to the Luke study, Book and Penttinen (1997) also found mothers and fathers portrayed in traditional roles in Finnish women's magazines. Kaufman (1999) analyzed television commercials and found that caregiving of young children was the most common activity for mothers and the least common activity for fathers. Further, fathers are still being portrayed in the traditional "good provider" role.

The purpose of the present study is to investigate the cultural image of parenting portrayed by popular American magazines. Specifically, I sought to determine how mothers and fathers are portrayed in both advertisements and magazine articles. Second, I examined whether there is a discrepancy between portrayals of parents of color and white parents in American magazine culture. Lastly, I questioned whether there was a difference in images of mothers and fathers in parenting magazines versus popular men and women's magazines. Research indicates that images or ideals of parenting shape the expectations and experiences of parents. Little is known about the images themselves. The goal of this study is to gain further understanding of parenthood and identify the images of parenthood that are portrayed in magazines. The results of this study will give insight into the current cultural messages parents, especially new parents receive on what is considered good parenting.

Methods

Twelve American magazines were selected for analysis based on circulation rates. The top-selling seven parenting magazines, three women's magazines and two men's magazines were identified. I chose both parenting magazines as well as men's and women's magazines for comparison purposes. The September 2001 issues were purchased for the investigation both as convenience but also because fall magazine issues tend to be fuller/larger. Photographs and pictures, both in the advertisements and stories, were

examined for 1) activities engaged in by children and parents; 2) gender of parents; and 3) ethnicity of the children and adults. Obviously, trying to identify ethnicity in a photograph is fraught with problems. Ethnicity is more than facial features and not clear-cut; thus the research team needed to make some assumptions. Adding to this dilemma many models are probably of mixed racial/ethnic background.

After thorough analysis, all the magazine article titles were identified and categorized into the following parenting activities: engagement in household activities (cleaning, cooking), caretaking (changing a diaper, feeding a child, tying a shoe), passive (holding), nurturing (snuggling-type interactions), playing (indoor and outdoor games), and teaching/reading. Descriptive statistics were used to determine the most common portrayals of mothers and fathers engaged in these various activities.

The second area of analysis focused on the content of the magazine stories. I was curious as to what the focus of stories would be and what current parenting issues were discussed. These articles too reflect current parenthood dilemmas and shape cultural images. Thus the titles of all stories in the magazines were also categorized into common subject areas.

Results and discussion

There were several interesting and unanticipated findings in this study. First, mothers were by far the most commonly portrayed (69 percent of all pictures) as compared to fathers (27 percent) and grandparents (three percent). Please refer to Table A for the breakdown of activities by gender. The message from these magazines is loud and clear that parenting is mother's work. Further, women continue to be primarily portrayed in traditional mothering activities such as nurturing, passive, and caretaking roles. Past research findings indicate the tendency for couples to carry out more traditional marital roles as they transition to parenthood. Wives are responsible for doing a greater proportion of the household and childcare tasks while husbands remain in the breadwinner role (Hochschild, 1989; Aldous, Mulligan and Bjarnason, 1998). MacDermid, Huston, and McHale (1990) also found in their examination of the early years of marriage that wives spent more hours than their husbands doing housework and childcare activities and less time in paid employment. Conversely, there was no change in the time husbands spent in paid employment or housework.

I had anticipated finding many pictures portraying the new age dad, a man who is nurturing and engages in caretaking activities while maintaining his masculinity. However, I was surprised that the data indicates that overall there are considerably fewer fathers pictured than mothers pictured. Further, the fathers were portrayed in some nurturing roles but a much higher percentage of fathers were engaged in traditional roles of active play and sports (25 percent of the father pictures versus 8.6 percent of mothers). This perpetuates the myth of fathers being better equipped to engage in physical play while mothers are the nurturers and caretakers.

Table A:
Mothers and Fathers Portrayed in Magazine Pictures

Activity	Mom	Dad	Grandparent
household	10	4	0
caretaking	47	8	3
passive	29	15	3
nurturing	78	25	2
playing	22	19	2
teaching/read	4	4	0
Total	**190**	**75**	**10**

Table B
Ethnic Distribution in Magazine Pictures

	White	Black	Asian	Latino	Native-Amer.	Unknown
Women's Magazines						
Family Circle	53	6	1	0	1	2
Good Housekeeping	80	12	10	1	0	0
Ladies Home Journal	64	8	3	0	2	0
Men's Magazines						
Maxim	92	16	4	1	0	6
Men's Health	62	6	3	4	0	4
Parenting Magazines						
American Baby	55	8	8	0	0	0
Baby Talk	44	7	1	2	0	0
Baby Years	35	5	2	2	0	0
Child Magazine	59	5	2	1	0	0
Family Fun	55	9	5	2	0	0
Parenting	109	25	6	2	0	2
Parents	114	19	4	0	0	1
Total	**822**	**126**	**49**	**15**	**3**	**15**

Like the chicken and egg age-old question, I wonder if these magazine pictures *represent* a cultural ideal or do they *shape* the current cultural image of good parenting? I suspect both are true. Which leads me to question these cultural messages in an era when most women with small children work in paid employment outside of the home and many do not have a choice in this matter. How do women feel about their mothering? Past research indicates that most women grapple with issues of work, which is no wonder when they receive clear messages that they are the primary person to nurture and care for their children.

Gender ideology theory provides some insights into this dilemma. According to gender ideology theory, gender norms influence beliefs about the appropriateness of certain tasks and activities for women and men. Specific tasks are assigned according to these gender beliefs rather than the abilities of each partner (Aldous *et al.*, 1998). Men are traditionally viewed as the breadwinners and thus immune from household and childcare responsibilities. In contrast, women are responsible for maintaining the household and caring for children. In this theory women are viewed as having essential traits for raising children. For example, women are considered more nurturing and caring than men are. Thus, women are better equipped to mother. This extreme essentialist view does not allow for variation. It does not consider that some women are more nurturing than others or that some men may be more nurturing than some women.

Further, as Howard and Hollander (1997) point out, polarized gender ideology can be harmful in several ways. First, by viewing parenting as something only women do, men are not allowed to "experience sustained involvement and commitment to parenting" (34). In addition by assuming women are more caring and nurturing, women are set up to do all the parenting. They are assumed to know how to mother and to enjoy mothering. This gendered parenting stereotype contributes to a hierarchy disadvantaging both men and women.

Gender ideology has remained intact despite women's entrance into the paid labor force (Hochschild, 1989). According to this theory, male participation in household and childcare tasks will increase only when there is a shift in the belief system, for example, when both men and women are viewed as being capable of caring and nurturing. Clearly the messages from the magazine pictures and articles studied indicated that parenting is gendered.

Another area explored in this study was to examine the ethnicity of people represented in the magazine pictures. Similar to Luke's (1994) study, I also found that the images in the parenting, women and men's magazines most commonly (80 percent) portray Caucasian people. See Table B for a breakdown of images by ethnicity. Of note, this study did not examine magazines specifically geared to minority populations, which presumably would have a much greater percentage of non-Caucasian images.

Lastly, I examined the titles of magazine articles in an attempt to discern the issues and concerns highlighted in the parenting magazines and to

investigate whether parenting was a topic discussed in the women's and men's magazines. I grouped the most common subjects found in the parenting magazine articles according to the following: 1) normal childhood development; 2) mother's health and fitness; 3) children's health and fitness; 4) cooking and food; 5) education and school issues; and 6) fashion, beauty and shopping. Of note, is that parenting was not a subject mentioned in any of the men's magazines but was a focus in all of the women's magazines. Magazine editors print what they perceive will help sell their magazines; clearly parenting is not a hot seller for men.

In an earlier study (Francis-Connolly, 1999) I found that new mothers are often overwhelmed by parenting and are searching for the "right" answers. The women in that study lacked confidence in their mothering skills and sought reassurance from others that they had made the right parenting decisions. They actively sought the advice of trusted friends, family members, and health care professionals and regularly consulted books and subscribed to parenting magazines. From examination of the most common topic areas portrayed in the magazines, it is evident that child development, mother's and child's health are the areas of concern for women.

Some limitations of this present study include that the data obtained from the magazines only represented one month. Thus, topics discussed in these magazines may show greater variation over time. It would be useful to study several months worth of magazine article topics to get a broader representation. However, I suspect pictures/images may have changed over the past several years and decades but we would see less variation over a period of a few months. As discussed earlier in this article, the researcher subjectivity in defining ethnicity of images portrayed in the magazine could be problematic.

In conclusion, the images and content of popular magazines carry strong cultural messages about parenting. Clearly the group of people that read parenting magazines are especially vulnerable to the cultural messages portrayed. This study provides insight into the cultural messages people receive from popular American magazines. It is evident that there is a clear message that women remain the caretakers while fathers are less visible and enjoy the fun aspects of parenting young children, such as playing games and engaging in sport activities. These images remain despite women's entrance over two decades ago into the paid labor force, and the second wave women's movement.

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Trudelle Thomas

Misfit Mothers
Memoirs by Mothers of Children with Disabilities

> Through my children I learned everything I know about my helplessness, but also about my ultimate strength. As mothers we test our own survival when we raise children—we strengthen our core.
> —Sallie Bingham (1991: 96)

Over the past 30 years literature by women has moved from the margins to the mainstream of literary culture. Little-known writers from earlier eras have been given new attention and a many contemporary writers have flourished. Still, even in 2003, certain aspects of human experience remain largely "off the map." Motherhood, for one. The vast majority of women worldwide, past and present, have been mothers, yet the subjective experience of motherhood has seldom been explored in literature, not even in autobiography, presumably the most personal and candid of genres. As late as 2000, Jo Malin observed, "Texts that are sited in the writer's identity as a mother are rare" (See also Suleiman, 1986; Rich, 1976). According to literary scholar Brenda Clews (2001), we are just now (since the mid-1990s) entering a stage where "the maternal text" has begun to be written.[1]

Yet I have discovered six book-length autobiographical works (literary memoirs published between 1967 and 2000) firmly sited in the authors' identities as mothers.[2] This essay argues that these memoirs shed light on what it means to reach full human development, suggesting four stages of growth that might be applied to the maturation of all adults, not just the mothers of children with disabilities: First, each mother must let go of the dream child, i.e., the idealized "perfect" child, and of her idealized image of herself. Second, each mother must reinvent her role as a mother by acquiring new knowledge, language, and skills. Third, each mother learns to "think like a mother,"

involving many changes in thinking, feeling, and decision-making. Fourth, for many, this new consciousness leads to fighting for social change in hopes of creating better conditions for all people with disabilities.

On the surface, each memoir appears to focus on a child's life (as the subtitles suggest: "one child's courage," "a daughter's life," etc.). In fact, each also tells the story of a mother's life, especially her inward experience of self-in-relation—the mother's subjectivity. Each author writes of her caring for a child with a serious brain-based disability, including autism, Down's Syndrome, and lissencephaly. (To use the professional terminology, the children are "exceptional" because they have "special needs.")

As she chronicles her child's development, each author reveals her own. I call these authors "misfit mothers" because they do not fit stereotypes of mothers as passive and serene. Nor do they fit the existing categories of the adult life cycle; these categories are typically framed in terms of the education and career path of a solitary working in the public sphere (Levinson).

One researcher has pointed out that when a woman becomes a mother, she develops a mindset fundamentally different than the one she held before:

> There are many books written about the physiological and practical aspects of motherhood, but far less is written about the mental world where the new identity is formed. Becoming a mother is accomplished by the labor each woman performs on the landscape of her mind, labor resulting in a motherhood mindset, a deep and private realm of experience. (Stern and Bruschweiler-Stern, 1998: 3)

One need only visit any bookstore to find shelves crowded with books on birth, the physical changes of pregnancy, "parenting," and child discipline. But one would be hard-pressed to find descriptions of the "motherhood mindset." It is as if our society assumes that such a mindset does not exist, or else develops without conscious thought. The authors of these memoirs must consciously "labor on the landscape of the mind" because each has been thrust into a crisis with high stakes—her child's very survival. Each author manages to overcome a child's grim prognosis.

A developmental model for mothers

These memoirs suggest four developmental stages of growth: First, each mother must let go of the dream child, i.e., the idealized "perfect" child that most mothers hope for. This often involves a period of intense grief and shame when she learns of her child's disability, and may also involve the letting go of illusions regarding herself and the larger world. This "letting go" must occur before the mother can accept and renew her commitment to the real child. Second, each mother must reinvent her role as a mother. This reinvention involves acquiring new knowledge, language, and skills, in addition to carrying out the day-to-day nurturing and training that we usually equate with moth-

ering. Third, each mother learns to "think like a mother." The word "think" only partially suggests the many changes in perception, thinking, feeling, and making judgments that occur. These changes involve hard work over many years that leads to a new kind of consciousness. And finally, fourth, for many of these mothers, this new consciousness leads to fighting for social change in hopes of creating better conditions for all people with disabilities.

