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The Association for Research on Mothering (A.R.M.)

The Association for Research on Mothering (A.R.M.) is the first feminist organization devoted specifically to the topic of mothering-motherhood. A.R.M. is an association of scholars, writers, activists, policy makers, educators, parents, and artists. A.R.M. is housed at Atkinson College, York University, Toronto, Ontario. Our mandate is to provide a forum for the discussion and dissemination of feminist, academic and community, grassroots research, theory, and praxis on mothering-motherhood. We are committted, in both membership and research, to the inclusion of all mothers, First Nations, immigrant and refugee mothers, working-class mothers, lesbian mothers, mothers with disabilites, mothers of colours, and mothers of other marginalized communities. We welcome memberships to A.R.M. and submissions to the *Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering,* our biannual publication, from all individuals.

Membership and Subscription Information

Individual memberships are available for $25.00Cdn./$20.00US; institutional memberships are $50.00Cdn./$40.00US. Effective December 1999, individual A.R.M. memberships will be $40.00Cdn./$30.00US; institutional memberships will be $60.00Cdn./$50.00US. Please see the last page of this Journal for detailed information and order forms. All memberships include a subscription to *Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering*, a biannual publication, as well as regular information mailings with respect to upcoming events, lecture series, conferences, workshops, and fundraisers. You must be a member of A.R.M. to participate in any of the conferences or workshops.

Submission Guidelines

In order to submit articles or poetry to the *Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering* contributors must be a member of A.R.M. The Journal will only consider material which is not under consideration at any other journal or publication. Please contact us for a list of upcoming themes as well as a copy of our stylesheet. In general, articles should be typed and double-spaced, and no longer than 3750 words (or 15 pages), and accompanied by a diskette. You may submit art or photographs to accompany your work. A.R.M. reserves the right to edit manuscripts with respect to length and in conformity with our editorial guidelines and housestyle. We will not publish writing that is sexist, homophobic, racist, or in any other way discriminatory. Submissions will be blind-reviewed by a guest editorial board of the *Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering*. Articles printed in the Journal do not necessarily reflect the views of the editors, the staff of the Journal, or of our funders.

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Andrea O'Reilly

Inaugurating the Association for Research on Mothering

The Association for Research on Mothering is the first feminist international organization devoted specifically to the topic of mothering-motherhood. A.R.M. was officially launched in September 1998; in the six months since, close to 300 members have joined this new and vibrant association; we aim to have a membership of 1000 by the new millennium. A.R.M. members include: scholars, writers, activists, social workers, midwives, nurses, therapists, lawyers, teachers, politicians, parents, students, and artists from over 15 coun-tries; as well as numerous local and international agencies, governmental and social, and community groups that work for, and on behalf of, mothers. Our mandate is to provide a forum for the discussion and dissemination of maternal theory and praxis and to establish a community of individuals/institutions working and researching in the area of mothering-motherhood. A.R.M., first and foremost, seeks to promote maternal scholarship, both at the university and community level, by bringing together interested individuals to share their insights, experiences, ideas, stories, studies, and concerns about mothering-motherhood. A.R.M. is committed, in both membership and research, to the inclusion of *all* mothers, First Nations mothers, immigrant and refugee mothers, working-class mothers, lesbian mothers, mothers with disabilities, mothers of colour, and mothers of other marginalized groups.

To date, A.R.M. has undertaken numerous initiatives to build and sustain a community for individuals/institutions working and researching in the area of motherhood-mothering. In September 1997, a year before A.R.M. was "officially" launched, 150 women from Canada, the United States, and Europe participated in the first international conference on mothering and motherhood coordinated by Andrea O'Reilly and sponsored by the Centre for Feminist Research (CFR) at York University, Toronto, Canada that focused on

"Mothers and Daughters: Moving into the Next Millennium." The interest and enthusiasm generated by the "Mothers and Daughters" conference motivated Andrea O'Reilly and the CFR to host a second conference in September 1998 entitled "Mothers and Sons Today: Challenges and Possibilities." Three books and a special journal issue have been and/or will be published from the two conferences: Sharon Abbey and Andrea O'Reilly's *Redefining Motherhood: Changing Identities and Patterns,* (Second Story Press, 1998); Andrea O'Reilly and Sharon Abbey, *Mothers and Daughters: Connection, Empowerment, Transformation,* (Rowman and Littlefield, forthcoming 1999); Andrea O'Reilly, *Mothers and Sons: Feminist Perspectives,* (Routledge, forthcoming 2000); "Looking Back, Looking Forward: Mothers, Daughters, and Feminism" *Canadian Woman Studies/les cahiers de la femme's* special 20th Anniversary issue, (Summer/Fall 1998). The overwhelming response to the conferences and the subsequent publications demonstrate the compelling need for women to come together and to "talk" motherhood, as it is lived and researched. And so in response to this demand, A.R.M. was formed.

During the fall/winter of 1998/99 the National Advisory Board of A.R.M. was established; members include Andrea O'Reilly, (Founding President (York University); Sharon Abbey (Brock University); Andrea Doucet (Carleton University); Susan McCallum-Whitcomb (University of New Brunswick); Dolana Mogadime (Graduate Student Representative, OISE/UT); and Alison Thomas (University of Victoria). We are currently seeking board representatives from Quebec, the Prairies and the Territories, and board representatives who research and/or work on behalf of First Nations mothers, Lesbian mothers, mothers of colour, and mothers with disabilities. The board, for at least the next few years, will be Canadian-based though we have links with individuals and institutions from around the world.

A.R.M.'s commitment to the creation of a community of individuals/institutions working and researching in the field of motherhood has been the primary aim of A.R.M. in its first six months. In the fall and winter of 1998/99 A.R.M. undertook a major membership drive; Christy Taylor, A.R.M.'s administrative assistant, Jennifer Conner, A.R.M.'s graduate assistant and, myself, Andrea O'Reilly, Founding President of A.R.M., as well as Andrea's family spent countless hours stuffing envelopes; while our membership information was posted on numerous list serves. The winter months also saw Sharon Abbey, conference coordinator of the third annual A.R.M. conference, finalize programming for what promises to be a landmark conference; over one hundreds speakers from around the world will be presenting at "Mothers and Education: Issues and Directions for Maternal Pedagogy" October 1st-3rd, 1999, at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ontario.

In the Spring of 1999, Andrea O'Reilly started organizing an international conference entitled "Mothering in the African Diaspora: Literature, Society, History, Popular Culture, and the Arts" which will take place February 4th-6th, 2000, as part of A.R.M.'s congress grant application to the Social Science

and Humanities Research Council of Canada, (SSHRC). Spring 1999 also saw the birth of *The Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering*, the first and only journal publication devoted specifically to scholarship on motherhood. *The Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering* will be published twice annually and its issues will focus on a particular topic or theme of motherhood. Future issues include: "Lesbian Mothers" (Winter 1999), "Mothers and Education," "Mothering in the African Diaspora," and "Mothers and Sons." In the summer of 1999, and subsequent summers, A.R.M. will also publish a Member's Directory, as well as an A.R.M. list serve and web page.

As A.R.M. expands globally, it remains committed to local programming through the collaborative development of community-based initiatives with agencies that provide services and programs for mothers in Toronto. To consolidate this local and community base of A.R.M. in Toronto we have established a "daughter" organization called Community and Academic Research on Mothering Association (C.A.R.M.A.). C.A.R.M.A. is under the umbrella of A.R.M. and is composed of two groups; community and academic. Our efforts towards responding locally have resulted in hosting a four-part lecture series entitled "Redefining Motherhood" during the month of March in celebration of International Women's Day. C.A.R.M.A. and 519 Church Street, a local com-munity group, are also co-sponsoring an international symposium on Lesbian Mothers which will be held June 12, 1999, in celebration of Pride Day. C.A.R.M.A. will host a fundraising Mother's Day dance on May 8th, 1999 in celebration of Mother's Day and to launch the inaugural issue of *The Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering*. Future events include a lecture series for Women's History Month (October 1999) as well as programming for Disability Awareness Week in January 2000. These, and other C.A.R.M.A. sponsored events, are free for C.A.R.M.A. and A.R.M. members. All members will be informed of all these events through A.R.M. mailings.

C.A.R.M.A. is committed to bridging the gap between community work and academic research on mothering. Our mandate is to provide a forum wherein knowledge can be shared and dialogue fostered between the community and academics so that we can best learn how to address the diverse experiences, insights and concerns of mothers. A.R.M. hopes to establish other local C.A.R.M.A. associations across Canada during 1999/2000 .

A.R.M. will remain committed to the development and promotion of a community of individuals/institutions who research and work in the area of mothering-motherhood through an ever-expanding membership base, an annual A.R.M. conference, as well as thematic conferences, a list serve, web page, annual membership directory, the bi-annual publication of the *Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering*, C.A.R.M.A. events in the Toronto area, and in other Canadian cities by 2000, and finally by creating a network of maternal researchers that will span the globe, bridge academe and activism, and link lived mothering to examined motherhood.

Over the last year, as A.R.M. was being born, I found myself, as mothers will often do, describing in the minutest detail the labour of this beloved child, every contraction, rush, pain, thrill I have shared with colleagues, friends, family, acquaintances, and, more often than I care to admit, passerbys at airports, restaurants, in taxis and at the mall. And while most people listened patiently and congratulated the birth, many expressed puzzlement: "Why would I want such a 'baby'"; or more to the point, was such a baby really needed, in other words, "Why do we, society, university, government depending on the context, need or want an association about motherhood?" Such remarks while certainly not welcome were hardly surprising.

Adrienne Rich opened her now classic work *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* with the observation: "We know more about the air we breath, the seas we travel, than about the nature and meaning of motherhood" (Rich, 1976: 11). In the close to three decades since the publication of *Of Woman Born* the topic of motherhood, as Laura Unmansky has documented in *Motherhood Reconceived: Feminism and the Legacies of the Sixties,* has become increasingly central to feminist activism and scholarship (Umansky, 1996). However, as motherhood scholarship has found a place in Women's Studies, it still remains, in many disciplines, at the margins of scholarly inquiry. Most maternal scholars can recall and recount an instance where their motherhood research was viewed with suspicion if not outright dismissal. Real academics do not *do* motherhood (either in research or in life); at least not ones who seek a "real" tenured job.

When I wrote my dissertation on motherhood in Toni Morrison's work in the early '90s, as a mother of three young children I encountered many a raised eyebrow among my male English colleagues whether it was for the "upchuck" stains on my blouse, my chosen topic of study, or both I am still not certain. As an undergraduate student and later a graduate student, motherhood was seldom discussed, even in my Women's Studies courses. And when motherhood was considered in the classroom the frame of reference for theoretical discussion it was, more often than not, the "prison of domesticity" theme of late nineteenth-century literature or the "motherhood-as-patriarchal trap" paradigm of early 1970s feminist thought. When I began to teach Women's Studies in 1989, and brought the topic of motherhood into the classroom I discovered two things; the students had not studied motherhood, and two, they were most eager to do so. In response, I designed in 1991 a full, third-year Women's Studies course on Mothering and Motherhood, the first of its kind in Canada.[1] When colleagues and acquaintances, inquired why I was designing a course on motherhood (they never seem to ask such questions of historians or political scientists who develop courses on war) I reflected upon a comment made by Toni Morrison: "I wrote the books ... I wanted to read" (qtd. in Russell, 1998: 43). My course on mothering-motherhood was the course I had always wanted—and needed—to take.

Over the last decade I have heard similar stories from maternal scholars

from across Canada, the United States, and Europe. I am currently conducting, as part of my SSHRC-funded research on "Motherhood and Feminism," interviews with faculty who research and teach the subject of motherhood in order to assess the positioning of this topic in Women's Studies curriculum; exploring questions such as: is the subject of motherhood taught? from what perspective? for what purpose? and to whom? What I discovered is that, despite the increasing centrality of motherhood in feminist scholarship since the publication of *Of Woman Born*, scant attention has been paid to motherhood in the Women's Studies classroom and at feminist conferences. Motherhood, compared to topics such as work, sexuality, violence, or images of women, remains marginal to feminist study at both conferences and in the classroom. My research attempts to explain this.

I open my research interviews with the question do you teach the subject of motherhood in your Women's Studies courses? and if not, why not?. In answering this question, many professors discussed how they did not consciously exclude the subject of motherhood; it just did not occur to them to include it. Others worried out loud that a specialization in a subject like motherhood could harm their career advancement in securing tenure or promotion. Still others expressed concern that if their colleagues viewed them as the "woman who did motherhood," they and their scholarship would be dismissed as essentialist, particularly by feminists of the post-modernist persuasion. Some admitted to me that they do teach and research motherhood "on the side"; however they seldom make their collegues privy to this information. Maternal scholarship, as these comments aptly demonstrate, remains largely invisible to a large number of academics, so much so that scholars trained in Women's Studies, have not even considered that motherhood could and should be a topic of investigation in a Women's Studies course. And scholars who do research and teach motherhood often downplay and conceal their work; or encounter ridicule and resistance for pursuing their chosen area of study.

A.R.M. was formed to promote, showcase, and make visible maternal scholarship and to accord legitimacy to this academic field. Most importantly A.R.M. exists to provide a community for like-minded scholars who research and work in the area of motherhood. Scholarship, both at the university and community level, as we all know, is enriched by dialogue and debate, broadened through knowledge /resources sharing and sustained by a sense of belonging.

As A.R.M. exists to simultaneously build a community of maternal scholars, academic and grassroots, and promote maternal scholarship, it developed in recognition of the centrality of motherhood in most women's lives. We are all daughters and most women are mothers if we mean by this "othermothers" as described by Patricia Hill Collins (1990), spiritual mothers, as mentors, or any woman who is deeply concerned about children. As well, many other women engage in work, paid or otherwise, that is deemed, culturally and politically, as an extension of the maternal function; teaching, nursing and, in particular, child care and elder care. This view is neither

essential nor pro-natalist; it simply acknowledges that discourses of motherhood script all women's lives whether they are biological mothers or not. Normative ideologies of the "good mother," public policies on maternity leave, child care, legal rulings concerning same-sex adoptions, governmental decisions about children's education and maternal healthcare, workplace policy on mothering and employment and so on and so forth affect all of us, albeit in different ways. A.R.M. exists to provide a forum for women to discuss with one another their "maternal" experiences; both as they are structured by these controlling discourses and how they are lived in resistance to them. A.R.M. was created in the hope of creating a maternal community that Sara Ruddick (1989), among others, has argued is essential for the empowerment of mothers.

The *Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering* is an integral part of this community building for both researchers, academic and grassroots, and for mothers. The journal will showcase the newest and best in maternal scholarship and will feature numerous book reviews. As well through poetry, photography and artwork the journal will give voice to women's lived experiences of mothering in all their complexity and diversity. The inaugural issue that you hold in your hands is the first of many splendid issues to come. This issue explores many and diverse mothering-motherhood themes and issues from a multitude of perspectives; testimony to the depth and breadth of current maternal scholarship. The inaugural issue, as a way of introduction to A.R.M. and maternal scholarship generally, provides a cross-disciplinary sampling of motherhood research; future issues will highlight a particular motherhood theme or topic.

As the proud mother of A.R.M., I would like to take this opportunity, here in the introduction to our inaugural issue, to thank you for being part of this herstoric event; the publication of the first and only feminist journal devoted specifically to motherhood, and of course to welcome you to A.R.M., the first and only feminist mothering-motherhood association. Appropriately enough, the journal is being launched on the eve of Mother's Day at a fundraising Mother's Day dance in Toronto. Mother's Day thus marks the official birth day of the *The Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering:* a most fitting tribute to honour and celebrate both mothers and maternal scholarship; better indeed than breakfast in bed!

Finally, as it should be for all births, A.R.M. had many attentive and devoted midwives. I would like to thank the office of Michael Stevenson, Vice President Academic at York University for its generous funding of the inaugural issue of the *Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering*; as well as the Social Science Research Council of Canada for their financial support of the "Mothers and Daughters" and "Mothers and Sons" conferences and my "Motherhood and Feminism" research project. Special thanks are due to the Center for Feminist Research at York University for hosting the above two conferences and for providing A.R.M. with office space and subsidizing our mailing costs throughout the fall/winter 1998/99. Students in my Mothering-

Andrea O'Reilly, Founding President of the Association for Research on Mothering

Sharon Abbey, National Advisory Board Member

Christy Taylor, Administrative Assistant

Dolana Mogadime, Student Rep.

Jennifer Conner, Graduate Assistant

Motherhood courses, particularly the class of 1998/99, bear special mention as they laboured alongside me as A.R.M. was born. Thanks are also due to Dr. Nancy Mandell, former director of the CFR, for her initial vision of a Mothering conference and for her characteristic energy, enthusiasm, and expertise that helped make the vision a reality. I also would like to thank the members of A.R.M.'s national advisory board: Andrea Doucet, Susan McCallum-Whitcomb, Dolana Mogadime, Alison Thomas, and in particular, Sharon Abbey for their belief and commitment to A.R.M. Thanks are also due to the Guest Editorial Board of this inaugural issue, Christine Bellini, Jennifer Conner, Molly Ladd-Taylor, Ruby Newman, and Christy Taylor; their hard work ensured that the journal was delivered on its scheduled due date.

Jennifer Conner, my Graduate Assistant, has been a second mother to A.R.M. since its infancy; as an othermother she tended to A.R.M.'s growth the times I could not. My deepest appreciation to Luciana Ricciutelli, responsible for the production, design and layout, was handed a huge stack of manuscripts by someone, i.e., me, who knew nothing about journal publication and with little more than two weeks notice, Luciana created from this chaos and stress the absolutely splendid journal you hold in your hands. Thanks also to Jennifer Liptrot whose hard work enabled us to meet our production deadline. My family, Terry Conlin and children Jesse, Erin, and Casey O'Reilly-Conlin, also deserve thanks; they stuffed hundreds of envelopes, have been a part of dozens of A.R.M. discussions at the dinner table, and have given sage advice and unfailing support that sustained A.R.M. and myself during its most critical periods.

Special thanks are due to Christy Taylor, administrative assistant of A.R.M. and designer of A.R.M.'s official poster and logo (as featured on this issue's cover). Christy, more so than anyone else, laboured diligently and patiently to bring A.R.M. into the world; her intelligence, and sheer grit ensured that A.R.M. grew and grew well.

Finally thanks are due to the contributors of this issue and to all A.R.M. members; A.R.M. exists because of you. In appreciation and celebration, this inaugural issue is dedicated to the members of A.R.M. for their commitment to maternal scholarship and their support of this association.

[1]For a detailed description of the designing and teaching of this course please see my article, "Talking Back in Mother Tongue: A Feminist Course on Mothering-Motherhood," *Feminism and Education: A Canadian Perspective*, Vol. 2, eds. Paula Bourne, Philandra Masters, Nuzhat Amin, Marina Gonick and Lisa Gribowski, Toronto: Centre for Studies in Education, 1994.

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Motherhood

Laurie Kruk

Penelope in Odyssey (July 26, 1998)

Turning and twisting
in the wine-dark sea
of forty-two weeks' odyssey,
you were dreamed in autumn
out of our daring hope
and surfaced, mid-summer
blown by storming waves
into the wet pre-dawn light
of labour's fifteen hour triumph
and your mother's wild cry
before your own sailor's announcement
of landfall. Big little woman,
weaving destiny from a web
of tangled blood threads,
you already harbour the seeds
of your own interior ocean.

Long fingers grasp so tiny, so strong
rose mouth reaching out, trusting
for what I did not know was there,
you were welcomed
by wise and brave women,
your mother among them,
and wrapped in the warmth
of your father's arms,
which ached from coaxing
your safe passage home
between the rocky straits of
the uncertainty of birth
to the constantly shifting ground
of a suddenly enlarged earth:

you emptied the nine-months space
under my heart
only to enter it forever.

Susan MacCallum-Whitcomb

Long And Difficult Labour
The Emergence Of American Maternity Poetry

On November 7, 1995, I was giving birth to my last child, a daughter named Sophie Constance. Exactly six months later, I was being escorted out of the White House. Well, that's a bit of an understatement: actually I was being "swept" out of the White House, with my daughter-in-arms, by a squadron of walkie-talkie-wielding secret service agents, not because I'd been hurling threats or planting bombs but because the infant I carried had the audacity to cry a little too loud and a little too long during a standard White House tour.

I offer this anecdote only because the incident reminded me that even in an age when "family values" are everywhere extolled, real-live mothers and their screaming, squirming children are not everywhere accepted. What struck me at the time was the absurdity of the whole thing. Upstairs, Bill Clinton was singing the praises of "Soccer Moms" (and doing God-knows what else); Hilary was writing "It takes a village to raise a child." Meanwhile, downstairs, Sophie and I were being told to shut up or get out.

I have no doubt that on that spring day in Washington D.C., we were an annoying pair. I hadn't expected that either my daughter's "barbaric yawp" (Whitman, 1959: 68) or my own noisy attempt to console her would be applauded. But neither had I expected that we'd be treated like co- conspirators in some diabolical plot to bring down the American government, as dangerous subversives who had to be silenced as quickly and completely as possible.

But that is exactly what happened. Having been unceremoniously dumped outside, Sophie and I made the further mistake of sitting on the White House lawn to catch our breath and were promptly chased away. At this point, visions of Virginia Woolf and the Oxbridge Beadle began dancing in my head. Woolf, of course, would have gathered up her dignity (luckily she wouldn't have had to worry about a baby and a diaper bag) and trotted off to the Library of

Congress to try her luck there. I didn't even consider it. I could already imagine the reception we'd find ... especially if we tried to gain access to the poetry stacks: after all, it is a place which has never been known for welcoming women with children—whether in the flesh or on paper.

American poetry has long upheld a distinctly male model of experience. Interpreting literally the national dream of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, it has celebrated the wholly unencumbered individual; and from Walt Whitman to the Beats and beyond, it has lionized those poets who could act as the living embodiment of the ideal. An unfortunate consequence of this has been the marginalization of those poets who proved to be either unwilling or unable to conform to such a rigid standard. For American women in general, the insistence on a male model, grounded by definition in alien experiences, has made the writing of poetry very difficult. For American mothers, women bound by an even wider range of physical and cultural imperatives, the task has been more difficult still.

Some, like America's first poet, Anne Bradstreet, succeeded as poets despite great odds. That she, and other colonial women, like Ann Eliza Bleecker and Judith Sargent Murray, could write poems at all while raising children in a rough, new land, was a rare and remarkable feat. But that rough new land did offer them one advantage over their literary descendants: they were able to live in the relative freedom of the literary frontier in an age before the boundary lines for poetry had been completely mapped. Thus the "rambling brat[s]" they brought to term (Bradstreet, 1981: 177) could be sent out into the world rather than being relegated to a magazine and gift book ghetto.

After the American Revolution, however, this situation changed because with the founding of the new nation came the call for a national literature. The criteria for poetry and the range of subjects considered appropriate became strictly codified, and the criteria for the "true" American poet became codified as well. Simply put, the paths of the literary parents diverged: fathers were able, indeed encouraged, to take the road "less travelled by" (Frost, 1962: 72) while mothers were sent home to knit booties and gossip amongst themselves.

As evidence of this, we need only look at the simultaneous development of two separate bodies of work: the literature of the American Renaissance, written by men, and what Mary Ryan (1982) has called "the liturgy of the cult of domesticity," a "ritual incantation recited by a vast congregation composed mostly of women" (17, 143). This meant that women and, more specifically, mothers, could still write: indeed some wrote voluminously. But if they wished to publish, the range of tones and subjects available to them was relatively narrow. Furthermore, as women speaking to women, they could only achieve only popular success. Serious critical consideration was reserved for men speaking to men.

If women held out any hope of being regarded as poets as opposed to poetesses—in other words if they wanted to distance themselves from what Nathaniel Hawthorne (1987) blithely described as the "d——d mob of

scribbling women" (304)—it was necessary for them to free themselves from as many stereotypical female responsibilities as possible. Historically, this meant that American women were forced to make a choice. They could forgo childbearing to dedicate themselves to their art, and, in doing so, risk being dismissed as aberrations, or they could have children, settle into a domestic routine, and give up their poetic aspirations.

Some women, like the nineteenth century poet Lucretia Davidson, consciously chose the first option. According to her mother, Davidson felt that she "could not do justice to husband or children, while her whole soul was absorbed in literary pursuits; she was not willing to resign them for any man, therefore, she had formed the resolution to lead a single life" (qtd. in Walker, 1982: 75). Early in this century, Sara Teasdale made a similar choice when she aborted a fetus because, in the words of Elaine Showalter, she was "unable to imagine maternity and poetic creativity as other than antagonistic roles" (1991: 110).

Others, like Alice Williams Brotherton, made a different decision. "I thought to win me a name," Brotherton wrote, that would "ring in the ear of the world—/ [But] How can I work with small pink fists / About my fingers curled? (1898: 76). Feeling unequal to the challenge, Brotherton bade "adieu to name and to fame" (1898: 76).

We will never know the number of literary mothers who felt compelled to be silent for the sake of their children. But there must have been many, for when Amy Lowell wrote "The Sisters" in 1955, the ability of any woman to combine motherhood with a literary career still seemed "miraculous" (459). Lowell, however, did feel that women were potentially "double-bearing, / With matrices in body and in brain" (459), and in her lifetime this belief was beginning to be put into practice through the creation of an alternative model for poetry based on female experience: one which not only allowed for the possibility of motherhood, but recognized it as asset rather than an artistic liability.

It is, of course, no coincidence that this new model, based on the belief that "Nature endowed the Complete Woman with a faculty for expressing herself through all her functions" (Loy 1982: 270), grew up simultaneously with the struggle for women's rights and, more specifically, reproductive choice. Just as it is easier to celebrate pregnancy when no social stigma is attached to it, and to celebrate child-rearing when economic hardship is not a pressing concern, it is easier to celebrate motherhood in general when you have the freedom to decide whether or not you'll have children in the first place.

But obstacles remained for those women who choose to be both mothers and poets. And they remain today. After all, literary mothers continue to deal with the relentless reality of bringing up children. Pre-revolutionary poet, Ann Eliza Bleecker lamented that "... Amidst domestic cares to rhyme / I find no pleasure, and I find no time" (qtd. in Cowell, 1981: 5). But issues of occupation

and interruption still jeopardize the productivity of literary mothers, as contemporary pieces like Alice Walker's "Now That the Book is Finished," Susan Griffin's "This Is the Story of the Day in the Life of a Woman Trying" and Marilyn Nelson Waniek's "Levitation with Baby" make abundantly clear. Moreover, the "carping tongue" which Anne Bradstreet complained of (1981: 7) has never really been silenced. Women poets must still contend with the admonishment of their peers, both the men who believe that "Women artists fail / Because they have babies" (MacDonald, 1993: 189) and the women who believe that "motherhood is the sinister invention / of patriarchy" (Ostriker, 1980: 46)

Nevertheless, in this century—and especially in the years after World War Two—America's literary mothers have, in increasing numbers, managed to be "double-bearing" (Lowell, 1955: 459). Women like Louise Bogan, Gwendolyn Brooks, Lucille Clifton, Maxine Kumin, Denise Levertov, Sandra McPherson, Alicia Ostriker, Sylvia Plath, Muriel Rukeyser, and Adrienne Rich—to name only a few—have been able not only to produce poetry but to use their poetry to reflect and validate maternal experience.

Taken collectively, America's literary mothers have regained confidence in their creative powers, both poetic and reproductive. Indeed, power itself has become a central theme for many of them. Some recast themselves in powerful roles. Moving beyond maternal stereotypes, they describe themselves as providers or protectors. In doing so, they not only reverse traditional expectations of the passive, dependent mother; they also succeed in reducing the importance of the father by effectively usurping the positions from which his authority is typically derived.

But a number of them go further still. Rather than dealing with generic fathers, women like Anne Sexton and Sharon Olds challenge, with varying degrees of directness, the fathers of American poetry. These women subvert the phallocentric national model by taking the words of its primary promoters, men such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Walt Whitman, and applying them to maternal experience. In the process, they prove that mothers are not just capable of writing poetry, they are as well qualified to write it as the icons of American literature.

The literary mothers who adhere to this new female model view themselves as neither romanticized Madonnas nor as martyrs to tradition. Yet neither can they be dismissed as penis-envying male-wannabes. In the opening stanzas of Sharon Old's poem, "Language of the Brag," for instance, the speaker desires "some epic use" for her "excellent body" (1980: 44). She stands by the sandlot and watches the boys play. But—and it's a big but—she does not stuff her hair up under her hat, don a jock strap and join the game. Rather than trying to fit herself into a masculine paradigm, the adult Olds embraces an equally valid, and, if anything, more authentic, female one. She defiantly celebrates maternity, revelling in her new-found power and demanding that it be recognized:

I have done what you wanted to do, Walt Whitman,
Allen Ginsberg, I have done this thing,
I and other women, this exceptional
act with the exceptional heroic body,
this giving birth, this glistening verb ... (1980: 45)

Here Olds suggests that males exploit their physicality because they are searching for a substitute for female fecundity—they are motivated, if you will, by womb envy. Alma Luz Villanueva states this belief still more explicitly in "Witches' Blood," when she theorizes that

Men have killed,
made war,
for blood to flow as naturally,
as a woman's
once a month—
men have roamed the earth to find
the patience of pregnancy
the joy of birth. (1980: 384)

The confidence that comes from this belief allows literary mothers to write in the "Language of the Brag" and put their "proud American boast / right here with the others" (Olds, 1980: 45).

The codifiers of the national literature long underestimated the power of the maternal voice. Canon-makers like Ralph Waldo Emerson felt that mothers lacked the necessary tools, for they could not use the "spermatic, prophesying, man-making words" which were supposedly the hallmark of American poetry (Emerson, qtd. in Leverenz, 1986: 39). That "childless, lonely old grubber," Walt Whitman (Ginsberg, 1993: 29), concurred when he distinguished between those who could "perceive" and "tell" and those who could "conceive children and bring them up well" (420). But America's "double-bearing" (Lowell, 1955: 459) maternity poets, women whose work is notable for its emotional force and formal ingenuity, have repeatedly proven them wrong.

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Carol Hult

Writer in the House

Once upon an old time, women were a rarity among writers. Only men possessed authority to write; women had babies, not books. A woman who chose writing over procreating fought and paid dearly for the right; a woman who combined writing and mothering was considered an aberration of nature.

Times have changed. Many writers are women now, and many of us are mothers. Jane Smiley—a writing mother believes that "a new literature, the literature of real, live motherhood, is inserting itself in our time, into the literary stream" (Smiley, 1993: 14). I see the stream widening all around me; it rushes with women's and men's voices from minorities once overlooked as well as the voices of that once-silent female majority: mothers. I hear solo voices of mothers from previous centuries and a chorus of contemporary maternal voices. I hear my literary foremothers and I claim them all.

Earlier this century, Virginia Woolf noted that her path as a woman writer had been cut by many well-known women and even more forgotten women. In her classic book, *A Room of One's Own*, she contemplates four of her famous predecessors George Eliot, Emily Bronte, Charlotte Bronte, and Jane Austen—and concludes they had little in common "Save for the possibly relevant fact that not one of them had a child" (Woolf, 1929: 69). The rarity of writing mothers was a glaring fact until the latter part of this century. Now the number and diversity—of women who are both writing and mothering has put writing mothers on the literary map.

My own voice as a writer emerged during the process of mothering. My writings have grown as I've paid attention to my children, to my own experience, and to the works of Adrienne Rich, Grace Paley, Louise Erdrich, Nancy Mairs and many others whose non-fiction, fiction, and poetry have opened windows into the lived experience of mothers. I've joined others in

giving literary form to the earlier forms of *silences* articulated so clearly by Tillie Olsen—silences due to the effects of class, race, gender, and particularly due to the maintenance-of-life aspects of mothering.

Why has it taken so long for mothers to speak out? Why did it take *me* so long? Anne Bradstreet was writing poetry in the seventeenth century despite extreme strictures against female ambition in Puritan society. Settling in the wilderness of North America in 1630, Bradstreet produced a volume of poems while raising eight children. Her book was smuggled back to England where it was published in 1650 as *The Tenth Muse, Lately Sprung Up in America.* In a preface, her brother-in-law assured the reader that the poetry was indeed the work of a woman and that her poems were "but the fruit of some few hours, curtailed from her sleep and other refreshments" (cited in Gilbert and Gubar, 1985: 60); she had *not* neglected her family duties.

Despite women's advances in the last three centuries which have given me far more liberties than Bradstreet knew, I hear tones in her poetry that still resonate—the apologia in calling her book an "ill-formed offspring" (qtd. in Gilbert and Gubar, 1985: 67); the anger in the lines "Of what I do prove well, it won't advance,/They'll say it's stolen, or else it was by chance" (qtd. in Gilbert and Gubar, 1985: 62); the irony in the line "Men can do best, and women know it well" (qtd. in Gilbert and Gubar, 1985: 67). I also recognize, with dismay, the guarded sanction expressed by her brother-in-law. His blend of pride and reproach are echoed daily in the mixed support and complaint I receive from the twentieth-century man to whom I am married. "Write," my husband tells me. "Write, if it's important to you." And then, when I do write, "What's for dinner?"

Daring to write ought to come more easily for a woman in this time of widespread "speaking up." In facing my particular marital and maternal and literary interests, I have a multiplicity of models all around me. Anne Bradstreet had few models and little or no company in her literary endeavors. Yet she claimed the title "author"—within a Puritan community where woman was viewed as man's helpmate. We've come a long way, we tell each other today. As we inch toward a new millennium, neither men nor women want to claim close kinship with patriarchy or Puritanism. We seek partners, not subordinates. But the phantoms of old live in our houses.

The contemporory poetry of Sharon Olds seems a far cry from Anne Bradstreet's apologia. Replete with images of sexuality and birthing, Olds' poems leap boldly off the page. In "The Language of the Brag," Olds writes: "I have done this thing,/I and the other women this exceptional/act with the exceptional heroic body,/this giving birth, this glistening verb" (1980: 45). I sing this boast along with her. But among Olds' poems is one called "Staffon" which speaks of putting a child to bed and running out to a dock to write, leaving another child with a man described as a "lord ... descended from lords." When the poet sees that she is being watched, she feels the poems "heavy as poached game hanging from my hands" (Olds, 1980: 29).

I know no mother—not Anne Bradstreet nor Sharon Olds nor myself—who has not at some time felt she was stealing time to write. Stealing from her family, her sleep, her duties, and sometimes caught with poached evidence: the poem, the essay, the chapter. Perhaps this is why a room of one's own is necessary, as proclaimed by Virginia Woolf and resounded by so many. A room *is* essential, a place to make writing *legal* to make it one's *own*. Until I had my own room I thought I could work from the family table but found instead that my space in the house was both everywhere and nowhere. The kitchen table was wonderful for the kids' homework; the kitchen table was poor as a base for my writing life.

In many ways, my writing began when I acquired a room of my own in the Alaskan house where my family and I still live. My oldest daughter, Marie, was four years old when we moved into this house. My twins, Hanna and Heather, were two years old. It was a time of active mothering and little writing, but my husband had ideas for the unfinished family room downstairs.

"It's L-shaped," Paul said. "We could add one wall and make a room for you." We imported the best carpenter I know, my father from Nebraska. "I want lots of bookshelves," I told my dad. "And I'd like one of those Dutch doors."

The room—finished and furnished with *my stuff*—has plenty of space, a large desk, a quilt, and family pictures hanging on one wall, and a window looking out upon hundreds of trees. At first I scribbled a few notes while my children napped. When they became old enough to engage in their own play, I spent bigger chunks of time in my room, keeping the bottom half of the Dutch door closed and the top half open so I could write and still see and hear my children. And they could see and hear me.