Letting go of the dream child and committing to the real child

First, each mother goes through a period of intense grief and shame when she learns of her child's disability. All six describe the crucial stage of grieving the loss of their own imagined child—the perfect child they dreamed of. Martha Beck, for example, learns during mid-pregnancy that her child has Down's Syndrome. The next few months bring an intense and painful grief process. She describes a time when, still pregnant, she stops an elevator between floors in order to be alone:

> [I] covered my face with my hands, trying to control myself. I felt as if some evil ogre had killed my "real" baby—the baby I'd been expecting—and replaced him with an ugly, broken replica .... I was suddenly seized by a rage so strong that I wanted to bash in the elevator walls .... I mashed my hands against my eyes and shook so hard that the elevator compartment trembled on its cable. (1999: 197)

Others write of pounding pillows and mattresses, throwing objects, and verbally lashing out at spouses and doctors. Rage grows out of an intense sense of loss and in every case it is accompanied by a sense of shame—the sense that somehow the author has failed as a mother. As her once-lively toddler sinks into a vortex of silence, Beth Kephart often feels she is somehow responsible for his Pervasive Developmental Delay (PDD): "[I]n the dark at night, I lie awake and wonder, worry about the instincts I am lacking ... horrified that love alone may not be enough" (1998: 54).[3] She is close to despair. "I can't believe how deep the hurt goes—or how black things look, how broken" (1998: 63). Unfortunately, this shame is often reinforced by professionals who work with the mother.

In time, the grief leads to a recommitment to her child. As Beck searched a bookstore for parenting guides, "I realized that I was not looking for information on how to transform my child into a prize that every parent would envy. I needed to transform *myself* into a parent who would accept her child, no matter what" (italics hers, 1999: 195). Kephart reached a similar point after her son's diagnosis with PDD: "I pound the books ... with my fist. I pledge to the boy and his father ... that I will not, no matter what, confuse my child with a label.... I will not lose sight of the gift that my son is, will not let go of my expectation—my surety—that Jeremy will find his way in the world" (1998: 85).

For each mother, this commitment is not a passive resignation to the inevitable but rather a deliberate choice to commit not to the child she dreamed of but to *this actual child.* She sees the child as imperfect yet still precious and lovable. Often spirituality is part of this process of grieving and recommitment. For most of these authors, this phase of letting go also involves letting go of many illusions—about oneself, about professional helpers, about society's view of the disabled, and more. Miriam Edelson (2000), for example, is heartbroken about her inability to breastfeed her son or to love him without ambivalence. Beck (1999), Park (2001a, 2001b), and Kephart (1998) are all disillusioned by friends who shun them because of their children's disabilities.[4] Joan Richards (2000) is shocked by the way she is dismissed by her son's doctors, even though she is their professional peer.

Reinventing the maternal role

Second, for each author, acceptance and commitment lead to a determined and tough-minded advocacy for her child in the face of a sometimes hostile environment. All the authors write of their love for their children—the tenderness, protectiveness, and fascination that we often associate with mothers. Such tender feelings help the mother to provide day-to-day nurturing, protecting, and care. In addition, she must acquire a set of skills that includes "political literacy," assertiveness, communication skills, and the ability to be a "broker" for her child.

James Wilson and Cindy Lewiecki Wilson, parents to a disabled adult child, observe that when a child is diagnosed with a disability, he or she is "immediately inserted into a complex array of institutions and inscribed by their medical, legal, educational, and social discourses" (2001: 9). These institutions tend to objectify the disabled person. The mother—if she is to fend for her child—is forced to make sense of this "social apparatus of disability." Wilson and Lewiecki Wilson use the term "political literacy" to describe knowledge of the specialized terminologies, the power structure of various institutions, and how to access and navigate the "complex array of institutions" that may include hospitals, clinics, schools, and social service agencies. Political literacy also involves learning about laws affecting her child.

Initially, the need for "political literacy" is overwhelming, as in the case of Miriam Edelson (2000). Her son Jake is hospitalized in infancy with a rare brain deformity that causes seizures and other baffling symptoms. She and her spouse must decide if Jake should receive a feeding tube, undergo major surgery, be permitted to be resuscitated, be placed in residential care—all within a short period of time and with little information or counsel. All of these are highly charged decisions with huge ethical, financial, and emotional consequences. In the midst of the initial crisis and in the years following, Edelson works hard to become "politically literate"; she learns about the legal and ethical issues, figures out the medical terminology, collaborates with other caregivers, and challenges authority figures when necessary.

Robert Naseef, father to an autistic son, runs into repeated bureaucratic barriers and gradually learns that "A parent is the most effective case manager for his child because he knows his child best.... Accepting this responsibility is key to getting the best program and services for your child.... You need to know how to navigate the service system ... and to develop skills of advocacy and assertiveness" (1997: 187). Edelson elaborates on the need to "navigate":

> To access the assistance they need, families must navigate extensive government and agency bureaucracies and cope with filling out umpteen forms for an alphabet soup of programs. This requires a fairly good educational background and a lot of chutzpah, in addition to the patience of a saint. [To provide home care] the managing of budgets, payroll and deductions also demands mathematical and accounting literacy equivalent to that exercised in running a small business. (2000: 76)

Sometimes the "navigator" role leads to becoming what Edelson calls "the broker." She writes, "It is often necessary for one parent to stay at home to coordinate the various therapies the child needs. This 'broker' role can itself be a full-time job when coupled with the child's personal care and ongoing roster of therapeutic and medical appointments" (2000: 75). It is most often the female parent who assumes the broker role, which may bring with it economic dependency, split gender roles, social isolation, over identification with the child, and vulnerability to divorce. Married couples with a seriously disabled child are far more likely to divorce than other couples. For all these authors, the child's disability caused great upheavals in their jobs or careers.

It is important to note that there is nothing natural or instinctive about "political literacy" and that many mothers never acquire such skills. In fact, often professional helpers actively discourage mothers from asking too many questions. Edelson (2000), for example, observed that at Jake's pediatric hospital, the only acceptable attitude on the part of parents was gratitude. Virtually all the writers describe encounters with doctors who try to infantilize them by scolding, blaming, and talking down to them. Beck's Harvard doctor pressures her to abort, a renowned psychiatrist suggests that Park is at fault for her daughter's autism, and Richards is dismissed when she pleads for pain relief for her hospitalized son. As Edelson observes, these roles are far more difficult for those who do not speak English or who lack education or *chutzpah.* [5]

Thinking like a mother

Third, out of this new motherly role—involving hard work and learning over many years—evolves a new kind of thinking that accompanied by many changes in perception, thinking, feeling, and the ability to discern and make judgments.[6] Although one might easily write a book on this change in consciousness,[7] I will limit myself to four aspects that stand out in these memoirs: intelligent love; a belief in the value of all life; a sense of

interconnectedness with other beings; and an ethic of care.

"Intelligent love" is the phrase that Clara Claireborne Park uses to describe the acute sensitivity that grows from a deep love for a child and a deepening understanding of a child's needs.

> Parents can accomplish much through intelligent love. [Despite what doctors believe] intelligence and love are not natural enemies. Nothing sharpens one's wits for the hints and shadows of another's thinking as love does.... [A poem by William Blake] describes love that "seeketh not itself to please /Not for itself hath any care, / But for another gives its ease, / And builds a Heaven in Hell's despair." There are millions of parents who practice this love daily and know that love is a technique as well as an emotion. (2001a: 197)

The phrase "intelligent love" calls to mind the word "attunement" that is used to speak of the mother-infant bonding of early infancy; attunement suggests the attentive observation, eye contact, mirroring, non-verbal communication, and the way a mother may synchronize her own daily rhythms to those of her infant's. Attunement is comparable to acquiring a new language by immersion—a learned skill rather than an instinct. Attunement to a young child fosters "intelligent love."

Thinking like a mother also involves seeing a child in terms of preciousness and not just deficit, and may lead to a belief in the value of all human life. Kephart writes,

> Until I had Jeremy, I didn't understand the expression "child of God." But now I do. I understand God's alive in him. That my son's a spiritual presence grander in his architecture than I will ever be.... He has completed me, wrenched me in and out of myself, forced me past my boundaries. (1998: 167)

On a similar note, Brydon Gombay, in her study of mothers of disabled children, observes that "nurturing their children often leads to a profound recognition of the value of all human life" (2000: 17) and a strong will to protect it.

This new consciousness also involves a sense of the shared human condition. Regarding disabled children, Aristotle prescribed, "Let there be a law that no deformed child shall be reared" (*The Poetics* VII. xiv). He set the tone for Western civilization, seeing the disabled as abnormal or monstrous; therefore he believed they should simply be allowed to die—or at least to be excluded from society. In contrast, these writers emphasize a shared humanity. Park writes,

> I have come to see mental health and illness, soundness and defect, not as the separate entities but as a continuum. The needs of defective and

> sick children are more imperious than those of the well, but they are not different in kind. Sick children need to be accepted, supported, comforted, corrected—like well children.... And they need to be respected. (2001a: 192)

Wilson and Lewiecki Wilson emphasize that "disability" is a condition that unites almost all human beings: "All people who live long enough are likely to experience disability ... or to be closely related to someone who is disabled. What has been labeled abnormal actually occurs regularly and frequently and, yes, normally" (2001: 10).

Another aspect of thinking like a mother is a sense of interconnectedness with other creatures. Margaret Smith comments about her daughter:

> Emma's disability [epilepsy] links our family with families in the past, with families in the Third World, and with the animal kingdom, of which we all still form a part. Here, suffering and early death were and still are very real facts of life. Disability in the family has taught us all a powerful lesson: do not take life for granted. (1989: 170)[8]

Yet another aspect of thinking like a mother is the ethic of care that grows out of a fundamental belief in human value, dignity, and interconnection. Edelson explores this idea in her memoir:

> The ethic of care arises from the notion that human interdependence is fundamental. We are persons to the extent that we relate to others. This differs sharply the views of theorists who have for centuries defined the self as independent, rational, self-interested, and autonomous. (2000: 152)

Edelson (2000) goes on to argue in favor of a feminist ethic of care which holds that bio-ethical decision-making should be rooted in specific contexts, guided by emotions, growing out of compassion and a belief in human dignity. Difficult decisions regarding abortion, feeding tubes, resuscitation, and other medical interventions should be approached through an ethic of care, writes Edelson.[9]

Fighting for social change

Out of this new consciousness, many mothers grow into a fourth stage, a commitment to changing society for the better. Having become much more sensitive to and knowledgeable about the injustices encountered by their individual children, many mothers go on to work on behalf of the needs of others with disabilities. They see clearly the narrowness of the Western view of human value and success—measured in terms of dollars, test scores, or accomplishments; they question the way our society offers little respect and few

rights to the disabled. These mothers also have gained a hard-won understanding of how institutions, policies, and laws may harm the disabled—even when they are intended to help.

Out of such insights, all six of these writers have committed themselves to helping those with disabilities. First, most obviously, all have written books that serve as guides to others, especially parents. Kephart's (1998) book, for example, has helped medical professionals to systematize a therapeutic approach to children with PDD. Similarly, Park's (2001a, 2001b) books provide extensive documentation kept over many years of how her daughter Jessy came to terms with autism; these have been used by researchers to better understand and diagnose autism. Parents and professionals alike now regard these books as groundbreaking guides.

Some of the writers have gone beyond writing to educate through other means. Robert Naseef (1997), motivated by his son's autism, retrained as a psychologist and now runs workshops to train parents and professionals to work together to help children with "special needs" as diverse as autism and ADHD. Edelson (2000) developed TV and radio documentaries to draw attention to the needs of "medically fragile" children. Beck (1999) has spoken to professional conferences for MD's on the bio-ethical decisions associated with medical technologies such as prenatal testing and sonograms; she believes that doctors cannot ethically encourage the "therapeutic abortion" of a fetus with Down's Syndrome if they lack a realistic view of what Down's Syndrome actually is and of the realities of parenting such a child. (Often doctors project their own exaggerated fears onto the fetus and thus paint an overly bleak picture of her or her future prospects.)

Most of these writers have focused their efforts at public education and activism on a specific type of disability. They are also part of a growing chorus of voices that have called attention to larger issues of human rights. Activist mothers have led the way to better and more just treatment of people with disabilities, including more inclusive public education, changed workplace policies, the community living movement for mentally retarded adults and the mentally ill, and more. They have formed national organizations such as ARC (formerly "Association for Retarded Citizens") and the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI). In the United States, the efforts of activist mothers have contributed to powerful federal laws such as the 1975 *Education for All Handicapped Children Act*, the 1990 *Americans with Disabilities Act*, and the 1990 *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*. Reforms have also occurred in the fields of criminal justice, medicine, and social work. Such progress supports the belief of philosopher Sara Ruddick (1995) that the practice of mothering (with its central themes of protection, nurturance, and training) can contribute to a more peaceful and just world.

Though much remains to be done to improve opportunities of those with disabilities, immense progress has occurred. Whereas in earlier eras a child with a serious disability would have been left to die or else hidden away, today such

a child has far more opportunities for a happy and meaningful life. Progress would not have occurred if not for the efforts of determined and intelligent mothers motivated by a passion for justice. The words of theologian Elizabeth A. Johnson might readily be applied to these "misfit mothers":

> Love [is] the shape in which divine power appears ... [love rooted in] the experience of women who know the breakthrough of their own strength, usually under duress: the nurturing power of a mother who enables her children to grow to full personhood ... the justice making vigor of women who know wrongs, both personal and structural, and stand as strong witnesses to resist and remake, deriving energy that they critically turn toward the well-being of others. (1992: 269)

Conclusions

These mothers—the six authors of the memoirs in my study and others like them—truly are "misfit mothers." Through a process of relating to, thinking about, and coming to understand their "special needs" children, they have grown into mature adults who are remarkably active, enlightened, and courageous. These "memoirs of misfit mothers" chronicle in candid and unsentimental terms the authors' full human development under difficult circumstances. Having come to terms with great sorrow and injustice, these women have grown far beyond the expectations they once held for themselves. All would echo the sentiments of Kephart, who writes, "[My child] wrenched me in and out of myself, forced me past my boundaries" (1998: 167). Closer attention to these life-stories would benefit not just mothers but all people who desire to grow into full humanity.

[1]In 2001, Clews suggested a three stage process: 1) the mother is spoken for (by artist, writer, doctor, etc.), 2) the mother is written about by a daughter (1970s-1990s), and 3) the mother herself finally speaks.

[2]Martha Beck (*Expecting Adam: A True Story of Birth, Rebirth, and Everyday Magic*) is a graduate student at Harvard when she learns the fetus she is carrying has Down's Syndrome. Despite strong pressure from the medical community to abort, she carries the child to term. This memoir focuses on the many changes in values and perspectives that occur during her pregnancy. When Miriam Edelson's (*My Journey with Jake: A Memoir of Parenting and Disability*) first child is a young infant, she learns that he has lissencephaly, a rare brain deformity that will severely limit his mental and physical capabilities. This memoir tells of her relationship with her son, coming to terms with his disability, and efforts to improve health care for disabled children. Her son Jake is ten and living in residential care as she writes. Beth Kephart's *(A Slant of Sun: One Child's Courage)* son Jeremy is two when she realizes he

suffers from a mystifying autism-like disability, PDD-NOS (Pervasive Developmental Delay, Not Otherwise Specified). This is an evocative account of her relationship with her son. Through determination and love Kephart and her husband help him overcome this serious condition. Part memoir, part parenting guide, Robert A. Naseef's *Special Children, Challenged Parents: The Struggles and Rewards of Raising a Child with a Disability* tells the story of raising an autistic son (now an adult). He also offers many insights and resources for parents of children with various kinds of physical and mental disabilities. Clara Claiborne Park's two books, *The Siege: A Family's Journey into the World of an Autistic Child* and *Exiting Nirvana: A Daughter's Life with Autism.* tell about the life of Park's daughter, Jessy, beginning with her diagnosis of "childhood psychosis" at age three into adulthood; Jessy is now forty and an artist. Park is an English professor who tracks and documents her daughter's intellectual and emotional development in detail. Joan Richards (*Angles of Reflection: A Memoir of Logic and a Mother's Love*) is an historian of science who writes of her son Ned's physical challenges: first, a brain tumor that he recovers from, then a odd injury to his elbow (while they are living in Germany) that heals improperly, resulting in his spending long stretches of time in a German hospital. Her experiences with her son and with bureaucratic hospitals awaken Richards to a feminist consciousness.

[3]PDD-NOS (Pervasive Developmental Delay-Not Otherwise Specified) is a set of symptoms that includes social, language, and behavioral impairments; the disorder is little-understood and is sometimes used as a catchall term to "diagnose" symptoms that do not fit elsewhere. Like autism, PDD often manifests itself around the age of one or two years.

[4]Shunning and social isolation are more likely when the disability is one that is stigmatized and misunderstood, such as mental retardation or mental illness. People have more compassion for disabilities that are clearly physical in nature.

[5]Even as they encounter arrogance, the writers all express tender appreciation for the kindness and compassion they receive, sometimes unexpectedly, from others: a nurse, a speech therapist, a day-care director, a neighbor, etc. Affection, trust, loyalty, and wisdom grow from these relationships that sometimes demonstrate an impressive level of respectful collaboration.

[6]In her important book on maternal identity, Ramona Mercer asserts that much of maternal competence (even under normal circumstances) is "dependent on the woman's cognitive abilities: to project into the future, to consider alternatives and problem-solve, to know what information she needs and where to obtain it, to communicate effectively, to trust others, and to establish nurturing relationships with others" (1995: 303).

[7]See Sara Ruddick's (1995) classic book, *Maternal Thinking: Towards a Politics of Peace.*

[8]This belief in the interconnection with other humans and animals echoes the ideas of David Hay and Rebecca Nye, who have researched the spirituality of early childhood. In *The Spirit of the Child* (1998), they argue that "relational

consciousness" is common among young children, before they have been socialized into seeing themselves as rational and autonomous.

[9]Most of these authors also write about other decisions they must face, such as whether to have another child. Stretched to the limit by caring for a "special needs child," they are reluctant to give birth to another who runs a genetic risk of disability. This decision leads to conflict in the family.

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Brenda Clews, "After the Bath," Birth Painting Series, watercolour on paper, 21" x 28", 1987.

"When I was pregnant, my body changed in fundamental and drastic ways. It was a crisis: the freedom of an old self was dying to make way for the mother I would become.

The "Birth Series" paintings became a visual journey of my changing body, a way to comprehend what I was undergoing in the tumble of hormones as my belly grew. The paintings focus on the woman who conceives and carries a baby into life, who nourishes and awaits the child who will hopefully emerge from the nine-month gestation of her body like a dream become real.

In reaction to an increasing invisibility in the world—the averted gaze, perhaps arising out of cultural discomfort with the swollen belly, I wished to present the pregnant body as sensual and sacred. At the beginning of the series, the body is portrayed clearly; as the the forces of labour, birth and then breastfeeding unfold, the clarity shifts into flowing colours suggesting the transformative experience that carrying and delivering and breastfeeding a baby is. These paintings are about a rite of passage, about the strangest body on earth, about the mind-blowing transformation of skin, belly, heart and perception of the self, as a woman ripens and delivers her fragile and beautiful fruit, the newborn, a miracle of the world."

—Brenda Clews (artist statement)

Isabella Colalillo Katz

Julie Payette made it to the stars

Julie Payette made it to the stars
after they said we were not good enough
after they said we were not smart enough
after they said we were not strong enough
after they chained us to cook and clean
for a thousand years
after they denied us education
after they said we were second class
after making us chattel
after making us bear their children
and forcing us to raise them alone
after leaving us poor and defenseless
after making us doubt our own worth
after enslaving our souls
and trampling our spirit
after denying us gender equity
and deserved promotions
after creating glass ceilings
after denying us the vote
after fighting against the ERA
after making into lies
our truths about gender exploitation
after treating us like objects
and selling our bodies for pleasure and profit
after destroying our power to heal
and burning our bodies and writings

after all these injustices
after a million billion tribulations
after uncountable lists of offences
womanspirit is soaring to the stars
our daughters are finally tasting freedom
let us free them further
we who are their mothers, aunts,
sisters and grandmothers,
their fathers, brothers, lovers and husbands
let us work to set each other free
let women grow into whatever shape and dreams
let Julie Payette fly to the stars
let our daughters dare and dream
and fly and fly and fly.

Book Reviews

Parenting Together: Men and Women Sharing the Care of Their Children

Ehrensaft, Dianne.
Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987.

Reviewed by Elise Pflum

Although almost 15 years have passed since *Parenting Together* was first published, Dianne Ehrensaft's study remains relevant today. Ehrensaft focuses on men and women who share parenting. In order to qualify for the sample, the husband and wife both needed to identify themselves as a primary caregiver in their family. Ehrensaft describes the co-parents in her study as men and women who have been influenced by the idea of gender egalitarianism promoted by the feminist movement in the late '60s and early '70s. The desire to share parenting is based upon the assumption that two fully involved parents will offer children a view of the world that is as free as possible from gender bias.

The first hurdle experienced by co-parents upon the birth of a child is the fixed biological barrier of breast feeding. Ehrensaft explains that fathers often experience jealousy since they are unable to participate in the feeding of the child. On the other hand, mothers often feel resentful about having to bear the entire burden of feeding. As a result, significant numbers of shared parenting families discontinue breast feeding within the first three months of a child's life.

A key variable in shared parenting is the sense of comradery and mutual

respect displayed by the co-parents for each other. Failure of the shared parenting experience is most often cited as a result of financial considerations, however. This occurs when the couple abandons their practice of shared parenting, particularly when one parent (often the male) is able to earn more money as the sole breadwinner than if both parents work part-time. In addition, Ehrensaft found that men in shared parenting households are more likely to entertain fantasies about adopting the traditional model of parenting. Ehrensaft discovered that since a woman's desire for shared parenting appears to be the prime impetus in adopting this parenting style, failure of co-parenting often results in divorce.

Interestingly, even in households where shared parenting is successful, gender inequalities between the behaviours of mothers and fathers are apparent. A core difference between men and women's approaches to parenting is the issue of engagement. The mothering self of a woman is intermingled with all of her parts. This contrasts with fathers for whom parenting is something "to be done." As a result, men who seek to balance work, parenting, and time for themselves tend to be more successful than women, since it is easier for them to *do* all three compared to women who attempt to *be* all three. Hence, guilty feelings associated with separation from a child are far more common among women than men. When a woman leaves her child, she leaves behind an integral part of herself. When a man leaves his child he simply stops what he is doing—the loss of the child's presence does not pose a threat to his core being.

Children's Interests/Mothers' Rights: The Shaping of America's Child Care Policy

Michel, Sonya.
New Haven: Yale Univeristy Press 1999.

Reviewed by Merryl Hammond

Although dense and dry, *Children's Interests/Mother's Rights* is a meticulous, historical account of the child care system (or rather the lack thereof) in the United States, from its roots in the colonial era, through the early nineteenth century, the Victorian era, the Depression and World War II years, through to the present. Author Sonya Michel poses a central question: Why has the United States failed to develop a comprehensive system of public day care, when all the other democratic, market societies (Sweden, France, Japan, Australia, and Canada are mentioned briefly) have done so?

Readers learn about various child care options that working mothers in the United States have used over the centuries: "baby farms," boarding institutions

for "half-orphans," poor houses, "little mothers" (i.e. the use of young girls as child-minders), day nurseries, infant schools, crèches, kindergartens, children's shelters, and homes for infants. Michel is scrupulous in linking developments in the childcare arena to forces at work in the larger society, such as industrialization, immigration, urbanization, and war. She places each child care-related "development" or innovation within a specific historical and ideological context.

Sonya Michel is a history professor and director of women's studies at the University of Illinois. Scholars will appreciate her rigorous research, attention to detail, 84 pages of endnotes, and detailed index—all of which weighs heavily in this publication's favour. However, this is one of the most poorly designed books I have read in some time. Both type and margins are too small, subheadings too few, and most of the illustrations and photographs are too small to be of any use—all of which detracted severely from my enjoyment of the book.

Constructing Lived Experiences: *Representations of Black Mothers in Child Sexual Abuse Discourses*

Bernard, Claudia.
Burlington: Ashgate, 2001.

Reviewed by Sara Collings

Claudia Bernard's research into black women's experiences of mothering children who have been sexually abused is an important addition to feminist literature which explores the blame and responsibility that is placed on non-offending mothers of sexually abused children. To date, the particular dilemmas that black mothers face in such a crisis have received little attention.

Bernard's qualitative interviews draw on the experience of thirty black mothers who self-identified as black British of African Caribbean origin whose children were either abused by a family member or by an adult who was known to the family. These women spoke about their coping strategies and their experiences with seeking help. Bernard's interviews suggest that these mothers faced particular stresses as they cared for their children, stresses that arose as they attempted to mother in a racist society. Bernard is particularly concerned with understanding how "divisions constructed around race and social class create a very different set of circumstances within which [black mothers] respond to the abuse of their children" (1).