All, however, was not as smooth as Virginia Woolf had indicated. "When I came to write, the family peace was not broken by the scratching of a pen," (1966: 277) she wrote. *My* family peace was turned head over heels, due to the "possibly relevant" presence of three small children as well as the complicated matter of my relationship with my husband who, I suspect, feared what might become of our family if I should place more importance on my writing than on *him*. As the wife of an ambitious man and mother of young children, I experienced exhaustion as a way of life. What I'd learned from my culture and family of origin was not how to incorporate writing into the world of my household but rather how to nurture my husband and children before attending—if any energy remained—to desires of my own.

My family was alive and well and so was the Angel in the House, that phantom described so well by Virginia Woolf in her lecture on "Professions for Women." "She was intensely sympathetic. She was immensely charming. She was utterly unselfish," Woolf wrote of the nineteenth-century Angel in the House.

> She sacrificed herself daily. If there was chicken, she took the leg; if there was a draft she sat in it—in short she was so constituted that she

> never had a mind or a wish of her own, but preferred to sympathize always with the minds and wishes of others. (Woolf, 1966: 278)

This selfless model of femininity outlasted the Victorian age to survive the modernist era and to hover in the corners of these postmodernist times. She definitely lurked in my house. Woolf reported the need to kill the Angel in her House in order to write undisturbed; she "took up the inkpot and flung it at her" (1966: 279). Killing the Angel in *my* house was not as simple as flinging a desktop monitor at her. My phantom held a semblance of my mother and beloved grandmothers; I had to come to terms with her. I have had to learn, slowly, to replace her with another reality, my reality, as I see it, piece by piece and build it word by word.

My reality involves children's needs, endless laundry, sleeplessness, and struggle. But more than these external circumstances, my reality is shaped by internal assumptions which I finally came to question: the notion that holding the family together fell entirely on me, the idea that taking time to write was a luxury. How did I ever believe that my husband's work was more important than contact with his children, when I so readily gave up my writing time to drive Marie to a friend's house or Heather and Hanna to the dentist, or the dog to the vet?

Sooner or later, a writing mother must lift the phantom of old assumptions and realize that writing is not only an acceptable occupation but an essential one. That mothering is a vital literary subject. That it is crucial to express the love and anguish she feels for her children—and for *herself.* That *if,* as Alicia Ostriker writes, she "has been trained to believe that the activities of motherhood are trivial, tangential to main issues of life, irrelevant to the great themes of literature, she should untrain herself" (1983: 131). I've been actively "untraining" myself, removing that sticky word "just" from its position in "trivial" away from "women's work."

A writing mother must "untrivialize" herself to get to the real work and play of writing, a process that takes time and faith and the help of one's friends. The either/or mentality, implicit in many descriptions of writing and mothering, affects almost all working moms, not just writing moms. Most women experience a battle between their children and their profession, a battle felt emotionally as well as economically. We've incorporated the belief that we either give it all to our job or we give it all to our children. The workplace culture that views work and family as adversarial makes everyone suffer—women, men, and children. At the core of this myth of mutually exclusive domains is the trivialization of work related to women: the persistent view that women are "helping out" rather than providing, the notion that career is not as important to a woman as to a man, the distorted perception that staying home with children is not "real" work.

As a writing mother, I actively refute—every time I sit down to write—the arbitrary belief that writing and mothering are incompatible. My choices of

profession—that of writer, that of mother—carry the mythical baggage of two misunderstood lines of work. The social conception of the writer is that of a solitary genius called for a special purpose which sets him [her] apart from society. Even in this post-modernist, post-feminist (but not yet post-patriarchal) era, our view of art is still shaped by this Romantic-Modernist image of the writer as a little bit eccentric (and possibly mad) and isolated in his [her] garret. The social conception of the mother is quite another thing. She is "everywoman," as common as bread. She is the nurturer who willingly puts her needs aside to be the invisible glue that holds everyone together. While the artist isolates himself [herself] in order to produce "pure art," the mother exists within the muck of everyday life, easily disturbed and always accessible.

Must a woman simultaneously embody the "genius" of the writer and the "ordinariness" of the mother? No. If we who combine mothering and writing have imbibed these cultural notions, then we fall into an especially vicious variation of the superwoman myth. We may find ourselves chasing two phantoms: the artist sacrificing everything to his [her] art and the mother sacrificing everything to her children. Are there other ways? Yes. As mothers become "speaking subjects" and add their perspectives to the literary stream, the limiting conceptions of a dying patriarchy begin to be replaced with the realities of women's lives. And the reality includes many writers and many mothers, in a spectrum that reaches from the kitchen and the bedroom and the writing room to the garret and the garden. The reality includes Sethe of Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, Lainie of Sue Miller's *Family Pictures*, the mothers of Isabel Allende's fiction and non-fiction, and the accounts of many essayist mothers. What do these perspectives reveal? There's no Ideal Mom. No Good Mother, Bad Mother. In reality we see many women in the intimate, intricate process and practice of mothering.

Revealing the intricacies of motherhood involves risks. By speaking out about their private lives, writing mothers place themselves on the dartboard of contradictory public expectations regarding many issues: work opportunities, equal pay, family flexibility in the workplace, education, childcare, maternity leave. Mothers—whether employed or working at home—are often a target of blame for the problems families suffer. The messages from society are inconsistent. Middleclass and upper-income women get the message to ease off their career interests and stay home with their children. New welfare rules tell low-income women to go to work and put their children in daycare. A writing mother, at any economic level, faces the work/family conflicts so prevalent in our culture. There's the lingering question, *can a woman work and still be a good mother?*

Speaking out also exposes our differences. Audre Lorde writes powerfully of her "sister outsiders"—those "who are poor, who are lesbians, who are black, who are older," those for whom "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" (1984: 112). Lorde writes that "Only within a patriarchal structure is maternity the only social power open to women" (1984: 111). Such

writing compels me to define who I am as both writer and mother. As one of society's "acceptable" women, I am not confronted with the racism and the forms of sexism that "sister outsiders" confront on a daily basis. As a white, middle-class, heterosexual woman who grew up in a stable family in middle-America, I confront the patriarchal structure in other insidious ways. As I raise my daughters according to *my* traditional values—to love and work and think for themselves—patriarchy is not my source of strength. I've been haunted by the specter of *who I am supposed to be*, and I am not that someone, guarding my house at the gates. I'm building a new house that is big enough for my children to grow in, big enough for me to write in, big enough to fit many houses in. I'm building my house with many others, and we're using all sorts of tools.

What does it take for any of us to speak, to build our houses, to write? It takes claiming authority to tell our own stories, with all of their commonalities and contradictions. And what would happen if mothers seized authority and started writing in their houses, telling the truth about their lives? Selves might be remade? The world might be remade?

Seizing authority is what I'm learning to do. Widening to other mothers is what I'm learning to do. And I'm learning to see the possibilities that our foremothers imagined. Virginia Woolf understood the limitations placed on women, the choices still required of us, and the consequences of making or not making those choices. "With whom are you going to share your room," she asked? "Upon what terms?" (1966: 282).

I've shared my room with many—my daughters, my friends and their children, my colleagues near and far. My room is the center of my writing practice, a hub that has grown up with the house as we've made and remade the structure around us. No longer am I the infinitely interruptable mother. I've learned to nurture my children *and* myself and my writings. I treat my writing as my children treat their projects: as serious work and play. And my daughters view me as I view them, lovingly, supportively, with interest and esteem. I've experienced mothering as an apprenticeship for writing, and writing as an apprenticeship for mothering. Both are slow, demanding processes that gain urgency each day.

My room is a porous place, full of voices and movement. As I write I hear Marie's music and the loving, combattive conversations of Heather and Hanna at work. I also hear voices from the shelves that surround me—Helene Cixous whispering *the future would be incalculable if the stories would be retold*, Sharon Olds urging me to *know what I know, slip the leash of my mind.* My room is not a priestly cell, though I sometimes close the door—all of the door—to work undisturbed. Other times I close the bottom half, and my kids lean their elbows on the ledge when they want to talk. This is my model for creativity, not Rilke's or Kafka's or Joseph Conrad's artistic seclusion. My writing life includes my loved ones. I write amidst our unpredictable life together as my daughters are busy elsewhere in the house—Marie at 16 learning photography and writing poetry, Heather and Hanna at 14 designing Web pages and building bridges

for the engineering fair. My children seek me when they need me and leave me at peace in my room the rest of the time. They know there's a woman inside—their mom—slipping one more life into the literary stream.

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Angie Bosco

Motherhood

Motherhood, as I gaze into your eyes
I see a reflection of myself that I don't recognize.
As you suckle, you chew up my heart and spit it out again.
Your love is pure and relentless.
It makes me hate myself for the days,
the hours, the minutes, that I don't love you the same way.

Motherhood, it has chewed me up and spit me out again.
I am a puzzle now.
I can't seem to put the pieces back together,
so that I can know myself again.

Motherhood, my power now seems so great
and it resonates in all the history books.
But yet the love you have brought,
A love that binds me and twists my heart,
greater than any other lover ever has,
is the greatest power.

Motherhood, it defines the life I bring into the world.
It defines my life like no other force could.
The darkest womb, my womb, a metaphor for our universe,
carries the seeds of my salvation,
my motherhood.

Susan Hendrick

"Carving Tomorrow from a Tombstone"
Maternal Grief Following the Death of a Daughter

for Kristina

Modern theories of psychological development have been largely based on the male experience that emphasizes some form of autonomy or separation as the developmental path (Kaplan, 1991: 208). It has only been recently with the work at the Stone Center by Jean Baker Miller and others that feminist psychotherapists have established a new understanding of women's psychological development. Miller and Stiver (1991) believe that "an inner sense of connection to others is a central organizing feature in women's development" (1) and that women's core self-structure, or their primary motivational thrust concerns growth within relationship or what is called "the self-in-relation." As a result, the theme of connection and disconnection becomes a central guiding principle for therapists working with female clients.

Likewise, until very recently theories of grief and bereavement were also based on the belief in the similarity between men and women's ways of grieving and in a linear and progressive movement through stages of separation or detachment from the deceased. As a result, women in our society who are trying to reconstruct their lives following the death of a loved one may be extremely frustrated in their attempts to find support when the therapeutic intervention stresses separation and does not take into account their need for an ongoing psychic connection.

What special needs do women have in terms of bereavement and how may they best be supported through their mourning process? More particularly, is grief work the same for all losses or does the bereaved mother have special needs that are quite different from those of others who grieve?

Based on research and personal experience, it is my contention that women

and men do experience grief differently and that bereavement for women has unique concerns in terms of self-definition. Since a woman's sense of self is tied up with maintaining relationships, it is not surprising that disruption of that relationship through death "is perceived not just as a loss of a relationship but as something closer to a total loss of self" (Miller, 1976: 83). Rubin (1985) writes, "the relationship of mother to child is so very potent, meaningful, and intense that the death of either partner uniquely affects the other" (347). When the loss is a woman's child, the grief and subsequent work of identity formation may be intensified as mother and child are both "snatched out of the context of [their] development" (Lowinsky, 1992: 151).

Moriarty, Carroll, and Cotroneo (1996) note that in some studies mothers seem to experience more intense or problematic responses than fathers on most bereavement measures, whereas in others no significant differences—or limited differences—in bereavement responses are found (461). This inconsistency in research results may be because in the case of the death of a child, both parents experience the loss similarly: as a loss of their sense of self. Robert Jay Lifton notes that parents frequently attribute to and experience through their children a "symbolic immortality" of themselves (qtd. in Carlson, 1997: 233). Through their children and their children's children and the ensuing numinous vision of infinite generations, parents have the sense that something of themselves will live on, even after their deaths.

Might there be additional issues to the grieving process when the child who has died is the same sex as the parent? Carlson noted that for fathers, at least in our culture, this archetypal vision is often attached to the handing down of a surname to a son. But for mothers, this sense of being carried forward into infinite time attaches most often to the daughter. Adrienne Rich (1976) writes,

> the cathexis between mother and daughter—essential, distorted, misused—is the great unwritten story. Probably there is nothing in human nature more resonant with charges than the flow of energy between two biologically alike bodies, one of which has lain in amniotic bliss inside the other, one of which has laboured to give birth to the other. (225)

A woman's daughter takes her back to her own beginnings, her own girlhood, and beyond to an archetypal Girl through whom the mother feels revitalized, reseeded, born again (Carlson, 1997: 92). Jung wrote that:

> Every mother contains her daughter within herself, and every daughter her mother ... Every woman extends backwards into her mother and forwards into her daughter. This participation and intermingling gives rise to that peculiar uncertainty as regards time ... the conscious experience of these ties produces the feeling that her life is spread out over generations. (qtd. in O'Barr, Pope and Wyer, 1990: 186)

When a child dies,

> the dialogue of development between a mother and her child [is] brutally interrupted, the looping of intergenerational connections butchered, the mother left with only grief at her center, the desolated center where the self that was no self made its home. (Lowinsky, 1992: 145)

While a mother will equally grieve the loss of her male child with pain and anguish, the loss of a daughter is likely to pose additional identity questions for women beyond the grief and loss process because of the unique characteristics of the mother-daughter bond.

Chodorow and Flax (qtd. in O'Barr *et al.*, 1990: 183) found that mothers identified more strongly with their female infants, seeing them more as extensions of themselves than their sons. Ego boundaries between mothers and daughters are more fluid, more undefined. Bereaved mothers in Edelstein's study "more often noted similarities with the daughter in personality, interests and career goals" (Edelstein, 1984: 40). The daughters appear to have had closer relationships to the mother and were perceived as tied more directly to the mother's future and hopes. Kate, a mother quoted in Lowinsky's *Stories from the Motherline*, sums it up when she says:

> Maybe I'm not supposed to feel this way, but I really want Allison to have children. My son has a child, so I'm already a grandmother. And I love my granddaughter. But grandchildren from sons are just not as awe-inspiring as from a daughter: having my little girl have a child as opposed to somebody else's little girl having a child. I know my son's sperm is there, but it's not the same. The child of my daughter is my way of being eternal, I guess, of living past death. (qtd. in Lowinsky, 1992: 86)

Within her relationship with her daughter, a mother also works out her unresolved relationship to her own mother. As a result, when later confronted with the eventual loss of her maternal parent, the bereaved mother may ultimately feel trapped in terms of the continuity of life, confined to an eternal embodied present with no way out.

What models of therapy currently exist and what support is being offered to women who have lost children? What therapy is appropriate for women seeking to resolve the loss of a daughter and does the theme of connection and disconnection serve as an appropriate model for grief counselling?

Modern theories of grief and mourning have stemmed from the work of Sigmund Freud whose theory of mourning evolved from his observations of children giving up their direct attachment (or oedipal love) to the parent. As Freud saw it, grief frees the ego from the attachment to the deceased.

In my view, Freud's theoretical legacy has generated a misunderstanding of the grief process. In actual fact, Freud never applied his theory to cases of grief after a significant death. His own lived experience clearly negated his theoretical position but this was never acknowledged. Freud's daughter, Sophie, died in 1920. Nine years later, upon learning that the son of his friend, Ludwig Binswanger, had died, he wrote:

> Although we know that after such a loss the acute state of mourning will subside, we also know that we shall remain inconsolable and will never find a substitute. No matter what may fill the gap, even if it be filled completely, it nevertheless remains something else. And actually this is how it should be. It is the only way of perpetuating that love which we do not wish to relinquish. (qtd. in Klass *et al.*, 1997: 6)

Unfortunately, as a result of Freud's misapplied legacy, the view of grief most accepted in this century holds that for successful mourning to take place, the mourner must disengage from the deceased and let go of the past (Klass, 1997: 4). Parkes felt that getting through the grief meant breaking the attachment (qtd. in Klass *et al.*, 1997: 11). Worden's final task of grieving is to "withdraw emotional energy from the deceased and reinvest it in another relationship" (Worden, 1991: 16). Principles of grief counselling and therapy have followed the view that bereaved persons need to break their ties with the deceased, give up their attachments, form a new identity in which the departed person plays no part, and reinvest in other relationships. People who persist in retaining a bond with their deceased loved one are, apparently, most in need of counselling or therapy. The model of grief that began with Freud is based on a patriarchal view of the world that stresses how separate people are from each other. As Klass *et al.* note, experiencing a continuing bond with the deceased in the present has been thought of as symptomatic of psychological problems and is often termed "unresolved grief" (1997: 4). Coontz adds that the difficulty has been confounded because in the modern West, where autonomy for men was asserted, all dependent behaviour was ascribed to women and other lower status groups (qtd. in Klass *et al.*, 1997: 16). The pathology of grief, therefore, was associated with the stereotype of feminine behaviour. As a result, women, in their natural attempt to maintain the connection with their deceased child have more often than men been labelled "pathological grievers." While Worden acknowledges the possibility of ongoing relationship with the "thoughts and memories ... associated with the child" (1991: 17), he, too, discounts the idea that a continuous and ongoing relationship with the deceased person is feasible.

Other cultures, however, have supported the notion that the deceased continue to live in some form after death, and they provide mourners with rituals to sustain an appropriate relationship (Klass *et al.*, 1997: 19-20). Klass *et al.* note that ancestor worship in Japan is an elaborate set of rituals by which those who are living maintain personal, emotional bonds with those who have

died. The deceased remain individual spirits, available to the living for 35 or 50 years (Klass *et al.*, 1997: 59); essentially, for "the remaining lifetime of those who have known them" (Klass *et al.*, 1997: 62-63).

Kathie Carlson (1997) notes that the anthropologist Loring Danforth studied the beliefs, customs and rituals surrounding death in a rural modern day Greek village he called Potamia. Danforth found that in this society, there is a centrality, longevity and intensity of grief borne by the women. Maintaining an ongoing "conversation" with the dead becomes the central focus of each bereaved woman's life and the new definition of her social responsibilities. Likewise, Woodrick (1995) documented that the Yucatec Mayans believe that the living and the dead continue a distinctive, interpersonal relationship. The lost loved one is culturally defined as an "ideal" who never abandons the living.

Edelstein (1984) in her book, *Maternal Bereavement,* suggested that there is an ongoing interdependent developmental process inherent in mothering a child. As each maturational process is completed in the child, a concomitant development occurs in the mother as a person as she works through issues of her own. This "working through facilitates her ability to let go of the child as he or she *was* (emphasis mine) and adapt to the next phase of the relationship" (1984: 32). Edelstein states that "the relationship is severed upon death" (1984: 32). I would like to suggest that this mutuality of growth continues beyond the grave and moves, instead, into the intrapsychic dimension of the mother.

Fortunately, there has been a very recent shift in the literature of grief and bereavement. Dennis Klass *et al.* note that "the resolution of grief involves continuing bonds that survivors maintain with the deceased and that these continuing bonds can be a healthy part of the survivor's ongoing life" (1997: 22).

Memorializing, remembering, knowing the person who has died, and allowing them to influence the present are active processes that seem to continue throughout the survivor's entire life. While the intensity of the relationship may diminish with time, it does not disappear. "We are not talking about living in the past," says Klass *et al.*, "but rather recognizing how bonds formed in the past can inform our present and our future" (1997: 17). Klass *et al.* state that for the bereaved parent the end of grief is not severing the bond with the dead child, but integrating the child into the parent's life and into the parent's social networks in a different way than when the child was alive (1997: 199).

While the literature is not extensive, work with bereaved mothers has revealed a paradoxical tension between connection and disconnection in their attempts to resolve their grief. The best example of this is found in the work of Charles Brice (1991) who writes of the paradoxes of maternal mourning. He notes that:

> the death of a child intensifies the pre-existing developmental paradox with which every mother and child must contend. This involves the mother's conflicted feeling that her child is both a part of her and apart

> from her. A bereaved mother feels empty inside. Paradoxically, she also lives her emptiness as fullness; she is full of sadness, worry and grief. Moreover, she unconsciously struggles to hold onto this emptiness-fullness (for it serves a "relationship" to her child), and yet she lets go of it as she sheds tears that symbolize her child. (3-4)

The child's death transforms the mother's experience of her world. She struggles with whether the child is still with her, still a part of her, or whether the child is permanently separated from her by death. Brice notes that none of these relations to the child can be unconflictedly accepted and that the paradoxes of mourning will remain more or less intact as time moves on, though their intensity may diminish.

Alice Longman also noted that the two basic social processes of connecting and disconnecting were identified in the bereavement experiences of mothers. In her study of six mothers whose sons had died of AIDS, she validates Brice's theory of the paradoxical nature of maternal mourning. She observes that the connecting process entailed continuous efforts to remain connected to the son who had died while at the same time facing the realization that he was dead. Time was spent learning about who the child was and participating in activities related to him. For these women, activism was a manifestation of support. As one mother said, "I decided how are you going to know—if I keep my mouth shut?" (Longman, 1995: 90). This same dynamic is observed in other bereaved mothers: many will remain close to friends of their children or will perpetuate involvement in organizations in which their child was involved.

Another means of remaining connected with their child was through rituals, such as visiting the cemetery and decorating the grave with seasonal items at Christmas or Easter, or organizing special family gatherings to honour the child's memory. Planning for various rituals can be satisfying for the bereaved mother and serves the dual function of both connecting and allowing her to reach closure on the disconnection of death.

Gathering mementos provides another means of connection. Pictures of the child may be arranged in an album; special mementos may be purchased each anniversary of the death. Mothers may begin to amass collections of angels or butterflies. These serve as concrete reminders of their child's life but also help them to derive meaning in the death and provide a source of healing (Longman, 1995: 92). In her study of family responses to the death of a child, Davies (1987) discusses the meaning of mementos. Mementos are either visible or not (i.e. displayed on walls or tucked away in drawers or boxes); community or household reminders. Community reminders include memorial gifts or scholarships. The meaning of these will vary with each family member, depending on their relationship with the deceased.

Klass *et al.* (1997) refers to these methods and items of memorabilia as "linking objects" that establish a connection with the dead child. These will transmute over time, but will be long lasting (202). Klass has worked extensively

with bereaved parents through the U.S. based self-help group, "The Compassionate Friends." He notes that such groups are instrumental in the recovery of bereaved parents since "membership in a community means that the dead child is also a member of the community, that the child is valued, remembered, celebrated, and loved" (1996: 206). The children are the heart and soul of the group, for it is the shared inner representations of the dead children that bond the members to each other. The children are in the midst of the group, not simply within each of the individual parents (1996: 209). It is important for bereaved parents that their deceased child continues to live on, not just in their inner world but in their social world as well. For as the dead child is integrated into the social network, the experiences by which parents maintain contact with their children can be socially validated as well.

Margaret Stroebe outlines an alternative dichotomous process of coping with bereavement in her restoration-loss orientation to grief. According to this view, when people go through the process of grieving, they need to undertake, in varying proportions, both loss and restoration oriented coping. Loss orientation refers to the attention that a person pays to the loss itself: restoration orientation refers to the adjustments or changes that are consequential to loss. A central construct in the model is that of oscillation between the two modes of coping. As Stroebe notes, at times they will be confronted by their loss; at others they will avoid memories, be distracted or seek relief by concentrating on other things (1998: 11).

Rubin also postulates that the mother is confronted with a dual task following the death of her child. First, she must come to terms with the reality of the loss, which is accomplished during the course of the bereavement response. Second, she must evolve some ongoing relationship to the internal representation of the dead child (1985: 351-2).

Common to all of the above theories is the idea that both orientations must be permitted and experienced. The natural process of mourning may be complicated if the paradox of connection and disconnection is not allowed expression. Filling the void of loss with "images of the child they once had preserves the reality of the intrapsychic relationship between parent and child" and "maintains the intercontinuity of the parent-child relationship" (Knapp, qtd. in Savage, 1989: 10), albeit aimed toward a potentially transformative end.

Continuity of the relationship between the deceased child and their surviving parent may also be preserved by dreams. For this reason, dream therapy or analysis is, in my belief, a requisite component of grief therapy with the bereaved mother. As Savage notes,

> the frequency of these kinds of dreams may diminish in time, yet is it not unusual to dream of the lost child for a lifetime. In this sense, one remains a parent forever to the deceased child and through the psychological reality of this intrapsychic relationship, the parent is able to express the love that the death has thwarted. (1989: 72)

Often the dead child evolves in dreams: she will become older or younger within the dream landscape. For Savage, "this ever-changing development of the image of the child underscores the continuing evolution of the parent-child relationship within the psyche of the dreamer" (1989: 73).

Moreover, the lost daughter of a mother's dreams may represent an aspect of herself that, in contrast to sons, offered her the possibility of experiencing something profoundly different as a parent. Savage describes the case of the mother, Sally, for whom despite her love for her sons, the image of this lost daughter became synonymous with [her] own unfulfillment. Not having a daughter, she feared that her maternity and her womanhood was lessened. For a time she viewed her sons in stereotypical ways. She felt they needed her less as young men. To Sally, the child needing her maternal attention was her deceased infant daughter, who symbolically corresponded with her own vulnerable and feminine self (1989: 12-13).

While learning to accept the reality of their loss, the grief work for many women who have lost daughters may also reside in claiming aspects of self they have long since relinquished, denied or projected onto their daughters. The configuration of relationship between mother and child may then be reinterpreted as an illustration of self-dynamics. For the mother left with only grief at her centre, "the desolated center where the self that was no self made its home," (Morrison, 1987: 140) successful resolution of the grief process must include some examination of the internal psychic dynamics that are operational within the external grief process.

Levinson (1992) has shown the effectiveness of the use of myth with women having difficulty resolving their sense of loss. The use of goddess figures may help women understand more about their problems and enlarge their view of the roles and personality characteristics possible for women. In particular, the myth of Demeter and her daughter, Persephone, provides fertile ground for women to deal with their losses. Many writers, notes Levinson, have seen Demeter primarily as a grieving victim. But in the myth, not only is Demeter free to express her anger, she is also a woman who is able to use her anger to produce change.

Painfully, women who are grieving the loss of their daughters may also discover an awareness of an inner rage that is directed not just at their personal situation of loss but at the patriarchal structure which surrounds them. As Barbara Black Koltov has noted in her book, *Weaving Woman* (1990), when Demeter was able to use her goddess-given fiery anger and nourishing power to demand that Persephone be restored to her, the masochistic knot of traditional female behaviour was broken. This knot consists of doing for others, not being appreciated, feeling angry, depressed and full of self-pity, unloved but not loving oneself enough to do what one wants. Demeter says, "no," finally, "no, nothing for anyone," until she gets her daughter back (1990: 32). Use of this myth encourages the bereaved mother to incorporate Persephone, the symbol of her projected fertility/creativity (as represented by the daughter) into

a newly emergent sense of self. Thus, the figure of Demeter serves as a role model not just in terms of child loss, but for the mother's total role as a woman.

Will any type of therapy serve the bereaved mother? Those in Edelstein's study identified the following helpful patterns of assistance: "shared experience and mutuality; availability and not withdrawing; having been through the same experience" (1984: 131). Brice sees the position of the therapist dealing with maternal bereavement as "the recipient of a mother's cathartic needs" and notes that "mourning will not proceed unless she can mourn to someone who will listen in a nonintrusive, nonjudgmental manner" without an attempt to "resolve the unresolvable" (1991: 9). Therapists faced with the despair and pain of the bereaved mother may wonder what they can do to help. Grieving people may need assistance but more than help, they need therapists and soul companions who will listen and recognize their ongoing need for care and concern. A therapist who understands the complexities of the never-ending grief process, particularly as it applies to child loss, may become an invaluable agent of healing.

One hallmark of feminist therapy that is useful is empathy. As Edelstein notes:

> For the therapist, empathy is, in part, an identification with the mother. For the woman it provides reassurance: that someone has entered her world and respects her integrity; that her experiences can be understood; and that she is acceptable. Empathic communication teaches that she is not alone and that her thoughts and feelings, while intense, are tolerable and understandable to someone else, thereby making them more tolerable and understandable to her (1984: 132-133).

While not all therapists may be mothers, all women are part of the "motherline" and share the feminine experience of creative regeneration in some aspect of its expression. Bereaved mothers need to be supported, at times comforted, but also provided with reasonable expectations in coping and encouraged in their attempts at mastery. Many women, when faced with the destruction of their assumptive world, will regress and lose whatever strength and feeling of self-worth they once had. It is important that they are not further infantilized or made more insecure by traditional therapeutic strategies that place the therapist in a position of power over the client. The feminist therapeutic stance will encourage the client to seek out support groups, to read and educate herself about the process of bereavement. Women who are looking for new direction in their lives following the death of a child may find the goal-oriented processes of feminist therapy empowering. If they are able to stick with the process, along with their own psychological healing will come a release of "powerful, revitalizing energies"; in their journey to recreate their sense of self will come new "life reborn from the destruction" (Edelstein, 1984: 82).

How much documentation exists concerning the intrapsychic process of women who have lost daughters? Has research been conducted about the developmental process bereaved mothers must negotiate in order to restore their sense of identity? Does literature exist that studies the differences in intrapsychic adjustment between losing a son or daughter? Savage's (1989) work is groundbreaking and unique in its analysis of the maternal grief experience. Yet the field of thanatology is still quite new: in fact, Rando's (1986) equally groundbreaking work that identified the unique aspects of parental loss of a child was published just 13 years ago. It is probably too soon to expect to find long term studies of the in-depth nature proposed here, however further study must be undertaken if we are to understand the phenomenon of maternal grief in its entirety. A feminist understanding of women's psychological development and growth-in-relationship has much to offer this new field. As Klass *et al.* have so aptly stated:

> we are not sure what form a new model of the resolution of grief will take, nor can we describe the rituals and social interactions that will express the new model. We are sure, however, that any new model that emerges will understand the centrality of the connection in the human family to others, both living and dead. (1996: 355)

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Jennifer Culik

Alma Mater

I steal sleep with her.
Press my empty belly
Against her feet
And curl my legs and
Arms around her.
Push my face against the
Warm tea scent of her neck.
Capture her in the circle of
My body once again.

Her feet kick against me
And her hands reach up.
Her body straight and long,
Her belly full with my milk,
She turns away,
Dreaming her own birth.

Sharon Abbey

Researching Motherhood as a Feminist

Reflecting on My Own Experiences

Although the burgeoning studies beginning to emerge across disciplines in research on motherhood attest to the growing interest in scholarship in this field,[1] research on mothering stills seems to trigger a curious mix of emotional responses that are often critical, resistant or defensive in nature. A typical remark such as "but ... what about fathers?" or other such accusations mistakenly assume an essentialist devaluing or marginalizing of people who are not mothers. Other reactions infer that this work may be self-indulgent "soft" research or that there is nothing much to question that we don't already know. After all, aren't mothers generally well respected and honoured? For this inaugural edition of the A.R.M. journal, it seems appropriate to revisit my intentions as a feminist researcher and to consider how my own personal work has challenged traditional images and ideologies of motherhood. I will begin by reviewing the many faces of feminism that give impetus to the diverse range of studies on motherhood. Next, I will point out that the social construction of gender is largely responsible for much of the complacency surrounding maternal ideologies and the status quo. I will end this essay by addressing new challenges that may arise with respect to the maternal narratives we are encouraging people to share.

Reaffirming a feminist standpoint

Since feminism is a large movement without official leaders, it is not surprising that it lacks a single definition of how to do feminist research. However, most feminist researchers generally consider personal experiences to be a valuable asset and our work is frequently presented in our own voice. A personal connection between the research project and the researcher's self frequently takes the form of starting with one's own lived experience or feminist

standpoint (Smith, 1987) and reflecting on what is learned in the process. A troubling or puzzling experience becomes a need to know and often we are willing to disrupt conventional research etiquette with our passion. As a result, feminist research reads as partly informal, engagingly personal, and even confessional. It involves an explanation of the author's relation to the subject matter or the explicit study of a phenomenon that concerns her in her personal life, thus merging the public and private.

Feminist researchers working with a variety of qualitative approaches take their interest in understanding lived experience one step further by making women's diverse situations central and problematic in the interest of realizing social justice for women (Olesen, 1994: 158). At the outset, it is important to stress that while feminist methods may not be unique or exclusive to women (Levinson, 1998), Judith Lorber (1988) suggests that "feminists do uniquely contribute to social science by seeing patterns and interrelationships and causes and effects and implications of questions that nonfeminists have not seen and still do not see" (6).

Briefly stated, feminism can be defined by any number of descriptors such as: a very personal act; a struggle against sexism, racism, and classism as paradigms for all oppression; a woman's assertion of her own power and a refusal to compromise; a commitment to end white male domination; the creation of inclusivity and mutuality; and the insistence on the well-being of all women. Much feminist research is focused on social change, consciousness-raising or specific policy recommendations and strives to recognize diversity. Shulamit Reinharz (1992) describes feminist research as "looking at the world through women's eyes and seeing how the lack of knowledge is constructed" (248). She identifies key elements in this work such as "making the invisible visible, bringing the margin to the center, rendering the trivial important, putting the spotlight on women as competent actors, [and] understanding women as subjects in their own right rather than objects for men" (248). She challenges feminists to be particularly concerned about the ideas of women who are not in print and the defining of these women out of existence.

As connected knowers, Reinharz also points out that feminists seem drawn to work on the borders and are interested in blending disciplines. She rejects the notion of a transcendent authority that decides what constitutes feminist research and resists generalizations which can be misleading and inadequate and instead identifies a multitude of feminist voices and plurality of feminist research methods which are contextual, inclusive, experiential, involved, socially relevant, multimethodological, complete but not necessarily replicable, open to the environment, and attuned to subjective emotions and personal events as experienced. "My approach" she states, "requires listening to the voices of feminist researchers at work and accepting their diversity" (1992: 5).

Ann Oakley's (1981) pioneer work in feminist methodology documents how advice about formalized interviewing did not work for her and limited her ability to communicate with female respondents. Ignoring the rules of positiv-

ists not to become personally involved in her research and challenging the subject-object separation codes, she made friends with her participants and answered their questions. As a result, she became an important source of information and a reassuring support figure for them. Likewise, in their landmark book, *Women's Ways of Knowing*, Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule (1986) continued to chart the course toward a paradigm shift that validated a subjective, relational knowing which they described as "an orientation toward understanding and truth that emphasizes not autonomy and independence of judgment but a joining of minds" (55). By turning their attention to the "voices and perspectives of women," they began "to hear the unheard and unimagined" (11) that had previously remained silent and devalued. Their work served to heighten awareness about the distinctions between objectivism, relativism and the resulting informational biases as well as about the failure to acknowledge women's roles, activities, and rituals as significant.

Michelle Fine (1992) points out that the experiences of women researchers investigating the lives of women have been forbidden pools of data and that women collaborate in keeping the pool hidden out of fear that they will be accused of biased scholarship or overidentification with respondents. Instead, Fine encourages women to deliberately integrate their repressed, unconscious female subjectivity. She argues that the notion of personal experience is an asset to research and describes feminist research as "an attempt to wedge between women's layers, to hear what has been hidden, swallowed, suffocated, and treasured by, for and despite women" (xii). Other feminists have pursued similar modes of personal inquiry and have succeeded in pushing the boundaries of relativism and narrative inquiry further by raising critical questions. What is recognized as "knowledge" and who is authorized to produce it? Do we trust caring ethics, self-reflective knowledge and intuitive practical reasoning as much as logical empirical thinking? If so, where does the female researcher fit into the ways of producing "knowledge?"

Joyce Nielsen (1990) was also an early proponent of relativism or the belief that there is no final, ultimate measure of truth that all can agree on. Instead, she argued that "all knowledge is culture-bound, theory-bound, and/or historically specific—that is, understandable and valid only within a specific time, place, theory or perspective" (3). Similarly, Lorraine Code (1991) described her position as a feminist standpoint theorist whose quest for truth and politics has been shaped by the understanding that knowledge is situated at a particular time and place and that there are multiple standpoints from which knowledge is produced. This viewpoint problematizes the issue of difference and the fact that all knowledge is partial and necessarily from some perspective.

The social constructionist theory of gender

Sandra Harding (1996) identifies recent shifts in theorizing gender in order to encourage an antiessentialist way of understanding gender relations.