In general, the participants described a range of strong and contradictory feelings about their child's abuse and they spoke about a lack of supportive outlets for the expression of their emotions or their needs. While they often felt anger toward their abusive partners and a strong desire to protect their child, they also felt conflicting feelings of loyalty toward the men whose abusive acts might be ascribed to their racialized experience. Some women also said that they or their relatives believed that talking about the interfamilial sexual abuse might be seen as a betrayal of the family—a potential site of refuge from the daily effects of racism. Further, with the added burden experienced by some mothers to conform to the image of the "strong black woman," these feelings were often internalized, exacerbating the women's feelings of self-blame. Bernard points to the damaged mother/daughter relationship that can result from this silent suffering, and suggests that daughters may develop a similar coping method so that their needs might also remain unexpressed and unmet.

Many of the women interviewed mistrusted social workers and Bernard carefully explores this mistrust. Black mothers, she suggests, already are more likely to be scrutinized by child protection workers, and many of the mothers interviewed explained that they thought of child protection agencies as racist institutions. The mothers had little reason to believe that the particular stress they faced as black women would be acknowledged by child protection workers.

Bernard devotes a chapter to how child welfare agencies might better respond to the needs of black mothers and their children. She draws on theories of anti-oppressive social work, suggesting that social workers need to reflect on their own social location and to consider black mothers' needs and actions within a context of race and gender. In particular, she encourages social workers to consider the divided loyalties that many black mothers experience in the face of a child's sexual abuse. Instead of focusing on deficits, Bernard recommends that child welfare workers look to black mothers' coping skills as a resource for working together and developing an allied relationship. Interestingly, Bernard also touches on a need to bring black men into the picture. She suggests that social workers who do not focus on men in their interventions with children run the risk of reinforcing gender stereotypes and she explains that black fathers and mothers are subjected to distinct forms of racism and blame. Black men often are seen as dangerous or uninvolved in their children's lives, while black mothers are charged with the responsibility for their children's protection and care. Bernard's proposal to include black men in child welfare assessment is intriguing and worth considering more thoroughly.

What makes Bernard's work especially valuable are her analyses of the ways in which racism and gender oppression can both harm the mother/child relationship and can leave children less protected from sexual abuse. This book likely will be of interest to social workers involved with children and families, particularly those who are concerned with child welfare. It also will be valuable to readers who are interested in a largely unexamined aspect of the mothering experience.

Creating a Life: Professional Women and the Quest for Children

Hewlett, Sylvia Ann.
New York: Talk Miramax Books, 2002.

Reviewed by Carolyn Cunningham

"Baby Scare," "Baby Panic," "Late to the Mommy Track," "The Baby Bust," and "The Mother Load" are some of the recent headlines dominating the popular press since the release in early 2002 of Sylvia Ann Hewlett's *Creating a Life: Professional Women and the Quest for Children*. Hewlett describes an "epidemic" of women who are shocked to find that after pursuing careers rather than motherhood, they are childless and miserable. Although the debate of "children versus career" has been part of public discourse since women's mass entrance into the workplace following advances of second wave feminism, we might ask what is different about Hewlett's findings in postmodern America. Rapid advances in reproductive technology and a United States humbled by an international terrorist attack have caused anxieties about the future, making both men and women reevaluate their priorities. But if feminism has taught us anything, it has taught us to consider implicit operations of power both in the representation of "facts" and in their reception.

Hewlett set out to write a book about women in the "breakthrough" generation, our foremothers who were the first to become doctors, lawyers, and CEOs. The majority of women Hewlett interviewed were childless. Hewlett's probing revealed that these women regretted not having the opportunity to become mothers. Alarmed by these findings, she set out on a mission to expose the effects of career success on women's lives. Hewlett's findings come from a national survey of 1,647 high-achieving (earning $55,000 or more) and high achieving non-career (completed a professional or advanced degree but not currently working) women and a subsample of high-achieving men. Her results are outlined in a chapter entitled "The Sobering Facts." Forty-two percent of women in corporate America were childless at age 40 and this number rose to 43 percent for African American women.

Hewlett also found significant differences between the older and younger generations of high-achieving women: only 45 percent of younger women had a child by age 35, while 62 percent of older women had had a child by age 35. Given the advances in reproductive technology, most young women assumed they could have children well into their 40s. Statistics, however, tell a different story. Chapter five, "Infertility: The Empty Promise of High-Tech Reproduction," shows the discrepancies between media accounts of reproductive technologies and actual success rates. Women over 40 have a three to five percent

chance of achieving a live birth through IVF and a 50 to 80 percent chance of experiencing a miscarriage.

Based on her findings, Hewlett urges young women to take charge of their fertility, to focus on finding an appropriate (male) mate in their twenties, and to choose a career path that allows for children (academia has one of the worst track records for supporting motherhood). Furthermore, Hewlett offers the following suggestions: create a national timebank of three-months paid parental leave; restructure retirement plans so they do not penalize workers for career breaks; offer three years of unpaid, job-protected leave.

When I first heard the media coverage of Hewlett's findings, I interpreted it as more backlash to women's career success. The truth is, however, that it is difficult to combine a career and motherhood. Hewlett's book, then, can be seen as a call to action rather than a slap in the face. The discrimination that mothers face in the workplace affects all women. What is needed, in fact, is a workplace that allows all women to participate equally.

In the end, Hewlett writes that the "truth will set us free." I would argue, however, that both Hewlett and her critics have missed an opportunity to promote real change. While Hewlett is motivated by a desire for social change, she envisions a return to traditional values where women are defined by their ability or inability to have children, and heterosexual marriage and nuclear families are seen as the "best" environments in which to raise children. There are many truths that Hewlett leaves out of her book, including the effects of divorce on women's careers and the benefits of alternative parenting and family structures. In the end, we must look beyond Hewlett's findings to alternative "truths" that could radically alter women's position in the workforce.

With Humor and Hope: Learning from Our Mothers' Depression and Alcoholism

Peets, Christine.
Victoria: Trafford, 2001.

Reviewed by Rivka Greenberg

In *With Humor and Hope: Learning from Our Mothers' Depression and Alcoholism*, Christine Peets addresses two problems that afflict women and often are shrouded in silence: alcohol/substance abuse and depression. Only in the past quarter of a century have clinicians and researchers begun to acknowledge publicly that alcoholism and substance abuse in women are critical health and mental health issues that affect substantial numbers of women. While often intertwined, substance abuse and depression need to be diagnosed separately and each disease requires treatment specific to women's needs.

While these diseases affect many women, they often are not recognized or diagnosed, either by the suffering women or by professionals. Many women cannot clearly identify what is bothering them and they often do not know where to seek help so they can get the attention they require. This book provides descriptions that will aid in this identification. In fact, there is no single portrait of an alcoholic woman; there are many. Because of its many manifestations, alcoholism often is difficult to identify by others and by alcoholic women themselves. Even with the identification, asking for and finding help usually is a lonely and difficult task. The same challenges confront women who are clinically depressed.

Peets uses the stories of others, as well as her own personal story of her mother and family. An important aspect of this book is the connection the author draws between her mother's alcoholism and depression and her own life. Across the book, Peets offers as examples the many preventive steps against alcoholism and depression that she has taken and will continue to take throughout her life.

I congratulate Christine Peets for her honesty and courage. Writing *With Humor and Hope* clearly was cathartic for the author and the book will assist readers who hope to interrupt the multigenerational effects of substance abuse and depression in their own lives. Peets includes a selective bibliography and a useful list of international resources.

Midwifery and Childbirth in America

Rooks, Judith Pence, S. Charles, and M. D. Mahan.
Temple Univ Press; 1999.

Reviewed by Ruth Nemzoff

Midwifery and Childbirth in America is not a book to give your pregnant daughter to read in her spare moments. It is too comprehensive, well researched, and detailed. But it is an appropriate gift for anyone who may be planning to attend nursing or medical school. Rooks has written a comprehensive, balanced, and eminently readable book about midwifery and childbirth in America. The book provides a complete history of the accreditation, licensure, and education of nurse midwives and direct entry midwives. It also provides data on the use of midwives. Most interesting is Rooks's review of studies that have assessed the quality, safety, and effectiveness of midwifery in the United States. She notes that surprisingly few studies compare the effectiveness of specific interventions used by midwives and obstetricians.

This book gives a clear explanation of the differences between the philosophies of midwives and physicians. While midwives see birth as a natural process needing little intervention, physicians view birth as potentially dangerous. Despite the sometimes uncooperative relations between midwives and medical doctors, Rooks explains the profound impact midwives have had on medical practitioners. The influence of midwives has led to the cessation of some medical practices that potentially caused harm to birthing mothers, such as shaving pubic hair and giving enemas to labouring women.

Although she recognizes the role of obstetricians in complicated births, Rooks is convinced that midwifery provides safe, effective childbirth assistance. She notes, for example, that normal births attended by midwives result in fewer cesarean sections, fewer episiotomies and other expensive interventions. To ensure appropriate care for birthing women, Rooks suggests that obstetricians and midwives alike assess all birth interventions.

Various laws and the need for insurance coverage, as well as the dwindling number of births per thousand in America, provide disincentives for allowing midwives to practice in the United States. Physician supervision of midwives is required and hospital births are advantaged. As a result, it has been difficult for midwifery to gain a foothold in the United States, despite the data from Europe, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Japan that strengthens the case for the use of midwives as safe birth attendants.

Birth by Design: Pregnancy, Maternity Care, and Midwifery in North America and Europe

Devries, Raymond, Cecilia Benoit, Edwin R. Van Teijlingen, and Sirpa Wrede, eds.
New York: Routledge, 2001.

Reviewed by Amy Mullin

Birth by Design provides well-researched, cross-cultural comparisons of maternity care practices in nine European and North American countries, with a heavy emphasis on Canada, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and the United States. While the countries involved differ in the ways they fund health care, all are highly developed, technologically sophisticated countries. Most medical specialties in these countries are marked by technical uniformity, but the countries involved are markedly different in their approaches to maternity care. They differ in the extent to which they see pregnancy as a medical

problem, in their attitudes toward and use of midwives, and in official government positions toward home birth and the rates of home birth. Cross-cultural comparisons allow the authors, who work in fields as diverse as medicine, history, sociology, anthropology, midwifery, and political science, to examine how and why maternal care reflects ideas about gender, sexuality, families, the organization of professions, government policies, and attitudes toward technology.

The book is divided into three sections, allowing the authors to analyze maternity care at the macro level (investigating states and other groups as they seek to design maternal health services), meso level (studying professional groups that deliver services), and micro level. At the latter level, the authors investigate "two central themes: (1) the views of maternity clients on their access to and utilization of maternal health services and (2) the varied ways technology shapes the work of midwives and the experiences of birthing women" (201). Issues analyzed include responsibility for costs incurred during maternal health care, different models of educating midwives, and technological interventions during pregnancy and birth.

The book is a fascinating account of different approaches to home and hospital birth. Readers learn about maternity protection laws that have existed in Germany for over a century, which have been connected both to feminist aims and to the eugenics movement. We hear midwives' attitudes toward prenatal testing based on their experiences with children born with disabilities and living in their communities. We learn why the Netherlands continues to have a relatively high rate of home birth, and how government policy in the United Kingdom has by turns opposed and supported home birth.

My one disappointment is that scant attention is paid to the plans and desires of pregnant and birthing women. At the beginning of the last chapter the authors admit, "We were well along in the planning of this book when it occurred to us that we had overlooked the most important actors in the drama of birth: mothers (to-be) and their families" (243). They excuse their oversight by arguing that women's desires are shaped by the alternatives presented to them, as much as or more than those desires shape the alternatives. However, while this is certainly true, the book would have been strengthened by some consideration of women's beliefs, desires, plans, and accounts of their experiences. Midwives' voices and experiences emerge far more clearly in this book than do the voices and experiences of pregnant women. Despite these concerns, *Birth by Design* provides a well-researched, interdisciplinary examination of maternal health care services.

Rediscovering Birth

Kitzinger, Sheila.
New York: Pocket Books, 2000.

Birth Your Own Way: Choosing Birth at Home or in a Birth Centre

Kitzinger, Sheila.
Rev. ed. London: Dorling Kindersley, 2002.

Reviewed by Robbie Pfuefer Kahn

When I gave birth in 1972, social anthropologist and childbirth educator Sheila Kitzinger had published two books. Since then she has become like the many-breasted Artemis, Goddess of Fertility. Readers now can "latch on" to any of her twenty-three books and receive knowledge, vital as the living tissue breast milk provides.