First, she points out, gender is now understood to be a relationship between men and women, rather than an isolated property and it is always about power. It is produced not by individual choices but by social structures that are interlocked with distinct cultural organization. Gender relations are dynamic and historically changing, never fixed or transcultural, making universal statements and generalizations problematic. Of course, we can treat the genders as distinctive cultures—as "gender cultures"—in order to consider gender cultures in social science and academic scholarship. To the extent that gender social structures assign women and men to different activities, they tend to interact with different parts of nature or have different interest in such interactions. Furthermore, men and women can have different relations to the cultural discursive traditions that direct their practices and give them meaning. Finally, Harding argues that men and women often have different, socially developed ways of organizing the production of knowledge. The idea that women may inhabit different worlds than men is fraught with complexities however and could be viewed as equally dualistic, dichotomous, and essentialistic or even the simplistic valorization of women's experiences and virtues. Although each of us experiences our gender as belonging to us, as individuals, we now understand gender to be social and cultural rather than biological.

Daniel Goleman (1998) also grounds his theories about emotional intelligence on assumptions about gender differences, pointing out that girls are raised to be more attuned to intuitions and feelings in the North American culture and, as a result, having more practice at interpersonal skills they may attribute greater value to understanding personal experience for its own sake than their brothers do. Many feminist researchers also support this claim, raising questions about a male bias that shapes basic assumptions about the nature of truth and reality as well as the higher value placed on the rational and objective over the emotional and the subjective (Belenky *et al.*, 1986; Gilligan, 1982; Shakeshaft, 1989). Early feminists drew attention to the fact that male researchers tended to focus on issues related to autonomy and independence, abstract critical thinking, and the unfolding of a morality of rights and justice with little concern for gender differences. On the other hand, little attention was paid to the development of interdependence, intimacy, nurturance, and contextual thought. Male experience was simply accepted as a baseline norm for all human experience. These feminists also pointed out that the nature of the research question changes and dualism gives way to multiplicity when the conceptions of self are rooted in a sense of connection and relatedness to others rather than when one defines self in terms of separation, autonomy, and competition.

Consistent with such conceptualizations of gender, my own would be significantly shaped by my limited experiences as a white, heterosexual, middle-class female living in a capitalistic democracy in North America during the fifth decade of my life. I can look outside of myself, but I can never be outside of myself. My experience as an only daughter and as a mother of a son and

daughter, for example, certainly led to the kinds of topics I have chosen to pay attention to over the past decade, including a strong interest in images of mothering and motherhood (Abbey and O'Reilly, 1998; Abbey, 1999). There is little authorized language and few words available to describe: the intense involvement with my children during pregnancy; the emotions I felt as I experienced my body change or felt life move for the first time inside of me; the passionate commitment and restrictions I stringently imposed on myself to safeguard the health of my unborn children; the fear, uncertainty, and pain during childbirth or the ultimate joy and sense of oneness with the universe when I first heard the mewing sounds of my newborn children; or to describe the terror surging through me when I first realized I was ultimately responsible for the survival and nurturing of another human being.

Of course, it is true that men can and do write about their exclusive experiences as sons and fathers but such studies are neither as prevalent in the literature nor as personal. For example, child psychologist Jean Piaget (1923) studied his own children for his research on cognitive development and then translated his results into generalized universal truths as did others such as John Bly (1990). Furthermore, most studies on fatherhood tend to address only male relationships between fathers and sons set within a masculine hegemonic context, often inferring a subordinate role for mothers as patriarchal conformists or compliant enforcers of the status quo. As a result of the normative implications of such studies, women often internalize limited, androcentric male descriptions of the mother-child dyad as subtle interactions between letting go and clinging. Even liberal feminist interpretations (Arcana, 1983; Caron, 1994; Forcey, 1987; and Smith, 1995) emphasize the oppression of motherhood which also tends to impede mother-son identifications. Such literature tends to discount and marginalize the responsibility, authority, and power of women to socialize their sons and their daughters with respect to gender identity (Abbey, 1998) and warrants a feminist critique related to gender bias. As insiders of a particular lived experience, women necessarily see the world differently and as such, notice things that will bring about new and diverse ways of understanding.

Reflection on my own research methodology

In designing a qualitative study with two female colleagues to examine our maternal influence on the education of our sons and daughters (Castle, Abbey and Reynolds, 1998) we charted new ground in a number of ways that is consistent with many of the identified elements of feminist research. For example, we were not only co-researchers investigating the thinking of mothers and their children, but we were also the subjects of our own research who were personally involved with the other participants (our own sons and daughters). We were also using our own lived maternal experiences as the substance of the study starting with our experience as insiders. Without this gender-specific experience our research questions would not have been as immediate or as

compelling nor would the voices of our sons and daughters have been made so apparent and tangible.

Our goal was to create an opportunity for focused conversations about mothers' relationships and educational influences on young adult daughters. We envisioned these conversations as the "helping" kind that Benjamin (1981) describes, in which one sets out not to direct others or to teach them anything, but instead to listen and to enter into the other's thinking, avoiding premature judgment. We were also influenced by Van Manen's (1990) notion that co-researchers can examine issues in a collaborative conversational formal that leads to the unfolding of deeper meaning as individual input is examined, and by Hollingsworth's (1992) contention that collaborative and non-evaluative conversations allow those involved to identify and understand personally and contexually relevant issues in education. Also influencing our thinking was a belief in the value of narrative inquiry and autobiographical data as sources of self-knowledge and critical self-reflection (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990). We agreed with Bruner's (1990) notion that narrative is a primary way humans make meaning of events in their lives, and with Diamond's (1994) view that narrative is the key to studying the self and reconstructing one's experiences.

The gendered structuring of language discourse

In our studies on mothering roles, it became increasingly apparent that our sons and daughters were using language for different purposes and also that our involvment as researcher/participants was qualitatively different when we interacted with sons or with daughters. We noticed, for example, that our daughters seemed to be more comfortable sharing their feelings and more willing to confront their thoughts on a deeper emotional level. In contrast, we felt that our sons were holding back to some degree. When we shared this observation with them, they countered that we had not make our intentions explicit enough. They insisted that they could share their feelings if only we had asked them to, and they expressed their resentment that the rules and expectations had not been clearly explained to them in advance. In spite of this, it appeared that our sons had more to say about the issues raised, including many analytic, theoretical and interpretive comments peppered with references to laws, theories, and statistics as well as unsolicited advice. It seemed evident, upon analyzing the transcripts, that our sons were engaging in skillful power games with words.

In contrast, we had not noticed the same use of linguistic tactics to control the conversations and take charge in our work with our daughters. As Robin Lakoff (1990) points out, "both sexes use the same words in the same constructions, but understand them differently." She suggests that gender differences in language constantly cause comparisons and the need to polarize. Related to her findings, we noticed that our sons seemed to engage in more "report" talk and closed statements that focused on the final outcome of the research process itself, while our daughters preferred "rapport" talk and

immersion in the research process itself. For example, in spite of no previous acquaintance with each other, the girls tried to find common ground right away and quickly established a positive trusting relationship with one another. They seemed content to linger after each session, chatting and laughing together about common experiences. In contrast, their brothers took off immediately after each session, making little attempt to relate or get to know each other.

In our all-female group sessions as mothers and daughters, we found ourselves talking on a more personal level, using expressive adjectives and making an effort to be collaborative and polite by encouraging one another with tagalong questions. The girls remarked privately to their mothers just how much they had enjoyed meeting one another and how easily the seemed to get along. It was obvious that they found the group encounters to be supportive and therapeutic and that they were willing to trust each other with very personal feelings and confessions from their early school days. They seemed to bond readily and to share many similar personality traits and values such as their quiet reserve, their sensitivity, and their underlying sense of independence.

Our sons, however, seemed to have two distinct conversational modes—one for the "guy circle" and another for the mothers. Among themselves, their comments seemed relatively brief and guarded and their conversations tended to be more superficial. They often made jokes that trivialized the significance of the points they were raising, presumably to keep their dialogue on safe ground. They also seemed to avoid subjective references to emotions that might expose their vulnerabilities. They may have also used theories and objective remarks to guard their personal feelings and to maintain a position of authority. Sometimes they even chose to be silent, ambiguous or indirect. As one of our sons explained:

> *I don't let my feelings get in the way because once they get in the way my mind gets all fogged and once it gets fogged I can't think clear ... I don't let a lot of different groups know my feelings or my interpretations on certain aspects because I don't want people to know what I am thinking ... I don't reveal. It's a control game.*

With their mothers present, however, our sons raised more topics and their comments became more theoretical, assertive and lengthy, almost to the point of lecturing. They were overtly assertive and confident during our group conversations, offering us advice on how to improve our study, altering our procedures, and even presuming to interpret the data for us. We think we know our sons fairly well and believe that they were all quite eager to impress one another and to put on a "show" for our benefit. They were conscious of presenting themselves well and concerned about not letting their mothers down in front of each other. To some degree, they tried to predict our purposes in order to deliver what they thought we wanted to hear or backpedal if necessary in order to win the approval of their mothers. At times, our sons even

included deliberate "shock" statements to gain our attention. Deborah Tannen (1994) argues that these kinds of linguistic strategies are predominately used by men in mixed groups to dominate the conversation or show solidarity for one another.

We also observed that our sons had learned to use silence as a form of resistance or rebellion whereas our daughters, modelling their mothers perhaps, had used silence to please, to comply or to avoid confrontation. By refusing to answer certain questions in the interviews or declining to comment during our group discussion, our sons were demonstrating their understanding of the power of silence to guard their privacy, to reveal very little about themselves or to withhold information from us. Their silence may also serve to mask male power relations and structures and, according to Frank Blye (1996), such masculine hegemony is a highly rational, if not costly, choice that may also result in a loss of freedom of relational experience or a tendency to ignore needs and desires. As insiders of a male culture which excludes their mothers, our sons may have felt the need to serve as informants to enlighten us. A remark by one of our sons exemplifies this point:

> I've said things honestly and I've left things out that I don't want you to know about. There are things you don't know about me and you're probably never going to know. I only gave you a quarter of the package. Certainly it's couched in terms of you [mother] sitting there.

If the power of style and language is culturally learned and engendered (Lakoff, 1990; Tannen, 1994), then we must recognize these factors at work during our conversations with participants. Would our sons withhold the same information from their fathers or would they engage in less restricted "guy talk"? Would our daughters have been more inhibited or less comfortable talking about some of their emotional recollections with their fathers? To answer these question it might also be useful to consider that our daughters were involved in women-only discourses while our sons took part in a mixed-gender dialogue. Reinharz (1992) suggests that women have an easier time crossing gender boundaries than men (57). For our sons, this would obviously involve not only a code switch from peer (guy) to intergenerational dialogue but also one with women who held power positions as their mothers and also as researchers. The context of our dialogue was academic, professional and purpose-oriented rather than familiar and egalitarian. Unlike ordinary conversation, Lakoff (1990) suggests that "institutional and professional talk, has, until recently, been almost totally a male preserve, so the rules of male discourse are not only seen as the better way to talk but as the only way" (210). This complicates the power balance significantly. It is also important to remember that when we embarked on the study with our sons we had already been strongly influenced by the work with our daughters. Knowing that they were being compared with their sisters in this study might also make our sons more self-

conscious and cautious. In fact, among themselves they acknowledged their vulnerability and suspicions and wondered if their mothers were deliberately trying to set them up, or make them look bad as men. For example, one son asked the other, "do you withhold stuff, knowing your mother would be reading it and you would have to answer for it?"

Conclusion

Perhaps it is not enough, as feminists, to be satisfied with encouraging more marginalized voices to be heard and more maternal stories to become visible. Susan Heald (1997) also cautions us to consider that all our experiences are constituted in language and discourses and that culture imposes a certain coherence and structure on the stories we tell. Although "relationships and chance have an enormous influence on what gets done and said ... we write these things out of our accounts in our attempts to make our stories, and ourselves, rational and coherent." (38) It seems to me that this censoring and reconfiguring of stories to fit a prescribed framework presents a new challenge to feminist researchers. If we are to encourage authentic stories of mothers and mothering, we will need to find ways to honour and validate multiple or contradictory realities that do not necessarily adhere to conventional forms of discourse. We must also keep probing how we are shaped by the stories we choose or feel compelled to tell and how we might tell them differently.

The current work contributing to the scholarship on mothering roles is not intended to be exclusionary or elitist. It does not attempt to exalt the maternal experience of insiders but instead tries to understand it more clearly from multiple perspectives. This research attempts to transform and emancipate rather than trivialize or sentimentalize. It crosses all disciplines and divisions of ethnicity, gender, sexuality and class. To this end, I venture to say that understanding the multiple and complex realities of motherhood has only just begun. There is important work ahead.

[1]See, for example the recent edited collection of papers by Abbey and O'Reilly (1998) and the special thematic 20th Anniversary edition of *Canadian Woman Studies/les cahiers de la femme*, 18 (2,3), 1998, which examine mothering and motherhood from such perspectives as literature and poetry, legal policy and rights, health, popular culture, agency, narrative, education, sexuality, generational transitions, and cultural diversity.

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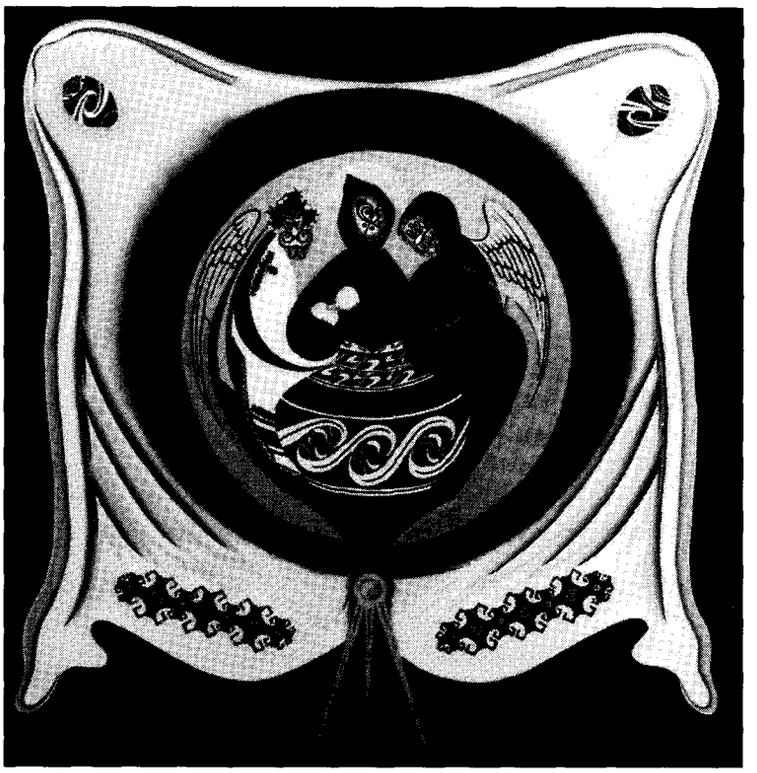

Maureen Stefaniuk, "Ukrainian Matriarchal Earth Trinity," 34" x 34", acrylic on panel. 1987. Photograph: Mitch Hippsley.

"Ukrainian Matriarchal Earth Trinity" is a painting in the Ukrainian Christian Feminist Tradition. It is a piece that integrates pre-historic Ukrainian matriarchal imagery with elements of traditional Byzantine iconography for a unique contemporary juxtaposition. Having grown up in the Ukrainian Greek Orthodox tradition, Stefaniuk wondered about the origin of the preoccupation in Eastern spirituality with the Trinity. She instinctively believed that there must be something within the roots of Ukrainian culture itself that pre-dates belief in the Christian Trinity. In her research she discovered that generations of pre-historic peoples in the Ukrainian culture worshipped a female Trinity. This feminine Trinity was symbolized by three aspects of womanhood: maiden, mother, and old woman (baba). Traditional Ukrainian costume, embroidery, and Easter egg design represented in the painting all reflect this ancient belief in a Matriarchal Trinity.

"Ukrainian Matriarchal Earth Trinity" was purchased by the Canadian Museum of Civilization, Ottawa/Hull. This painting was included in an exhibition honouring the centenary of Ukrainian settlement in Canada. The exhibit was cureated by Robert Klymasz.

Gillian Ranson

Paid Work, Family Work and the Discourse of the "Full-Time Mother"

This paper emerged from research undertaken some years ago with an interest other than discourses of mothering in mind. At that time, my focus was on the educational choices and occupational experiences of the university-educated women in the study in which I was then involved. My goal was to explore the ways these choices and experiences articulated with decisions about family formation, and, for the mothers in the group, the decisions they made about paid employment and the necessity to balance "work and family" responsibilities.

I had been long familiar with the feminist-inspired research on the gendered (and inequitable) division of household and childcare labour, and gender segregation in workplaces. And I had read more recent feminist theorizing about motherhood and its social construction. But listening to women in many interviews, I came to understand that the ways they *spoke* about their lives at work and with their children, the terms they used to frame their own experiences and activities, and the models and ideals on which they drew, were also critically important. This talk, at the level of the individual, was a link to the bigger social picture that had always interested me. In the tradition of Gubrium and Holstein, whose emerging interest in "family discourse" sent them back to the task of "reinterpreting data originally gathered for other purposes" (1990: 32), in this paper I return to my interviews with mothers, and listen again to their talk. I try to "hear" what organizes it, and what effect this organizing has on what they do as mothers.

The interviews

The interviews which provide the data for my exploration of talk about mothering were conducted in late 1993 and early 1994 with 45 women who

had graduated from the University of Alberta in the mid-1980s. They represented a sub-sample of a larger group who had participated since their graduation in a panel study of the transition from school to work.[1] The interviews were semi-structured and open-ended; I was interested in gathering information about each woman's work and family history, the decisions she had made (or was in the process of making) about work and family, and the circumstances surrounding each decision. Of the interview group, 24 had children at the time I met them, and their mothering was playing out in a variety of domestic situations. In this paper I focus on nine of the mothers, three of whom were in full-time paid employment, three of whom were in part-time paid employment, and three of whom were "home-based" (a term to which I will return later). Eight were married (as were almost all the mothers in the larger sample) and one was in a stable, long-term relationship, all were white, and all had university degrees.

Conceptual framework

The interview tapes and transcripts revealed that many of the mothers shared a common frame of reference when it came to thinking and talking about being mothers. This frame of reference has a long pedigree in western industrial society. For most of the twentieth century, a model of motherhood (based heavily on the situation of the white, middle-class family) has been projected as universal. This model establishes one woman (the biological mother) as primarily responsible for mothering during her children's formative years, with the children constructed reciprocally as needing her constant and exclusive care (Glenn, 1994; Wearing, 1984). This model has been articulated more recently by Hays (1996) as "intensive mothering," in which mothers are urged to "give unselfishly of their time, money and love on behalf of sacred children" (97).

Ideologies such as this shape our perceptions of our activities. They act, in Kaplan's (1992) terms, as "master discourses" that organize not only how we think but what we do—our daily practices. One dimension of mothering discourse powerfully informed much of the talk about mothering that I heard. I have called this dimension the discourse of the "full-time mother." The thrust of this discursive position is that mothering, particularly when children are very young, is in effect a full-time job. The belief is that the best child care is exclusively maternal, and that mothers are obligated to supply it on an ongoing basis. This is certainly intensive mothering, in Hays' terms. But my focus here is also on the way "full-time" is interpreted both as ideal and in practice. This involves looking at the way *time* spent, or not spent, wearing the "mother" hat is used to shape, or judge, mothers' practices.

The nine women whose stories I share here all organized their mothering practices—or evaluated them—in terms of the "full-time mother" discourse. This happened in spite of the fact that their domestic circumstances did not always allow them to be "full-time mothers," whatever they understood that term to mean.

The "full-time mother" and full-time paid employment

Mothers in full-time paid employment are prevented by this employment from becoming "full-time mothers." But all of those interviewed expressed a wish to be working fewer hours, and most specifically wanted to be able to spend more time with their children. The three women whose stories I include here were quite explicit about their preferences for how to spend their time. No one articulated the discursive ideal better than Laura, the mother of a three-year-old; she worked because she felt her economic independence was an important safeguard in an unstable relationship, but she judged her mothering clearly in the terms of the "full-time mother" discourse:

> *I would just like to raise [her child] in the way I guess I was raised and my mom was always home with us kids. And I remember feeling so secure... It was just nice to come home at lunchtime during school, and just know that your mom was always around. And I would like for [her child] to have that ... I just think back to the fifties, the sixties, the seventies where the moms were at home, and they were sewing and cooking and, that's the type of thing that I remember and that's what I would like to be like even though I'm not like that at all, I don't sew and I don't really love cooking. But that would be my perfect model.*

For Helene, a teacher on maternity leave with her second baby at the time of the interview, feeling maternal corresponded to being at home. With her first baby, now three, she felt "non-maternal," and was impatient to get back to work. But the second maternity leave was different.

> *I was holding [the baby] yesterday morning, about seven o'clock, at the window. And people were brushing off their cars and getting ready to go to work. And it was just daybreak. It was beautiful, the snow was coming down. And I just felt overwhelmed with happiness, sort of, at being able to be home, and not having to go out... Feeling I guess maternal.*

Bonnie, a teacher employed full-time, said she knew from personal experience where the expression "sick and tired" came from. She wanted to give up her job to be home with her children, but was also concerned about burning her financial and professional bridges by doing so. She told a powerful story from her childhood as she explained her thinking:

> *My mom was a teacher. She was married and had two children and stayed at home and then I was born, and apparently, I don't remember this, I was two years old, she had picked up a teaching job and she was teaching and my dad was working and they had a lady that would come in and look after me. ... Anyways, the lady, caregiver, fell asleep on the chair. It was a September day, I went walking downtown. When the police finally found me ... they*

> *said, 'Where are you going?' and apparently I said, 'Looking for my mom.' Now, I'm getting all emotional, but I don't even remember it.*

Unable to stay at home and be a "full-time mother" herself, Bonnie found a "full-time mother" substitute to care for her children. Bonnie described this woman as "kind of a stay-at-home mom" who worked part-time at night (and thus, as the next section will pick up in more detail, was able to create the illusion of "full-time mothering"). She had children the same age as Bonnie's, and treated Bonnie's children "like her own."

As Uttal (1996) has noted, women whose paid employment precludes the kind of intensive mothering described by Hays, and elaborated here in terms of its time focus as "full-time mothering," place different constructions on the kind of care their children receive from others in their absence. For some of the women in Uttal's research, constructing themselves as ultimately the most important influence in their child's life meant reframing the work of the caregiver as merely custodial. Others saw the caregiver as surrogate mothers, and others again saw themselves in partnership with the caregivers to provide "co-ordinated" care. Bonnie's assessment of her caregiver's role was probably as providing surrogate care. She herself wanted to be the woman at home:

> *I don't know, I just feel for my kids and for me it is the right thing, you know, it's just the right thing. I don't know if it's from something in my past, or, it's just, I evaluate something and I say this is what it should be.*

The "full-time mother" and part-time paid work

The "full-time mother" discourse also framed the practices of the three women in more regular part-time employment whose stories are included here. Linda, a nurse with a 19-month-old baby and six months pregnant with her second child, said she was "horrified" at having to leave her child, then 11 months old, when she returned to work half-time. She shared a babysitter with a friend, and the arrangement worked well though she considered herself "definitely" the best person to look after her daughter.

> *It's nice for her to mix with another little person and she enjoys the children and so, it's been kind of a positive part of having someone else look after her. I do have a definite problem with the control, giving up, I mean I like things sort of a certain way sometimes ... I don't get bent out of shape but I just recognize that I really like it to be just [her child] and I, we do things this way.... I like her to spend time with other people, but not a whole day.*

As a nurse working shifts, she had some flexibility in organizing her work time. Her goal was a particular combination of day and evening shifts, and some weekend work, that would require only five or six days a month of childcare provided by someone else. In this respect, her paid work would become much

less visible, and her mothering time commitment would begin to look much more like "full-time" in practice. Much of the supplementary child care required by her evening and weekend shifts could also be provided by her husband, which she construed as "a kind of bonus."

> *Sometimes I feel like I'm missing out on family things. Like this weekend. I'm going to be sleeping [because she is working a night shift] and they're going to be toodling around doing something. But that's the same as me in my mind, is for her to be with Dad.*

Garey's (1995) study of nurses working the night shift articulated exactly this practice. Like Linda, the women in Garey's study were aware of the symbolic importance of being "at home" during the day—even if they were at home sleeping, and even if they were home while their children were not.

Gail, a speech pathologist with a 14-month-old baby, worked three days a week at a paying job. There was no concealing this paid work through night shifts. And she found the need to share caregiving with someone else extremely painful—even though the caregivers in question were her parents:

> *I think the biggest thing was, it's that little bit of letting go, that somebody else can do the job, somebody else take care of him as well as I can ... The morning I left him to go to work ... I cried leaving, and I thought, My God, I am leaving him with my mother and I'm crying. What would I have done if I had left him with somebody else?' [It] probably would have been horrible. I probably would have taken me days.*

But if her job took three days, she was a "full-time mother" for four. Here the constantly available mother was reconstituted as the person who saw more of the child than anyone else did. She explained:

> *My job is important to me but my home life and my personal life is more important. And I didn't want to spend more time at work than at home.... I thought to myself too how tired I would get working full time and, you know, the house and doing all these different things that I just thought it wouldn't be fair to everyone involved because I couldn't do it. I couldn't keep myself working well, doing things at home, being mom and wife and happy with everything. I just knew I wasn't the type to do that.*

Initially, Gail's plan was to work four days a week, mainly for the financial benefit. Then she decided that would be "almost like working full-time." Three days at her paying job was "a nice even balance."

> *It was nice to be back at work. And probably not as much for the work as for the social, you know, being able to chat with people and being with*

> *people again without your attention being divided somewhere else.... And yet I still felt I was home enough that I wasn't, like so far I haven't really missed big events or big things, or really felt like I'm losing, losing out.*

That Gail did not describe her *baby* as "losing out" by his mother's three-day absence was explained by the fact that the baby was cared for in Gail's absence by Gail's parents. Other members of a devoted extended family lived nearby and visited often. Gail's time at home was needed perhaps not so much to meet her baby's needs as for Gail herself to stake her claim as a primary person in her baby's life.

By these terms, Marie, the mother of three children aged eight, four and two, was a "full-time mother" for all but the two afternoons a week she taught elementary school French. She echoed the sentiments about the importance of time spent with children expressed by many of the other women as she gave the reasons for her choice:

> *I feel strongly that I should raise my children, not somebody else. And I guess I'm not that career oriented that I would do that.... I like to have some time to myself.... I like to be with my kids. I like to take (the four-year-old) swimming, when we want to go swimming. I think it is important for me to be around the children as much as I can. So it's like the best of both worlds.... I wanted my children so, I should raise them. But yet I like my career as well and ... if you can have a balance, I think it's the best thing.*

The "balance" Marie was speaking of was the balance between "raising her children" and her career as a teacher. But her response to a question about other activities opened up a diverse array of other commitments, including school volunteering (as a teacher herself she was much in demand), community and church volunteering, time spent on crafts and in the garden, and membership in a country club which provided the venue for jogging and a tennis league. If "full-time mothers" are symbolically placed at home, for Marie the day when she was actually and uninterruptedly there was Thursday. Thursday was her day to "clean house," to "stay at home," and "rest up."

The home-based "full-time mother"

Three of the mothers, Melanie, Jessica, and Lucy, were "home-based," a term I use to describe the situation were women have chosen to forego formal, regular paid work, either full- or part-time, with one employer, in order to stay at home to care for pre-school children. Of all the women I interviewed, these were the ones for whom the "full-time mother discourse" was most likely to organize practices of mothering as well as talk. And two of the three spoke very passionately about the importance of the mother as the child's primary caregiver. For example, Melanie stressed in her talk the importance of the constant physical presence of the mother for the child:

> *I think more than anything it's your instinctive mothering, or your mothering instincts or whatever become, they're primal and they're first and foremost. It doesn't matter if anything else is going on in the world, you're going to protect and look after your child before anything.... I feel very—not possessive, but I think very close. I could be one of those African women that carry their babies around all the time.*
>
> *... I like the scenario of women working with the children close by. I feel sad when kids are crying for their moms and they have to be dropped off somewhere. Even if the caregivers are excellent caregivers, I still think there is something about having Mom [close] by.*

Jessica, a mother of two pre-school children and a former child-care counsellor, said she could see "no purpose in life other than raising a healthy individual." There is a moral turn to her talk about full-time mothers. Exclusive maternal care is needed to counter the risk of children being contaminated by other contacts:

> *I'm not putting my child in a day care when I can't control the kind of employees that work there. Oh, yeah, there's some wonderful daycares but there's also some horrible ones, and unless I know absolutely every person in there that has contact with my child I'm not putting my child there.*
>
> *... I need to know that what my children are learning is what my husband and I want them to learn, and their values and morals are what we think are important for them to know. And I don't know that you can always teach that from the time you pick them up from day care until the time that you put them to bed and on weekends. I think it takes more than that ... I mean, a lot of these kids that are in daycares learn more from the daycare people than they do from their parents.*

Though home-based, Melanie and Jessica (like almost all the other home-based mothers interviewed) fitted a great deal more into their days than child-care, however. For both, "full-time mothering" *in practice* meant fitting other work around the needs of their children. In Melanie's case, her home-based art business meant that she was constantly on the phone to clients during the day. Though physically present for her child, her attention was often divided:

> *I'm on the phone a lot of the time. [Her child] is really wise to this now. So she takes things and just throws them at the phone cord, or—she doesn't like me on the phone any more and, it's difficult sometimes because the phone calls .... really do take up a lot of my time.*

Similarly, Jessica, making and selling crafts from home, often worked till "one or two o'clock in the morning" in her basement.

By day, choosing supplies was what took some of her time.

> *And that's the hard part to do with kids along. So a lot of times I'll leave my kids behind and let Grandma take care of them.*

Lucy's story is included because it offers a slightly different perspective on the discourse of full-time mothering. Lucy, a business graduate, with two children aged five and three, was a full-time sales representative until the birth of her second child. Lucy moved to "full-time mothering" not out of moral conviction, like Melanie and Jessica, but because a combination of circumstances left her with what she considered to be little other choice. She had some health problems after her second pregnancy; her former employer was unwilling to accommodate her wish to work part-time; her husband's very demanding job meant that he was for practical purposes unavailable as a parent; and she found out that the baby-sitter she had trusted to care for her first child had, on at least two occasions, left children unsupervised in her house while she was absent. Lucy was structurally manoeuvred into the situation where "full-time mothering" seemed to be the only viable alternative. In Hays' (1996) terms, Lucy was following the prescription which required her to sacrifice her own interests to those of her "sacred" children. But in this case there was some awareness on Lucy's part of the political implications.

> *My life really does centre around the kids, and I think, sometimes I feel like I need that. Sometimes I feel that it is meeting my needs and other times I feel very frustrated by the whole thing, and say, you know, I'm a terrible mother, and what am I doing at home, and I should just let somebody else raise them.... I think that it's meeting my needs because I can stand back and say, this is why I'm doing it, and this is for how long I'm intending on doing it ... and really it's just a little niggle in my life, it's not going to be a big portion taken out of my working days.... Then there's other times when I really feel like my needs aren't ever being met, you know. This is too much for me.*

For Lucy, as for Marie, and for other mothers who are home-based or working less than full-time in paid employment, family or volunteer work expanded to fill the time that might have gone into paid work. Time not spent in paid employment is often spent meeting, one way and another, other people's needs. Lucy did the books for her husband's business, mainly as an income-splitting strategy that gave her some money of her own. She also volunteered for several school and community organizations. And, as a firm believer in the importance of structure and routine, she spent much of her time meeting her children's busy schedules of school, music, swimming, skating and other programs. Though based at home, Lucy commented that she could "barely get out and do the grocery shopping." What *actually* constitutes "mothering," and how to separate the "mothering" from the welter of other activities home-based mothers engage in, become important questions.

Discussion

The experiences included above suggest two important points about the "full-time mother" discourse. The first is its power to inform thinking about mothering for women the majority of contemporary women who are not, and will never be, "full-time mothers." All the irony of this situation is expressed in the comments of Laura and Helene. Full-time paid work places both women on the other side of an ideological fence. From their side of the fence, they construct an ideal picture of motherhood which bears little relation to their own lived experience of it.

The second point is that this ideal picture *also* bears little relation to the lived experience of mothers whose domestic circumstances make "full-time mothering" more attainable. "Full-time mothering" offers the promise of exclusive and on-going maternal care. But exclusive maternal care, as the interview material shows, is not always what is on offer. "Full-time mothering" serves to structure and organize women's days in a particular way—but it does not mean that what they are "doing," full-time, is "mothering."

"Full-time mothering" serves to locate women, symbolically, in a particular place—the home. But in fact the women in this study who might identify themselves as "full-time mothers" are often anywhere but at home. And while many of the activities of these women—in school and community volunteering, for example—could be seen as contributing to the care of a much larger "family," their time away from paid employment is *not* always devoted exclusively to the needs of their own children.

Whatever "full-time mothering" might look like in practice, however, the fact is that only a dwindling minority of women—like the privileged, well-educated middle-class women in this study—are likely to engage in it. Why then does it retain its ideological force? The full answer probably lies well beyond the scope of this paper, in a particular social and economic climate of neoconservatism in which "traditional family values" now figure prominently.

But I suggest that any ideology also retains credibility to the extent that it has torchbearers. The "full-time mothers" in this study are very few in number, but their presence legitimates the activity. They are, in Stacey's terms, "propagandists and principal beneficiaries" of a view of family life that for most Canadian families is either unattainable or undesirable (Stacey, 1990: 252).

It is important then to deconstruct, as I have begun to do here, the *practices* of the "full-time mother" that accompany the talk. "Full-time mothers" are not always doing mothering. Some do home-based work for pay. Most have busy and stressful lives in the community. They are not "mothering" on a full-time basis. Perhaps those other mothers who are not "full-time mothers" need to know this.

An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Conference on Mothers and Daughters, Centre for Feminist Research, York University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, September 1997.

[1]The panel study referred to here represents part of the Youth Employment Study, organized through the Department of Sociology at the University of Alberta under the leadership of Dr. Harvey Krahn and Dr. Graham Lowe. I am extremely grateful to both of them for their support and encouragement, and their generosity in making their data available to me.

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Renee Norman

Where Did I Leave Me?

making my bed
I smooth plastic undersheet
protect adult mattress
from leaky child-urine
and regurgitated child-size dinners

remove the dangle bracelet
and Barbie boots
underneath folds of quilt

trip on purple-haired clear plastic
see-through pink pony
lying on the floor
drop-kick kinky-haired
white stuffed dog
down the hall
first freeing it
from fierce bed wheels

clear ten videotapes
with Disney-tale titles
off tarnished silver dresser set

rearrange pile of new children's literature
awaiting bedtime storytime
add another small torn spring skirt
to sewing basket
still holding
waiting winterwear wearing out

glance in mirror
at wild knotted hair
and old cotton nightgown
rush by with hands full
of yesterday's underwear

April L. Few

The (Un)Making of Martyrs

Black Mothers, Daughters, and Intimate Violence

Public discussion of intimate violence has long been considered by Black communities in the United States an unspeakable taboo, having consequences contrary to the sociopolitical and economic uplift of Blacks in the United States. The cultural stigma attached to speaking out about the prevalence of intimate violence against Black women has affected not only the extent of research conducted with Black participants but also the kind of questions generated by researchers. A review of the literature indicates that few family social scientists have studied intimate violence issues unique to Black women. Researchers have ignored Black women in the theoretical and public discourse by either excluding them as participants or labeling them as "Other" in the intimate violence research. In this manner, family science has, as Crenshaw (1993) suggested, "reinforce[d] [a construct of] 'otherness' of battered women of color" (383). This omission has resulted in the longstanding stereotypes of Black women as mammies, superwomen, welfare mothers, sapphires, and consensual victims of violence. It is these images that have become deeply embedded in the American psyche as normative behavior of Black women.