In *Rediscovering Birth*, Kitzinger weaves an historical and cross-cultural tapestry filled with a lifetime's gathering of stories and images. Ancient artifacts; startlingly beautiful indigenous mothers and their infants; racially diverse Western women and babies, men and midwives enliven the pages of Kitzinger's book. Kitzinger shows a wall-hanging decorated with a repeating hooked diamond symbol, found in weaving and pottery from antiquity to the present. The symbol looks abstract but when you "look more closely" you see a standing woman with arms and legs bent as a baby emerges. Today, Moroccan men sell rugs bearing this birth symbol. When Kitzinger asked about the meaning of the symbol, men explained that it represented "men at prayer" because they "saw these shapes with men's eyes."

Rediscovering Birth looks at birth with women's eyes: It resanctifies birth, recovers "social birth" and the "birth place," where women create "birth dances" through spontaneous movements and positions. Kitzinger's tapestry reduces patriarchal "obstetric colonization" to a misshapen oddity in the hooked diamond pattern. She calls "social birth" political because women's birth work forms "the warp and weft of society." By relativizing Western medical childbirth (which threatens to obliterate traditional ways), Kitzinger performs her own political act on behalf of childbearing women worldwide.

Sheila Kitzinger is the daughter of a midwife. In *Birth Your Own Way: Choosing Birth at Home or in a Birth Center*, Kitzinger continues the family tradition. She advocates the choice to give birth outside the hospital. With hospital birth the norm, Kitzinger must persuade women that the power to give birth is theirs. Her word-midwifery draws upon metaphors and concepts

accumulated over 30 years: "In labor you swim with contractions that are like tidal waves sweeping through your body. As you push the baby down, you know the intensity of the birth passion, and then reach out with eager hands to welcome your baby and cradle this new life in your arms. To see love made flesh is to witness a miracle." Phrases like "tidal waves," "birth passion," "love made flesh" flood the reader with elemental energy, instilling a desire to know such moments and lessening fear. The beautiful photographs visually corroborate her language of birth. Kitzinger describes the iatrogenic (physician induced disease or damage) consequences of common obstetrical interventions and of newborn care in hospitals, and the estrangement from "the spontaneous psychobiological processes of birth and the creative energy pouring through [women's] bodies." She provides abundant information on arranging a birth without a hospital, finding a midwife, choosing the right birth partner(s), meeting birth challenges in nonmedical ways, and planning the "babymoon." As Kitzinger states, in a "society that is hostile to freedom in childbirth," it takes "courage to resist autocracy, dogma and the power of the medical system." Her words act like a tonic, invigorating women to find strength within themselves; this is the book's greatest act of midwifery.

Pregnant Pictures

Matthews, Sandra, and Laura Wexler.
New York: Routledge, 2000.

Reviewed by Lisa M. Mitchell

In their introduction to *Pregnant Pictures*, Sandra Matthews and Laura Wexler ask an interesting and provocative question: "What is a photograph of pregnancy anyway?" (xi). For North Americans the conventional response includes pictures of women serene and glowing in a naturalized state, headless pregnant torsos in guides to pregnancy, and increasingly, images of the fetus. Matthews and Wexler's many photographs, with their accompanying analysis, provide a compelling framework for readers to move beyond the conventional responses and to think critically about how we look at and interpret visual representations of pregnancy.

Matthews and Wexler's analysis is framed in terms of different modes of looking—scopic, instrumental, clinical, and iconic—each with distinctive and changing implications for the production and consumption of images. Readers who are unfamiliar with visual theory may wish that the introductory chapter was a less dense, more accessible pathway into the subsequent analysis of the images. Mindful that looking occurs within particular contexts, the analysis nonetheless deftly links the act of viewing to changing attitudes about preg-

nancy and the maternal figure, diverse representations of female subjectivity, and social conflicts over reproduction.

The more than 200 photographs in the book are drawn primarily from art, advertising, family albums, medical textbooks, and public policy material in the United States since World War II. While there already are numerous analyses of obstetrical representations of pregnancy, women, and the fetus, *Pregnant Pictures* manages to offer a fresh reading of medical images by suggesting disturbing eugenicist connotations. Matthews and Wexler move onto less traveled terrain in their analyses of maternity clothing advertisements, their discussion of humour, athleticism, and eroticism in family snapshots of pregnancy, and in their argument about the simultaneous desire for and anxiety about the pregnant figure in popular media. Readers of this *Journal* will be interested particularly in their discussions of the instrumental uses of pregnancy and motherhood in public policy, visual representations of single mothers and working mothers, and modernist visual conventions of desexualized motherhood.

In the social and historical context in which pregnancy so often is equated with producing and nurturing fetuses, reclaiming and embracing images of women during pregnancy is important cultural and political work. Yet, the authors manage to avoid fetishizing their subject, acknowledging that "many a pregnant woman already feels enough like a spectacle and would just as soon not be further featured in the feminine visual position of to-be-looked-at-ness" (14-15). The book is a welcome visual companion to the growing number of text- and narrative-based analyses of the politics of reproduction and of the diverse subject positions of women in pregnancy and motherhood. *Pregnant Pictures* will be appreciated by researchers, students, and others interested in motherhood, reproduction, the life cycle, gender, visual studies, and the body.

Birth Passages: Maternity and Nostalgia, Antiquity to Shakespeare

Krier, Theresa M.
Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001.

Reviewed by Jill Scott

In *Birth Passages*, Theresa Krier writes against the grain of much contemporary critical analysis of the role of mothers and mothering in literature. Feminist psychoanalysis in particular has given voice to a larger cultural obsession with nostalgia for the lost mother, which in turn manifests itself as an insatiable desire for the return to the bliss of maternal, pre-oedipal one-

ness. This bliss, argues Krier, is a false one, and the predominance of this cultural myth necessitates a historical re-examination beginning in the cradle of Western civilization with antiquity's own mothers. Krier extends her argument in thematically linked chapters right through the Middle Ages to Elizabethan England (including works from Lucretius, Chaucer, Spencer, and Shakespeare). Through her insightful and subtle readings of central canonical texts from a broad range of periods and genres, she allows her authors to argue her points for her: namely that there are alternative views on motherhood. Rather than privileging the prenatal mother-child bond to the detriment of all subsequent stages of infant and childhood development, Krier demonstrates that mother and child engage in complex negotiations of distance and proximity.

Krier cites Luce Irigaray as her most potent inspiration and her readings of this theorist's work are both illuminating and challenging. As part of her sophisticated theoretical apparatus, Krier takes the unconventional approach of weaving together the French and British traditions of psychoanalysis, schools of thought which have for the most part been considered separate and even antagonistic intellectual pursuits. The dialogue that she instigates among Klein, Winnicott and Irigaray brings new insight to the lesser known contributions of British psychoanalysis.

Krier is clearly at her best when tackling Shakespeare. The concluding chapter on *The Winter's Tale* contains fire, wit, and courage as the author brings her arguments to a theatrical climax with her reading of one of Shakespeare's most controversial and challenging dramas. She admits that the play was the inspiration for this book and is at her scholarly best in her critique of it. Here, she takes careful aim at the concept of the "good enough" mother and succeeds in skillfully dispelling the myth of the "bad mother" syndrome. One of the undeniable strengths of Krier's work, which contributes to her convincing argument, is the time and space she allots to extended literary interpretations. She avoids quoting too many literary examples to support her sustained critique of a central axis of psychoanalytic theory, and instead has the patience to coax her thesis out of each text in lengthy and thoughtful analysis.

There are few flaws in Krier's theoretical and literary musings, however her arguments and her prose are occasionally more dense and hermetic than this reader would have liked. At times, I felt I almost had lost the thread of the subtle web she attempts to weave. Though I always found my way again, a few more signposts would have clarified where I was on her clever map. Reading Krier's serious and intellectually engaging tome while awaiting the birth of my own second child, I constantly was reminded and surprised by the richness that the opportunity of motherhood unveils. Her erudition and astuteness as a literary scholar and as a theoretician are clearly established in *Birth Passages*. Mostly, however, we are left convinced by Krier's sincere and infectious passion and enthusiasm for her deserving topic.

Women in Labor: Mothers, Medicine and Occupational Health in the United States 1890-1980

Hepler, Allison L.
Columbus: Ohio State University Press. 2000.

Reviewed by Amy Cuomo

Women in Labor: Mothers, Medicine and Occupational Health in the United States 1890-1980 provides an incisive history of gender issues in the workplace. Hepler's interdisciplinary approach to motherhood, medicine, and industrial labour offers a fully realized exploration of the many issues that have affected women in the workplace. While the book focuses on motherhood, the workplace, and health, Hepler's emphasis on gender allows for a wider understanding of occupational health that includes, for example, how and when laws intended to aid/protect women also benefited their male co-workers. As suggested by its subtitle, Hepler's book spans ninety years of occupational health and provides an interesting overview of the many problems women have faced in industry. The author's focus, however, eventually shifts to the conflict between feminists who believe in protective labour legislation for women in the workplace and feminists who work for women's equality by minimizing differences between men and women.

Divided into seven chapters, *Women in Labor* explores the construction of the idea of occupational health. Hepler notes that early reformers' concerns about women's health in the workplace was founded on the principle that women's primary duty was that of mother. Long hours and unsanitary conditions could hinder women's ability to produce and raise future citizens. The author notes that reform efforts eventually led to protective legislation that limited the number of hours women could work in selected jobs. While protective legislation often was beneficial to women, it also prohibited their employment in jobs that posed less of an overall threat to their health.

In the 1920s, the debate over protective legislation was shaped by two groups: the Women's Bureau and supporters of the Equal Rights Amendment. Hepler traces this debate through World War II when women's entry into the workforce in unprecedented numbers instigated a variety of reforms beneficial to both women and men. These reforms convinced protectionist advocates such as Alice Hamilton to support a philosophy that minimized difference. This philosophy, expressed by supporters of the Equal Rights Amendment, limited activism for protective legislation based solely on gender.

Hepler continues her investigation of protectionism in her study of fetal protection policies by citing the American Cyanamid's surgical sterilization of five employees as part of its fetal protection policy. She also discusses the

Supreme Court case in which the United Auto Workers (UAW) challenged the constitutionality of Johnson Control's fetal protection policy. Hepler emphasizes the difficulties that result from the polarization of protective labour legislation and equality based policies regarding women in the workplace. While the Supreme Court declared fetal protection policies unconstitutional in *UAW v. Johnson Controls, Inc.*, (1991), this victory, according to Hepler "must be tempered by the realization that the decision did not result in a different work environment. Emphasizing equal rights has placed responsibility for health on the workers themselves."

Women in Labor is an excellent resource for courses on women or gender studies. The book provides an invaluable history of how gender has dictated women's roles at work and at home. Also included are several carefully selected illustrations and photographs that portray women in industry. Hepler's scholarship is impressive and her work is well research and documented.

Born to Procreate: Women and Childbirth in France from the Middle Ages to the Eighteenth Century

Graves, Rolande.
New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2001.

Reviewed by Susan S. Hennessy

In *Born to Procreate*, Rolande Graves lays out the history of midwifery and the development of obstetric medicine from medieval times through to the eighteenth century. The book begins with an overview of scientific knowledge during the Middle Ages. While medical doctors published numerous treatises on the female anatomy, beliefs stemming from superstition and the Church continued to override rational explanations for reproduction: "To these theories must be added the philosophical debates on the power or influence of God and the stars on the sperm at the time of conception" (27). Other common beliefs included the notion of menstruation as a necessary purification of the body, or that menstruation was a means of shedding an overabundance of blood in the woman's body. Such perceptions continued to pervade the scientific realm for centuries to come.

Graves traces the evolution of obstetrical manuals, including those written by *sages femmes*. Ambroise Paré, cited as one of the more influential doctors, published manuals that provided extensive information drawn from his own experience with parturient women. They also describe and attempt to explain common complications of childbirth, stillbirths, and the birth of deformed babies. Here, too, superstition underlies the explanation of unusual births:

"Paré recommends that women not look at monstrous things during intercourse or prior to the 'formation' of the baby.... Twisted hands or feet, humps or other deformities are the direct result of the bad habits of the mother..." such as wearing clothes that are too tight (56). Because knowledge regarding reproduction remained largely unchanged from the Middle Ages through to the sixteenth century, the treatment of pregnant women often was based on misinformation and age-old notions rather than solid scientific fact.

Chapter three describes the struggle for midwives to improve their skills and maintain their role in the delivery of babies. The gradual education and regulation of midwifery in the 1800s made it possible for midwives to care more effectively for women. This section also describes the rampant infection that killed many parturient women in hospitals: as many as one woman in fifteen died in the best years, one in ten in the worst years.

In the final chapter, the author describes "Precursors of Modern Obstetrics" whose knowledge seems no greater than that of earlier physicians. Illustrations of obstetrical instruments, such as the speculum and forceps, underscore the readiness of doctors to intervene in childbirth. Drawings of the female anatomy remain rudimentary and flawed. Indeed, it is difficult to perceive any progress in obstetric medicine. *Born to Procreate* is useful as an introduction to the history of medical practice as it pertains to women in France. It provides insight into cultural practices that shaped the medical treatment of women, and outlines the evolution of women's role as caregiver of women. Unfortunately, excessive typographical errors distract the reader, lending an air of amateurism to the book.

Mothers and Sons: Feminism, Masculinity, and the Struggle to Raise Our Sons

O'Reilly, Andrea, ed.
New York and London: Routledge, 2001.

Reviewed by Fiona Joy Green

Over a decade ago, during a rare speaking engagement in Winnipeg, Gloria Steinem advised a sold-out audience that "we need to raise our sons more like our daughters." While the violence of boys and male youth experienced in the Columbine shootings and other such horrific actions had not yet occurred, Steinem's analysis was not new to me. Since the birth of my son fourteen years ago, I have been raising him with the conscious understanding that the mother-son relationship as proscribed by patriarchy is limited, damaging, and dangerous. Sadly, feminist scholarship has continued to focus on mother-daughter relationships, almost to the exclusion of mother-son relationships.

Thanks to Andrea O'Reilly, who has edited and contributed to *Mothers and Sons: Feminism, Masculinity, and the Struggle to Raise Our Sons*, the dearth of scholarship on mother-son relations is being addressed. Based on papers presented at the 1998 Conference of the Association for Research on Mothering (ARM) on "Mothers and Sons: Challenges and Possibilities," this 280-page publication introduces readers to a healthy selection of exciting and important feminist scholarship on mothers and sons. Eleven chapters are grouped into three separate, yet interconnected, sections united by recurring topics such as feminism, mothering, masculinity, ethnicity, war, peace, and nurturing. One of the greatest achievements of this collection is its attempt to balance diverse theoretical approaches and theories with personal narratives that explore various elements of mother-son relationships.

In the first section, "Mothering and Motherhood," authors demonstrate how positioning themselves as critics of the master narrative of motherhood enables them to challenge the oppressive elements of the institution of motherhood and to redefine mothering for themselves and for their sons. Mary Kay Blakely describes, with humour and poignancy, some of the ways in which she personally has deconstructed the institution of motherhood through her need to model truth and authenticity for her son. Claudette Lee and Ethel Hill Williams add to this understanding in their critique of the myths and realities of mothering from a black feminist perspective. They illuminate the need for African-American mothers to instill in their sons an awareness of a racially oppressive society and their need to be agents within that society. The importance of peacekeeping and peacemaking, first introduced by Jacqueline Haessly in her personal narrative of mothering sons with special needs, is explored by Linda Rennie Forcey in her reflective discussion of mothering and the art of peacebuilding. Andrea O'Reilly's brilliant analysis of three feminist approaches to mother-son relationships concludes the section. Drawing on recent contributions of Anglo-American and African-American feminist theorizing on mothers and sons, O'Reilly explains the shift in feminist theorizing about mothering from maternal erasure and disconnection to maternal presence, agency, and authority. As motherhood "outlaws," each writer substantiates how mothers are able to be autonomous beings as they foreground their mother-son relationships.

The second section, "Men and Masculinities," addresses the complexity of the interplay between feminism and mothering that has generally remained on the fringe of feminist scholarship. For example, Alison Thomas demonstrates how some feminist mothers who attempt to encourage alternative and positive manifestations of masculinity often face opposition from various elements of the dominant culture (such as the school system, the mass media, their peers, and at times the fathers of their sons) and, as a result, must deal with their own ambivalence and anxiety. Sharon Abbey explores the influence of feminist academic mothers on their sons' masculinity and Jess Wells examines the struggles and challenges lesbian mothers face in raising male children. In the

last chapter, Andrea Doucet investigates the challenges faced by men who cross into maternal work when attempting to father in ways that benefit women, men, girls, and boys. Each article illustrates the multiple ways in which feminist mothers are committed to understanding and challenging the damaging aspects of "normative patterns of male socialization and traditional definitions of masculinity."

The final section, "Men and Masculinities and Mothers and Sons: Connections and Disconnections," advances discussions introduced in the earlier sections and provides practical examples of how mothers are engaged in positive relations with their sons. Each of the four chapters challenge the widely held belief that mothers and sons must be disconnected or detached psychologically from one another if boys are to develop successfully into men. Drawing on examples from their workshops and clinical work, Cate Dooley and Nikki Fedele openly challenge this belief. Through the use of their own alternative parenting-in-connection approach, they demonstrate how mother-son relationships can be different across childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. Janet Sayers addresses the damage sons often experience through the loss of early attachment to their mothers, reconfirming the need for a parent-in-connection approach to mothering sons. In "Mother-Son Relationships in the Shadow of War," Amia Lieblich reflects on the mother-son connection/disconnection that occurs due to obligatory military service in Israel. Lieblich makes a convincing argument for the need and support of those individualist and feminist mothers who publicly challenge the status quo by speaking of their attachment to and need to be connected to their dead sons who have been lost in war. The final chapter is written by the lone son and only male author in the book. In a moving tribute to his mother, Douglas Sadao Aoki explores the ways in which his subjectivity as a son, brother, father, and husband are connected to his motherline. He generously shares with the reader the gift of Japanese calligraphy that his mother, June Yuriko Aoki, has given him and his son. In so doing, he highlights how his mother's language and traditional writing foster his ongoing connection to her, to his paternal and maternal grandmothers, and to his maternal great-grandmother. Including the experience and theorizing of a son is a fitting end to this fine and much needed collection of essays on mothers and sons.

Like Andrea O'Reilly, I wonder if my relationship with my son is secure enough "to weather the patriarchal storm" that continually rages around us. *Mothers and Sons: Feminism, Masculinity, and the Struggle to Raise Our Sons* attests to the fact that many feminist mothers have long been raising their sons like their daughters, and successfully demonstrates the multiple ways in which feminist mothers counter institutional motherhood by ensuring that their ongoing connection with their sons (and grandsons) remains in the foreground of their lives. It also provides powerful evidence that many other feminist mothers are both struggling and succeeding in creating nurturing and meaningful relationships with their sons—relationships that are resistant to the

patriarchal boy culture that divides sons (men) from mothers (women). People interested in peace studies, family patterns, family relations, gender relations, feminism, psychology, sociology, or women's studies will find this book invaluable to their research and teaching. Those more interested in the struggles of feminist mothers to raise sons in ways that challenge the status quo will also find this collection to be priceless.

My Journey with Jake: A Memoir of Parenting and Disability

Edelson, Miriam.
Toronto: Between the Lines, 2000.

Reviewed by Trudelle Thomas

My Journey with Jake: A Memoir of Parenting and Disability is a vivid, thoughtful account of author Miriam Edelson's ten-year relationship with her son, Jake. At age 34 Edelson is "hard-wired for kids" and is devastated when a doctor announces that her five-month-old son, her firstborn, may never learn to speak, walk, talk, or even eat on his own. Jake is born in 1990 with severe abnormality, lissencephaly, caused when his brain ceased developing mid-pregnancy. The fifteen chapters in this book are an account of Jake's impaired development and of Edelson's journey as a mother under extraordinary circumstances. Included are several black and white photos of the two of them.

The first half of the book tenderly describes Jake's birth and first year of life: his mysterious symptoms, such as low muscle tone and seizures, his diagnosis, the parents' grief process, and their difficult decisions regarding Jake's treatment. They choose several interventions including early surgery, a feeding tube, and residential care. The second half chronicles Edelson's efforts to maintain a strong and loving bond with Jake despite living apart, and her becoming a vocal advocate for the rights of "medically fragile" children in Canada. Along the way, she has a second child (an able-bodied daughter, Emma), lives through an unwelcome divorce, moves in and out of her career as a trade union activist, and deepens her Jewish roots.

What I valued most about the book is Edelson's candour. She presents Jake as lovable, yet she is frank about the enormous challenges of parenting a child with severe medical problems. A fighter by temperament, Edelson at times slides into clinical depression; like so many contemporary women, she must work hard to find ways to keep her balance, including massage, exercise, psychotherapy, and full-spectrum light. I found it easy to identify with Edelson.

The book is carefully researched, providing a tough-minded critique of the injustices and bureaucratic maze faced by parents of disabled children. Edelson criticizes the Canadian "top-down" medical model of health care and suggests alternatives. In Chapter 12, "The Ethic of Care," Edelson raises tough bio-ethical questions: Is it ethical for science to save an infant's life if it cannot equip him to live fully and independently? Under what circumstances is it preferable to provide only comfort care (and not intervention) to an infant who has no hope of a quality life? Who should decide—parents or doctors? She writes, "If we possess the power, as doctors and citizens, to keep vulnerable little ones alive then we must also exercise our judicious ability to maintain them in conditions which promote their dignity and well-being" (153).

The book concludes with a seven-page appendix called "Resources for Parents" that features recommended reading, suggestions on how to get information and help, tips on "how to be most helpful to someone who learns their child is seriously disabled or may die," and "advice to professionals." The last two lists should be required reading for anyone in the helping professions. A sample suggestion for professionals: "Do not imagine for a second that you know what these families are going through.... Give full explanations of diagnosis, treatment options, and relevant therapies ... (197).

My Journey with Jake is fascinating, enlightening reading for anyone who cares about children or the disabled. Policy makers, ethicists, and health care practitioners will learn from Edelson. (Edelson sits on the advisory board of the Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering.)

Pregnant with Meaning: Teen Mothers and the Politics of Inclusive Schooling

Kelly, D. M.
New York: Peter Lang, 2000.

Reviewed by Sylvia Moore

In *Pregnant With Meaning*, D. M. Kelly studies inclusive schooling of teen mothers. She analyzes inclusive schooling from a critical feminist stance, probing both the needs of the mothers and the stigma they encounter. The stories she tells come from two schools in British Columbia which attempt to integrate teen mothers. Kelly asks the reader to consider what "inclusion" means for these young women and in what way their best interests might be served.

One approach to inclusion is the "real-world microcosm" where mothers are placed in regular classrooms. Here they are not considered different from other students, they are exposed to the public, and the orientation of the

curriculum is towards the workplace. Conversely, the "safe haven" approach places mothers in separate classes. This keeps them protected but supports and encourages their independence. Kelly concludes that aspects of both approaches best serve the mothers' needs.

Kelly's examination of the political construct of teen motherhood provides an understanding of the background on which the two approaches are based. We hear the mothers talking, their voices woven amongst the framework of authoritative and marginal discourses on teen pregnancy. Lack of public support for teen mothers is linked to the perceived public need to deter teen motherhood and the notion that teen pregnancy is linked to a cycle of poverty. Teen mothers are not seen as "good mothers"; they are not lauded for accepting responsibility for their children; and their decisions, even appropriate ones, are challenged constantly. Schools use teen mothers as role models for other students, both as "shining stars" and as "reality communicators." Thus, the individual mother is made to shoulder the burden of change while the larger society is left unchanged.

Kelly juxtaposes media stories and statements from bureaucrats with stories of teen mothers. The individual stories describe challenges, frustrations, and successes and they push the boundaries of what "inclusion" might mean for all involved. As Kelly concludes, "an inclusive school is impossible to separate from an inclusive society."

KidStress

Witkin, Georgia.
New York, Penguin, 1999.

Reviewed by Ruthe Thompson

KidStress struck several vital chords in me. As the mother of a 17-year-old who announced shortly after transferring from a rural to an urban high school that she would have to start drinking coffee to sustain homework and extracurricular activities in her faster-paced city life, the book's suggestions for helping children deal with daily stresses were enlightening. And as a parent living in the metropolitan United States amid daily news of anthrax deaths and exposures, the war in Afghanistan, and investigations of the Sept. 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, this slim handbook has reminded me to take numerous deep breaths while helping my daughter complete college applications and prepare to launch into an increasingly stressful world.

Written by Georgia Witkin, a Clinical Psychologist at the Mt. Sinai School of Medicine in New York City and author of eight books on women's health, *KidStress* offers a compendium of useful strategies for teaching children

to cope with life today. Using the Internet to reach a broad audience, Witkin surveyed 800 children aged nine to twelve about their stress and compared their responses to the results of surveys taken by their parents. She discovered that children are more stressed than ever and due to a greater variety of issues: sibling rivalries, parental divorce and blended families, school expectations, peer pressures, exposure to violence in the media and fears about world conditions. Most surprising is Witkin's discovery that parents surveyed had not taken a full measure of their children's stress. Witkin reports that parents badly underestimate how much children worry, how alone many of them feel, how much sleep they lose due to stress, and how often they are fearful of confiding in their parents. The adults Witkin surveyed underestimated school stress and overestimated peer pressure, underestimated how often children's fears were realistic, and underestimated a deep altruism that made many children sad about problems afflicting family, community, and world.