In general, it is the experiences of heterosexual, able-bodied, middle-income White women that define both the frequency of this social problem and the standards used in public policy making. Black women, have been, in effect, generalized into a kind of "everywoman," independent of institutional racism, classism, and sexism. The irony of the invisibility of Black women as subjects in the violence research is that Black women are often depicted as the "typical" victims of intimate violence in the mass media and in public debates. The lack of studies focusing on both the Black mother-daughter relationship and the effect of intimate violence on this relationship has also contributed to the invisibility of Black women.

As a scholar interested in the experiences of Black families, I have found Black feminist thought especially helpful. Black feminist thought particularly stresses the inclusion of the diverse qualitative experiences of Black women in social sciences research (Bell-Scott, 1982; Collins, 1994; Crenshaw, 1993; Hull, Bell-Scott, and Smith, 1982; Joseph and Lewis, 1981). In the case of violent relationships, many Black feminists argue that the experiences of battered Black women cannot be generalized to the experiences of battered White women; there are many mitigating factors (i.e., racism and classism) that affect the social lives of both White women and Black women differently. Ritchie (1985) included the cultural aspects of one's community as one of those many mitigating factors.

The purpose of this paper is to analyze how attitudes of race, class, and gender influence the interpersonal relationships of battered Black mothers and daughters but also contribute to the making of silent martyrs within the Black community. In addition, an analysis of the role in which female-headed social support networks play in the decision-making processes of battered women is considered. Finally, this paper includes ways in which law enforcement, shelters, and social services can devise policy more inclusive of women of color by utilizing an untapped source in order to break the cycle of intimate violence in Black communities: the strength of the relationship between Black mothers and daughters.

The contribution that this examination makes to the family studies discipline is to specify how future research might be directed in order to (a) build a knowledge base focusing on the meaning of Black motherhood and Black mother-daughter relationships and (b) broaden our understanding of women's experience of violence in intimate relationships.

Black intimate violence

Intimate violence is a critical problem within the Black community in the United States. Black women are more likely to be victims of criminal assault (e.g., rape, battery, and murder) than any other ethnic group (Rollins, 1996). Lockhart (1991) found that 48 percent of Black women reported having had a weapon used against them more often than either White or Hispanic participants (39 percent combined). Hampton and Gelles (1994) found that Black wives were 1.23 times more likely to experience severe violence. They also estimated that more than 603,000 Black women were victims of husband-to-wife violence in the survey year, 1985.

Staples (1976) found that Black couples were not, contrary to popular belief, more inherently violent than White couples. Lockhart's study (1991) of battered women indicated that there were no significant differences between the proportions of Black and White women that reported that they were victims of husband-to-wife violence. Interestingly, Coley and Beckett (1988) reported that the incidence of Black women who are battered is slightly lower than the rest of the American population.

By excluding Black women from the intimate violence research, myths and stereotypes of Black women and their families fester and proliferate. But what is more dangerous than the proliferation of these myths outside of Black communities, is the acceptance of these sometimes pathological, sometimes domineering images of Black women within Black communities. And it is these beliefs that are largely responsible for creating martyrs out of women who are being victimized at the hands of their partners.

Hush, hush, voices carry: making of martyrs

Two major conditions that are characteristic to African American culture can be associated with the creation of suffering martyrs in violent relationships: the internalization of stereotypes of Black women and the high priority placed on racial discrimination over gender discrimination .

Asbury (1987) suggested that some Black women do not seek help because they have come to believe that the many portrayals of Black women in the mass media, movies, and literature must be true and therefore, must be true about themselves. Perceptions of Black women as being strong, domineering, matriarchal, emasculating superwomen are antithetical to disclosure of abuse and help-seeking from social services and shelters. Disclosure to and help-seeking from those outside of the abusive relationship may be perceived as a sign of vulnerability and weakness by the battered woman. Asbury (1987) stated that Black battered women may be more reluctant to call attention to the abuse because they feel that they should be able to find the strength to handle their own relationship problems. They may even go as far as denying the severity of the physical and psychological abuse that they are suffering. McNair and Neville (1996) argued that Black women from low-income and working class backgrounds may be particularly more susceptible to these myths because it is from backgrounds that they are derived.

Speaking out against Black perpetrators is considered taboo within many Black communities because to speak out is to publicly reaffirm violent, dysfunctional images of Black families for people outside of Black communities (Asbury, 1987; Bell, 1992; Collins, 1991; Hull *et al.*, 1982; McNair and Neville, 1996; Morrow, 1994; Staples, 1993; Uzell and Peebles-Wilkins, 1989). Boyd-Franklin (1991) found that many of the Black women in group psychotherapy report that they experience great internal and external pressure to disprove negative stereotypes, even at the risk of their own mental health.

To speak out is to become a co-conspirator against the Black community and Black men. In fact, many Black feminists and writers such as Alice Walker, Ntozake Shange, bell hooks, Sapphire, and Anita Hill have been labeled traitors by both men and women in some Black communities for breaking the silence and talking about physical, psychological, and sexual abuse or discrimination. Patricia Bell-Scott, Gloria Hull, and Barbara Smith have been criticized for including the painful experiences of lesbians of color in their works. To endure the "inconvenience" of intimate violence is to save face and to

become a martyr, silenced, revered, and isolated.

The primacy of racial discrimination over gender discrimination is a longstanding practice in many Black communities. Separating the subjective experiences of racism, classism, and sexism for many Black women can be an unsettling challenge to face (Boyd-Franklin, 1991). Institutional racism has served as a mainstay of a strong allegiance between Black women and men. Bell (1992) suggested some Black women are socialized early to "suffer the vent of some Black men's pain and rage resulting from their living in a hostile, racist environment" (371). It is a social obligation passed on from mother to daughter to support Black men and to protect them from a criminal legal system that has historically engaged in racial discriminatory practices. Lorde (1984) stated that "violence against Black women...often becomes a standard within our communities, one by which manliness can be measured" (120). In concordance, Bell (1992) argued that the precarious social position of Black women can only be addressed when the struggle of African Americans ceases to be defined as the struggle for Black manhood.

Strength in mother-daughter relationships: unmaking martyrs

Black battered women can find the strength to leave abusive partners in the same community that sometimes demands their silence. The deliverance of daughters or mothers in violent relationships can be found in a community of mothers and othermothers and in therapy groups and battered women's shelters that integrate Afrocentric and feminist perspectives into their programs.

Mothering and othermothering

Daughters learn survival strategies first and foremost from their mothers. Mothers and daughters can interchangeably serve as lifelines to one another when they feel overwhelmed by societal and interpersonal factors. Othermothers and community mothers also share the responsibility of mothering in their communities and provide daughters with more strategies for resistance and models of Black womanhood (Bell-Scott *et al.*, 1991; Collins, 1991, 1991b; Debold, Wilson, and Malave, 1994; Joseph, 1991, 1981). Othermothers encourage Black mothers to trust their expertise in mothering (subjugated knowledge), to reclaim lost power, and grow from lessons learned. Through close relationships with othermothers, young women come to know a range of possibilities in their lives and thus, experience greater control in their own lives (Debold, Wilson, and Malave, 1993). Community mothers could eliminate some of the distrust of social services and lessen anxiety about seeking help outside of family and the church.

At work within this community of women, the mother-daughter relationship between bloodmothers, othermothers, and community mothers can arm battered Black women with the courage to take control of their lives by not defining themselves through their relationships with abusive intimate partners.

The work of mothering and othermothering should be considered a site of maternal empowerment for daughters involved in violent relationships because these women create an environment where women are respected and valued.

Afrocentric and Black feminist perspectives in therapy

Two integral parts of an Afrocentric model is the notion of the centrality of female-headed social support networks and the collective responsibility for all in the community (Ho, 1986; King and Ferguson, 1996; McNair, 1992; Parham, 1996; Sue, Ivey, and Pedersen, 1996). The challenge facing most battered Black women who seek outside intervention and therapy is learning how to balance the needs of the self with familial and communal obligations. It is important for the therapist to focus on how structures of racism, classism, and sexism influence the concrete and subjective experiences of Black women, especially those in violent relationships. Helping battered Black women to understand these interacting factors may encourage them not to accept the role of martyrs in their communities. In the cases where battered Black women have been isolated physically or psychologically from their kin support networks, a major goal of the therapist should be to help their clients rediscover natural helping relationships with their mothers, othermothers, and community mothers.

Policy suggestions

In reviewing both the Black mother-daughter relationship and the intimate violence literature, certain policy suggestions as to how law enforcement, shelters, and social services can be more inclusive of, and sensitive to the needs of Black women in the design of programs for battered women need to be addressed. The following is by no means a complete listing, but it is my hope that at least some brainstorming can be incited and further investigated.

1. Domestic violence police handbooks should include current family and intmate violence *research on ethnically and culturally diverse families.* Many American police handbooks derive their information about intimate violence from family science and health researchers who generally study families and women from the majority population. Any domestic violence seminars given in support of the handbooks should include how racism affects some Black women's decision to involve and cooperate with the police.

2. Staff members of battered women's shelters should provide reading materials that address the subjective experiences of Black women in order to make them feel more comfortable *and supported in shelters.* Marginalized women need to be exposed to media that discusses how racism, classism, sexism, and homophobia influence the decisions that women in violent relationships make. Battered Black women can circulate and discuss these reading materials with mothers, daughters, and other significant women friends and family members. Black women need to see their experiences represented and centered in intimate violence reading materials.

3. Efforts should be made to recruit ethnically and linguistically diverse staff members and *directors in shelters.* If the physical settings and services of shelters do not change to reflect the population that they serve, Black women will continue to report feeling isolated and ignored in shelters. In addition, family and friends of battered Black women may hesitate to recommend these shelters and like services if they feel that the service cannot meet the basic need of effective communication.

4. *Battered women's shelters should not make it a policy to completely isolate the battered woman from family ties other than the batterer.* Mothers, othermothers, fictive kin, and friends are important naturally occurring support systems that help women feel less isolated. Staying in a shelter for the first time can be an alienating, frightening experience for some women. Staff members need to be aware of how strong the bonds of family, in particular, the mother-daughter bond, and community obligations are for Black women.

5. *Community leaders and social services should come together in order to depathologize clinical therapy and public assistance.* Community leaders should make efforts to help social services and public health workers publicize, make accessible, and humanize intimate violence prevention programs in ethnic communities. The clergy can help young women, mothers and their children feel more comfortable about raising the issue of intimate violence by integrating education seminars in the agendas of all church groups. Teachers, principals, and school nurses could help students recognize indicators of intimate and family violence by organizing a single class period, general assemblies, and parent-teacher meetings with speakers from women's shelters and police domestic violence units. Parent-teacher meetings can provide the spark that encourages parents, particularly mothers, to pay more attention to the social aspects and social relationships in their daughters' lives. The presence of intimate violence should not be a secret in a community of women.

Conclusion

Overall, the policy suggestions indicate that it is necessary to surround a survivor of intimate violence with her naturally occurring social support network. This social support network includes the many women in a survivor's life. This community of women—mothers, othermothers, and daughters—must give one another permission to voice and name the violence that they experience in their lives; Only with this freedom can Black women begin the process of unmaking martyrs in the Black communities.

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Kim Chase

Cesarean Section

In 1960
one C-section meant
all the rest by C-section
And a long, red snarl of a scar
up a soft, fleshy stomach.

That's where you were born,
she told us
when we lay in our underwear
in the smothering heat of summer.

We notice the hair under her arms.
We remembered those times later
when she said,
Don't start shaving now, girls.
You'll be a slave to the razor
the rest of your lives.

In 1960
one C-section meant
a menu of options
And tucked discreetly beneath
the bikini line,
A thin, prim smile of a scar
Smug
as if we deserved to not be
cut up the middle
like our mothers.

Robin Hemenway

A Stranger in The House:
Middle-Class Stepmothers in Nineteenth-Century America

In 1826, almost one year after the death of his first wife from complications following childbirth, Robert Smith Todd wrote to his fiancée, Elizabeth Humphreys, pressing her to agree on a wedding date. Left with six young children, Todd wrote imploringly:

> I need to complete my domestic circle where, worn down by cares and complexities of the world I can retire into the sanctuary ... and enjoy that repose and happiness which the world with all its boasted pleasure and engagements can never give. (qtd. in Baker, 1987: 28)

Elizabeth Humphreys did eventually complete Robert's "domestic circle" and became the new matriarch of a well-established and wealthy Kentucky family. Her marriage, however, also placed her in the dubious role of new "Ma" to Todd's six young children, and Elizabeth's transition to step-motherhood was far from smooth. Her new husband was frequently away on business, the children's maternal grandmother lived less than 150 feet away, and the Todd children were in anguish over the death of their mother a year earlier. Elizabeth was an aggressive, sometimes domineering woman, and her relationships with her stepchildren, especially Mary, were at best precarious and often wildly contentious. The resulting undercurrent of hostility in the Todd family would last for the duration of Elizabeth's lifetime. As Mary Todd Lincoln would later write to her husband, Elizabeth could sometimes be "... very obliging and accommodating, but if she thought any of us were on her hands again, I believe she would be worst than ever" (qtd. in Turner and Turner, 1972: 37).

As Elizabeth Humphreys was accepting Robert Todd's marriage proposal, another southern woman, Sarah Gayle, was expressing in her diary her

persistent fear of an untimely death. Plagued by ill health Gayle was convinced of the inevitability of her early demise, and was especially worried about the impact her death would have on her two young daughters. She took great pains to instill as much practical and moral education in her children as possible before she died, and expressed her wish that her guidance would have a lasting impact. Writing of her children in 1832, Gayle declared her intention to "try, while I am with them, to acquire an influence over which the grave will have no power" (qtd. in Fox-Genovese, 1988: 18).

Gayle's fears also stemmed from her concern about the kind of care her children would receive after her death She herself was an orphan and had no living female relatives. She worried in her diary that her children would be deprived of the kind of "maternal connexions [sic], who, in general, guard and comfort the orphan with double kindness" (qtd. in Fox-Genovese, 1988: 18). However, Gayle apparently felt that the right kind of "maternal connexion" would not be found in her replacement. In 1831, she left a written request to her husband that he not remarry after her death. "No stepmother for my poor girls," she wrote, "she may be an Angel for you, but very different for them" (qtd. in Fox-Genovese, 1988: 27).

Elizabeth Todd's experience—and Sarah Gayle's apprehension—show that the idea of step-motherhood was sometimes a troublesome one in nineteenth-century America. In the 1800s, the ideal family was increasingly defined in terms of the emotional well-being of its relationships, especially those between mothers and children (Kellog and Mintz, 1988: 44-45). The stepmother occupied a troublesome position as someone who was both necessary and potentially threatening to familial and social stability. While white middle-and upper-class families were bound by rigid narratives of motherhood and domesticity, the stepmother represented a disjuncture in that narrative. She served as one symbol of the tenuousness of the white middle-class ideal. Moreover, because she was by definition a "replacement mother" she also served as a potential threat to women's maternal power within the home. But stepmothers themselves were a part of the white middle-class culture that made motherhood the central criteria for family and community stability. When she agreed to marry Robert Todd and become a second mother to his children, Elizabeth Humphreys Todd joined a long line of stepmothers who have struggled to raise children who are not their own while mediating familial tensions, social expectations, and cultural stereotypes. As "replacement" mothers, they found themselves negotiating a role for which there was no prescribed codes, which was often looked upon with suspicion, and which often stood in stark contradiction to some of the most basic aspects of the motherhood ideal.

This paper seeks to explore the ways in which white middle-class stepmothers may have negotiated maternal and domestic power through their relationships with stepchildren. Early nineteenth-century domestic ideology focused on the mother's role in maintaining the home as a peaceful refuge from the hazards of an increasingly diverse and competitive society, and as a place

where children would grow up to be productive and moral citizens. But as a stepmother, a woman might find herself confronted with uncooperative stepchildren, uncommunicative or even absent husbands, overly solicitous relatives, or nosy neighbors. The ways in which these women sought to sustain family harmony—while retaining some sense of maternal authority—reveal the complex relationship between step-motherhood and middle-class domestic ideology.

A stepmother's problems could begin long before her entrance into a family. The ways in which families dealt with a mother's death, for instance, could have an important effect on stepchildren's reactions to a father's remarriage, and thus on a stepmother's attempts to incorporate herself into a "first family." Moreover, as years passed, the memory of a dead mother could reach saintly proportions, resulting in what sociologist Annagret Ogden has called the "dead mother cult." Placed on a pedestal of maternal perfection during life, mothers were often practically canonized after their death (Ogden, 1986: 5).[1]

In the famous Beecher family, Lyman Beecher's first wife, Roxana, apparently personified maternal and moral fortitude and her untimely death only strengthened this image of domestic perfection. Beecher family biographer, Milton Rugoff, notes that the Beecher family "made a legend out of [Roxana's] sensitivity, gentleness, and purity, remembering only an angel who had never grown old—perfect mother, ideal woman (Rugoff, 1981: 34). The Beecher children's recollections of their mother reveal how Roxana's memory was idealized. Harriet Beecher Stowe was four when her mother died. Despite (or perhaps because of) the fact that she was subsequently cared for by not one, but two stepmothers, Stowe later wrote that her mother's memory had "more influence in moulding [sic] her family, in deterring from evil and exciting to good, than *the living presence of many mothers* (Boydston, Kelley, and Margolis, 1988: 47) (emphasis added). The death of a mother could have a significant impact on adult children, as well. Catherine Sedgwick was 18 years old when her mother died, and she remembered her "beloved mother" as "wise and tender." In her autobiography, she stressed her mother's patient, pious, and unassuming nature. "She was oppressed with cares and responsibilities; her health failed; she made no claims, she uttered no complaints; she knew she was most tenderly beloved ..." (Sedgwick, 1993: 59).

The stepmother's position—and her relationships with stepchildren—was further complicated by the fact that many widowers remarried promptly in order to attain caretakers for their home and children. Although Robert Todd's former mother-in-law and unmarried sister helped to care for the Todd children after his first wife's death, he set out to find a new wife within weeks of his wife's funeral. Todd proposed to Elizabeth Humphreys six months later, and wrote persistent letters pleading with her to set a wedding date. The ardency of his courtship suggest that his primary motive may indeed have been the procurement of a new mother for his children as soon as possible, as well as a new wife for himself (Baker, 1987: 25-26). Todd's swift remarriage was a

source of scandal to his family and to the rest of the Lexington community (so much so that Todd complained about the "persons of ill-will" who had raised eyebrows at the courtship) (Baker, 1987: 26-27).

Lyman Beecher was left with eight children after his wife's death. Although devastated by the loss, he remarried within the year. His own stepmother and half-sister had moved into the Beecher household to help with childrearing and housecare, and his oldest daughter, Catharine, also took over some domestic duties. However, when Lyman met and courted Harriet Porter, he did so swiftly, writing to her within a few days after their first meeting and almost every day after that until they were married (Rugoff, 1981: 34-35).

Given the reverence for deceased mothers, the swiftness of a widower's remarriage could create major tensions between stepmothers and stepchildren. For children still mourning their mother's loss, the widowed father's sometimes rapid remarriage could be quite a shock, and the new stepmother viewed with suspicion. Nineteenth century writer Catherine Sedgwick lost her mother at the age of 18, and was highly displeased with her father's remarriage a year later. Sedgwick not only expressed distrust of her new stepmother's motives, but her reaction also revealed a preconceived prejudice toward stepfamilies:

> My father was flattered into this marriage by some good-natured friends who believed he would be happier for it, and knew she would. *Like most second marriages where there are children, it was disastrous.* The poor lady was put into a life for which she was totally unfitted. (Sedgwick, 1993: 67) (emphasis added)

Catherine Beecher wrote a gracious letter of welcome to her first stepmother, Harriet Porter, when she learned of her father's intention to remarry. Nonetheless, her letter carried an implicit warning as she stressed in the missive her deep and exclusive emotional connection with her dead mother:

> ... dear madam, imagine how terrible was the stroke that deprived me of my guide, my adviser, and my best earthly friend; that left me comparatively alone to grope my own way through the dangers and vicissitudes of life, for who can fill a *mother's* place but *a mother?* (Boydston, *et al.*, 1988: 29-30)

Stepdaughters such as Sedgwick and Beecher especially felt the effects of their mother's death, and, being unmarried and childless themselves, may have been especially sensitive to the threat posed by her "replacement." When young women took over domestic duties after a mother's death, problems invariably arose when they were displaced by their father's remarriage. Beecher took on the responsibilities of family care after the death of her mother, and clearly considered herself as something of a family matriarch (Boydston, *et al.*, 1981: 226-227). Although her letters suggest that her relationship with her first

stepmother began amicably enough, Beecher later raised questions about her stepmother's diplomacy in running her household. While she admired Harriet's "refined style of housekeeping," she also noted that Harriet "sometimes failed in manifesting pleasure and words of approval at the well-doing of subordinates" (Boydston, *et al.*, 1981: 17).

However, there was no such ambiguity in Catharine's relationship with her father's third wife, Lydia Beals Jackson. This relationship reveals how an older daughter and a stepmother could go head to head over domestic and familial matters. At least one ugly incident arose when the third Mrs. Beecher challenged Catherine's decision to have a seamstress attend to her at the Beecher home. In an angry letter, Catherine raised doubts about the quality of care her father was receiving from her stepmother. She wrote, "There has been an increasing uneasiness and suspiciousness ... that something is wrong and that *father* in his declining years has to suffer deprivations which could wit be believed." She threatened to go public with the insult if the situation were not soon rectified, hinting that there would be dire repercussions "If it were believed that I could not live comfortably at home..." (Boydston, *et al.*, 1988: 237-238).

Catharine Sedgwick also saw her new stepmother, Penelope Russell as a threat to the stability of the Sedgwick family. She viewed her new stepmother with disdain, referring to her as "a languid valetudinarian, petulant and annoying to the last degree" who exhibited a "sort of frittering dissipation incident to a single woman's social life in a fashionable social circle" (Mintz: 155-156). Steven Mintz has also argued that Sedgwick's condemnation was rooted as much in her perception of her new stepmother as a frivolous woman who knew nothing of the business" of an appropriate domestic life, as it was from her unhappiness with the disruption of the Sedgwick family (Mintz: 155-156).

Tensions within stepfamilies were manifested in many different ways: through outright hostility, the ostracizing of a stepmother, or even just polite, but impersonal relations between stepfamily members. Indeed, a stepfamily did not have to be characterized by open conflict to create a difficult environment for a stepmother. Sometimes, she was simply ignored, especially in families with older children. Many stepfamily relationships also began with peace and equanimity on both sides, only to find tensions arising after. The story of Lyman Beecher's second wife, Harriet Porter, poignantly illustrates how the promising beginnings of step-motherhood could deteriorate in time.

Harriet Porter's entrance into stepmotherhood certainly began promisingly enough. As her stepdaughter, Harriet Beecher Stowe, would later recall, the Beecher children all "felt a little in awe" of their refined and elegant stepmother, "as if she were a strange princess rather than our own mamma." But Harriet Porter's kindness soon won them over "never did a mother-in-law [stepmother] make a prettier or sweeter impression." Harriet apparently returned the sentiments, writing in a letter to her sister that the Beecher household was filled with "rosy cheeks and laughing eyes," and was one of great

cheerfulness and comfort. "She also praised the children, describing them as "helpful," "affectionate" and "bright" (Rugoff, 1981: 35-36).

Soon, however, Porter found herself swallowed up by the intimidating clan. Plagued by ill health, the responsibilities of caring for eight children overwhelmed her. But Harriet Porter was also attempting to rear children who held a profoundly idealized image of their mother. Within a year of her marriage, Harriet Porter Beecher was increasingly despondent. One of her stepdaughters, Mary Beecher, wrote at this time that her stepmother was "not well and don't laugh any more than she used to." Overworked, ill, and homesick after the family moved away from Boston, Harriet's suffering culminated in cold discipline and emotional detachment toward her stepchild. Harriet Beecher Stowe would remember her stepmother as "hard, correct, exact, and exacting" (Rugoff, 1981: 35-36, 160, 161-162). In his portrayal of Harriet Porter, Milton Rugoff writes that during her 18-year marriage to Lyman Beecher, Porter had "remained a visitor—a troubled, pensive transient." Rugoff argues that before Harriet Porter Beecher died of consumption, "she had long before died of morbid melancholy" (Rugoff, 1981: 160).

In accordance with the prescribed feminine domestic role as the sustainer of family harmony, some accounts of stepmother / stepchild relationships indicate that tensions may have been suppressed in the interest of family unity. Some children also attempted to get along with their stepmothers out of respect for their father, or even out of respect for their dead mother. Catherine Beecher's willingness to welcome her first stepmother into the family suggests that her father's satisfaction was ultimately more important than her longing for her dead mother or her own desire to be the family matriarch.

> Think then, dear madam, how great must be my joy and relief, and how unbounded ought to be my gratitude to God ... for providing one so competent and who ... will prove a kind and affectionate companion to my father, and relieve his mind from heavy domestic cares. (Boydston, *et.al.*, 1988: 30)

Likewise, in their threat to "go public" with her second stepmother's indiscretion, Catharine Beecher openly acknowledged that familial unity was at stake, writing that "it is necessary for the reputation of the family ..." that she and Lydia resolve their differences (Boydston, *et.al.*, 1988: 238). Susan Hines, a planter's daughter, wrote of her stepmother after her father's death in 1852 that: "I do not and I can not love her as a mother, but I hope that I have too much respect for myself and my Father's memory to treat her otherwise than with the greatest deference and respect that her relation to me demands" (Censer, 1984: 22).[2]

Whether stepmother / stepchild relationships were openly hostile or simply distant, stepmothers nonetheless sought ways to assert their maternal authority in the home. While a stepmother's active participation in her step-

children's upbringing was no doubt expected, this participation also provided ways for her to assert her authority and stress her maternal role. Elizabeth Humphreys Todd was a strict disciplinarian, and although she soon had children of her own she continued to play an authoritarian role in the lives of her stepchildren. These disciplinary efforts sometimes resulted in explicit displays of hostility. At least one account tells of Elizabeth's harsh and shaming rebuke when Mary attempted to wear (at the age of nine) a home-made hoop skirt to Sunday school. Another account, however, suggests that Elizabeth may have indeed had her hands full with her young stepdaughter. Although she once referred to Mary as "a limb of Satan loping down the broad road leading to destruction," it was in response to the fact that young Mary had put salt in her coffee (Turner and Turner, 1972: 29-30).

The fervor with which some stepmothers undertook the care of their stepchildren also suggests that they may have felt extra pressure not to shirk their "maternal" duties. Eva Berrien Jones married the widower Charles Jones when his daughter was just a baby. In a letter to her sister-in-law, Eva seemed especially concerned that her husband's family knew of her care for her stepdaughter: "I am trying in every way possible to do my duty in *every respect* towards this little one ... although I am a 'cruel stepmother,' she is remarkably fond of me; I wish it were possible for you to meet us in Savannah so you could see the child, she is so sweet and smart ... I keep her constantly with me" (Myers, 1984: 573-574). Of course, there were many stepmothers such as Eva Jones who were genuinely close to their stepchildren. Eva may have been careful to inform her in-laws of her maternal skills, but she wrote at great length in her correspondence about her care and affection for her young stepdaughter. Referring to her stepdaughter as "little Ruthie," she filled her letters with lists of Ruth's accomplishments, and her maternal pride toward the young girl is evident.

More often, though, stepmothers balanced precariously between a sense of maternal duty, on the one hand, and a sometimes keen awareness of the vulnerability of their maternal power, on the other. The case of Elizabeth Duncan demonstrates how the life of a stepmother could be marked by high degrees of both powerlessness and control. In 1864, Duncan's 17-year-old stepson, Willy, ran away while her husband was out of town on a business trip. When he had not returned by morning, Elizabeth lamented in her diary about the "grace we need to bear the trials and temptations of life." During his absence, Elizabeth frequently expressed her sense of despair, worry, and embarrassment about this all too public display of family disharmony. "How long will I have to suffer in mind as I have today," she wrote, "I trust my stay in this world will be short if I always have to feel as I now do." By the time her stepson had been found and carted home, her misery had heightened: "I can say that I have no desire to live any longer."

Although Elizabeth does not record what happened after Willie was carted home, after his return her distress turned into a keen sense of perse-

cution at the position in which she had been placed by his desertion. "I have had my patience very severely tryed [sic]. I will try by the grace of God assisting me to not let the trial tempt me as far from that good way that I can never get back," she wrote. "I desire to be good, faithful and useful but it does seem to me as if I have more to bear than any one in the world." By the next Monday, she had apparently decided that her aim to be "good, faithful and useful" did not prohibit her from expressing a well-justified fury toward her stepson: "I came home ... feeling just as angry as I ever had in all my life. I have made up my mind that I will not be imposed on any longer by *the one that has caused me more trouble than all the others* in the world." She does not explain how she went about it, but Elizabeth made good on her threat. The very next day her diary cheerfully notes: "This has been a lovely day. This morning I went downtown ... and got Willies [sic] clothes for him to go away to school" (Armitage, 1987-88: 275-289).

However they asserted their maternal authority in the home, stepmothers engaged in an ongoing negotiation of familial relationships and social expectations. Many stepfamily relationships were complicated by the fact that nineteenth-century motherhood ideals often stood in stark contrast to the realities of stepmotherhood. The feminine domestic ideal in nineteenth-century America required women to maintain domestic harmony and to preserve the home as a sanctuary—and stepfamilies were often forced to contend with complex issues and dynamics that popularize that unity. Moreover, the ideal of domesticity itself affected the ways in which stepmothers and stepchildren interacted. Taught to idealize their dead mothers, stepchildren were then introduced to new mother figures who often complicated that ideal. How women confronted the intersections between stepfamily relationships and domestic ideals help us to understand more fully both social attitudes toward step-motherhood, and the ways in which middle- and upper-class women dealt with the inherent ambiguities of a domestic narrative which, while restrictive, also often served as their only source of social power.

[1]Nineteenth-century domestic literature also reinforced the idea of a maternal influence that extended beyond the grave. Mothers were considered to hold a moral and emotional influence that prevailed long after their demise.
[2]Censer finds the troubled step-mother / step-child relationships were often subordinated to the larger necessity of maintaining family unity.

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Doreen Fumia

Marginalized Motherhood and the Mother-Lesbian Subject

> Government agencies, the courts, and other entities have threatened, enforced, or terminated the motherhood status of certain women and girls, against their stated desires and without evidence of abuse, because, for example, the woman in question was disabled, a political activist, too young, unmarried, comatose (judge denied abortion), divorced and had sex, too old, the wrong race, an atheist, a Native American, deaf, mentally ill, retarded, seeking an abortion, lesbian, reported to speak Spanish to her child, enrolled in full-time college, a drug user, poor. (Solinger, 1998: 383)

Introduction

This paper seeks to claim a space for mother-lesbians. This subject position, mother-lesbian, to which I belong, refers to women who have had their children in the context of heterosexual relationships and then reconfigured their family lives in order to live as lesbians. Placing the word mother before lesbian indicates that such a woman identified, at least publicly, with motherhood before lesbianism, in contrast to lesbian originated motherhood. The desire to draw attention to mother-lesbian subjectivities grows out of my experience of exclusion from already constituted categories of mother and lesbian.

Creating ever-increasing categories of "mother" is useful if the intention is to expand the possible ways in which any individual mother can legitimate her identity. Additive methods of increasing categories are, however, limiting as they always exclude someone and do little to address the systems of oppression that restrict legitimising identities in the first place. As Judith Butler (1990) suggests, categories always leak.

For example, while gathering data for my Master's thesis I attempted to create a category of identity I termed "once married mother-lesbians." I used a snowball method in order to obtain interviews. Two women referred to me for this study did not easily fit the confining category of "once married mother-lesbian." They are same-sex lovers, with six children between them, from heterosexual marriages. One of the husbands had died, and the other husband lives with them. All three adults—the two women and the husband of one of the women—love each other and all maintain intimate, sexual relationships. Although the women are same-sex lovers they are also opposite-sex lovers. They are not "once-married" since one is still married. They are not simply mother-lesbians; in fact, they rejected the term "lesbian" altogether. What term could I use to define the motherhood in which these two women were engaged? The category I had drawn in order to rupture a normalized category of heteronormative motherhood and differentiate mother-lesbian from lesbian mother—was an already-ruptured category.

Interlocking

Additive methods used for inclusion are, ultimately, dangerous. Such methods result in exclusions and when applied to the discourses of motherhood, limit, rather than enhance, the capacity for women to mother. Fellows and Razack (1997) cite the work of Patricia Hill Collins to strengthen their claim that additive methods are limiting and will ultimately fail since they disrupt one system without simultaneously disrupting others.

> Replacing additive models of oppression with interlocking ones creates possibilities for new paradigms. The significance of seeing race, class, and gender as interlocking systems of oppression is that such an approach fosters a paradigmatic shift of thinking inclusively about other oppressions, such as age, sexual orientation, religion, and ethnicity. (Hill Collins qtd. in Fellows and Razack, 1997: 3)

The compulsion to be included in any category that carries with it the potential of social and economic benefits is, however, strong. There are very real consequences attached to whether or not mother-lesbians are able to claim that their motherhood is legitimate. Is it any surprise, then, that if and when possible, mother-lesbians will disavow identities associated with "illegitimate" mother identities in order to claim benefits reserved for women attached to (white, middle-class, "respectable") legitimate ones? What is to be gained and what is lost when individual claims to legitimate motherhood depend on excluding women positioned outside those categories?

*Un*respectably respectable

In 1991, Martha Fineman said that motherhood is an institution "with significant and powerful symbolic content in our culture "[that] has an impact

on all women independent of the individual choice about whether to become a mother" (276). The identities of woman and mother, then, interplay and depend on specific histories of understanding which make particular and different subject positions available for different women.

> Even as we must fully comprehend the pastness of the past, there is no just way in which the past can be quarantined from the present. Past and present inform each other, each implies the other. Neither past nor present—has a complete meaning alone. (Said, 1994: 4)

> From the moment they set foot in this country as slaves, Black women have fallen outside the American ideal of womanhood. (Roberts, 1997: 10)

Dorothy Roberts states that attributes assigned to the True Woman "were precisely the opposite of those that characterized Black women" (1997: 10). Further, Black women's mother practices were blamed for Black peoples' problems (Roberts, 1997: 10). Interpal Grewal explains that notions of beauty that began just before the turn of the century focussed on the face as the representation of "good" or "bad" moral character of a woman (Grewal, 1996: 27). Thus, the fact that Trollop's Hatty Carbury, in *The Way We Live Now* (1875), was a good woman was affirmed by the perfection of her physical features (Grewal, 1996: 27). Circumscribing boundaries of moral perfection based on an "aesthetic" version of "white transparent beauty" carefully constructed categories of women/mother in ways that excluded those it could never contain—poor women who tarnished their transparent whiteness with the dirt of their work, or women marked by skin colour. Such discourses circulate in ways that set an impossible standard by which women are measured.

Mother nation

Anna Davin frames motherhood as an imperial nation building project that supports the ideology of the "survival of the fittest." She asserts that the exaltation of motherhood confirmed the family in its bourgeois form based on unpaid female labour supported by the male "family wage" (1997: 138). The pivotal centering of the white middle-class/elite male depends on his female counterpart to complete the arrangement. The arrangement is not a linear one although the ideology of "the nation as family" can make it appear so. Phrases like, "the strength of the nation depends on the strength of our families" rest on the myth that the traditional nuclear heteronormative family form is attainable to all, and that our national survival depends on maintaining it dominance (Chunn, 1992; Davin, 1997; McClintock, 1995; Stoler, 1995).

Sheryl Nestel, commenting on the work by Stoler and McClintock on the construction of the bourgeois subject, says, "The production of whiteness as a social identity ... has direct historical links to an imperial past in which

racialized subjects provided the counterpoint against which bourgeois identities could be recognized" (Nestel, 1997: 3).

For whiteness, goodness, and chasteness to become the measure for the respectable bourgeois subject there had to be categories of women that deviated from that standard in order to be contrasted with it. Without the contrast, there could be no "deviant." With the contrast, the claim to respectability facilitated coding women who were "on the other side of the degenerate divide," deviant (Fellows and Razack, 1997: 4).

Degeneration

There is a potent rhetoric that circulates a belief that "degenerate" families destabilize the nation. The rhetoric has a strong "home" in American Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan's 1965 publication *The Negro Family, The Case for National Action*. Slavery's legacy to the contemporary construction of Black mothers as degenerate is supported by terms used to categorize Black mothers: "welfare queen," "deviant," "matriarch," "unwed," "mammy," "negligent," "Jezebel," and "immoral" (Roberts, 1997: 10-18). Racialized concepts such as these apply to all women who fail to meet the standard of "respectable" mothering practices. Hence phrases such as "welfare queen" carry a multitude of assumptions about class and race while notions such as the "unfit mother" carry assumptions about class, race, and sexuality. Both these and similar terms are imbued with social meanings apart from any individual woman's mothering practices. The constructed "welfare queen" or "unfit mother" identities have little space outside the imagination of degeneracy and the anxieties of a nation produced through the rhetoric of the "demise of the bourgeois family."

Mother-lesbians and other marginalized mothers are racialized by the terms "deviant," "immoral," "unwed," and "negligent." Anne McClintock makes a convincing case for the idea that racial degeneration was evoked by the state at the turn of the century to "police the 'degenerate' classes—the militant working class, the Irish, Jews, gays and lesbians, prostitutes, criminals, alcoholics and the insane—who were collectively figured as racial deviants" (McClintock, 1995: 43). How do mother-lesbians become a category that is coded "deviant" and what do we do in our attempts to avoid those markers?

Elisions

Kate Davy says that "[w]hite women signify hegemonic, institutionalised whiteness through their association with a pure, chaste, asexual before-the-fall womanhood ... attained and maintained via middle-class respectability with its implicit heterosexuality" (Davy, 1997: 212). The fallen or "bad" woman, she says, is "embodied by some white women (prostitutes, white trash, lesbians) and all women of colour" (Davy, 1997: 212).

Whiteness constructs motherhood discourses amidst assumptions that "best practices" in mothering reflect the "American ideal of womanhood" (Chunn, 1992; Coontz, 1992; Davin, 1997). Black feminist literature on

mothering posit claims that Black mothers face challenges in mothering practices that are invisible in white motherhood discourses (see Glenn *et al.*, 1994; Collins, 1994; Williams, 1995). Both white and Black motherhood discourses are steeped in heteronormativity and erase mother-lesbian mothering practices. How do positions of motherhood set up competing marginalities in ways that continue to support dominant positions of whiteness and heteronormativity?

Competing marginalities

Many feminists readily adhere to the belief that Canada's imperialist roots have produced governing structures and institutions that support oppressive racist and sexist constructions of women in relation to men—and that women are differently placed along lines of multiple and overlapping oppressions (see, for example: Davin, 1997; Grewal, 1996; Razack, 1998; Stoler, 1995; Williams, 1995). This not only constructs gender differences it also constructs "difference" in relation to the dominant subject.[1] The marking of difference as subordinate allows the dominant subject to know itself as dominant (Fellows and Razack, 1997: 15). Without the unmarked position of dominance, difference would not exist as subordinate. Different and subordinate positions of motherhood upheld by machineries of institutional powers—capitalism, patriarchy and imperialism—pit women against women. The result is a hierarchy of differences that positions subjects in various orders amidst the dominant center (hooks, 1984).

Mary Louise Fellows and Sherene Razack wrote of their experiences, at a "failed conference," that led them to examine hierarchies among women (Fellows and Razack, 1997). At a conference on law and feminism, discussion about prostitution, violence and race came to be framed as "competing marginalities." Women were differently positioned in relation to prostitution, violence and race—some were academics who theorized the subject and some were sex trade workers; some were women of color and others white women. At the end of the first day of the conference a "survivor of prostitution" left the conference feeling, once again, that the process of (re)defining the social context of work and prostitution was erasing violence in prostitution. The next day discussions about racism began in earnest. Tensions rose when participants turned the in-progress discussion of race to the former day's discussion of violence in prostitution. Some viewed this as a familiar move to eclipse debates about race. The separation of prostitution from race constructed a contest *between* rather than amongst women, "as if [prostitution and racism] were independent systems—as if they were competing parallel narratives" (Fellows and Razack, 1997: 8).

Borrowing from this narrative and the theories Fellows and Razack (1997) apply to their analysis, I would like to think about the possibilities for claiming mother-lesbian subjectivities. What discourses are already competing in the spaces in which I make a claim for legitimate mother-lesbian subjectivities?

Race to innocence

Motherhood is a cornerstone support in upholding the very systems of domination that oppress women. It is not only an experience it is also an institution built on unequal relationships of power (Rich, 1986). Through the institution of motherhood and domesticity women come to be regulated by the state, the self, and each other to desire particular mothering practices (Davin, 1997; Stoler, 1995; Foucault, 1991). Through our participation in the regulation of others, and ourselves as mothers, we come to be positioned as both oppressed and oppressor.

Feminists "have gained an intellectual understanding of complicity" (Fellows and Razack, 1997:5) through an acknowledgment of the places we find ourselves within institutionalized structures of oppression. For example, we might be able to understand that another woman has less privilege than we do. However, when a political moment challenges our own stability within imperialist, capitalist, and patriarchal frameworks, we feel our own oppression as both separate from the oppression of others and more critical than their claims of oppression. This is described by Fellows and Razack as a "race to innocence" (1997: 2). A race to innocence is, they say, " the process through which a woman comes to believe her own claim of subordination is the most urgent and that she is unimplicated in the subordination of other women. Although we know we are complicitous in the oppression of other women, we seldom *feel* this to be true " (Fellows and Razack, 1997: 2, 6).[2]

Who can be a mother?

As I continue my own project—to make the mother-lesbian legitimately visible—I wonder about how to dismantle systems of oppressions that regulate women in ways that compel us to perform "good mother" subjectivities based on white middle-class standards of respectability. If women are constructed as mothers through the available position of the bourgeois subject, then there are limited spaces in which to articulate, live, and form subjectivities that reflect the reality of her lived experiences—which more often than not lies outside such an impossible ideal (Smith, 1987).

> Placing the experience of women of color in the center of feminist theorizing about motherhood demonstrates how emphasizing the issue of father as patriarch in a decontextualized nuclear family, distorts the experience of women in alternate family structures with quite different political economies. (Collins, 1994: 46)

In order to begin to think about alternative family structures, or households headed by mother-lesbians, it is necessary to find an entry point into motherhood outside the North American ideal of womanhood. Centering women of color when theorizing about motherhood redirects attention away from the white hegemonic center and opens possibilities for thinking about

interrupting the bourgeois subject as the measure for the "good" mother. The question is: what does it take for individual mothers to interrupt the dominant discourse, and how are competing marginalities always already present and hailing us in ways that reproduce dominance?

Because women are all too aware of the risks for mothers who claim "respectability," those of us who sit a distance from, or outside, the assumed right to mother compete with each other. We understand our own vulnerable positions as the most salient oppression of motherhood, exactly because we feel there is a threat to our own mothering practices. We erase the subjectivities of other women who are attempting to mother, as we launch our individual battles in order to find spaces within legitimate mother subjectivities.

Through the performance of respectable identities, women participate in perpetuating dominant bourgeois subject positionings or what Ruthann Robson terms their "legal domestication"—"the regulation of women to the domestic sphere, a private place that can facilitate being dominated and inhibit collective action" (Robson, 1991: 172).

> We attempt to argue ourselves into legal categories so that we can be protected, not noticing how such categories restrict [us]. (Robson, 1991: 173)

All women are regulated by state enforced, legal definitions of "mother." Racialized notions of degenerate/deviant sexuality, unfit mothering practices, and the absence of a male provider regulate women who are lesbians. The "deviant," "unwed," and "negligent" lesbian is not close enough to the dominant center of "good mother" to be able to assume the right to mother unquestioningly. There are, however, discourses that are available for some mother-lesbians to mobilize based constructions of race, class and gender performance.

Respectability constructs whiteness, gender, and class in ways that surround women who are able to mobilize within these constructs. If mother-lesbians (particularly if they are white and middle-class) can perform ourselves as "respectable," we can hide from the discourses that would construct us as "deviant."

Women whose right to mother is questioned, are liable to state scrutiny, vulnerable to coercive reproductive control, risk having their children removed, and are made accountable for their sexual activities and their personal expenditures (Roberts, 1997). If possible, women avoid being categorized in ways that diminish their privacy. If possible, women are careful about avoiding social service institutions that compromise their autonomy. Not all women can always avoid surveillance.

Conclusion

When I moved away from the heterosexual privilege I had assumed in my twenty-three year marriage, I became conspicuously aware of the speed with

which racialized discourses surrounded me. I am reminded of Patricia William's description, in *The Rooster's Egg*, of her experience following the adoption of her son, looking in the mirror and saying to her reflection, "I am an (over-the-hill) black single mother" (1995: 171). She said that she realized she was "so many things that many people seemed to think were anti-family—"unwed," "black," "single," everything but "teenage" (1995: 171). Despite her privilege of class and profession she experienced tremendous social resistance.

I sometimes look at my own reflection in the mirror and say; "I am an (over-the-hill) white middle-class mother-lesbian with four children." Unable to "keep my family together" I feel the stigma of failure. I feel the economic vulnerability of dependency. My status as a mother of four demanding children, once lauded in my Italian-American community, is now viewed as "excessive" in a community where women have few or no children. I have become conscious of my changed status in institutional spaces such as my children's schools. My ears and eyes have been sharpened to the homophobic nuances "othering" me.

What is not so clear is an awareness of the subtle and not so subtle ways in which I have begun to see the connections with, and disavowal of, other mothers who are racialized and deemed "unfit" because of their sexuality, class status, visible ethnicity, or race. Despite my intentions, I self-regulate according to anxieties that call into relief motherhood as an imperial nation-building project. Rather than disputing these anxieties, I, consciously or not, limit the possibilities to mother unquestioningly through the disavowal of those categories of disentitled women condemned by society and the state.

I am coming to an understanding that it is "motherhood"—as an institution—that regulates me into competing with other women on the margins of "respectable" motherhood. Women are pitted against each other, and that limits our capacity to seek alternative and effective ways to mother. If I continue to seek to claim legitimate subjectivities for mother-lesbians without simultaneously challenging "respectable bourgeois subjectivities," then the systems of oppressions that create categories of exclusion will not be disrupted. Individuals may continue to make gains, but at the expense of excluding those always outside the categories of privilege.

[1]For a more complete discussion of "difference" see, Goldberg, 1993; Lorde, 1984; McClintock, 1995; Said, 1993, along with the authors mentioned in the body of the text. These authors would be termed "critical race theorists" and they stretch the notion of dominance and subordination beyond gender inequality. There is a belief that the politics of difference has the capacity both to identify and make differences visible and to conflate difference into essentialized categories. By this I mean that the complex specificities of definable discriminatory markers such as class, gender, ability, sexual orientation are rolled into the one category—race. The aforementioned critical race theorists explore the specificities of how bodies are marked and the histories through which they are marked.

[2]It is important to note that even as we attempt to build coalitions through our political strategies, it is difficult to put our theories into action—to *know* that we are both oppressors and oppressed.

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Mothering

Renee Norman

Happy Birthday, Sara!

I'm not ready
for the big black Sony Space Sound radio
taking up half her dresser space
the classical tapes
returned to the stereo cabinet
Red Riding's Hood given away

I only just folded the diapers into dustclothes
dismantled the crib
donated small sleepers to the playroom dollhouse

I watch her
by her radio
still deep in thought
dreaming to the raucous music

I see myself
by the screen door
tears pouring down my eyes
I gaze out at prairie sunset
blood red dulled by summer haze
chequered in the tiny squares
of front door lookout

my mother's radio playing
songs that make me cry
apron tied
she dances round our kitchen
making dinner

I want to hide that radio
in her room
cover it
paint it white
unplug it
smash its speakers
glue the buttons down
give it away

But I won't
it's me there by the radio
the sunset's calling
it once spoke to me

I'll play her radio
dance around her room
put clothes away
tuned to a classical song I like
wish it wasn't there

Fiona Green

Living Feminism Through Mothering

The feminist mothers represented in this article believe that traditional, patriarchal mothering roles are hurtful to both women and children and are therefore trying to raise their daughters based on their understanding of feminism.[1] They try to give their daughters a sense of what it is to be a woman by providing them with some understanding of what oppression is, how it operates, and ways in which to deal with it. Daughters are encouraged to develop critical thinking and are taught by their mothers to recognize the influences of race, class, and gender on themselves and on others. Raising daughters based on a feminist awareness is political for these women as they are influencing their daughters to be critical of social structures, whether this be education, religion, media, or family. Feminist mothers want their daughters to develop to their full potential as human beings, to be strong and confident as children and as adults. Through consciously raising daughters to be critical of social structures and the roles defined for people, these feminist mothers are teaching their daughters the value of the personal being political.

The paper is divided into three sections. The first briefly outlines who these women are and what feminism means to them, the second explains how these women view mothering, and the third and final section explores how they ground their mothering in feminism by using specific examples.

Feminist mothers and feminism

The group of feminist mothers in this study do not represent all feminist mothers, nor do they represent particular "types" of mothers. Rather they represent themselves. The age range of these women is from 25 to 50 and they live in or around Winnipeg, Manitoba. They are all temporarily able-bodied,[2] birth mothers raising biological children, with two raising non-biological

children in addition to bioligical children. Half are raising children alone, while the other half are raising children in partnerships.[3] Six mothers are single, two are lesbian, one is bisexual, eleven are heterosexual and I am uncertain of the sexuality of two of the women. Eleven women were born in Canada, two in the U.S.A, two in England and one in Africa.

The ethnic ancestry of this group is varied. One woman is African, one is Metis, and two are Jewish. Two women have Columbian/European ancestry, two are of Jewish/European decent and seven women have mixed European heritage. Four women identify themselves as poor, while the other twelve see themselves as middle-class.

All of these women identify themselves as feminist and insist that being feminist is who they are and not simply a role, theory, or ideological paradigm. Feminism is a world view which is ingrained in their bodies, minds, beliefs, and actions and is, therefore, implicit in everything they do, including their mothering practices.

Of course each woman has her own understanding and definition of feminism, yet a number of commonalities exist. These commonalities do not represent the entire understanding of feminism for these women, but provide a partial view of what feminism means to these women and how it relates to their mothering.

For all participants, being feminist entails having a feminist consciousness. It means consciously analyzing everyday events, and looking for the underlying assumptions in everything. Having a feminist consciousness for these women demands a recognition of what, where, when, why and how patriarchy works, as well its implications. Patriarchy, they believe, efficiently dis-empowers and dis-enfranchises children and women through systemic discrimination that supports and limits everyone to varying degrees—according to factors such as gender, ethnicity, sexuality, social class, geography, and ability.[4] Patriarchy uses social structures to limit women in ways that are harmful, give men power, and maintain a male-dominated hierarchy. Patriarchy does not acknowledge women's contributions in this world; it ignores her-story.

For these women, acknowledging and understanding patriarchy includes recognizing that the personal is political; that all personal experiences are linked to the larger world which is political in its makeup. They see that living in a patriarchal social environment influences and affects each one of us personally. They also consider the reverse to be true, that the political is personal. What we do as individuals has an affect on the larger world and its politics. These feminist mothers actively practice their beliefs.

Central to praxis, they argue, is choice. Choice entails the fundamental right to make personal decisions for themselves and about their lives, even when this includes little or no support from others. Choice is one of many paths to freedom from the social construction of gender and thus to self-determination. Making choices around issues of relationships, education, work, religion and, of course, reproduction, children and mothering are ways these women take

charge of their lives and create social change.

To be feminist includes, but is not limited to, analyzing and understanding patriarchy, inequality, and the social injustice as it pertains to women and children. It also entails knowing that by putting personal understandings, beliefs, and theories into practice, both individually and communally, acknowledges and acts on women's potential to be self-determined.

Mothering

Traditional patriarchal notions of mothering, according to the women in this study, are harmful to women and children. They claim that the most hurtful reality of mothering is the isolation and lack of support for mothers, both from people in general and from other feminists. Damage to mothers and children is brought about through the tactic of dividing different "types" of mothers into groups and then judging women according to their particular grouping. "Working mothers" are perceived as selfish and neglectful of their children's needs. "Stay-at-home mothers" are labelled dependent, boring, and suspect for not contributing to the family income. "Disabled mothers" are considered incapable, selfish, wrong, or invisible. "Welfare mothers" are seen as lazy, inept, and abusers of the "system." "Lesbian mothers" are viewed as incompetent, deviant, and "bad." What is additionally hurtful, according to these women, is that they themselves have labelled and judged other mothers and thus alienated themselves and other women. They know this undermines women and are working to eradicate this attitude in themselves and others.

Raising daughters in ways that duplicate patriarchal gender role stereotypes is also understood to be damaging to everyone. Not only do gender roles constrain the development of human beings, the roles themselves are destructive. Changing the socialization of children from conforming to patriarchal stereotypes to being autonomous human beings first, both liberates people and challenges the social order. Mothering for these women entails just this, allowing their daughters to be the people they are, regardless of social prescriptions according to sex and gender.

All of the women interviewed see their mothering as feminist because they value and encourage autonomy, self-determination and self-reliance in their daughters. Mothers respect and support the development and growth of children as individuals in their own right, and try to recognize the different strengths and weaknesses of all people.

One woman believes mothering is an important and powerful role in itself. To mother, in her words, "is to have a generation in one's hand." She believes that a mother's power to shape and influence the development of individuals, regardless of what's out there, means that mothers can contribute to the feminist struggle. Although all of the participants believe that the work of mothering is hard, undervalued and isolating, they also regard mothering to be the most significant work they can do for themselves, their children and their society.

Living feminism through mothering

In attempting to actively resist patriarchal ideals of mothering and notions of gender by rearing their daughters based on the feminist principle of the personal being political, these women believe they are living their feminism through their mothering. Of course, the particular ways of doing this varies from woman to woman.

One mother views all decisions around her mothering as feminist because she believes her political values go beyond her immediate family to touch others within the community. She makes conscious and deliberate choices around child care, schooling, immunization and the well-being of her daughters. The outcome of these decisions, she points out, does not occur within a void, but involves others in the community. This, she believes, influences community members by demonstrating alternative ways of mothering (choices) and that all people do not share the same values nor behave in exactly the same way. She views her mothering as politically effective because she provides a role model of mothering for her daughters and others that actively resist patriarchy.

Another mother views her choice to stay at home and raise her daughter as a way of defying the social institution of motherhood. By vocalizing her particular choice of staying at home, what she forgoes by choosing to stay at home, and how it relates to her politics, she believes challenges the assumptions people, including other feminists, hold about traditional female roles. Upon returning to the workforce in a job with a feminist organization, this woman finds herself battling discrimination from her feminist employers who do not recognize the value of her mother work while she was absent from the labour force. Because her work as a feminist mother is not validated, she finds herself both educating and politicizing those around her about her parenting choices. This, she argues, exemplifies living feminism through mothering.

Three mothers who have chosen to home-school their daughters believe that by doing so they are teaching their children and others about feminism. Each of these mothers spoke about the damage done to their particular daughters by the school system, whether through the violence of sexism, racism, or intolerance and discrimination based on other "differences." These mothers show their daughters, and others, that they will not participate in a system which harms their children. Rather, they create alternative ways to educate their daughters in healthy environments which value children as unique individuals with particular needs. Home-schooling is therefore a feminist and political act for these women.

Mothers live their feminism through their parenting by helping their daughters achieve an understanding of how patriarchy oppresses them. Mothers show them how social structures are not fair to women and children. They consciously raise their daughters to be critical of these structures and the roles defined for people according to differences in gender, race, ability, sexuality, and class.

One mother shows her daughters ways in which the divorce law concretely

affects their lives to explain inequality. A second mother explains the unjust local and global division of economic resources amongst children, women, and men while shopping. Another sits with her daughters when they watch TV to expose sexist, racist, abelist, homophobic, and class biases which are presented as the norm.

Mothers live their feminism by actively demonstrating ways to resist patriarchy. They explain the links between the personal and the political in their children's lives and the power this has to bring about social change. For example, one mother supported her daughter who wanted to play soccer on the school team which was reserved only for boys. The daughter understood, from her mother's teachings, that not being allowed to play soccer was sexist, unjust, and had to be challenged. With support from her family, the daughter was able to affect change in the rules of the school district and play soccer on the school team. Furthermore, due to the work of this girl and her family, other girls are now playing on their own soccer teams in this community.

Another way to resist patriarchy is through making choices in our lives. The choices we make, these women point out, are however not without sacrifice as they are made within the confines of patriarchal society. Mothers exemplify this by sharing with their children choices they have made and acknowledge both the costs and benefits of these. For example, the choice to raise children has meant going on social assistance for three women. A number of mothers know that the cost of choosing to stay at home is not having a pension and an income. Other mothers recognize the lack of time they spend with their daughters as the cost of working outside the home. The price for another mother who, due to financial constraints can not home-school, is to place her daughter in an educational program which is far from ideal. The consequence of making the choice of raising children for two mothers means putting their own education on hold. Children are not blamed for the costs of mothering, but rather are shown how there are constraints placed on people's lives due to patriarchy.

In addition to acknowledging the cost and benefits of choice, feminist mothers ensure that choice is a value they pass onto their daughters by encouraging them to make choices for themselves. At times these choices may not be ones mothers believe to be "best" for their daughters, yet they allow them the independence and freedom to learn the realities of making personal choices. For example, one mother supported her daughter's wish to go to a religious school for a time until it did not satisfy the daughter's expectations or needs.

Being an advocate for children in their choices also means providing children with the skills required to live with choices which may be difficult. One mother supports her daughter's education in fashion design knowing full well that her daughter's designs do not fit the mould of the patriarchal fashion world. She and her daughter are both prepared for the hardships they will incur for not conforming to the dominant standard.

Living feminism through mothering is illustrated in the support mothers

give their daughters to develop into human beings when they may not fit the stereotypical gender roles prescribed by patriarchy. One mother speaks of how she tries to empower her two daughters to be who they want to be. She does this by encouraging them to do whatever they want and be whoever they are, with the only restriction being the safety of her daughters and others. For this mother, living feminism through mothering is, in her own words, "helping someone to become strong, and to fulfill themselves. It's creation, it's development, it's assisting someone in growth and becoming."

Conclusion

As has been illustrated above, these women live their feminism through their mothering in various ways. Some women challenge the patriarchal role of mother by critiquing the institution of motherhood outright and by overtly mothering in ways other than those prescribed by patriarchy. Other women use the "cover of mother" to subversively teach their children to challenge the injustices of patriarchy. In either case, these mothers live their feminism through their mothering by illustrating to their daughters, and others, the injustice of and need to eradicate patriarchy.

All of these mothers acknowledge the immense power they have in the lives of their children. They counsel them to "be awake"; to know and be critical of the patriarchal system we live in. They choose to consciously educate and guide their daughters in ways that resist patriarchy by showing them how the personal is political and by encouraging them to be critical thinkers. Through the act of supporting their daughters to be who they want to be and in teaching them that they need not conform to damaging stereotypical gender roles, these mothers help foster positive self-esteem and self-confidence in their daughters. Raising empowered daughters, these feminist mothers argue, is one of the many steps required to bring about feminist social change.

[1]These 16 self-identified feminist mothers are living in southern Manitoba and are involved in research for my Interdisciplinary (Education, Sociology, Women's Studies) Ph.D. at the University of Manitoba.

[2]I use the term temporarily-able bodied to draw attention to the reality that most people become "disabled," whether through old age, through accident, or other life experiences.

[3]A number of these women are also mothers of sons, and argue that they try to use their feminism in raising all of their children, regardless of sex/gender.

[4]The term patriarchy was used by both myself and the participants, and included discussion of its meaning.

Marilyn Garber

A Mother's Reflections at Fifty-Something

The empty nest is vastly underrated. It is cushy, cozy, liberating, a place which provides many rooms of one's own. When the children go, perhaps the quiet brings on a kind of loneliness. But after a bit, the silences speak. One can hear many voices, the voices of one's self, one's life, one's possibilities, the souls left unfulfilled by the decision to commit to a life of child rearing. The lives one might have lived are not just fantasies. All around, nieces and nephews, sons and daughters are making the choices of freedom and adventure, not marriage and offspring.

It is well those strangers in the house leave, those strangers born of one's own body, those strangers seeking to be themselves and grabbing the clay of their becoming from the craters of their parents' bared being, from the wells of their nurturing cradles. It's hard at first for anyone. The house after all is big, too big for a mother and father without their young.

The manse is quiet, too hushed and still, for lives shaped in the bell tower of passionate family debate over the Middle East, and over who has the right to leave dirty socks in the living room. But, once they are gone, one gets accustomed, as one must.

And then comes the surprise, when one of them comes home, just for the summer, mom, or, just to save a little money, dad. The homestead becomes small and crowded, noisy beyond one's choice, a hotel where the proprietors begin to wonder why they are in the business. "Give her a little money to get a place of her own," says Dad.

'No, no, I couldn't, I want to be independent," says babe.

Mom and Dad begin to live externally, noticing the trail of laundry leading to the guest bedroom, worrying once again about walking around nude, thinking about whether twenty-year-old baby has had her dinner, whether she

is happy, and why she is home so late. The universal assurance, "I can take care of myself" gives no peace, no security.

"I know she is complaining to her friends that we don't leave her alone," says Dad.

"Why not," says Mom, "I am complaining to mine that I am never alone anymore."

The empty nest is a venture, an enterprise that must be protected, guarded, patrolled, shielded. Here at last after twenty and more years of grubbing for worms to toss into the demanding beaks, Mamma Robin can look to the state of her own feathers. They need preening, for sure. No matter what else she had been doing while the little ones grew, never mind if she was a professional, an attorney or teacher or executive, the center was in the fledglings, God's little children. Though she might struggle against it, arguing in court, demanding justice, grading papers, making "tough" decisions, Johnny's whereabouts, Susie's school problems, Annie's doctor's appointment, floated at the core. Now alone at home, she has another chance at life, at new adventures, vast possibilities. When Mom was young the choices were unfathomable, but the hopes formed at her own mother's knee were more limited, less explicit, than those of her own children. With them out and gone, she is a young adult once again. New career, world travel, study for self development, change of personality (shall I get an elder's Hell's Angels), live abroad, build a house, get a totally new wardrobe, quit my job, and how many other options flaunt themselves.

Of course, parenthood cannot be obliterated. Once a parent, always a parent. When Paul gets a motorcycle, it doesn't matter if he is living three thousand miles away, he needs a call to remind him to wear his helmet. Yet, days go by when Mom writes and lives and plans (without a thought of her babies) for herself in joy unconnected to her parenthood and in satisfaction for herself alone, alone in the nurturing nest.

Robbie Pfeufer Kahn

Family Album/ 1943

The blades in the mixing bowl whirred. My mother was baking a two layered cake with green icing. It would look just like the picture on the Betty Crocker box, the frosting fluted by strokes of a knife. She baked to make the time pass. A slant of light sliced the room. The floor and walls met in the corner but offered no shelter. A propeller plane droned overhead. My father's fixing pilot's teeth. Our country was at war.

"Daddy home?" I asked my mother's turned back. The flared hem of her flowered dress with white buttons down the front swayed as she rubbed wax paper smeared with butter around the cake pan. Her back still to me she brushed a strand of auburn hair up over the barrette that held it in place.

Annoyance in her voice she said "Daddy will be home soon."

I went out on the screened-in porch looking out on a suburban neighborhood of Fort Worth, Texas. The warm breeze felt friendly. I climbed on my painted wood rocker. It's a brown and white heifer with a merry sideways glance that seemed to say "Not only did I jump over the moon, I ran away with the dish and the spoon."

I was clean. I had been quiet. Maybe she wouldn't fill the slant of light with angry words today dividing me from my father. The front door slammed. He's home. I clambered off the rocker and ran to him my face open and eager. "Daddy." He crouched down on his coltish legs, gathered me in his arms. Lifted me high. His pained prominent eyes shone as if wet. His full lips planted a kiss on mine. He pressed me against his scratchy army shirt. I didn't mind. I burrowed into a fold of cloth wanting to stay there forever. Then I looked back at my mother. Turned now in my direction her smooth face was impassive, her sensuous lips set one against the other as she regarded us with an absent stare. What I didn't see was the Yiddish-speaking girl in a homemade dress who

stood watching. The girl saw a short father, home from peddling dry goods. He crouched down on sturdy bowed legs and lifted her in his muscular arms up to his broad Slavic face. Laughing with delight she ran her hands over his shining bald crown.

I scanned my mother's face but could not read it. It seemed though there would be no angry words today. Later cake with green icing. My heart unclenched. For the moment I was safe.

Jacque Roethler

Sleep

Night
And once again, she
With a force of will puzzling in one so small
Will not sleep.

Her father,
In one of his snits again,
Complaining about
His truck, his job, the weather,
But mostly about the children,
Volunteers to put her to sleep
And I know there will be trouble.

Why does he begrudge the time spent with his children?
The moments spent with his friends
With his lathe
With his instruments
With the television
Join in a trickle
Which finally carries him away on its floodtide
But the moments with the children
He spends like a miser
With bad grace.

It begins
She lying uneasily in his arms
With him pulling his lip
Drumming fingers
Blaming her brother
Reciting to me a litany of the things conspiring to keep her awake
Omitting his own nervous energy
Which surrounds her like a palpable noise.

Jacque Roethler

I think this is unfair
For certainly this tendency to sleeplessness comes from him
Late nights in the workshop
Starting the drill press at midnight
With heartstopping noise
Lacquering something at two a.m.
Filling the house with such an acrid and invasive smell
That it wakes us upstairs.

And finally ends with his roaring at her
"Go to sleep Goddamit!"
I swoop down and carry her off with me to the waterbed
Angry, yet pleased:
The responsibility lies with me again
But nobody else does it right.

Her tiny body looks even smaller in the big bed
Like a single perfect pearl
Lying against the velvet
In the jeweler's shop.

And she,
There in that sea of warmth
My breathing comfortably near
And, comfortably far,
The sounds of her father clattering around in the shop
Contemplating, no doubt,
Some odor,
Wood putty, mineral spirits, paint thinner
With which to assail our sleep later,
Sleeps.

Robbie Pinter

Separation Anxiety

My blond, blue-eyed boy runs to the door screaming "bye-bye, bye-bye!" with all the joy of an exuberant two-year-old. I smile to see him so happy. But I know the happiness will not last past the first left turn that leads to his sitter's home. Now, we are not going for a leisurely ride around the neighborhood or to the grocery with its promise of cookies and balloons or to Taco Bell for special cheese "sandwiches." I'm now taking him to another woman's home for a full eight hours.

At the sitter's, he will make no field trips, seldom venturing out of doors since Karryn, his sitter, also cares for five other children. I will leave him there and he will display his new skills for her all day long—he'll make sentences like "where Daddy is?" He'll smile and hug her when she hands him his juice cup. He'll learn to play with other children. At least I hope he will. After leaving him for short periods this summer, I learned he liked to run and hide when anyone new came to the door, clinging to Karryn's legs. He never did that at home where he welcomed strangers, prancing around the house like a prince in his kingdom.

To my husband and I, he is our prince, almost like our personal "knight-in-shining-armor." Fresh from the hospital, he entered our home like many newborns do, with cries that often rose to staccato-like screams. But he wasn't exactly like most newborns; he was adopted. My son saved us from a life of childlessness, a life I could not embrace. My husband and I took him home to live with us after another woman walked silently down a long hospital corridor to bring him to us. She placed him in my arms and I struggled to hold him closely so I could believe he would be mine. I was introduced to a new life, and at the same time, my new life. I was reborn as a mother.

Every day as I leave my son at his sitter's, I try to learn one of those lessons.

Recently I returned to work after almost two years of staying at home with him. In those two years I had learned much about mothering an infant and then toddler. The traditional jobs of reading books, playing with "play-dough," and buying diapers were ever-present, but each activity was always tinged with a familiar refrain: "I have a child!" But I am now learning how to leave that child in another woman's care.

On each shiny new day as I load my toddler, all our gear as well as myself into the car, I tell myself that I'm making the best decision I can. He will have fun playing with the other children, and Karryn will care for him like a doting mother would. But still, he is no miracle to her.

On day seven of the repeated ritual, I thought, how much longer will he do this? My friends at work smile and nod knowingly, "It's only separation anxiety," they chant as if coaxed by some eternal, mothering bible. I know they must not remember mornings like the one I just had.

I have wondered if the separation is harder for me because my son is adopted. I think the seven years I had to wait to become a mother are still fresh in my mind, unabsolved by the two years I've had with him. I want to witness the miracle of my son now, especially while he is small and learning about the wonders of his world. "It doesn't seem fair." The words are barely out of my mouth when I remember that I'll pick him up in only six hours.

He'll run to me, each foot stretching behind him as he half-dances, his arms open wide, ready to jump into mine. I will see him again, this evening, this weekend, this summer. I think of rocking him to sleep again tonight after he wakes from a bad dream and I again remember the joy I felt when I first held him in the hospital. Then it hits me; I will see and hold my son each evening, each afternoon, every day. Perhaps the nervousness at being separated from him is more mine than my son's; after all, I know how tenuous human connections can be, and I remember what my life was like before I became a mother.

I hope the rhythm of our daily separations and reunions will calm me, the routines easing my anxiety. When I leave my son in another woman's arms, I cannot forget that he is bound to me, his adopted mother, by an untested cord. Each day I am learning to hold that miracle in trust, because each evening when I see him again, I behold its power in my son's laughing eyes—that is a tie that binds.

Ruth Panofsky

The Pregnant Women of Spring

I envy
the pregnant women of spring
on parade after
an interminable winter
they show themselves
and I notice
their cumbersome girth
and curious gait
slowed by burdens
they carry
into heavy traffic
and city streets

In the pregnant women of spring
I see my own body
round and ripe
with my son
then my daughter
and feel the sudden stirrings
of a glorious and riotous past
in my still
silent womb

Evangeline Davis

The Daughter aka The Adoptee

Waking up these days with my teeth on edge, I have begun to comb through books like a mad person in search of an identity, somehow forgotten, but recorded by another. Frustration is getting the better of me as I throw chunks of paragraphs, pieces of poems, mixed with bits of sentences into the air. I write words entwined and re-ordered in hopes some meaning will follow.

How do I feel about Regina, my birth-mother? About Ruby, my adoptive mother? I live with the belief that I feel nothing less than indifference. The details are all mixed up, blurry. The only clear truth is the gaping holes and absence of knowing anything for certain.

Two mothers stand distantly behind this daughter's life, far enough away that she can never reach them. Neither is ever very real because the daughter has never touched her mothers. All she feels is each mother taking turns at abandoning her; one physically and the other emotionally. Mother-to-daughter love is murky and uncertain X 2. The mothers are jealous, trying to cancel each other out. Each believes the other is worse. Neither understands the hollowness they have both created inside their daughter. All that's been offered is a legacy of hurting and emotional scarring X 3. Is a family tied together tighter with shared blood and DNA? Or are family bonds formed after years of shared day-to-day existence? Does love ever have anything to do with family?

My legacy. Their histories. Each making me afraid of the dark and the monsters under my bed; leaving me wondering if the monsters will crawl out and grab me by the throat and take control. Desperately I attempt to be a better mother than the two I had. Constantly I am paralyzed with dread their mistakes will reappear in me, that this is inevitable, that for a time I am a mother like Ruby and Regina combined. Drugs. Suicide attempts. Leaving my children for someone else to mother because I was petrified and unsure of myself. For a time

I let their insecurities win. I unwittingly gave myself over to their low self-esteem. During those years I was introduced to the psyches of Regina and Ruby, though I didn't recognize them at the time. I was offered a rare and valuable opportunity to understand them, as I needed to understand myself. For a while, and sometimes still, I lacked the ability to see our situations through compassion. Instead I judged Regina and Ruby with the same severity I used to criticize myself.