While making clear connections between emotional stress, physical illness, and other problems over-stressed children may experience, *KidStress* focuses most heavily on how parents can teach children to combat anxieties and fears with useful lists of tips categorized by issue. Witkin takes note of gender differences in coping and points out that parental modeling, birth order, income and other factors can affect how well children manage. One drawback of the volume is that it has been carelessly proofread; small diction and other errors detract from readability in numerous places. In addition, the book could use an update to account for publications and events since its 1999 appearance. For example, Witkin cites two long-term studies of how divorce affects children by psychologist Judith Wallerstein but was not able to include a third published in 2000, *The Unexpected Legacy of Divorce*. As this third volume offers important insights about lessening stress for children when parents consider divorce, it would make an important addition to the information *KidStress* provides.

The Lost Daughters of China: Abandoned Girls, Their Journey to America, and the Search for a Missing Past

Evans, Karin.
New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam, 2000.

Reviewed by Andrea Riesch Toepell

Karin Evans and her husband wanted to have a child. For most people, this desire is fulfilled easily through a pregnancy carried to term. For some, however, 10 to 25 percent of all couples (depending on age), it is not so simple. In *The*

Lost Daughters of China, Evans elucidates the process that leads to a couple's decision to adopt a child. Some couples choose to cross cultural and racial as well as genetic lines. Such choices are not easy to make and even more difficult to fulfill, however.

The book begins with a description of Evans' family and the circumstances that lead to their decision to adopt across ethnic lines. A realistic and, some might say, gripping account of the adoption process follows. (Anyone who can write a gripping account of two years of waiting deserves praise for that alone.) Along the way, Evan includes numerous digressions into various aspects of Chinese history, the history of women in China, the population crisis, and the government's attempts to deal with the problem. The historically unprecedented result of Chinese policies governing birth and population control is the "international female diaspora." Many thousands of Chinese infants, almost exclusively girls, have been adopted by families in the United States, Canada, and many other developed countries.

Many people have heard about "Chinese adoptions" or may know someone who has "actually done it." International adoption is no longer rare. Evans discusses the generic issues applicable to all adoptive families, as well as those specific to adoptions from China. The latter are many and Evan explores Chinese culture, the causes, the magnitude, and the results of the population crisis (China has more than 50 times the population of Canada with a roughly similar land area), and the powerful forces that govern people's lives in China.

A significant portion of the book is devoted to the plight of unknown Chinese mothers. Each mother has had to act in a way that is completely contrary to her "natural" instincts: she has had to sever the mother-child bond so that her daughter may have a chance at life. Evans has little sympathy, however, for the fathers of these lost daughters.

The book is intense, personal, and well written. It gives a balanced account of a complicated process spanning two cultures and centuries of history. It is essential for anyone contemplating adoption, especially from China, and recommended for any student of Chinese history and culture.

Child: An Anthology of Poetry and Prose

Dunlop, Rishma, ed.
Toronto: Boundary Bay Press, 2001

Reviewed by Roxanne Harde

In her introduction, editor Rishma Dunlop suggests that *Child: An Anthology of Poetry and Prose* "is about capturing our relationships to the qualities of the child within each of us," and she goes on to point out that "this book is about

the child as a way of knowing the world" (5). While some of the pieces of writing included in *Child* fulfill these epistemological intentions, the poems and short pieces of prose tend, rather, to explore how the writer/speaker comes to fuller self-knowledge through interaction with the child. The speaker's gaze, by and large, tends to turn inward rather than outward. For every piece that presents the child's perspective in one way or another, there are several that present the child from an adult's perspective, and both approaches are valid and valuable as ways of knowing. In the first case, for example, gary raspberry and Rebecca Luce-Kapler revisit sites of childhood as they examine, in diverse and enigmatic ways, how coming-of-age continues to inform their worldview. In the latter case, Gary Kembel and Renee Norman follow rites of passages in the lives of their young children as they become the rites and rituals that inform the adult speaker. Similarly, the two selections of prose in the text, from Bill Richardson and David Beers, articulate what the birth of a child, in this case the same child, has taught and given them.

While the pieces mentioned above are provocative and thoughtful works of contemporary poetry and personal narrative, the general quality of the selections is uneven. Too often Dunlop has included that brand of contemporary meditative poetry that, by saying everything, ultimately says nothing at all. Leigh Faulkner provides examples of both overly transparent and beautifully formed verse in his poems on his daughter's death. "Poems of Loss I & II" describe her illness and death with an abundance of description that leaves the reader with little to carry away. His "Ghazals of Loss" presents the type of succinct phrasing that haunts readers and makes clear the lack of weight in the earlier poems; for example, "I pile words into a rough mountain / my grief refuses to stay hidden" (36), and "I've written your death so many ways / each remains a monstrous fiction" (37). Furthermore, Dunlop's inclusion of a previously published poem by noted Irish writer Eavan Boland only accentuates the shortcomings of the weaker pieces, and seems an ill-fitting conclusion to an otherwise all-Canadian collection.

What the text lacks in consistency of writing, however, it makes up for with a marvelous selection of photographs of children of varying ages and cultures. The work of several contributors, the photographs function as a photo-essay; they convey their own meaning and enrich that of the written texts. They are a welcome addition to this beautifully bound and printed volume, one that ought to be a welcome addition to public, academic, secondary, and private libraries.

American Family Album: 28 Contemporary Ethnic Stories

TuSmith, Bonnie, and Gerald W. Bergevin, eds.
Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt College Publishers, 2000.

Reviewed by Melissa Hamilton Hayes

This concise anthology is an excellent starting point for teachers who are looking for a text that will introduce students to multicultural literature. There is a tendency in textbooks that focus on multicultural readings to be too prescriptive, especially when it comes to a focus on American multiculturalism. Many multicultural texts focus first on the writing of early Americans, the Puritan consciousness, Native American mythology, the immigrant's story, and slave narratives to the Harlem Renaissance, followed by Latino and Asian writing. Usually, such texts read multicultural literature in the context of American history and politics.

TuSmith and Bergevin approach multicultural writing about the American experience from a different angle, which is not to say that they ignore either history or politics. In fact, their book—organized around the concrete, central theme of family—raises a variety of issues. The book is divided into sections that explore familial relationships: grandparent/grandchild, father/child, mother/child, siblings, couples, and adoption. In a section entitled "Family Ties," TuSmith and Bergevin push the boundaries of multicultural literature by addressing the issue of gay marriage and parenting as part of a mixed ethnic relationship. This is an often-overlooked aspect of multicultural literature and the editors should be commended for incorporating this section in their volume.

As part of their textual apparatus, TuSmith and Bergevin offer the cultural context for each story. They also include authors' biographies and discussion questions. In addition to introducing students to multicultural writing, the volume aims to help students with writing. Included is an expansive glossary of literary terms and prompts for writing about literature. The text also encourages writing about personal experience by challenging students to think about their lives in a broad cultural context.

Overall, this is an excellent introductory text for use in college freshman or high school courses. TuSmith and Bergevin include some of the most accomplished modern American writers, such as Alice Walker, Tillie Olsen, Leslie Marmon Silko, and Sandra Cisneros. Although it could be argued that some of these writers have been "overly anthologized," such as Toni Cade Bambara, there seems no better story to represent sibling love than "Raymond's Run." In contrast, it is refreshing to encounter such writers as Bharati Mukherjee or M. Evalina Galang, whose work is well worth reading in this wide context of multiethnic literature.

Contributor Notes

Sharon Abbey is Associate Professor of Education at Brock University and Director of the Women's Studies Program. She is a trustee on the Brock Board of Directors, an elected Senate member as well as a former school principal. She received the Ruby Kincaid Award for her research on mothering roles and co-edited two books in this field. Her current SSHRC funded research and teaching focuses on Embodied Knowing and Maternal Images.

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.

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.

Paula J. 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 of the University of Toronto. 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."*

Myrel Chernick was born in Minneapolis to parents who were originally from Winnipeg, Manitoba. She grew up in New Jersey (with time out for a year in Paris), and eventually moved to New York City after living in Chicago and the southwest. She began creating multimedia installations in the late 1970s, working with sculptural objects, theatrical lighting and slide projections. These have been exhibited both nationally and internationally. She currently lives in Manhattan with her family, where she continues to create videotapes, photographs and installations.

Kathryn Church in an independent researcher who works primarily in the areas of community mental health and economic development. She writes for both academic and popular publications and has worked successfully on exhibit and film projects.

Lorraine Church is a wife, mother, grandmother and dressmaker extraordinaire. Her diverse body of work spans 50 years.

Sara Collings is a Ph.D. candidate at the McGill University School of Social Work. She is researching child welfare from a feminist perspective, with a particular focus on practice in Ontario.

Brenda Clews has degrees in Fine Arts and English Literature from York University in Toronto. She is a performance poet, artist, dancer, yoga instructor and mother of two teenagers. She is working on a book with an accompanying

video that will incorporate theory, poetry, painting, and dance, "The Maternal Body: Theorising the Embodied Subject."

Carolyn Cunningham is a Masters Candidate in the Department of Radio-Television-Film at the University of Texas at Austin. Her thesis, "Technologies of Anxiety: Discourses of Fertility and Infertility," explores the implications of the Protect Your Fertility campaign. Other research interests include sexuality and motherhood, and the intersections of gender and technology.

Amy Cuomo earned her Ph.D. from Louisiana State University. She currently teaches courses in theatre and women studies at the State University of West Georgia. Her research interests include the myriad ways in which women and motherhood are represented on stage and screen.

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 motherhood 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 US 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 Managing Editor of ARM. She holds an MA in Sociology from York University and her studies have focused on women, youth and sexuality. Her work has been published in *The Journal of Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Identity*, *The Journal of Homosexuality*, *Herizons* and *Fireweed*. Cheryl also publishes a bi women's zine called *The Fence* and is currently conducting research on bisexual health and wellness issues in Ontario.

Carol B. Duncan is Assistant Professor of Religion and Culture at Wilfrid Laurier University. Her areas of interest include the intersection of religion and popular culture, the African Diaspora in Canada and Caribbean religions in the Diaspora.

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 *Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering.*

Jillian M. Duquaine-Watson is a Ph.D. candidate in the Women's Studies Department at The University of Iowa. Her work draws on theories and methodologies from Feminist Anthropology, Feminist Pedagogy, and Feminist Theories of Motherhood and Reproduction to explore the intersections of motherhood, class, politics, and representation in American culture.

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.

Elizabeth Francis-Connolly became interested in examining motherhood after becoming a mother at age 31 and finding the experience to be much different than her expectations. She has her doctoral degree in sociology from the University of Michigan and her master's and bachelor's degrees in occupational therapy. She has been writing and presenting on her research examining mothering as occupation and mothering across the lifecourse for the past five years. Currently she is the interim Head of the Department of Associated Health Professions and Director of the Occupational Therapy Program at Eastern Michigan University.

Rosita Georgieva, originally from Bulgaria, is a mother of two and a Ph.D. candidate in English at York University. Many of her poems have been published in European and American magazines and anthologies including *The Path Not Taken* (1996), *International Review* (1996), *Poetic Vocies of America* (1999) and *Canadian Woman Studies/les cahiers de la femme (CWS/cf)* (2000). She is interested in the mother-daughter relationships, in all their complexity, and more particularly, in the lives of immigrant women and women living in exile. The poem that appears in this issue was originally published in *CWS/cf* 20 (1)(2000) and is reprinted with permission.

Fiona Joy Green is an assistant professor in the Women's Studies Programme

at the University of Winnipeg. Giving birth to her son and mothering as a feminist has been the catalyst for her Ph.D. dissertation "Living Feminism: Pedagogy and Praxis in Mothering." Work related to this research is published in Vol. 1 (1) of the *Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering* and in *The Legacy of Adrienne Rich's Of Woman Born* (forthcoming, SUNY Press). While Fiona teaches courses focused on gender and the sciences, feminist research methodologies and women and health, her current areas of scholarly interest also include: feminist/ maternal pedagogy, gender performance and gender and sexuality.

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.

Margaret Morganroth Gullette is the author of the prize-winning *Declining to Decline: Cultural Combat and the Politics of the Midlife* (Emily Toth prize for the best feminist book on American popular culture, 1998*)* and of the forthcoming *Aged by Culture* (University of Chicago Press, November 2003). She is currently writing a book on postmaternity from 1900 to today. She is a Resident Scholar in Women's Studies at Brandeis.

Diana L. Haleman is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Elementary, Reading and Special Education at Morehead State University in Eastern Kentucky. Her research interests include single mothering, teacher education and socio-cultural influences on education. She is the mother of Sam Hobson, for whom "Old Photograph" was written.