My birth-mother

Dear Regina;

I wish for understanding, for empathizing with whatever motivated you to keep having babies, eleven babies, my brothers and sisters, when you didn't seem to want them once they became physical realities struggling from your womb. Was the alcohol damaging your ability to realize? What I wouldn't give to live inside your memories for just one brief moment. Seconds of knowing, of feeling an answer, could melt all the pain and confusion, all the irrational feelings of worthlessness solidified around my gut. My head and my heart, my intellect and emotions, have been at war for as long as I can recall. I am supposed to understand the illness consuming you, the illness you consumed. I should not take your actions as a statement about me, but rather realize what you did was a statement about you. My rationality grasps these concepts, like a drowning woman grips a life preserver or an outstretched hand. I try planting seeds of sympathy, but the earth spits them back, indignant I would try to grow understanding.

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Regina. The sole reason I exist today. Without Regina I could not leave my mark on this earth, whatever it may be. Her body housed my growth. Nurtured me, no matter how unintentional, into existence. From May until February, Regina's body fed me, kept me warm and protected me from harm. And then the time came when Regina's body had enough, pushing me out to face my existence. Regina could have abandoned me right from the start, long before her belly began to swell with my kicking legs and fisting hands. I wish I could love her for allowing my life. I wish I could hate her for not following through with what she started. The indifference Regina and I feel for one another is what I hate. Acidic sadness for what will never be shared between Regina and me and my brothers and sisters; a common, everyday, family history. We all attempt to ignore our desires for Regina's care and nurturing; our craving to be valued by the woman who gave us life.

A child's dream. I could never admit before how much I yearned for Regina's embrace the first time we met. I secretly prayed for her to walk into my living room and wrap her arms around me, tight, like she would never let me go ever again. I wanted her to tell me about all the February 19th's she spent thinking about me, wondering, and worrying if I was okay. I hoped more than anything Regina would tell me what a mistake she'd made giving me away, that

the rest of her life had lost some of its meaning without me at her side as her daughter. Longingly, I waited for Regina's promise that now we had found each other, things would be different, we, a mother and a daughter, could make up for lost time. A child's dream.

* * * *

Regina is on her third heart attack in two years. Six months earlier her left leg was eaten away by gangrene, fueled by diabetes, irritated by alcoholism. Regina's boyfriend waited for her in the lobby of their apartment building, staggering impatiently back and forth between the elevators and the front doors. When the taxi finally arrived, Regina's boyfriend couldn't find the fare Regina instructed him to bring when she called from her hospital room. He bummed the money from the guy in apartment 114. Trying to be gallant and strong, this boyfriend offers his arm to help balance Regina into the lobby. But his drunkenness pulls them both to the ground. Regina hits the pavement hard. The boyfriend can barely raise himself and must forfeit assisting Regina. Tears roll into Regina's ears, tickling, wet puddles form an itch she can't be bothered reaching for. Distorted and unfocused when seen through drops of salt water vision, clouds billowing into cotton candy shapes float over and into Regina's sight. Grinding her teeth at every passer-by, praying to god for the will to shut down her tears, Regina lays frozen by embarrassment and pain.

* * * *

Regina's first introduction to tragedy came when she was nine years old, the day she heard her father died. Some say his death was accidental, that he drank from the barrel containing poison believing it was water. Yet others say it was suicide, that he had had enough of life on this earth. But to a nine-year-old child who worshipped her father, those were minor details. All that mattered was that her father had been wiped from her life; his smile, his affection for her, gone forever.

Regina's mother remarried and her children became some man's stepchildren. Regina, more than her brothers and sisters resented her stepfather's intrusion, wishing he would go away and her own father would return.

When Regina was 23 she gave birth to the first of her children, David. Unmarried and alone, having a baby "out of wedlock" in the early 1950s was punishable by forced solitude and ridicule. Regina chose to leave her son in the care of her mother and stepfather in hopes of getting on her feet. Shortly after moving to Toronto, Regina met Frank Davis and they were married. Six children later, living in poverty, and dealing with abuse and alcoholism, Regina still had not returned to Saskatchewan to reclaim her first born from her mother. David grew up believing Regina was his sister.

Regina gave away the six children born to her and Frank Davis and left him and the chaos that was their life together. Regina took the alcoholism with her. She met three more indifferent men and had four more children which she also eventually gave away.

But we all came back, nine daughters and two sons. Some of us wanted Regina to pick up where she'd left off, to play mommy, and soothe away the boogieman hiding under our lives. Some wanted Regina to be a friend, to have over for tea and some easy conversation. Others wanted the essentials, wanted Regina to fill in the missing gaps of family history. But, secretly, we all wanted Regina to love us, to love us before we loved her this time. We all wanted an apology, words of regret. We were little children beneath our adult surfaces, making demands and living with secret, unrealistic expectations. And like so many years earlier, we overwhelmed Regina. She could not meet each of our individual needs; she still didn't have the tools. But she never pushed us away when we made those first steps toward her. If we called just wanting to chat or find out some new details that had just crossed our minds, Regina always made herself available. Sometimes the chats were incoherent and slurred by Regina's drunken demeanor. Sometimes she'd cry and talk about regrets. But mostly Regina kept us a safe, arm's distance away because, I believe, bringing us any closer would open up all the old wounds and probably kill her. Regina heard and recognized the need in our voices and realizing she could not fulfill that need must have been like reliving the past over and over, like realizing the first time she could not answer the need in our baby cries. Inside I felt abandoned all over again. And again. And again. I would never have the mother-daughter relationship with Regina, with my first mother, that I so desperately needed.

And today those words, that realization, has been solidified without any hope of changing because I find out Regina is dead. Regina Bengert-Davis-Minchinton died on November 6, 1996. None of us, not one of Regina's eleven children knew that she had been in hospital for three months and then, holding the hand of her estranged, second husband, Butch, died at 3:30 a.m. I suppose everyone thought we didn't care that our mother, the woman who gave us life, died.

Some of us have cried hard, bitter tears. Some of us seem indifferent. And some of us still don't know. But Regina's ending is not our ending. Our finishing touches were grabbed from us by a system leaking with poverty, by alcoholism, by uncaring men who knew and cared so little for Regina, when asked at the end if she had any children, they said, "No," and then sold off what ever worldly goods Regina had left behind so they could buy a few more drafts.

Regina is buried in a mass grave on common ground in St. James Cemetery. Her friends had a candle light service in the tavern Regina thought of as her second home. And once again Regina's children were absent, transformed into a memory that Regina took to her grave.

* * * *

Pain and disappointment accumulate slowly, drop-by-drop, seeming harmless and bearable when measured incident-by-incident. But one day life is suddenly overflowing with pain, the overflowing pain is unmanageable, the spirit drowning and crying for a hand to reach out and pull it free from sinking

and dying. Desperate acts follow when no one answers the call for help. Self-preservation becomes the focus without regard for the rippling effects a life filled with pain inevitably has, passing the pain onto those nearest at hand, the pain transforming into dark, murky disappointment when received by those who are touched by the dying, frightened spirit.

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My adoptive mother

Hesitating at the foot of Ruby's bed, our eyes are locked and afraid to let go. Ruby's eyes are sucked deep, the cancer has left little supporting flesh around the sockets. She can barely speak because internal bleeding gurgles around her vocal cords. Not permitting the tubes to be inserted into her throat and nose, crusts of dried blood cover the inner edges of her lips instead. Hand with tubes placed into collapsed veins is taped to a board and hard to hold. The room starts spinning, with white and tubes and glints of silver taped to skin, entwined in one. Ruby's eyes fill with fear. I want to cry. Hold her close and take the journey with her, so she will get there safe and without any pain. But I don't know how, and the room won't stop and my stomach is turning to nausea. Ruby asks,

"Are you sorry? Are you *sorry*?"

"Yes, ma ... I'm sorry. Really. Sorry."

Three hours after I left the hospital, Ruby died. Died alone. My imagined vision of Ruby's heavy eye lids, closing one last time, no one there to see she feels alone and afraid, still nips and pinches at the heels of my conscience.

I stayed in my apartment, as far away from everyone as I could. I imagined Ruby looming around me, watching me every second of the day, like she would have, if it hadn't been impossible, when she was alive. For months after I couldn't have sex because I'd feel like Ruby was looking down at me from the ceiling. I didn't get over feeling her presence until I allowed her voice to move into my head.

The entrance from the parking lot into the funeral home resounded with aged neglect. Claustraphobically low, the ceiling was lined with fat, sweating pipes, their once-upon-a-time, white paint peeling age-old yellow from cigarette smoke and rust.

Finding a seat in the front pew I became transfixed on the dead Ruby in her casket, directly in front of me. Clusters of chattering people were scattered intermittently around the room like fallen confetti. I could sense their whispers crawling up my back, feel their pointing fingers in my neck muscles.

"Why hasn't she cried yet? It's not natural for a daughter to react this way."

Choking back tears, fighting to feel peace and hate without guilt, because loving her hurt too much. "It wasn't her fault," *they* tell me, "she had no control." *They* tell me I do. But nobody seems to care Ruby won't have a headstone, or some flowers now and then, to mark her life filled with pain that was passed along to those she loved. Harlen takes Ruby's ashes home and puts them in her

hope chest, stored in his garage amidst planks, hubcaps, and rebuilt motors.

Eventually I ask around, wonder if Ruby ever told anyone in the family what having a daughter represented. Nobody seems to know. A cynical voice in my head tells me Ruby wanted a daughter, much the same way a little girl wants her first doll. She sees other girls playing with dolls. Looks on with envy, wanting a doll of her own to dress up in those pretty, frilly outfits she sees at Woolworth's. She wants the doll with curly hair, so she can spend hours combing and adorning it with ribbons and poodle shaped barrettes.

In the photos taken of me when I was very young, young enough I couldn't protest, I am always wearing dresses trimmed with lace and ribbon, the skirt lifted high and stiff by the underlying crinoline. My hair manipulated into ringlets with sections tied back from my face, with satin bows. But dolls eventually get worn out from being played with so much. And little girls grow up, sometimes wanting to play in the dirt or explore the bushes to collect ladybugs in an emptied peanut butter jar. Ribbons, satin and lace are exchanged for tee-shirts and overalls.

Ruby bought large dolls with fake, curly hair and staring, glass eyes. She removed the clothes they were purchased in and re-dressed their plastic, unmoving bodies in my out grown frills and lace, the dresses I could no longer wear. These dolls were placed, every morning, on my freshly made bed and served as reminders of what I once was. A part of me felt sure if I'd stayed small, small enough to be fussed over without protest, small enough to fit into those frilly dresses instead of growing up, Ruby would have loved me better.

* * * *

Dear Ruby;

One day's worth of volunteer work at Women's Own Detox was all it took. Standing stunned and silent amidst the bed filled darkness of In-Take I feel certain I can smell your housecoat hanging at the foot of one of those beds. All of those beds. I'm not afraid, like I thought I would be during the streetcar ride down Dundas street. Why should I be afraid? This is familiar. I remember addiction's nuances. Dusting off my memories of your heavy eye lids, your rubbery body, the bones dissolved by valium and sleeping pills. I remembered your sleep filled with moans and incoherent words, you never really resting but unable to stay awake. I stand surrounded by bed after bed of you, Ruby, like you have exploded and scattered yourself all over Women's Own Detox.

What isn't familiar is the absence of my anger. I prepared myself for the necessity of counter-balancing, of compensating for the rock of anger living in the pit of my stomach since I was little. As I listen to the in-take worker's voice explaining the plight of addiction, the strength these women, women like you Ruby, are made of, surviving the details of their lives, I sense compassion and caring. I feel her realization that the women trying to find rest around us, have been thrown to the ground and stepped on. And rather than lay there dying, these women get back up and attempt survival one more time. Perhaps the

survival was drug induced or fueled by alcohol, but we all use whatever creative means are within our reach.

For the first time in my life I don't feel compelled to counter someone else's compassion with, "Yes, but what about...?" Instead I can see your baby being taken from your arms when you are only fifteen years old. I see you standing at the foot of his bed, some twenty-six years later, hoping he can hear your admission to motherhood, before death grabs him. I see your tears as you tired from raising your other four sons without enough food or milk. Cucumber sandwiches, I remember you telling me, were what you and your children survived on during the depression. And then another son died. And another. But you were strong, Ruby. I can see that now. Though you had steak in the fridge you courageously didn't stay married, to the husband who beat you and drank himself to death. Your self-respect did show itself from time-to-time, maybe more often than I am capable of admitting just yet.

Dear Ruby, I hope your spirit hears this and that you will be allowed to rest once and for all, because you deserve some peace now that your struggle here is over. Thank you for teaching me how to survive a life filled with confusion; for showing me bravery in a time when it was considered un-feminine. The addiction wasn't entirely your fault. A strong-willed woman, Ruby, you must have scared those doctors to death. You didn't fit their text book definitions of womanhood. So, they decided to carve you into submission. They ordered you to stay at home, give up your job, when your nerves became frayed then they sedated your work ethic. They created your dependency with a few careless strokes of a pen on welfare applications and Ontario Housing recommendations. When those efforts failed, they hospitalized you and utilized their strongest weapon of all. Torturing your brain, your inner being with electro-shock, the doctors told you it would make everything all better. No one thought to ask in those days, better for who? The truest testament to their near success was me, at 15 years of age, being handed my first prescription for sleeping pills. Followed by my struggle with valium at twenty-one.

But Ruby, we fooled them. I eventually discovered other resources to help me put the pieces back together. I'm only sad Ruby, that you won't be here to witness it. But I will bear witness through your eyes. When people ask me where I've found the strength to go on, instead of shrugging my shoulders I say you are my example.

Renee Norman

Homeschooling

November, 1992.

Standing at the top of the snow-covered hill at the school, our circular sleigh in hand, we have just kissed Rebecca and dropped her off at the schoolroom door. Sara and Erin are both standing by my side, beside the other mothers with their toddlers. Sara wants to slide down the hill with the other young children, and I let her. Erin is too afraid of the hurtling speed, and remains with me, clinging to my coat.

"Why isn't Sara in school?" a mother asks, interest in her voice.

Dead silence. All the other mothers stop what they are doing, freeze-frame, watching me, waiting for me to speak, while the children laugh and slide in the background.

"Because I am homeschooling her," I reply simply. Tight. Taut. Tart.

(Because she hates school, I want to say. Very vulgar. Vogue. Vague.)

Shocked silence. Moms all listening, then, "were you not happy?" asks this mother, not insensitively either.

"Sara wasn't happy," I reply honestly. Polite. Proper. Ponderous. Pilfwater.

(No, I wasn't happy, I want to say. We cried. Both of us. When Sara began to cry and ran after me when it was time to kiss her goodbye at the classroom door, and this went on for weeks on end, I cried too, I want to say.)

"Oh," comments the mother who asked. "Let's go," say the others to their children, "we've got things to do." Everyone disperses except Sara and Erin and I who are left standing at the top of the snow-covered hill. Alone with our circular sleigh, and Sara slides down the hill some more, as Erin pleads with us to go ...

In 1992 I pulled my daughter out of a competitive classroom where I watched her struggle to tie her laces fast enough to please a demanding and impatient teacher. An educator myself, I ached. I watched my daughter turn

into a clingy, tearful child who could not seem to cross the threshold of the classroom door.

I homeschooled my daughter Sara for a year until a new school planned for our neighbourhood was eventually built. It was a good year, a time of healing and renewal. Sara thrived in the comfort of home learning which was specially tailored to her dreamy, creative spirit. Then Sara willingly re-entered the school system once again, a fresh start. Although she had benefitted enormously from the year at my side, she needed others, too. I felt I needed more solitude and some time for myself. I had returned to university; I was writing. I did not feel I had the time or energy to homeschool any of my three daughters.

Research attests to the academic and social benefits of homeschooling, a social movement growing in scope and popularity. Homeschooling is legal in Canada, with an estimated 50,000 homeschoolers, according to the Canadian Alliance of Homeschoolers (not all register). Each province has different regulations: Saskatchewan requests a philosophy of education and curriculum plan; Alberta evaluates progress with provincial achievement tests; B.C. has the most open policy, in place since 1989, requiring only registration. In 1983, Vancouver newspapers featured an unemployed Christian pipelayer who was being charged with neglect for homeschooling his children in a motel room!

The homeschooling phenomenon is mainly one of choice, not necessity; of deliberation, not impulse. The decision to homeschool seems to stem from several sources. It may be a lifestyle choice that offers an alternative to the more regimented and less creative side of public schooling. Or parents may wish to homeschool in order to protect cherished and traditional family values and religious doctrine which they see undermined in the regular school system. Some parents homeschool children who simply do not fit the mold of public schooling, having physical, mental or emotional challenges. Or some parents, like me, choose to homeschool because, for one reason or another, they are dissatisfied with their local school or their children are unhappy there.

Homeschooling developed out of the educational reforms of the '60s and '70s, giving rise to a philosophy of unschooling (or deschooling): education based on the natural interests of children learning from all aspects of their lives. The late John Holt, a pioneer of the homeschooling movement, believed compulsory schooling hurts children.

"You have reached the 24-hour information line of the Homeschoolers' Association of Greater Vancouver," begins the taped message: lists of events and activities for children and families, announcements regarding network group meetings, a request for help by a single mother homeschooling her sons. Inserted oh-so-gently are reassurances the get-togethers are informal and non-religious in nature.

Events such as the annual Not-Going-Back-to-School Picnic in September draw hundreds of homeschoolers. With a name that thumbs its nose at the yearly commercial back-to-school drive (and the anticipation and relief felt by

many parents), the picnic brings children of many ages and backgrounds together for a social event that promotes a different sense of community than that engendered in the schools.

But there is a faction of families within the homeschoolers' network who have chosen to homeschool in structured and disciplined ways in reaction to what they see as the moral breakdown of a postmodern society. The homeschooling movement is composed of two main factions, the (religious) Idealogues and the (humanist) Pedagogues.

The Moores, a Christian couple in the United States who have been promoting homeschooling since the '70s, espouse child-centred learning but also suggest that children avoid fantasy, fairy tale, and myth. They believe that learning is best accomplished in the home, mainly by the mother. "There is no reason here to get into a feminist flap," they write in *Homeschool Burnout* (1988) but the message seems clear. Much of the overall literature on homeschooling openly admits that it is mainly mothers who homeschool, but adds (politically and correctly) that fathers are important, too.

But even the most traditional and fundamentalist of family values in homeschooling incorporates lots of individual attention related to children's interests and experience and the opportunity to adjust resources, curriculum, and methods as needed. No matter how regimented learning might be in the home, could it compare with schools where children line up to move from room to room, must get permission to go to the bathroom and eat at prescribed times of the day?

Reading through a few issues of *Quest*, the "Canadian Home Educators' Digest," I find a description of one homeschooled day that would make the military cringe! I also find an ad for a book promoting that " ... it has been ordained by God that the man rule his family and that the woman order and keep the home." Does this sound familiar, like right out of the Promise-keepers Movement? Award-winning novelist David Guterson, author of *Family Matters: Why Homeschooling Makes Sense* (1993), admits that homeschooling can be a social danger if it narrows children's experience "for political, social, or religious purposes." He claims homeschooling is no more sexist than anything else in a marriage but refers to the women's movement as something that has changed America thoroughly. His description of a mother who can hardly wait to get her children off to school so she can parasail puts me in a feminist flap!

When I'm out parasailing to the school where I teach once a week, I reflect that ironically, some of the benefits touted by homeschoolers are what many educators have been insisting upon for years. However, these measures are difficult and expensive to accomplish.

But what about the social part of schooling? It's not just that kids need other kids and adults for interaction—many homeschoolers seem to be doing a fine job of arranging opportunities for that. What about the pluralistic society we live in? Schools perform a social and community function by bringing diverse groups of children together and educating them in humanistic ways.

Are homeschoolers selling out on society? on the important reformative aspects of schooling?

There is no doubt that homeschooling is changing our image of education and is a force to be reckoned with in the future. I know firsthand the benefits of homeschooling and the incredible demands it places on women. But if I didn't somehow believe that schools could potentially be safe, happy places where children learn and grow, I wouldn't still be teaching. Perhaps the best use of all our time, energy, and resources calls for new concepts of how we can teach children in both the home and the school.

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Beth Ann Bryant-Richards

Pulling the Tangles Out

When I'm not good enough
as a mother,
I think of my own Mama
pulling the tangles out
of my straight brown hair
with the pink plastic
stiff-bristled brush,
parting with a rat-tail comb,
coaxing my front cowlick into bangs,
sweeping my shoulder-length hair
up in a pony tail,
spraying the wisps, then
smoothing them down
with the palms of her hands,
moving aside the pony tail
to kiss my nape.

How many hours did she spend
bent over me in the bathroom?
Now I pray to her:
Send me your spirit.
I need your patience
for my little man,
his blue denim hat just
pulled down sharp
over his straight brown hair.

Christine Peets

Every Mother is a Working Mother

As feminists, we all need to believe that "every mother is a working mother" especially if we expect the same from the rest of the world. Yet we accept, and sometimes use, the term "working mother" to differentiate from those mothers who are "working" at home.

When I learned about the conference "Mothers and Sons: Challenges and Possibilities" (held at York University in September 1998), it was heartening to know that the academic world took the subject of mothering seriously enough to sponsor an entire weekend to study this topic. Yet, I was disappointed to hear the term "working mother" used in a number of different sessions and discover there is little feminist support for women who have chosen to be their children's primary caregiver for some period of time.

In one of the presentations at the conference, one of the speakers found there is still "feminist resistance to achieving a new 'feminist' mode of mothering." She was primarily referring to the fact that we may not give our sons the same freedoms in their actions and behaviour as we give our daughters. She went on to say that if we adopt the feminist "mantra" of "the personal is political and the political is personal," then we have to realize that this statement affects and influences everything we say and do. She noted that challenges and contradictions are to be expected in certain segments of society, but that it was frustrating to note that the feminist community is not totally supportive of other women's choices. This refers to their parenting style, and I might add, their child care choices, including the choice to raise their children at home.

I suppose we have become so used to the term "working mother" that we say it without thinking and we do not see how it devalues women who have chosen to stay at home, working, with children.

Women working against each other, or appearing to work against each

other, has long been a dilemma for feminists. At heart, we no doubt support each other's choices. We support each other to ensure our reproductive freedoms, health choices, and educational, political, and business opportunities. Yet when it comes to child care choices, we are pitted against each other: the "working mom" vs. the "stay-at-home mom." This has been perpetuated in the popular media, but it is also still debated in the feminist community.

When we speak to young women, we talk of career choices, but do we include the career of "mother"? Do we give it value? We need to be very clear on one idea: *every mother is a working mother*!

We need to start referring to women with children as mothers who work in the home, or as mothers who work outside of the home, but who are still "full-time moms." They just have a paid job in addition to their unpaid work of mothering.

For many women, continuing with a paid job not only pays the bills, but also gives them a sense of satisfaction in pursuing goals they may have set for themselves which they may not be able to do if they stay at home. I respect their choices, and, in turn, they should respect mine, as well as those of all the other mothers who choose to raise their children at home.

Staying home with children comes at a cost, apart from the obvious one of not having a salary. Parents, mostly mothers, working at home are not able to contribute to any type of pension plan, including an RRSP. Although, the "working" spouse / partner can contribute to an RRSP on their behalf, there are more limits to this type of contribution. This is detrimental to women, as they will not be eligible for as full a pension as they deserve. They are not allowed to claim any child care deductions for any period of time as a child's primary caregiver, which usually amounts to several years. So they get hit twice: once by not being able to reduce taxable income, therefore paying more tax, and second, by not having pensionable earnings for several years.

Being at home can also wear at one's self-esteem, especially when women really start believing that they don't "do" anything. It is particularly difficult when this attitude comes from other women, and devastating when it comes from feminists—the one group whom you should be able to count on to support the choices of all women. Isn't that the essence of feminism: to strive towards political, economic, and social equality? That social and economic equality has to include all mothers, at home, and in the paid work force. Many women who are at home with their children also do some type of paid work, yet it is only the paid work that is given value by society.

As much as I don't like the term "working mother," I'll use it—for now. I tell people I am a working mother at home, supporting my husband and kids who support me in my paid work. My business card says:"mother-writer-editor-researcher" to show that I give as much value to my "motherwork" as I do to my other work.

We have been socialized to value a woman's role as mother and homemaker as secondary to any paid work outside of the home that she may choose

to pursue. I am not suggesting that we encourage women to stay home with her children. It's every one's right to choose that option, however, if that is what she wants. It's up to the rest of us to respect and value a woman's work at home, if that is where she chooses to be. One woman at a time, we can change the world, because every woman is a working woman, and every mother is a working mother.

Robin Etheridge

It's Raining Again

It's raining again and it's cold. I can't remember the last time the sky was actually up in the air where it's supposed to be.

I lay on my bed, tired, and mildly depressed, thinking about the day, while my three-year-old son chatters tirelessly beside me. The day has been nothing unusual. In fact, most days of late have been so similar that I can't remember if anything different has ever happened or if it's always been this way.

I'm a single parent of one, working part-time and living off the support my husband pays me each month. I'm also an English teacher at a language school for refugee and immigrant women. This quarter most of my students are from the Ukraine. Raisa brought papers today for me to look at. She was worried about them and couldn't find anyone to translate them. Raisa has seven children, all under the age of ten. She usually asks her ten-year-old son to help her make sense of her new foreign world but this time he couldn't understand either. The papers were from the child support office. Her husband abandoned the family about two years ago and welfare is trying to get him to pay the back support he owes. She brought her child, Serge, so that he could translate my words of explanation to her. I looked at his sweet little-boy face as I tried to explain about his father being very late paying for his support. I don't know how much he understands about what has happened with his family since coming to the United States. I don't understand much myself. I know his father lives in another town and hasn't seen his kids since he left to live with another woman. From the looks of the child support papers, he is only paying about 300 dollars a month for his seven children. Loud weeping wells up inside of me.

Raisa recently asked the Minister of her church for help to feed and care for her children. He told her to pray. She tells me that here she is much better than in the Ukraine.

Jeanette Bushnell

Tribal Mothering as Portrayed in Paula Gunn Allen's *Spider Woman's Granddaughters*

> As the story unfolds, it becomes a part of their present. As you imagine and visualize in the mind's eye, how could you not become a part of it and it a part of you? There is no separation. The story and the words contain the epistemological webbing. (Kawagley, 1998: 3)

The challenge undertaken in this paper is to tease out elements of motherhood from within the matrix of Native American culture. Adding difficulty to this task is that the culture is ever changing, not static. Paula Gunn Allen has, by collecting such a variety of stories, exposed the fluid and circular nature of women's roles in tribal culture and challenged the reader to search for commonalties that belie the traditional.

Native stories fulfill the roles of history, literature, education, entertainment, and art. They are not readily comparable to western[1] fiction or non-fiction essays. They differ in structure, language, and culture. The stories don't have building conflict or an individual protagonist; their coherence is from a common understanding. Where western writers write as individuals, making up their creative ideas which have a coherence of place, person and time, Native writers write from a collective tribal unconsciousness (Gunn Allen, 1989: 5).

Language limits understanding of Native stories. Linguists teach that a language embodies the culture it belongs to. Philosophers caution that the oral and written words are potentially misleading representations of reality. Assumptions and orientation are built into the vocabulary and structure.

The word "warrior," for example, within most Native traditions connotes a person, woman or man, living an honourable and correct life as opposed to the English meaning of soldier or fighting man. One of my Quileyute mentors often lamented her inability to explain to me knowledge about reality, as she

understood it, because she could not make English words create Native ideas. Gunn Allen states that "certain ideas and concepts that are implicit in the structure of an Indian language are not possible in English" (1986: 225).

Ursula Le Guin (1989) also speaks to the deficiencies of English when reading Native stories. "Reading an oral piece translated from its original language to English, and from voice to print, is like reading a musical score: you have to know a lot before you can hear what's happening" (2). This is particularly pertinent in "Oshkikwe's Baby." Delia Oshogay (1989) moves comfortably amongst ideas that to the Western reader represent the different realms of physical, spiritual and temporal reality. Details of the story, such as travel through a small hole in the ground, are more meaningful with knowledge of Anishinabe culture and world views.

Traditional values addressed in the book, *Spider Woman's Granddaughters: Traditional Tales and Contemporary Writing by Native American Women* are harmony, connectedness, community, balance, relationships, and dignity. Traditional systems focus on social responsibility rather than privilege, and social control is achieved with an absence of punitiveness. Joking and embarrassment is used to change a person's behaviors. Harmony and balance are to be striven for within all aspects of life and mothers are to maintain harmony around them and their children. A critical task of life, of which parents are expected to teach their children, is to know oneself (Kawagley, 1998).

Connectedness, community, family. relationships

How was I to know the depth of my traditional beliefs? Mother, though raised within reservation culture, had moved far away from that life—physically, emotionally, culturally—long before I was born. My childhood was small-town U.S.A with no talk of our Native heritage. Mother had worked hard to achieve a separation from her own childhood which was darkened with prejudice and limited opportunities. She wanted better for her children.

Two years ago, my husband was asked to take an administrative position in Alaska. Although we had often talked of going to the wild northern state, the discussions had diminished as the children were born and grew. We settled in a small community just north of Seattle, within an hour's drive of my parents and all my siblings' homes. My only complaint had been the urban lifestyle; my dream was to move back to a small town or rural area. Alaska fit the bill and so we began planning the move.

Rare have been my forays away from my family. A short year in New York City for college when I was just out of high school was all unless you count my parents' three-year move to Virginia when I was thirty. The New York experience was overwhelming but somewhat expected for an eighteen-year-old small-town girl. I didn't share my distress when my parents left. After all, I was grown and married and had children of my own. Periodically it would wash over me as an intense sadness. I was just there, not grounded, attached to nothing.

In Alaska I live with my husband and youngest daughter. At home are two

daughters, parents, four brothers and a sister, aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces, and nephews enough to fill a trilogy of novels. I work at a fulfilling job and I take classes from stimulating teachers but my life rings hollow like footfalls in an empty hall.

Paula Gunn Allen

The stories in *Spider Woman's Granddaughters* come from a variety of traditions, time periods, and personal experiences. Their commonalties are that they are women's war stories or women warrior stories (Gunn Allen, 1989: 21). They speak of women in battle and women living the life of warriors and contained within them are many truths about Native traditions. They also tell us about the writers and their experiences, for as Joseph Campbell (1972) says, stories are living entities which change with each telling. A story tells as much about its speaker as it does its message. Campbell makes this point by comparing various bible stories and how they have changed over time. The genesis story written in the ninth-century BCE claims that God made man and woman together after animals, whereas the second-century AD genesis story has men being created before animals, and woman coming later from man's rib. Although, for the most part, this is the same story, there is a clear change in focus regarding the relationship between women and men (1972: 7).

The reader should keep this in mind when reading the seemingly traditional stories, such as Ella Cara Deloria's, "Blue Bird's Offering" (1989). Although the story includes many elements of Sioux life, it reads like a genre romance. Gunn Allen warns that westernization of the oral tradition pollutes from a patriarchal bias that discounts, degrades, or conceals gynocratic features or recontextualizes these features so they will appear patriarchal (1986: 4). The last stories in the *Spider Woman's Granddaughters* are current and utilize modern settings but incorporate traditional beliefs and structure. They leave the reader with a haunting image of the life-ways of Native peoples.

Traditional Native American culture, values, and beliefs can be easily delineated but to understand the profoundly different worldview is nearly impossible. Native tribal people share a different consciousness than Europeans. Imagine a Native American—European culture continuum. Those of the dominant culture envision this continuum as a line with their culture on one end. Now imagine that you are standing on this line and turn around, away from the dominant culture end. As you come around you find yourself not facing the other end of the line, but within a circle. This circle is tribal culture. Within it are future and past, physical reality and spiritual reality, the individual and all humans, animals, plants, rocks, planets, stars, ad infinitum. Everything within the circle is connected with something English has no words to describe. Louise Erdrich (1989) speaks about this as a "web" in her story "American Horse":

> She took a quick shallow breath and her face went strange and tight.
> She saw the black veins in the wings of the butterfly, roads burnt into

> a map, and then she was located somewhere in the net of veins and sinew that was the tragic complexity of the world so she did not see Officer Brackett and Vicki Koob rushing toward her, but felt them instead like flies caught in the same web, rocking it (59).

All children are valued and bonded with their entire communities. As a corollary to this, all people are valued as equals and seen to complement one another. Women are central to the tribe and share responsibilities equally with the men. Tribal lifestyles are often gynocratic and never patriarchal. Women and men have different roles but both are essential to the well-being of the tribe. And, openly recognized is that women don't have much knowledge of men's roles, nor men of women's roles. Expected behaviors are based on realities of the human condition. Children are accepted for what they are—still making mistakes, still learning. Adults anticipate "childishness" and accomodate it. People are not compelled to conform to a social fiction (Gunn Allen, 1986; Kawagley, 1989).

Communal parenting, dignity, empowerment

One-and-a-half years ago, two of our three daughters moved to Alaska with my husband and I. Violet, then twenty and a sophomore in college, felt comfortable staying behind to continue her studies. She got an apartment with friends but her favorite uncle was just a few miles away to handle emergencies and be available. She went to family gatherings for birthdays and small holidays while we would only hear about them long distance. Decisions about summer jobs, classes, and how to fix the car were dealt with by my brothers, sister, and parents. And I would get a phone call.

In Alaska all was new. Without their lifelong friends, the girls started riding lessons, flute lessons and after school activities—things they hadn't done much at home. We became two full-time working parents juggling jobs, carpools, and home chores. In lieu of family get-togethers we spent weekends traveling around the state. It was fun.

Julia lasted one year, then said she was going home to finish high school with her buddies. She didn't ask, just let us know her plans. It sounded good to me and I was more than ready to move back home, but Kale then twelve, asserted herself and refused to go back "just because Julia wants to." My husband was enjoying this new lifestyle and had no intention of returning.

I still had the option—return home to my family and be with my two oldest daughters or stay in Alaska to mother the youngest who, if I left would have only her father and he worked long hours and was frequently out of town. The choice was there but...

I asked non-Native friends for advice but mostly got ultimatums and power positioning. "Just tell her she has to stay" (or go, depending on the girl in question). Or belittling, "I can't believe you'd let Julia and Violet live alone together. They don't even like each other." My family was supportive, offering

any help the girls might need and encouraging their move to independence and maturity. No one was without a strongly-felt opinion and when I was not completely oppressed by my pending decision, I enjoyed an intellectual appreciation of cultural values and beliefs at work.

Paula Gunn Allen

In Native culture parenting is a communal activity with mothers acknowledged as the primary caregivers. The ideal role models for children are decisive, self-directed females and nurturing, pacifist males (Gunn Allen, 1986: 2). We see these role models portrayed in a number of the stories in *Spider Woman's Granddaughters* as well as in Mourning Dove's, *Coyote Stories* (1990). Parenting is accomplished through active role modeling and storytelling. Stories teach the young how to live as well as teach the adults how to parent. Teaching what to model and how to parent is a strong theme ranging from the very traditional in Delia Oshogay's, "Oshkikwe's Baby" (1989) to very current in Vicki Sears' story, "Grace."

Parenting is learned and many of the elder generation of Native parents learned their roles not from traditional family but by others—boarding school teachers, Christian missionaries, tuberculosis sanitarium nurses and doctors, government agents, non-Native foster parents. These elders saw models of abuse, neglect, terrorization, genocide, starvation, and humiliation (Gunn Allen, 1986). Native tradition teaches that it takes seven generations to move beyond an event and this is very evident in parenting. Pieces of tradition endure along with elements of the colonizing culture and elements of pure dysfunction. Today's Native parents struggle with the conflicting messages.

(Im)balance, (dis)harmony, mother, daughter, sister, wife, teacher, learner

"Well, Fuck You!" Violet sneered into the phone. "Thanks a fucking lot! Good-bye!"

My part of the conversation was easy; few words were expected after I said a rare, "No" to her request for her 32-year-old friend to use my phone card. She was obviously distraught when she called and rebuffed my efforts to explore solutions to her latest earth-shattering problem. Violet doesn't do mellow.

I am already unsettled. Two large tasks for which I have little experience await me at work. I must write a large final exam without the aid of an instructor's manual. Who would have thought writing tests would be as difficult as taking them? Plus I must give two presentations about our grant to a statewide audience at the Egan Center. Much as I convince myself that it will be no different than the lectures I give every week, nerves all over my body are firing randomly like little fire crackers.

I want to call my mother but dare not mention my daughter's appalling behavior. Dad would be supportive but he's most likely asleep by now. I share with my husband. He, too, feels like he's been hit. We stand at the stove

waiting for tea water to boil wondering, "What did we do wrong?" Knowing that such thoughts are a dead end, we try to make it positive and personal.

"Her anger always makes me feel so bad," my husband says.

"I wish I knew what was bothering her," I counter. "I wish she knew."

He has his nightly herbal tea and I my ice water and we both sleep badly.

Tuesday morning I'm very tired. My head feels like it is not well-attached to my leaden body as I shower and eat my toast. Somehow I make it to work a little early and begin that routine—turn on the desk lamp, light the scented candle, turn on the computer, start the tape of Yo Yo Ma playing Bach. Only one benign voice message from a student thanking me for something or other; many emails about Lushootseed, the Native language I am learning and one from Violet, sent this morning, all cheerful, like nothing had happened. I close my door and cry.

My brother has my name in our family Christmas gift exchange and I guiltily burden him with my wish list by email. All I want for Christmas is something to help me deal with my oldest daughter. He is like a second father to her and much more patient than I. He has been through it all with me. I know he will understand. All the same, I feel it is unfair. I send it.

> The encroachment of Western civilization in the Yupiaq world changed a people that did not seek changing. (Kawagley, 1998: 5)

[1]Throughout this paper several authors are quoted, each with their own terminology of cultures and groups of people. Native American, tribal native and traditional all refer to the culture of the people indigenous to North America. Western, European and dominant describe the culture and heritage of the colonizing peoples.

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Kara Lynn Braun

Free to Be ... You and Me
Considering the Impact of Feminist Influences in Children's Literature from the 1970s

What are Little Boys Made of?
What are little boys made of, *made of*?
What are little boys made of?
Love and care
And skin and hair
That's what little boys are made of.
What are little girls made of, *made of*?
What are little girls made of?
Care and love
And (see above)
That's what little girls are made of.
—Elaine Laron

The beauty of Elaine Laron's (1974a) poem lies in it's simplicity and it, without doubt, reflects the world we wish for our children. However I would suggest that it is perhaps too simple and that if we really want a world where boys and girls can be equal and I think they deserve nothing less—they should be told that the world and particularly our culture as it stands today is not equally accommodating for boys and girls, women and men, just as it was not in 1974. Children have an innate sense of justice and thrive on knowing the truth and we must honour that sense of truth in the stories we give them.

Looking at this body of children's literature from the 1970s that was so obviously influenced by popular feminism, I see two problems. First, the way in which adult relationships are portrayed is not realistic. Conflict is seldom an issue and if it is, it's very neat. Secondly, women's roles as mothers are not accurately reflected. We have books about moms who work but seldom stories

that speak to the reality of juggling work, relationships and children. I'm a mother, I'm a student, I'm "married," my partner runs a business—I consider my life pretty dynamic—that's on a good day—on bad days I think it's just crazy and the only thing I can remember from my childhood that might have suggested what was to come is that "Calgon" bath commercial where the woman says, "*take me away.*"

Free to Be.... You and Me (1974), the book in which Laron's poem was published, represented a movement whose time had come. The work of early "popular" feminists such as Gloria Steinem was being heard—"men and women are equal" was the message. And what better way to ensure a future of equality than to tell young girls and boys that they could be anything they wanted, as long as they worked together, and respected each other. (Assuming all other things are equal was the part they left out.) In reality we know just how gender-constrained the world remains.

To be fair, the '70s did see a mass of books that dealt with "reality"—books about divorce, disability, families of mixed race, etc. These books are all shelved in what is called the "issue" section at any children's library and I have been told that kids don't go near them. Parents do because they make them feel good. But kids want adventure and fantasy—the books I'm asking for must be full of these things but they can also reflect reality in a way that is very telling and in a way that honours children as people who have a pretty good idea of how things work.

Published in 1974 as a Ms. Foundation Project, *Free to Be.... You and Me* was developed and edited by Carol Hart, Letty Cottin Pogrebin, Mary Rodgers, and Marlo Thomas. Thomas explains in her introduction that she found herself unable to find inspiring books for her young niece. She writes, "I wanted a book for Dionne, a special book, a party of a book, to celebrate who she was and who she could be, all the possibilities and all the possible Dionnes." And so *Free to Be.... You and Me* was conceived. Popular writers such as Carl Reiner, Shel Silverstein, Carol Hall, Judy Blume, and Anne Roiphe contributed with titles such as "Parents are People," "It's all Right to Cry," and "Glad to Have a Friend like You."

The Sun and the Moon

The Sun is filled with shining light
It blazes far and wide
The Moon reflects the sunlight back
But has no light inside.
I think I'd rather be the Sun
That shines so bold and bright
Than be the Moon, that only glows
With someone else's light.
Elaine Laron (1974b)

It has taken me a long time to realize that you can't always be the sun. Sometimes you have to be the moon—and it's ok to be the moon. Is it possible that some of our preconceived notions about equality, messages that I clearly remember being part of my environment were not more than a little misleading? One should of course acknowledge the class and cultural limitations of *Free to Be....* The book would have been accessible to a particularly middle-class audience—an environment rich with reading material, pretty much free of violence and discrimination—I grew up in an environment in which I could easily soak up this stuff and very easily imagine a future of equality. I just wish there had been some sort of disclaimer that said I could not expect everyone to have read the book nor to have understood the message as I did and therefore should probably expect some resistance along the way.

I don't think we can underestimate the influence of children's literature especially in the hands of people whom we trust and admire. *Eloise* by Kay Thompson, was published in 1957 and is enjoying a recent revival of sorts. The main character, Eloise is the perfect example of a not-so-stereotypical little girl. I can't read this book without hearing my Nana's voice and I knew that she wished the two of us could be just like Eloise and her Nanny who lived at the Plaza Hotel in New York City, running up and down the halls and pestering the bellhops. Similarly, my uncle, someone who has always encouraged me to be independent—(he used to tell me to go play on the road)—gave me my own copy of *Free to Be.... You and Me.*

What kind of stories would I like to see? Stories that reflect the realities of this world, with characters that question those realities. The '70s were full of books about very independent, adventurous, bold, boisterous, spunky little girls who who could match any boy—in terms of strength and bravery. Some of these were pretty over the top. My daughter's favourite, from 1973 is called, *Benjamin and Tulip* by Rosemary Wells. The first line reads, "Every time Benjamin passed Tulip's house, she said, 'I'm gonna beat you up.'" Eventually Benjamin and Tulip learn to be friends of course.

As inspiring as these very un-stereotypical characters are it would be nice if once and a while, one of these very self assured young girls would run into somebody who says, no ... it doesn't matter how confident you are ... this is the way the world is ... and have the young girl take in the dynamics of the situation ... perhaps question why she is encountering such resistance ... and then come up with a way—perhaps with the help of friends or family, to work through the problem. We must also acknowledge the desperate need for thoughtful stories about young boys. Stories about kind, caring boys—eager to imagine a world that is different and that speak to what it means to be a boy in this culture. Stories that tell little boys how much we respect them as unique human beings, that we expect a great deal from them, and that we trust they will grow as thoughtful and caring people.

Mothers are present in many of the stories as supporting characters, offering advice or threatening punishment but seldom do the mothers in these

stories do anything else. Unless the story is specifically about mothers who work, and there are lots of books about all the "things" that mothers can be, they remain very stereotypical.

Parents Are People

Mommies are people.
People with children.
When mommies were little
They used to be girls,
Like some of you,
But then they grew.
And now mommies are women,
Women with children,
Busy with children
And things that they do.
There are a lot of things
A lot of mommies can do.
Some mommies are ranchers
Or poetry makers
Or doctors or teachers
Or cleaners or bakers.
Some mommies drive taxis
Or sing on TV.
Yes, mommies can be
Almost anything they want to be.
Carol Hall (1974)

Stories such as Hall's seldom look at how mothers combine their work as mothers with other interests. I had a mother who worked at a job she seemed to enjoy and I think I always assumed that I would want to do the same. But I also knew that my mother also did the majority of work in our home including the cooking and cleaning and was the parent most intimately concerned with our day to day activity. And I knew she was often tired and overwhelmed. I grew up expecting to share equal responsibility for a home and for children with a partner who would want the same thing for both of us. But low and behold, for whatever reasons, I am currently the primary care giver to our child and I seem to be doing more than my fair share of dishes.

Admittedly, I have chosen to stay at home. However I do consider the time I spend alone with our child as challenging and as valuable as my partner's work. I also expect for us to share child care equally when we have rare opportunities to parent together. But it does not seem to happen just because I expect it and there have been few successful models for us to turn to.

I wish that I could be the perfect role model but I cannot and so I think

about stories that we can offer our children—stories that we did not have. What about a story where the mother really wants to stay at home with her baby and has a partner who wants to work so that she can do that. But sometimes she feels that she is the only one making a point of remembering doctor's appointments and birthdays and writing to grandparents and so she figures out a way of asking for help without getting mad at her partner and she is able to help that person see that it isn't fair for her to have all that responsibility just because she is at home caring for their child. The same woman might decide that she really wants to work outside of the home and could ask her partner to help her make that a possibility.

Sarah Garland (1982) is a British writer and illustrator whose work accurately depicts what spending time with a child is like. Garland has a knack for identifying the "everyday" things like struggling to get children into car seats while balancing grocery carts and keeping an eye on dogs. Or collapsing on the kitchen floor with a cup of tea because a young child is demanding to be read to that very second. While her stories are exceedingly simple, the illustrations are incredibly comforting—and children love them. Of course there is no universal mothering experience and when I say that somebody's particular depiction of mothering speaks to me—it will not speak to everybody.

I would like to see more stories that speak to the dynamics of wanting to be with children but having other passions as well. I'd like to write a story about a woman who has a special talent for dreaming while she is with her children. While reading to her young children she projects herself into far away places and has great adventures. While playing with blocks she fantasises about her own building projects. The beautiful part of the story is when the woman is actually given the time at some point in the day to do these things, by somebody who obviously cherishes the work she does. Because being with children is work. Balancing careers and mothering and relationships is work. And I wish I'd grown up with stories that were respectful of this. Perhaps the realities of being an adult wouldn't have taken me so by surprise and taken me so long to realize that work is ok. Children aren't afraid of work. They just innately, do, they are driven to work—it is just us that calls it play.

I have a great deal of respect for the work that happened during this period and I certainly think we are further ahead then we would have been without it. The '70s were a unique time for children. There was lots of exciting work being done and there wasn't the extreme commercialism that we started to see in the '80s and that is so prevalent today. Likewise the '70s were a very special time for children's literature and it was a natural period for me to look at. These were the stories that I grew up with and because of that they have a great deal of meaning for me. They reeked of possibility and they were exciting. The Concise Oxford says, that to "excite" is to "rouse the feelings or emotions of [a person]." I think it's the perfect word to describe what happens in families.

To conclude, I am most intrigued by the stories not told in these stories. As daughters of this liberal feminism of the early '70s—we got a very clear

message but it was very idealistic and it made assumptions about the world as it was in 1974 and the world that we were going to grow into. I can't say whether my life would be any different if there had been more stories that accurately reflected what life is like—but when I look at the way parents and especially women are portrayed in children's books I think—come on, kids know what's going on—lets write stories that are real!

In this world, certain ideologies exist that make it very difficult for men and women to be equal. Yes, the stories, so thoughtfully given to us were non-sexist, but the world is not. I certainly grew up *wanting* to believe that I could be anything I wanted to be. But a young person's sense of self must be incredibly strong if it was going to go head to head with institutionalised sexism. Popular culture, for example, that perpetuates sexism through everything from comic books to video games, and a school system with a curriculum that has been proven gendered time after time. And most significantly, the home, where gendered stereotypes play themselves out like a worn record. What about all the other factors that will contribute to our personal happiness and self-esteem? It's very difficult for many young women to feel good about themselves and to like themselves when they are constantly faced with media messages that question who they are.

What these stories didn't tell us was how we might go about realising our expectations in the real world. The notion of having it all and being it all, and having to be all, has become very problematic for women. Assuming you will be treated as an equal does not guarantee that you will be. The fact that you have decided you will not do all the housework does not mean that the person you chose to share a house with will think the same way.

Housework

... Children,
when you have a house of your own
make sure, when there's housework to do,
that you don't have to do it alone.
Little boys, little girls,
when you're big husbands and wives,
if you want all the days of your lives
to seem sunny as summer weather
make sure, when there's housework to do,
that you do it together.
Sheldon Harnick (1974)

Finally, what I find troubling about *Free to Be.... You and Me,* from a materialist feminist, stay at home mom perspective is that the book fails to ask questions. I really wish for stories that ask questions about why things are the way they are. Questioning after all is the first step to realising change. Why

aren't all people equal? Aren't some people disadvantaged to the point of never being able to be equal? Will it be hard for little girls to grow up and be anything they want to be? Will there be people who will stand in our way? Even people who love us?

Yes boys and girls can do anything but why aren't my mother and father equal? Where were the stories about men and women who argue but who respect each other and work to find solutions for everybody. Stories with adults who didn't agree about everything but who honoured each other enough as individuals to work things out. Stories that acknowledge the "exciting" dynamics of families—the rousing of emotions that is so a part of life. It is something to write stories that inspire children, that nurture creativity, personal growth and self esteem. I continue to struggle for a balance between fostering not only self esteem, but a critical awareness of the world and the cultures unto which our children must exist.

As feminists, let's write *for* children. Stories that are not about making us feel good but that will serve our children well. Let's tell them the stories we wish we'd been told, the stories we yearn to tell. Yes we'll tell them about the world we want for them and the worlds we want them to be able to imagine for themselves but let's also talk about the world that we live in. Stories that reflect the dynamics of real families and that model resolution. Life is not easy, nurturing relationships, finding balances as women between the needs of children, partners, and ourselves—will rouse "emotion"—it will be *exciting*. Only in acknowledging *that* can we really be *free*.

Notes

Books that are problematic can be very useful—they provide excellent opportunities to ask questions and challenge stereotypes. You can start practising this with very young children. For example, why do you think the Mother in this story is always doing the dishes?

Develop reading strategies, ie., reversing gender, pasting revisions into books. Have you ever tried to make Tigger a "she" instead of a "he?"

As adults we have to tell our own stories and be honest with ourselves and thus tell our children about why things are the way they are. We can say, "Mommy is tired right now and feeling lousy because nobody is helping with the dishes."

Theatre is an incredible tool—acting out favourite stories (including personal stories) will often offer unique insight into a situation.

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Alison Thomas, member of the A.R.M. National Advisory Board, and her son.

Susan McCallum-Whitcomb, member of the A.R.M. National Advisory Board, and her children.

Motherline

Karen Alkalay-Gut

Grandmother Reconsiders Her Knitting

Protecting a child's name
with a voluminous cape
was the first mistake
an anonymous little girl
her face hooded
from human gaze
in a forest

And why red?
Shouldn't I have given her
a briar patch
to maneuver
the enticing wood
knowing the wolf
was drawn
to the brightness
of little girls?

And why is she known only
by this garish robe
instead of her kindness
to her ancestor?
It was a mistake
to place the weight
of our existence
on her shoulders

Priscilla F. Sears

Cradling Your Mother

> For women, the need to nurture each other is not pathological but redemptive, and it is with this knowledge that our real power is discovered.
>
> —Audre Lorde

The representation of women interacting with other women, whether nurturing or not, is often pathologized in western literature. In our stories, mothers who remain active in their grown daughters' lives are "nester neurotics." Daughters who continue a profound relationship with their mothers are often diagnosed as "immature chicks," fearful to fledge, or as sickly sufferers from an unresolved Electra complex. Women with women as partners are "perverts" in an "unnatural relationship." And female friendships are secondary to and sorry substitutes for relationships with men who plant the wake-up kiss on Sleeping Beauty, take Cinderella out of the cinders, snatch Andromeda off of the rock, just in time, and rescue Princess Leah. Nurturing sisterhood is compromised by a ferocious, faithless sibling rivalry. As Ruth Ray (1996) points out, an adult child caring for a disabled mother is often regarded as a victim of a social disease, exhibiting the syndrome of co-dependency or of failure to care for numero uno. She fails the developmental test of what Jung called the "noon of life" and which he describes as "individuation" in the sense of a process through which a person acquires a clearer personal identity, a process usually thought to be a crucial aspect of childhood and adolescence. Not very redemptive these, but very androcentric.

We assume that the maturation process, the developmental sequence, advances toward a "true" self, one that is separate and individual. This may be event oriented: getting a license, buying a bra, leaving home. This also may be

seen as a life long emergence of the "true" self. Many women, however, are socialized into a gender identity that is not directed toward separation and individuation but toward connection and communality. Indeed, some research suggests that empathy, not individuation, is at the center of many women's personalities. Yet women are "diagnosed" as immature or as pathologically empathetic. But men, who become fiercely separate and aggressively individualistic are "mature," not suffering from "pathological isolationism."

The old truism that a woman can raise ten children, but ten children cannot provide for one mother, is not true. Our stereotype of the elderly being "abandoned" by their families, particularly by their daughters, and "warehoused" in nursing homes, is false and widespread. I taught in China in the eighties and my Chinese students thought that the decadent Americans sent their pets to hotels and charged their parents when they came for dinner, and—worst of all—put the elderly together, isolated them, in so-called "homes." They thought this was not only weird but wicked. The evidence suggest that both we and the Chinese have it wrong, however. Ruth Whybrow (1996) in her recent text, *Caring for Elderly Parents*, notes that "almost three times as many disabled older people are supported in their own homes by their kin as live in nursing homes (12). And the term "caregiver," which describes those who keep their elderly parents out of institutions and care for them in their own homes or in the parents' home is also wrong. Ruth Ray suggests: "Care suggests that the activity involves intimacy and connection in addition to the meeting of physical care and 'giver' suggests that this care is offered freely" (1996: 97).

Despite the plenitude of problems around care giving by adult women in various forms, all the polls show that one of the most dominant and powerful shared themes of women's filial care giving experience is "their fundamental acceptance that parental care is a woman's role." *Every day is Mother's Day with me.* This is true in most cultures most of the time, and is confirmed and often enforced by sociological, cultural, and religious traditions. As Ivy Schweitzer points out, in the Book of Ruth in the Old Testament, written more than a thousand years before the birth of Christ, Ruth is regarded as exemplary. She selflessly cares for her mother-in-law, Naomi, even though Naomi has no more sons to give her: "Where you go I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people and your God my God. Where you die, I will die ... there will I be buried." Furthermore she bears a son for Naomi thereby becoming the great grandmother of King David and fulfilling scripture. And this is a daughter-in-law.

This paper examines the possibility of redemption in the nurturing relationship of adult daughters and dependent mothers. By "redemption" I mean atonement, or redemption in the sense of freeing, delivering, or restoring. To make this possibility clear and emphatic, I've combined the anecdotal and the scholarly, the subjective and the objective, pairs irreconcilable in the binary oppositions of the father tongue.

My mother, Ruth Flagg, died at 6:50 on August 16, 1996 at home. In bed.

Alone. The autopsy, or "post mortem pathology report" my sister ordered described my mother a an "elderly, frail, white female who measures 5'6" in length and is estimated to weigh 120 pounds. Her heart weighs 425 grams. Her main arteries are 80 percent occluded. Her large intestine is unremarkable ... very early stages of Altzheimers disease.... Cause of death: arrhythmia."

Actually this "elderly white female" was 5'4" and weighed 95 pounds. And her 425 grams heart had wished and worked to wipe the tears out of the eyes of the world.

In her career as a nurse, she cared for rejected newborns in our home. She took in unmarried, rejected girls who had the good fortune to find the sanctuary my mother was. Early in her career she had been an obstetrical nurse who felt each birth was a miracle. She cared for the mad later in her career, and the last twenty years of her professional life as Medical Director of the Jewish Home for the Aged in Worcester, Mass. I picked her up there now and then. She was usually late so occasionally I would go in for her, although the scene was so depressing it made my teeth ache. Many patients would be at the front door, often wearing their best clothes, watching and waiting for their children or for the friend who never comes or for Death. Perhaps they were plotting an escape.

Once my mother and I were coming out, and as we passed one room my mother saw that an old woman's leg was hanging off the side of the bed. My mother tucked her leg under the blanket, and the patient began to cry. After a few minutes my mother got onto the bed and cradled the woman in her arms, singing so softly I could hardly hear her. The old woman finally fell asleep.

This was a typical scene in my mother's professional life. She cared for the sick and the homeless, the abandoned, the tired, the poor. Lost animals and strays of all kinds seemed to find her by a "homing instinct." She fed corn to the pheasants who came to her back yard. I wrote a poem for her once called "The Benefactress of Pheasants."

I used to imagine that she prayed, "Please God don't send me anyone else to love." But much of her personal life was also spent caring for and nursing her own mother, her sister, my father, her grandchildren and us, her children. She did not care well for herself, but she did not use this as a control mechanism whereby we could be subtly guilt tripped into submitting to her posing up there on the high moral ground. She "gave a gift without return," as Helene Cixous says.

My brother called her Mother Teresa. Her sons-in-law said they had only married her daughters because she was already taken. My daughter said that when her grandmother died, she would ascend straight to the heart of God. At her funeral several famous doctors said they had had the privilege of working with many distinguished medical experts in their lives, but they had never known anyone who was as great a healer as my mother. My daughter wrote a poem about mourning her: "If every velvet bloom of every perfumed flower bowed their heads, would that be enough? If all the birds sang your name? If the rain cascaded as rose diamonds? If all the world were to stop and all the lights

go dim? Were everyone in every place to shed a tear, would that be enough? But the world doesn't stop. The lights shine bright, the rain comes down complacently. The birds sing familiar tunes. And all the flowers in all the world do not fill this room."

My mother's need to nurture women, as well as others, was redemptive for her as well as for those others. And it wasn't merely a need; it was also a choice, constant throughout her adult life, even as she lay dying. One of our cousins said that "she took a long time to grow old." Up until she was about 82, she had few of the symptoms of old age. But over the last three years of her life, she had suffered many of the common ravages of old age: she couldn't recover quickly from infections, she forgot names, and toward the end her short term memory was not good. Many of her friends and her beloved brother and sister had died. She had to stop driving. The worst for us were the personality changes, but not those that occur most often according to gerontologists, namely pessimism and self-centeredness. She became able to express anger about our father, and more significantly, to our father. Once, in a singular show of anger, she refused to go to the doctor, but I insisted. "Don't I count?" she asked, and I told her that she had said that she would do as I suggested because her judgment was impaired, and I knew she needed to go. I said that she knew from her nursing experience that we must consult a urologist. I asked her to go for us. She did, of course. And once, when she was hospitalized and afterwards spent three weeks in a rehabilitation and nursing home, she expressed jealousy, a common characteristic of old age but unknown to my mother. Her Russian nurse, Nina, had refused to leave her bedside when my mother broke her hip and was hospitalized. Nina stayed beside her bed reciting prayers aloud, softly, in Russian. She kissed my mother's hands. Late in the evening the nurses would insist that she and my father, who also never left the bedside, leave. Once my mother said that my father seemed to want to go home with Nina. I was flabbergasted, but managed to say that she knew my father loved her, always and all the time. My father put his head on the pillow next to hers and said that if she died, he would follow her shortly since he belonged to her and she belonged to him. And for the fist few days at this well-recommended nursing home and rehabilitation center she would cry with humiliation because she had to lie in her own feces because the nurses were too busy to come promptly, and we didn't dare lift her.

But worst of all for her was the loss of the ability to be the caregiver and accept her role as the care recipient, a reversal of roles, which became worse after she broke her hip and was not able to walk alone. The reason she had broken her hip was she tried to get up from the kitchen table and walk to the sink to help Nina. She shuddered when the visiting nurse brought a wheelchair and a hospital bed. She apologized time after time for being a burden. She was afraid I would injure my back if I tried to lift her to the wheelchair. She always cautioned me not to compromise my life and goals on her behalf.

One night my sister Alice and I were talking about placing her in a nursing home, and she was in a wheelchair nearby, but she no longer wore her hearing

aids, so we spoke freely abut the cost, the effect on her, and the effect upon our lives. At one point our mother wheeled herself over and said she didn't know what we were talking about, but she had some money she would be glad to give. My sister patted her on the head and said she needn't worry—we would take care of everything. Our mother wheeled herself away. I felt as if she had been dismissed. Alice meant that since our parents were in their second childhood that the roles were reversed, and we were parenting our parents, and that meant we would make all the decisions about money and care and residence. Her decision was that we should place our parents in a good nursing home, where they would be safe, and we would be free to lead our own lives.

I said I didn't think that they were babies again. And that we could keep them safe at home in our love.

Alice said she really didn't know who they were anymore. As far as she was concerned, our real parents had been gone for years. These people were strangers. They had lost all vitality, all strength, all dignity. She said it had been very hard for her to watch them deteriorate. She asked me if I would help them to die. I said I didn't know. She said she could if they were vegetables. I said that I thought I might be able to do that if they wanted to die. If they asked me.

She said it made no difference. She could help them to die, whether they wanted to die or not. She said, in way of explanation I supposed, that recently she had had to leave her classes several times and come to our parents' home, about an hour and a half away. She said by the time she got there, the crisis was usually over. She had, furthermore, to call doctors who didn't call back. And, she added, "When I stay overnight, I don't get much sleep" because Mime, as we called our mother, sometimes rattled the bars on her hospital bed. So I had to get up and tell her firmly that it was now time for sleeping. They are like children. "The next time she rattles those bars I am going to ignore her. You know, like a child, she'll figure out that rattling the bars does no good."

I told her that Mime was suffering from anxiety attacks, and if she pulled her cot next to Mime's and reached through the bars and took Mime's hand, she would be quiet and comforted.

She told me we shouldn't pamper them. After all, they had had their lives, and she needed to lead her own life now. She wasn't about to give up her friends and her career advancement. And she felt that they had saved for their retirement, and so we should use their money to pay all of their bills. It was not necessary for us to give them any money. And all the money would be gone soon since nursing home care would cost between $200 and $300 per day for each of them. And when they had only $70,000 left, Medex would take over.

She added that she hadn't asked to be born.

I said they hadn't asked to die.

I became so angry I couldn't continue the conversation. I got up and made

tea. Much had remained unspoken in my sister's and my relationship, even though we had been very close with hardly a smidgen of sibling rivalry because she was a prom queen, and I was a geek, and ten years older besides. She would sometimes say I was her mother. I had never had a serious argument with her because I didn't think love and anger were compatible, and besides, I was the understudy for the family peacemaker, our mother. Peace at almost any price that she herself could pay was my mother's policy in her personal live. Both she and I believed that relationships were first and everything else was derivative. I brought Alice a cup of tea and said I would think about her proposal and get back to her. I wanted to say that I thought she was betraying them to lead her jet-set life of jumping and jiving in Marakesh.

Over the next several days I went to the warehouse for heavy artillery; I went to the library. I read everything I found to justify my position. I read Carter William's (1989) article, "Role Reversal." This phrase, he says,

> is still used to describe the relationship between an adult child and a dependent parent. But parenting the parent reinforces the most negative and terrifying stereotypes about frailty and parent/child relationships in old age: the parent becomes a burden. The adult child, in most cases the adult female child, is forced to give up her own life in order to pay back her parents for the care they received as children. There are changes, of course, but change is not synonymous with reversal. The roles are different, but different is not necessarily reversal. This is simplistic. Childcare is different from managing decisions about another adult's life. (32-33)

Elaine Brody (1995) makes the same point and identifies the specific differences between caring for a child and caring for an aged, ailing parent. The elderly and the caretaker roles are not chosen by either. Sadness rather than joy accompanies each change in the trajectory of the parent's dependence, and both parent and child strive to avoid these changes. The duration of parent care is relatively open ended: some caretakers sometimes say they have cared for parents longer than they had cared for their own children.

> Young mothers' feeling about incontinence in her parents do not resemble the adult child's feelings about incontinence in her baby. Changing a baby's diaper is not the same as washing a parent with diarrhea or changing their Attend. The child has less dependency and the old have increasing dependency. Reminiscences about early life experience, failing memory, confusion and disorientation do not mean that the old person is returned emotionally or psychologically to childhood. Being expected to become child to one's child adds insult to the injury of becoming disabled and losing autonomy. A sense of control is central to the integrity of the human personality. Magie

> Kuhn, founder of the Grey Panthers says: "... don't turn us into wrinkled babies." (Brody, 1995: 65-66)

Barry Gurland (1983) in *The Journal of Gerontological Social Work* says that if there is any truth in the role reversal theory, "the parallel would be closer to a mother of a child with a debilitating disorder who is dying or who is severely, possibility hopelessly, retarded." Ruth Whybrow says

> In reality, our parents, in most cases, continue to think of themselves as capable, knowledgeable, and nurturing, and are usually acutely sensitive to signs that they are not. The damage and consequences of patronizing older people are immense. However impaired in old age, your parents have lived many decades as adults in control of their own lives. Even the most confused seem to sense that there is something amiss when they cannot look after themselves. They are embarrassed by signs of failure such as incontinence, and often troubled by needing help with simple tasks, such as dressing. When they are treated by others, whether their children or staff in a nursing home, in manner, words or tones normally reserved for young children, their dignity and self esteem are seriously threatened. (1996: 60-61).

I stored up more ammunition for the forthcoming Armageddon with Alice. I had been the primary giver of intensive care from within the family of three siblings ever since the need for care became undeniable. My husband was heroic in his efforts to provide real, hands-on care, and my daughter supported both my mother and me. Our father provided some help, but he worsened as my mother worsened. He become ever more angry with us, his children, although not with my husband, because we had begun to take over some of his responsibilities. We scheduled their doctors' appointments; we planned the food; we made decisions about his investments; we drove the car. (My father had blacked out several times, and so he had agreed not to drive, but he promptly forgot his wise decision when he realized how his freedom had been compromised.) He was also angry with my mother because he had begun to realize how dependent he had been on our mother throughout their marriage. One night I woke up because he was shouting at my mother downstairs. He said that if she was trying to drive him crazy she was doing a good job. When I went downstairs, I saw that my mother had thrown up all over the bed and was gasping. When he realized what had happened, my father apologized to my mother. My father seldom apologized.

My brother visited regularly, but he usually only helped with home repairs. He said he couldn't bear to give our mother personal care or to be with her for more than fifteen minutes. He would become nauseous. He couldn't stand it. (I thought of a play about the lives of women in a small New Hampshire town during the late ninteenth century: "It Had To Be Done So I Did It.") But my

brother, and the rest of us as well, unconsciously subscribed to the notion that "the daughter is a daughter all of her life, and a son is a son till he gets a wife." Ruth Ray (1996) says that this is typical among children who are primary caregivers, daughters outnumber sons three to one. "If men do share in the care giving, the tasks are apportioned along traditional lines: men usually help with transportation, home repairs, and financial management; women give personal care" (96-97).

And for the last 18 months of my mother's life, I, the eldest daughter, spent all vacations and nearly every weekend with her. The round trip was six hours. I called every day until she could no longer hear me. I was in the emergency room so often the cashiers in the cafeteria gave me employee discounts. I became so tired that I had to hire help. I hired Nina to live with my parents. I hired a tutor to help Nina with her English. I hired a Russian interpreter who was always on call so we could be sure that Nina understood vital information. I saw to it that Nina got to church and could take long weekends with her daughter. I paid her dental bills. She was critical to the cause. Alice had arranged for a visiting nurse and a home health provider. (This ability to hire so much help sets us apart, of course, from many caregivers, who must do it all alone.) Throughout this time, I held at full-time job at Dartmouth.

Sarah Vaughn-Brockman (1994) says that only two hundred of six million employers in the U.S. offer any assistance with elder care, and half of these companies merely provide long term care insurance. Brackman goes on to say that the family and medical leave act in the U.S. provides job protection for caregivers of children, parents, and spouses, but the leave is without pay and for a limited time (26-27).

Toward the end of my mother's suffering, I slept on a cot next to her bed, and if she woke in the night, I would put my hands through the bars on the sides of her bed, and hold her hand, and she would be able to go back to sleep. Sometimes I would wake in the night and reach for her hand and take her pulse and then go back to sleep myself, still holding her hand. When I took her for a ride in the car, she would put her head on my shoulder. Sometimes I would cradle her in my arms. In many ways I was grateful for the opportunity to help my mother. She had seldom asked me for help. Caring for her, however, was often exhausting and excruciating. I watched her disappear, dissolving like a snowflake into the air.

Nina was a blessing. She would wake my mother, who she always referred to as "Mrs. Flagg," by applying warm washcloths to my mother's face, then kissing her gently on the forehead. (My sister insisted that although Nina was good-hearted, our mother was not safe with her because of the language problem and lack of intelligence.)

At last I felt I was ready to take on my sister, although I had read works that seemed to not only identify her position vis a vis our mother, but to note that these reactions were common and had some justification. For example, Carter says that many adult women caregivers experience conflicts between obliga-

tions to their own partners and children and their responsibility to their mothers, conflicts between their mother and their jobs, conflicts between their duty to their mother and their duty to themselves. "There are the practical problems of feeding and toiling over your mother," and how long can you tolerate a house kept at tropical temperatures because of the parent's poor circulation? There is the problem of guilt—"I'm not doing this with a song in my heart"—and it is never enough. There's the anger. The sense of being overwhelmed. The resentment. Financial problems. At last, there's the problem of facing your own mortality. I understood that my sister saw no possibility of empowerment or redemption in her relationship with our mother at this time of her life. It was more of an endurance contest.

The showdown was brief. I told Alice that I would not put our mother in a nursing home until every other possibility had been tried, and that time was not now. She told me—in the tone you might use to subdue an incorrigible second grader—that I was a martyr to our mother. And she wanted no part of it. I said that if she was unwilling to help me, I would take charge and make decisions about her life without consulting her. She slammed the door as she left. I thought I was losing my sister as well my mother. But a few hours later she came back. "I've been driving around, "she said, "and I want to say that yes we've had a fight, but I still love you and I'll do what I can. I'll be back on Thursday." Afterwards she systematically managed the money and helped with the doctors' appointments. But she continued to compliment our mother for eating her vegetables and praised her for solid bowel movements. Was there nurtuance and redemption and empowerment in these complex circumstances—redemption in the sense of freeing, delivering or restoring in some way and also in the sense of atonement made for an offense? At the time it seemed more like damnation.

Nina said that in Russia when your mother dies, you are regarded as an orphan, no matter what your age. Her nurturance was redemptive in the sense of atonement. When her own mother lay dying in Siberia, Nina was working in Moscow. It had taken her weeks to get enough money to go home. Her mother died while Nina was on the train en route to her bedside. She said our mother was like her mother, and she was happy to care for her.