Christina Halliday is the Writing and Learning Counsellor, Faculty of Liberal Studies, Ontario College of Art & Design, as well as the Coordinator of OCAD's Writing and Learning Centre and Faculty Development Program. Her research is guided by a preoccupation with the intersections between both practices and conceptions of the body, theory, art, and pedagogy. As a mother, feminist, and avid reader of post-structural theory, she is always interested in transgressive and artistic representations of mothering and mother-daughter relations.

Merryl Hammond is a (step-)mother to five children. She is a nurse and midwife, with a Ph.D in adult education and community health. She started a support group for at-home mothers, Mothering Matters, (www.mothering-matters.org) over ten years ago. She lives in Montreal with her husband and children.

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.*

Joyce Harries is a 74-year-old mother of five and grandmother of 15. Her first book *Girdles and Other Harnesses I Have Known* was published (5,000copies) when she was 72. Her next book is *Twice in a Blue Moon*. www.telusplanet.net/public/jharries

Melissa Hamilton Hayes is a doctoral candidate at the University of Nebraska Lincoln and will be graduating in August 2003. Her areas of research include Twentieth-Century Women's Literature, Women's Spiritual Narratives, and Mothering. She lives with her husband, Bryan, and is the mother of a two-year-old son, Lee. She is expecting her second child in September.

Susan S. Hennessy is Associate Professor of French at Missouri Western, where she teaches French language and literature. She is also the coordinator for Foreign Languages at Western. She earned her doctorate in French literature from the University of Colorado. Her expertise is in the nineteenth century, particularly the novels of Emile Zola. She works extensively on the topic of motherhood in narrative fiction.

Caitlin Hewitt-White currently lives in Guelph, Ontario.

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.

Robbie Pfeufer Kahn is associate professor of sociology at the University of Vermont. Her book *Bearing Meaning: The Language of Birth* won the 1997 Jesse Bernard Award of the American Sociological Association.

Isabella Colalillo Katz is a poet/writer, storyteller, holistic educator, scholar and documentary film maker based inToronto. 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 been heard on CBC radio.

Laurie Kruk teaches Canadian Literature at Nipissing University in North Bay. In Winter 2002, she had the pleasure of teaching "Mothering and Literature,"a new course inspired by ARM (she is also the mother of Elena, 4 and Bobbie-Ann, 18 months). A manuscript of interviews with Canadian authors in the works.

Jennifer Lawn lectures in the interdisciplinary School of Social and Cultural Studies at Massey University's Auckland campus in New Zealand. Her research interests include postcolonial Gothic, New Zealand literature, Canadian women's fiction, and the representation of trauma in literature and film.

Susan MacCallum-Whitcomb spent a decade in academia, teaching American 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.

Andra McCartney was born in Fleetwood, near Liverpool, UK and lived in several other British ports before moving to Canada in 1968. Her daughter was born in 1979 and her son in 1980. She has a PhD in Music from York University (1999). She has lived in several parts of Ontario and northern Canada, and moved to Montreal, Quebec in 1999, where she teaches Sound in Media for the Communication Studies department at Concordia University. http://andrasound.org.

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 19th- and 20th- century American literature, African American literature, women's literature, Victorian fiction, women's studies, theory and criticism.

Lisa M. Mitchell is Assistant Professor in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Victoria. She is a medical anthropologist specializing in the culture and politics of women,s health including reproduction, prenatal testing and perinatal loss in Canada and the health and empowerment of low-income youth and children in the Philippines. She is the author of *Baby's First Picture: Ultrasound* and the *Politics of Fetal Subject*s (2001).

Sylvia Moore former special education administrator, independent researcher

and writer. She is interested in the role of mothers in nurturing the self concept of children of mixed cultural heritage and is currently researching a book on non-Aboriginal mothers of Aboriginal children.

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 where she teaches history and women's studies. Currently she is examining the concept of domesticity, including marriage, motherhood and the home, from 1970-2000.

Amy Mullin is Associate Professor in Philosophy at the University of Toronto. Her intellectual interests include feminist theory and art theory and her publications include articles in *Hypatia, Feminist Theory*, and the *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*. She is working on a book that discusses women's experiences of engaging in reproductive labour, both in pregnancy and in providing childcare. She has three young children, aged 7, 5 and 2.

Jennifer Musial is a Graduate Student at Bowling Green State University. She is currently finishing up her graduate certificate in Women's Studies. She recently completed her Master's thesis entitled "Transgressive Embodiment: Containing the Pregnant Body in Popular Culture" through the Popular Culture department at BGSU. She is also currently putting together a curriculum model to incorporate critical media literacy into the elementary school classroom.

Ruth Nemzoff is the former assistant minority leader of the New Hampshire State Legislature and the first female Deputy Commissioner of Health and Welfare in the state. She is currently an adjunct associate professor at Bentley College and a resident scholar at Brandeis University's Women's Studies research Center where she worked on this paper. Dr Nemzoff holds a Bachelor's degree in American Studies from Barnard College, a Master's degree in Counseling from Columbia University and a Doctorate in Administration, Planning and Social Policy from Harvard University. She and her husband, Harris Berman have four children and live in West Newton, Massachusetts.

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 BC. 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(icall)y in Language/Education* was published by Peter Lang, New York. She is the mother of 3 school-age daughters.

Andrea O'Reilly, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor in the School of Women's Studies at York University where she teaches a course on motherhood (the first course on Motherhood in Canada; now taught to more than 200 students a year as a Distance Education course), and the Introduction to Women's Studies course. She has presented her research at numerous international conferences and she is the author of close to two 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 *Mothering Against Motherhood: The Legacy of Adrienne Rich's Of Woman Born* (SUNY, forthcoming). Her book *Toni Morrison and Motherhood: A Politics of the Heart,* also with SUNY, is in press. She is currently completing *From Motherhood to Mothering: Towards a Feminist Theory of Maternity* and editing *Mothering A Movement: Conversations with the Pioneer Feminist Scholars on Motherhood.* 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 editor -in-chief of 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. As well she had been interviewed widely on these topics including appearances on "More to Life," "Planet Parent," "Canadian Living Television," "Sex TV," and "Next.New.Now." Andrea and her common-law spouse of 20 years are the parents of an 18-year-old son and two daughters, ages 13 and 16.

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).

Mary Parham lives in Houston, Texas and is the mother of four children. She holds a Ph.D. in Romance Languages from UCLA and writes in both English and Spanish. Her creative work has appeared in *The Caribbean Writer, Atlanta Review* and other magazines and anthologies and her scholarly work has appeared in many books and journals in the U.S. and Latin America.

Elisa Pflum is a Ph.D. candidate in Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Texas at Austin. She is currently writing her dissertation on a qualitative study of first-time mothers who are employed as teachers of young

children. Elise and her husband live in Houston, Texas with their three sons—twin five-year-olds Jordan and Dylan and one-year-old Austin. Elise earned a B.A. with double majors in German and French and a minor in Education from LawrenceUniversity in Appleton, Wisconsin and has a M.A. in Educational Administration from University of Texas at Austin.

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.

Leslie Reid is an artist working in painting and photography. She is a full professor in the Department of Visual Arts at the University of Ottawa, where she has also served as Chair. She has received many grants and awards from the Canada Council for the Arts, the Ontario Arts Council, and the Royal Canadian Academy amongst others. Her work is in many major collections, including the National Gallery of Canada, the Canada Council Art Bank, the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, and the Musee d'art contemporain de Montreal. For the last few years her work has dealt with the representation of maternal ambivalence in the visual arts, and she has lectured in Canada and in the U.K. on the subject and its expression in her work, most recently at the First Person Plural Symposium, a unique forum on mothering issues and visual arts, organized by Mentoring Artists for Women's Art in Winnipeg, where these ideas were first presented.

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.

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 6 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.

Jill Scott is Assistant Professor of German at Queen's University, Kingston and received a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from the University of Toronto. She has published articles on women authors (Cixous, Dinesen, Gambaro), translation theory, German literature (Hofmannsthal, Musil, Novalis) and cultural studies (Benjamin, Generation X, condom advertising).

Trudelle Thomas is a Professor of English at Xavier University, a Jesuit university in Cincinnati, Ohio where she teaches courses in writing and literature. She writes creative nonfiction and publishes academic essays in the areas of Composition Studies, nature writing, and autobiography. She is currently completing a book about motherhood and spirituality, *Spirituality in the Mother Zone*.

Ruthe Thompson is an Assistant Professor of communications at Roosevelt University in Chicago. She holds degrees in English and journalism from University of California, Berkeley, and a doctorate in English from University of Arizona. Thompson completed her first documentary film, "Breast Cancer Diaries," in 2001, and is currently in production of a second film about gender politics in academia. Her entry on feminist artist Judy Chicago's "Dinner Party" installation appears in the forthcoming *International Encyclopedia of Censorship* (Fitzroy Dearborn). She has authored numerous articles for national magazines, publishing most recently in *American Artist* and *New Age*.

Andrea Riesch Toepell is Associate Professor in the Faculty of Applied Health Sciences at Brock University, Ontario. She teaches and does research in the field of population health, gender and health, aging women in sport, violence as a determinant of health among women, and HIV/AIDS and vulnerable populations. In 1998, she and her husband adopted their eldest daughter from China, hence the interest in reviewing a book on the subject.

Jodi E. Vandenberg-Dave is Assistant Professor of History at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. She earned her Ph.D. in U.S. History from the University of Minnesota in 1995. Her research in women's history and educational history has been published in the *Journal of American History, Women's Studies Quarterly, International Labor and Working-Class History, and*

History of Education. Her current research and teaching interests are the history of contemporary working-class women and the history of motherhood. She is also the mother of three children who expose her to *lots* of children's literature.

Gail Vanstone teaches in Women's Studies at York University, Toronto. She is also an Assistant Lecturer with the Centre for Academic Writing.

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 July 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.

Call for Papers

The Association for Research on Mothering (ARM)
invites submissions for a one-day conference
in honour of Mother's Day on:

Grandmothers and Grandmothering

May 1, 2004
York University, Toronto, Canada

This conference will explore, from a variety of perspectives and disciplines, the experiences, perspectives and representations of grandmothers, grandmothering and grandmotherhood. It will also examine the role and impact of older women as grandmother figures in communities and social movements, regardless of their family status. We are seeking submissions from students, activists, scholars, practitioners and artists. Cross-cultural, historical and comparative work is encouraged. We welcome a variety of submission types including academic papers, workshops, and creative submissions.

The conference will open with a keynote address by
Hope Edelman, author of
***Motherless Daughters* and *Mother of My Mother*,**
on "Mothers' Mothers: The Maternal Grandmother
as Matriarch, Role Model, and Guide."

Topics can include, but are not limited to:

•grandmothers as primary caregivers •the impact of grandmothering on mothering •the impact of mothering on grandmothering •the motherline •mothering across generations •othermothering/community

——Call for Papers——

(grand)mothering •intergenerational maternal experiences •changing family relationships •the subjectivity of becoming a grandmother •stereotypes of grandmothers •representations of grandmothers: artistic, popular culture, media •changing views of self and by others upon becoming a grandmother •generational conflict and mothering styles •grandmothering and public policy •issues for immigrant grandmothers •invisibility and power of grandmothers •grandmothers of influence •ethnic and racial diversity of grandmothers •health and disability issues for grandmothers •elder care/role reversal—mothering grandmothers •grandmothers and the preservation of culture •relationships between grandmothers and grandchildren •motherloss and grandmothering •grandmotherloss •grandmother deities and goddesses •the crone •grandmothering and spirituality •grandmother wisdom—idealization or disparagement? •grandmothering and sexuality •lesbian/bisexual/queer/trans grandmothers •grandmothers and activism •the benefits of being a grandmother •grandmothers and poverty •AIDS and motherloss in Africa—the role of grandmothers •grandmothers and paid work •grandmothers and reproductive work •"young" grandmothers •baby boom grandmothers •feminist grandmothers •modeling grandmotherhood •radical grandmothers

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If you are interested in being considered as a speaker, please send a 250 word abstract and a 50 word bio by September 1, 2003 to:

Association for Research on Mothering
726 Atkinson College,
York University,
4700 Keele Street,
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Call us at (416) 736-2100 x 60366,
or email us at arm@yorku.ca

One must be a member of ARM for 2003 in order to submit an abstract.
Membership must be received with your submission.

Call for Papers

The editorial board is seeking submissions for Vol. 6.1 of the *Journal of The Association for Research on Mothering* (ARM) to be published in Spring/Summer 2004.

The journal will explore the subject:

Mothering, Law, Politics and Public Policy

The journal will explore the topic of mothering, law, politics and public policy from a variety of perspectives and disciplines. We welcome submissions from scholars, students, activists, lawyers, policy makers, 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
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Submissions must be received by **November 1, 2003.**

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Association for Research on Mothering

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