And in some convoluted way my mother had redeemed herself and empowered herself. She was able to salvage her sense of some control, some integrity. She relieved us of whatever sorrow or stress she could. Despite 80 percent occlusion in some of her arteries, she still walked with her walker and performed the simple exercises. How much courage it must have taken for her to get to the table to eat when she wasn't hungry, to watch the movies we brought to her when she couldn't hear them. And even when she was in pain or fear, when consciousness dimmed, when she spoke from her subconscious, she would repeat and repeat again and again, "I love you," "I love you," I love you." This was convoluted in the sense that my mother didn't have anything to atone for. Unless, of course, she believed that mothers must always be selfless

saviors who seldom require care and tender mercies.

I was redeemed inasmuch as I learned that I could exert power deliberately and in multifarious ways without destroying my relationship with someone I loved. I learned the strategies of power and exercised them deliberately, consistently and unashamedly. I moved from cooperation to leadership. I learned that love could survive anger and that there could be love without misery. I learned that even after you are *sans* sight and *sans* hearing and *sans* bladder control, when you are only semiconscious, only able to mutter or whisper, you could die with dignity. I realized keenly, close to the heart, that I would die, that later is sooner, that there was no longer anyone ahead of me in the line, no one to shield me from the sickle. I couldn't delude myself that time could be denied and death diverted. Never was never. A thud. And I discovered, as Lorde says, my own strength and power.

In the "post mortem," I saw my sister's point about various conflicts of the adult daughter caring for her ailing mother. Yes, I was tired. Yes, I had to give up a social life. Yes, I gained weight, eating for two perhaps. Yes, I felt overwhelmed. I was depending on my husband too much. I wouldn't have been able to persist without help. But I never thought that my care of my mother was pathological. I had a life and an identity of my own. And I freely gave my nurturance to her. Mostly, throughout, I felt a fierce and unfaltering faithfulness to my mother. She had not only nurtured me, she had enabled me to believe in the possibility of transcendence of the self, in the reality of goodness, and in the power of love.

Surely "goodness and mercy follow[ed] her" all the days of her life.

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Inga Bergman

Memories of a Childhood In Iceland

Picture this bay, that sparkles like blue sapphires in the sun,
like green emeralds when the cloud cover closes in
or turns a gloomy dark green and grey as storms stir it into a frightening boiling pot
of waves as high as houses.

Picture how it stretches and opens to the western horizon,
beyond which looms the great continent of America, thousands of miles away,
and behind which the sun disappears every evening.

Listen, how everything grows quiet and hushed under the cloud cover
in the absence of the sun,
or how the bay huddles apprehensively
and braces it self against the lapping and crashing waves
when the winter storms howl across the strait.

Then picture the islands, protruding from the water like a lush, velvet green body
a knee here, an elbow there, belly, shoulders and breasts.
The movement of the sea, the tide and the tow,
exposing the rocky coast and wet black sandy beaches,
and then seeping back with a regular certainty.
The sucking and the sighing of the sea as it moves
gives the illusion that what we see is indeed alive and breathing.

The hilly regions of the largest island are dotted with white, fluffy shapes
nipping their way through the delicate, tasty mountain flora

and larger, heavier shapes
wading through lush green lowlands,
deftly slinging their long, strong tongues around tufts of grass
clipping it off just so, a couple of inches away from the roots.

Nestled in the broad cleavage of two large hills are a couple of ancient white buildings,
flanked by green fields sloping towards the sea.
Four little shapes are bopping in the green grass, bare, white, little bodies,
clad in lithe more than a pair of gaudily coloured shorts.
Red, blue, green, yellow—one colour each for easy recognition.
Every so often one of them stands erect and listens for sounds,
the tight little braids sticking almost straight out, while scanning towards the strait
then a glance back to the three little brothers playing nearby,
the littlest one barely a toddler.
The head cocks a little in the other direction
and catches a sound coming from behind the house.

A woman's voice can be heard, clear and rich.
She always sings as she hangs out laundry.
Her song grows softer and slower as her eyes wander
towards the faraway shape of the town that sprawls
along the shoreline on the other side of the strait.
Her hand fumbles for fly-away strands of copper and pins them behind her ear.
She shakes out yet another wet sheet, and as she stretches it over the washing line
her song grows stronger and more cheerful,
the lines punctuated with each peg that she drives home.

Rúna, across the way, says she can tell when it's mother's washing day.
She can hear her voice loud and clear.
She can probably also hear when mother calls us in at mealtimes.

We took refuge on the island from the squalor of a housing shortage and poverty
that was rampant in Reykiaveík in the fifties.
We came together as a family
gathered back by my father from various foster homes,
where we were placed during mother's sudden and mysterious illness
and father's attempt to make ends meet with seemingly endless workdays.
This is where my parents worked together,
joining their powerful strengths and ingenuity,
with rarely an unkind word uttered between them,

to create the oasis of security that we,
the colourful children,
need so desperately.

My memory of time before the island has grown scant over the years.
There were hard times, that left many scars on my family.
My parents were deeply wounded
and they lashed out at each other,
in desperation.
I was only six, but old enough to understand the anguish.
Life was unfair.
I knew that my parents deserved more than what they got.

I picture my mother waiting in line,
time and time again, anxious,
waiting for appointments with city officials,
reasoning, arguing, pleading and at last breaking down.
Weeping quietly, collecting herself, clenching her fists
and bearing them down on a desktop,
sending stacks of papers jumping.
Then, with the same hands, gathering our little hands
into her hot palms as she rose to leave.

I treasure pictures of my mother
coming home with my brothers newly born, one by one,
swaddled in her soft, white arms.
I remember her gentle voice,
as she comforted them and cuddled them to her breast.
As she sang us off to sleep in the evening
ever so softly, until there wasn't a care left in our wee hearts.

I remember her laughing eyes and cheerful morning songs
that always made it worth while starting afresh, every day.
The gay laughter as she shared in our delights.
The firm, yet gentle instruction, or reproach when needed.
And the glow of love, that would have sent me to the end of the world
if that is what she had requested.

And I remember the immense emptiness and pain
at being separated from my parents and my brothers.
Most of all, I remember
how my heart cried out in need for my mother.
There were no songs in my aunt's house.
No warm kisses or a lull-a-bye.

Inga Bergman

No smiles in the morning.
No sun.

We had been shacked up in temporary housing when mother took ill.
Relatives took us in,
somewhat reluctantly some of them.
I think it was my silence that finally got to my father.
My eyes had gone deep and watchful, my face pinched
and my body very, very quiet.

In his desperate search for a home he happened upon the deserted island.
No one had lived there for years and the only habitable house
was already two hundred and fifty years old.
Aside from two coal stoves it had no commodities, no running water,
but at least we would have a roof over our heads.

I never knew how my mother took the news about our new home.
By the time she was released from hospital the joy of being reunited
overshadowed everything else.
We had been apart for almost three months.

By the time mother joined us harvest was in full swing.
Some of my uncles gave up their evenings and weekends to help father.
The air was filled with the sweet smell of hay and the sound of men's voices,
talking and laughing as they worked.
I was instructed by my father to help mother,
and to call one of the men if I couldn't manage heavier tasks.
Mother was not to exert herself.

We worked hard that summer, and before we knew
old man winter was upon us,
coddling everything in cold grey, and later white.
The men were gone.
Mother was already shouldering her load of work.
There were twenty-four cows to be milked in the morning,
breakfast to be made, water to be carried from the well into the kitchen,
milk buckets to be washed, billies of milk to be carried down to the boat,
little bottoms to be washed in the tub, after the dishes were put away.
The bread was made in the afternoon,
while the little ones napped,
and clothes mended or made.

My mother's wardrobe slowly changed shape,
was carefully cut into smaller shapes with scissors,

and reappearing in a changed and smaller form
on our little bodies.

"No matter," she explained, "my waist isn't what it used to be."

In the afternoons there was also music.
For two hours every weekday afternoon Radio Reykiavík
broadcast classical music.
Our house changed into a music hall.
When they played operatic works
mother changed roles
and joined forces with the famous singers of the world.
At other times, after she had taught me some of her songs,
we would sing together,
her voice making scrolls and roses around my simple lines.
These were glorious times.

Mother's voice also mesmerised the cows.
She sang as she worked, and swaying as they listened
chewing their cud slowly and thoughtfully
the cows became less possessive of the milk
flooding the buckets in no time at all.
They even seemed to join in
with a short humming sound every so often.
When that happened mother would almost roll into the ditch giggling.

By nightfall, after the late milking, mother grew quiet.
She was tired.
And yet, as we nodded off to sleep,
there was always time for an embrace, warm kisses and a lull-a-bye.

In spite of all hardship, and in spite of my mother's loneliness,
these were the times that filled me with more happiness
than I had ever experienced before.

Fakete Rexha

Never Sure of Love

Are we or mothers those who raise children with eyelashes
and brows and lips that frown from expectations
over which bends the silver and fluid mouth without pardon
And when the age breaks and our summer love wanders
along with the odour of daybreak out of those we bore

Are we or mothers those who cook them deep-deep inside
our children with nine skins
Or maybe we are the one that is sown and grows up flowers
We neither see them while they climb our chest
after the smell of milk and their call is their help

With the first star at the window we adorn their forehead
and the world of miracles we hang on to their small bodies

Once it breaths with no rhythm no music, we guard it
from the evil, from the ugly, from foreigners

It everyday drives away our Springs
and we wake up with the old ones
richer for a new wrinkle, a new grizzle and insomnia.

It hardly lets us open the eyelid, stretch our hand
or crawl our leg.

We shut up exasperation within our bodies

and keep up the face all in green purple
while with lampshade we pull out suspicion from the room.

We hang our heart onto it in guard
hiding by the side of bed all night long.
A small candle keeps up their company by the pillow
which looks like a moon came down from the sky
to cover the small fright

Sadness at sleep while dreaming and by the small mouth
that has no explanation.
We explain everything smiling whilst taking it to lap.
Mother's caressing makes it easier while it watches out
the beloved voice, our kiss.

From tip to toe a single grain of peas.
Oh, sweet they are even when we wake up
with our transparent and sleepy eyes.

Do they grow up love within us
forgive, close up and fulfill everything about us?

And when they grow up like a virgin forest
and foreign feet would step onto.
we subtilize our friendly love to them unforgettably.
From inside of them they take out crudeness
and their hearts are full of stones, full of humps.

And our children grow up, are loved
and return back to their small birth away from roots
away from Genesis
from Origin
from Homeland.

Sudharshana Coomarasamy

Mothers And Daughters—Creating Anew

I had waited for this great occasion for many months. My mother and I had anticipated the event with excitement and pride. But when it happened I had to hear it from my mother, with that note of accusation in her voice for not being present at the auspicious minute! Another stab at my late working hours.

My daughter had "attained age," she had entered into womanhood and to put it plainly, she had started menstruating. When I ran upstairs to find her, she rose from her bed to hug me. There was something happening inside me which was neither pure joy nor pure sorrow. Yet, I could feel both. She was giggling with tears in her eyes. I hugged her to me and traced her face with my fingers asking, "Mahal (daughter), does it hurt?" She moulded her body to mine and I could feel the negative response in the movement of her head against my breast. All I could think was, "she's too young. Forty years of monthly bleeding, cramps and backaches...." And I hugged her closer.

When my mother in her usual way said, "let her stay back from school today," I responded to it with the memory of what had happened 26 years earlier. The scene was different in that I was terrified that I had a wound—how else could one explain the sudden evidence of bright red blood on one's panties. I had a geography test, which I didn't want to miss as it was not only my favourite subject, but it was also important for my mid-term grades. My pleadings with my mother to allow me to go to school—properly bandaged—had no effect at all. The verdict was 21 days of solitary confinement with restricted diet of eggs, sesame seed oil, eggplant, and black grain pancakes. So, I missed that geography test and many other tests for 21 days, while my marks dwindled and my body blossomed.

Twenty-six years later, I sit with my daughter and explain the reasons and beliefs behind the special diet and restrictions during the first few weeks

following the initial menstruation. With my mother I negotiated 21 days down to seven days. As this had happened on a Monday night, I proposed that we have the "bathing ceremony" on Sunday and thereby make it okay for my daughter to go back to school after seven days.

When we made plans about whom to invite, I asked my daughter if she would like to invite some of her friends. She was very sure about not wanting any of her friends to know. A year ago, when I had anticipated the burst of growth at any time, I had explained to my daughter what happens to our bodies and the cultural tradition of celebrating it with family and friends. I was determined that history should not repeat itself and that my daughter should not experience it as an unknown terror. During that discussion we had also talked about who she'd like to invite. I remember her saying that she would like it to be a party for young women (with the exception of her twin brother). But when the opportunity presented itself she did not want to invite her friends. So we settled for her maternal uncle, aunts, cousins, and close family friends. Next, we had to sort out what to wear. My daughter's question was, as always, "what did you wear?" She chose a long skirt with a fitting blouse up to the waist and a *thaavani* (also referred to as "half-saree"), the symbol of entering womanhood. Just as I had negotiated with my mother to lessen the days of seclusion, my daughter negotiated with me the length of time she would have to be "dressed-up" on the day of the ceremony. Finally, she agreed to wear the "half-saree" for two hours while all the pictures were taken and I agreed that she could change into her mini-skirt and bodysuit afterwards.

Following our Tamil cultural tradition my younger brother (in the absence of my elder brother), put milk on my daughter's head to initiate the bathing ceremony. Next, my aunts, and other women friends (only married women!) followed. My mother and I were the last to bless her, pray that all impurities be washed away, and that she grow into a woman. Once the bathing was over, wrapping her in a white cloth and with reminders to keep her eyes closed she was led into a room where the traditional lamp was lit beside the Bible and a picture of Christ. It was tradition to open one's eyes on light and something symbolic of one's faith, following the bathing ceremony. Then, it was such joy to dress her with the help of a dear friend with flowers, anklets, and bangles to match the "half-saree." Once my daughter was ready, her father was called to come and bless her.

From the day she started menstruating my prayer for her has been for a safe, violence-free life, filled with respect and dignity. That's my prayer for all our daughters here in the West, in the East, in the North, and in the South.

Jocalyn P. Clark and Camillia G. Clark

Studying and Sharing
Mother and Daughter Learn Academia

An earliest memory for me was my mom's convocation day when she graduated with her master's degree in psychology from the University of Regina. It was a celebratory occasion. I still have a picture in my mind of the excitement in her eyes and the glow of her cheeks, a memory secured by a photograph taken of my mom and me and my younger sister on that special day. At the time I did not fully appreciate the significance of convocation as a culmination of years and years of her hard work, completed while also raising two small children during a time when others were enjoying the freedom of their early twenties. Nor did I anticipate that the completion of my own master's degree, and the subsequent pursuit of doctoral degrees for both of us, would find us at a place where we would be sharing a similar journey through academia, although at very different life stages.

The mother-daughter relationship is complicated, unique, and often emotionally charged (Basoff, 1988; La Sorsa and Fodor, 1990; Smith and Smith-Blackner, 1981). While it is considered to be one of the strongest bonds throughout life, most literature refers to the influence that the mother has on her daughter. Very little has been written about the daughter's influence on her mother's emotional and psychological development and even less has been discussed regarding the process between a mother and daughter when they enter academic studies at similar times. This article describes some of the dialogue undertaken between a mother and daughter who have begun to share their similar and different experiences in academia. Although twenty years apart in age, we have found an important source of support in the mother-daughter relationship as both the challenges and successes of our academic studies are shared.

We each knew that we were well-suited to academic careers. Both of us

have long recognized our curiousities about the world of ideas and our desires to be continually challenged, for which academia seemed a desirable profession. Friends and family had often commented on our aptitudes for living the "student life." But we have also maintained very different lifestyles, each with its own constraints and opportunities to pursue our individual goals. The generational and socioeconomic gaps allowed one of us virtually unrestricted freedom to embark on academic endeavours, while the other faced financial obstacles and a social and cultural environment with more traditional expectations of women. While one of us grew up in an environment consisting of a mother who combined professional activities with marriage and family, the other grew up with few examples of women academics, and many fewer role models that successfully combined higher education with motherhood. Most striking is the similarity of our experiences now, pursuing graduate degrees, in different countries but in similar fields, with different life constraints but similar aspirations, and beginning to recognize that because of this experience we are connected in ways that are profound, endearing, and sustaining.

The daughter of us cares deeply about her academic study. It's undeniably a most central aspect of her self-identity, provoking her with constant challenges and new goals and providing opportunities to build knowledge. Acquiring knowledge is seen as the means to secure an independent and stable future in an increasingly tumultuous and competitive economic environment. Learning and understanding others' diverse experiences also forms the basis for her political action. The mother of us too cares deeply about academics. The desire to complete her doctorate has been a life long goal which encompasses her needs for achievement and personal success. The difference however, is that she has a husband and children about whom she also cares deeply. For mother, social and cultural influences prepared her for the roles of wife and mother but not as much for student. Expectations that one would get married were very clear and although she was an excellent student with marks well suited for university, she considered her future in terms of marriage and family, with much less emphasis on academics and career. For the daughter, the expectations were very different, in fact quite opposite. Emphasizing independence and individuality, pursuing higher education was consistent with the expectation of putting off family until a career was established. Although combining career and motherhood has become increasingly normative for Canadian women, the demands of this double duty lifestyle were seen as compromising to a successful academic career and avoiding these challenges was promoted as a choice the daughter was fortunate to make. While as mother and daughter we were nurtured by very different values that influenced our choices of career, working in academia has presented each of us with similar challenges for which we have both needed support. Our sources of support over the years have also reflected what was previously seen as divergent experience, but has culminated in a recognition of ourselves as role models to each other and as valuable sources of mentorship and encouragement.

Pursuing her academic goals, the daughter of us had many woman role models and teachers. Increasing numbers of women in a traditionally male-dominated setting provided camaraderie and shared experience that enabled her to build confidence in her goals and abilities. She pursued a feminist-oriented academic study that exposed her to a critical analysis of women's experiences in academia and how those experiences differ for diverse groups of women. While she learned to expect a variety of obstacles and struggles as a result of being a woman, her academic studies and involvement with women's organizations gave her valuable support and guidance. She also had financial support from her parents that her mother never had. On the other hand, she has lived many miles from all her family since she began university at the age of seventeen. Living apart from family supports required her to develop considerable independence and self-sufficiency that has at times been very challenging. She learned to draw support largely from friends from school, many of whom continue to study and provide encouragement. The academic environment has been a special place to build friendship and solidarity but its emphasis on achievement and competition continues to isolate and at times overwhelm her.

Mom had a different set of supports and encouragement. Her encouragement to pursue academics came first from a single mother who wanted her daughter to have opportunities that she did not have. A university education meant new opportunities and a "career," although the type of career was not identified in any way except to suggest that the humanities rather than science was an appropriate education to pursue. No other women in the family had accomplished a university education, thus most of the role models available were of women as wives and mothers. Introducing the idea of pursuing academic studies and having children was new and viewed skeptically. However, hard work and resilience characterized women of her extended family who had laboured to make a living in the Canadian prairies. Combined with the feminism of the 1970s and 80s that promoted women's equal access to academic opportunities, the hard work and determination served mother well in pursing her goals. She came to rely on support from other women, especially academic and professional colleagues. Feminist organizations and groups also became strong influences and provided a sounding board for finding ways to balance career and family responsibilities.

Mother's recent return to academia and her experiences and struggles during this time have provided the impetus for our sharing. We have begun a dialogue that points out similarities in our endeavours for knowledge, achievement, and academic success, a dialogue that has culminated in recognition of opportunities to support each other in our academic experiences. Much of this has derived from what we have come to know is a demanding and at times unrelenting work environment; the demands of academia seeming especially evident since we are women. For mom the process of returning to school after many years in professional practice was particularly daunting. But the daugh-

ter's years of university training has provided valuable experience on which the mother can draw for support.

One of mom's struggles involved having to write an aptitude-type exam designed for undergraduate students. She studied and prepared for the GRE in order to be considered for doctoral programs resentful that she had to take an undergraduate exam after years of clinical practice. The day that she received the results, a phone call from her daughter helped her deal with what was in her mind a failed attempt. She was extremely disappointed with the just average results and was devastated that this reflected her abilities and readiness to do doctoral studies. Having a daughter to provide support helped her put these results in perspective, including owning her own competencies and skills in spite of this external evaluation. She was quickly reassured that an aptitude test was not indicative of her abilities and that years of experience and knowledge would hold her well in academic pursuits. In turn, the daughter was given an important opportunity to offer reassurance and support that mirrored endless times her mother had provided encouragement over the many years of her schooling.

The tremendous support we have begun to recognize from each other is important because it both enriches our individual experiences in academia and reinforces the influence we can have on each other. The commonality of graduate studies provides the backdrop for our mother-daughter relationship to develop in new ways. In spite of the different social and cultural influences that have shaped our journeys through academia, the similarities of our experiences soften the demands and struggles along the way. An important element of our reciprocal support is the reminder we can offer to each other that each is competent, capable, and fully adequate. Besides providing emotional support and reassurance when a competency is challenged, our mother-daughter support continues in the form of discussing shared reading, editing each other's papers, and giving gifts of journals and books.

Our experiences in academia represent a parallel process, that is two women in a family, at different life stages, experiencing a similar developmental process. From a feminist perspective, the developmental process is one of self-definition. The reciprocal support promotes self-definition within our relationship as well as strengthening the relationship bond. The relationship process is akin to "relationship-differentiation," which viewed from the perspective of the "self-in-relation" model, emphasizes attachment and connection rather than separation as the basis for self-experience in female development (Jordan and Surrey, 1986). Differentiation is seen as a dynamic process of growth within the relationship rather than the more psychoanalytic perspective of separation- individuation which implies separation from the relationship. Our current experience of shared academia has allowed us to develop our relationship in a supportive, reciprocal way, consistent with this feminist perspective of self-development in a relational context.

We continue to pursue our academic goals, enjoying both the successes and

challenges of our studies, and the mutual mentoring and modeling that has developed through studying and sharing. Our current dialogue illustrates the possibilities for mothers and daughters in academic environments. It has truly been an enriching experience for both personal and relationship development for this mother and daughter.

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Carolyn Wright

The Cheerleader

It was the middle of September when Christina, my high school freshman, told me she wanted to be a cheerleader. She had suspected that her feminist mother would not be happy. She was correct. For more than eight years I had schlepped her to soccer practice, basketball camps, and swimming lessons. Now she wanted to be a cheerleader. I was confused and I was disappointed.

In 1962, when I was a high school freshman, sports meant gym class. To pass gym class one had only to prove they had washed and pressed their blue cotton gym suit on a weekly basis. Taking showers increased your grade. Anyone who didn't bow out of class with cramps was rewarded with an "A" grade.

Cheerleaders, however, were the only girls pictured in the sports section of my yearbook, something my daughter had commented on, and becoming a cheerleader wasn't easy. It was a political accomplishment with a degree of difficulty right up there with becoming the homecoming queen. To be chosen as a cheerleader meant you were popular, pretty, obedient, and probably dating a football player.

I flashed back to my own painful experiences of trying to make the squad. Try-outs included at least a hundred girls in a gym, dancing and jumping in unison following the gym teacher's instructions. There were cuts. The humiliating kind. Hopeful contenders were too short, too tall, too heavy, too thin, or they didn't have that elusive quality called "school spirit."

Hope was built and hope was destroyed. The seemingly endless process of weeding out the "insufficent" ended friendships. It was adolescent torture. And, no matter how high I jumped, or how I curved my back in flight, I never made last cut.

My mind raced as Christina stood in front of me. She was waiting for my

approval. I knew that the feminist I was today would never have wanted to be a cheerleader. Cheerleading was sexist. It was about wearing short skirts and boosting the moral of guys while ignoring girls' achievements in sports. While cheerleading was the only athletic activity open to me as a high school student, girls today had the opportunity to play real team sports. It was the '90s. Why would anybody even want to be a cheerleader today? What about all the titles women had fought for, like U.S. National Champion and Olympic gold medalist?

Christina held her head high, showing her resolve. I looked into her big blue eyes. She had decided to be a cheerleader *and* she wanted my support. I had said what I thought, but added with sincerity that she should do what she wanted to do. "Feminism is about choices," I said, "and you need to make your own."

In her school filled with female sports achievers, first in the state in soccer, first in the state in basketball, my daughter became a cheerleader. Then she became the cheerleading captain. She learned to choreograph dance numbers and demand equal practice space from none too happy football coaches and principals alike. Working with an elderly advisor and no coach, she sought out former cheerleaders in the community that volunteered to help her teach her squad.

Christina refused to wear the school's traditional Indian Warrior costume reserved as a special honor for head cheerleaders. She proclaimed it not only cumbersome for her sport, but racist as well. Then she moved on to recruitment. She wanted to integrate the team by gender. In her senior year she successfully trained two young men to be cheerleaders—a first in the district.

Under my daughter's leadership, cheerleading gained new- found respect as a team sport. Cheerleading had been an exclusive club and an admired activity for girls in my high school, but it had been a devalued activity in my daughter's school. Most hurtful was the criticism of cheerleaders voiced by female cohorts playing "real" sports. Christina was undaunted. Soon her squad began cheering for girls' teams at the invitation of the girls' teams themselves. She worked her squad every night while holding down a job and carrying excellent grades. She was voted the most valuable player by the team and given the sportsmanship award by her principal.

My daughter had entered this sport knowing full well it was going to be a challenge—a much different challenge than the one I had experienced as a young woman. I wanted to be accepted as a member of the popular girls' clique. She wanted to challenge the status quo. I looked at the choice she had made through a new lens. I could not help but admire her courage. She became my hero. No one was prouder than I when she was on top of the pyramid, the center dancer on the football field, or leading a cheer for other girls' teams. My daughter, the feminist cheerleader. She not only had my support, I thought she was awesome.

Suzanne Stutman

The Secret

I think about you, my mother, every day. And I wish that you could be my mother and not some stranger who only exists in my heart, in my deepest dreams. When I told you what happened so long ago, you didn't listen. And then you turned away again, as you had turned away from me so many years ago when I was just a very little girl. As I bring back the memories, jagged and bloody, from my past, I wonder where you were. How could you have not known? There were so many signs.

Always I have hated sheets. When I was just a young mother myself I would wonder in some deep recess of my mind why I hated so to fold them. And now I remember. For night after night it seemed to me, year after year, I would steal into the bathroom after he had left my room, sheets from my bed carried like a huge stuffed bunny within my arms, held against my stomach, and push them into the hamper. Then would begin the quick and furtive correction, either new sheets rearranged as best I could, or a towel to cover the spots, the wet, the smell, the secret. And you never found out the secret. Because you already knew the secret. You had made your decision not to see, for if you told you would be revealing a secret that would tear apart the fabric of things. I was not important enough or loved enough to be worth the consequences. So I remained from then to now, bleeding from my heart and from my eyes, with no one to see.

Lorna Rourke

A Story of Names

My son was born, my first child. I called him Joseph. Joseph was the name of my mother's brother, the one who died when he was nine. What was it that Joseph had died of? It was one of those things that killed children in those days. Pneumonia, perhaps? Or scarlet fever? One of those things that usually doesn't kill children any more. Anyway I thought it would please my Mom to have our son named after Joseph, and it did. Now Joseph is almost seven, and my Mom doesn't know his name anymore.

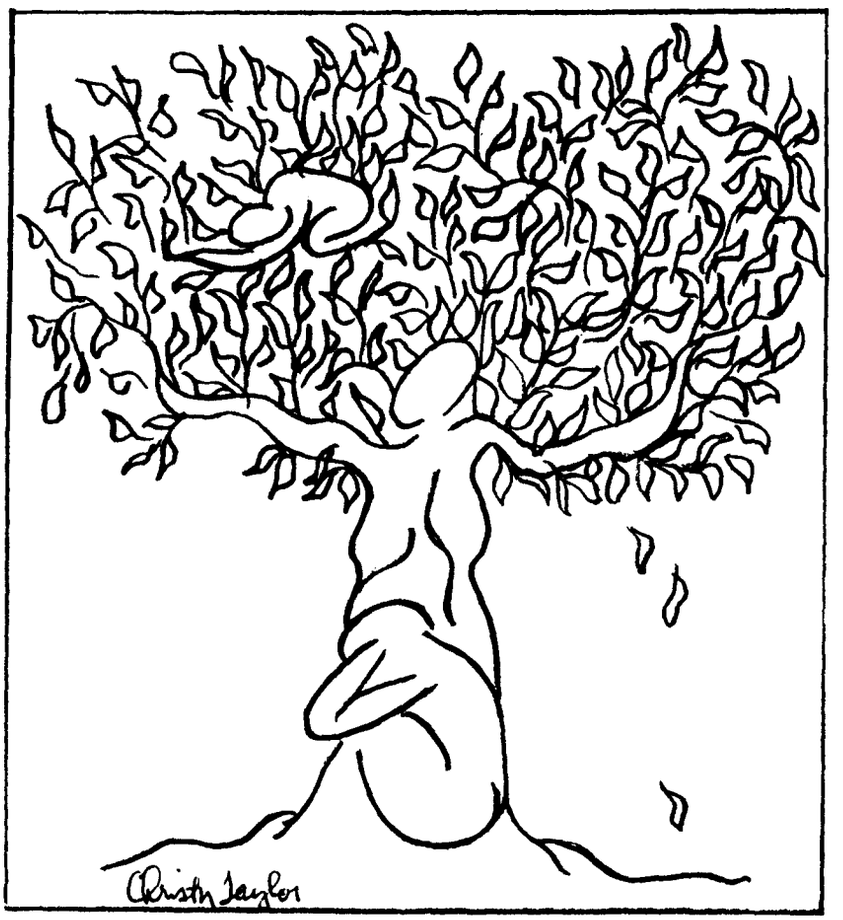
She hasn't seemed quite right for a few years—forgetful. Odd. She says things that don't make sense. But her behaviour has become more and more strange since Joseph was born. The summer he was a baby we went to the cottage with Mom and Dad for a weekend. Joseph slept in a portable crib in the back room, where Fred and I slept too. It was the middle of the night, and we were sleeping soundly. Mom burst through the door from the kitchen. She was frantic. "I have to find those children! I need to take care of them! They are calling for me!" There she was in her nightgown, in the dark of the cottage night, hysterical about some children. Joseph woke up and started to cry. What children was she talking about? Her younger siblings? My siblings? Children who didn't exist?

It was terrible to observe what was happening to Mom. Incidents like the one that night at the cottage began to happen regularly. I remember one Sunday afternoon when Mom and Dad came to visit us in Guelph. Mom always drove the car because Dad had lost his vision several years earlier. They got lost, and by the time they arrived, Mom was in a desperate state. Even when they were there and she saw me she still wasn't sure she had come to the right place. We live in a condominium called "Guelph Villa." She got out of the car and walked with me to our front door, lamenting over and over again, "Where is the Guelph

Villa? I just can't find it!" She didn't realize she had found it.

It took many months, but all of us finally admitted that something had to be done. This knowledge came slowly over time. Alzheimer's disease is like that—it creeps toward you, and then one day you realize it has stolen your mother from you before you've had time to say goodbye or to thank her for being such a great Mom.

I remember the day my eldest sister Mimi called. She is a nurse, and the oldest, so she does a lot of the hard things. She told me there was a room available for Mom in a nursing home. There I was with a two-year-old and another infant, Samuel, named after his great-grandfather, and my Mom was being moved to an Alzheimer's ward at a nursing home. My friends had mothers who took their kids to the zoo and to Disney World. I had a mother who didn't know that Sam was her grandson. She had forgotten Joseph's name. She had forgotten my name too, even though she chose it herself.



Denise Bauer and Ellen M. Gil-Gomez

The Newly Formed "Feminist Mothers and their Allies Task Force" of the NWSA

It seems hard to believe that a 20-year-old national feminist organization like The National Women's Studies Association (nWSA) would not have any organizational structures addressing mothering and childcare. That's why a group of mothers, frustrated by the lack of adequate childcare at national conferences, organized together to form the "Feminist Mothers and Their Allies Task Force" at the June, 1998 conference in Oswego, New York.

Historically, child care at NWSA conferences has only inconsistently been made available. At Oswego, excellent child care was provided, but was not communicated clearly in advance of the conference and was not mentioned in the program book at the conference. In addition, the childcare center was located on the periphery of campus, a 20-minute walk (each way!) from the sessions, a serious problem for breastfeeding mothers and a time consuming inconvenience for all mothers. In addition, the two panel discussions on feminist mothering were scheduled at the same time, again pointing to a systemic lack of awareness and attention paid to these issues.

Interestingly, the two panel discussions, "Motherhood and Families Reconceived" and "Feminist Motherhood Roundtable: The Move from Individual Suffering to Social Activism" fell along the lines of "theory" and "practice." Instead of remaining apart and forcing conference participants to choose between the two panels, the panelists agreed to join together in one room to share our thinking and among other things, combine our efforts to visualize how we might address feminist mothering within NWSA. A core group began the formal process of establishing a new NWSA Task Force. We chose the title "Feminist Mothers and Their Allies" to include the women who share our concern with mothering but who might not themselves be mothers.

We are happy to report that for the NWSA 1999 conference in Albuquerque

New Mexico the "Feminist Mothers and their Allies Task Force" has organized a series of compelling panel discussions and roundtables. Topics range from the politics of breastfeeding to breastfeeding across cultures, the place of mothering in Women's Studies, and to a case history of a struggle to establish daycare at a public university and its impact on women at the university. We have also planned a social event with an open reading of creative works on mothering and a book signing with editors Andrea O'Reilly and Sharon Abbey for their newest anthology on feminist mothering. We are also in the process of locating a gallery space in Albuquerque for an exhibition of photography by four women representing families from a feminist perspective. Childcare arrangements are still being finalized for this year's conference, but this year the process is being supported and paid attention to by the newTask Force.

Some of the Task Force's long range goals for future conferences are a plenary session on both the theoretical and practical issues of feminist mothering, a writers series featuring some of the extensive feminist writing on mothering and motherhood, centrally located (particularly to accommodate nursing mothers) and continuously available child care for the entire span of the conference, as well as the development of a feminist children's program to address the hypocrisy of talking feminism while our children play with sexist toys and videos that are the norm in most daycare centers.

We invite other concerned academics to join us in furthering these goals and helping to establish mothering as an important issue in Women's Studies. For further information contact one of the following people or see our information on the NWSA Web Page at www.nwsa.org and click on the link for caucuses and task forces; we're under task forces.

Janet Griffiths-Maxymiw

"Mothers and Sons Today Challenges and Possibilities," *September 25-27th, 1998: A Review"*

Students in Professor Andrea O'Reilly third year Women's Studies course, "Mothering and Motherhood," York Universtiy, attended the "Mothers and Sons: Challenges and Possibilities' Conference, September 1998, (Toronto, Ontario) at the start of their academic year. They were required to attend at least three sessions and write a five page review of selected sessions or plenaries. One review would be selected for publication in the inaugural issue of the journal of the Association for Research on Mothering. The following review by Janet Maxyman was selected from the 50 reviews received.

Feminist mothers face a challenge: how do you educate sons about the issues of gender equality without alienating them from their male culture? By being sensitive to sexism, sons face potential rejection from the masculine culture that bestows inclusion, esteem and privilege to "masculine" men. Feminists strive for gender equality, yet as mothers, they tend to fear that their sons will suffer and be displaced in the patriarchal society. The York University conference, "Mothers and Sons Today: Challenges and Possibilities," provided a forum for women to examine these and many other important questions about the mother-son relation. This paper will review the first and second keynote and one concurrent session.

Speakers in the first and second keynote addresses, and in the session "Reconstructing Masculinity at Home" examined how feminist thought has affected the mother and son relationship, challenged the belief that mothers must distance themselves to allow the masculine development of the sons, called into question the cultural definitions of masculinity, and finally shared with participants alternative modes of mothering. In the opening paper of the first Keynote Plenary entitled "Mothers, Sons and Feminism, Babette Smith

equality. She called for a better understanding of the construct of masculinity and argued that feminists, by maintaining an anti-male perspective, have misunderstood their sons needs and discounted the male culture. Smith suggested that it is not that sons lack emotion, it is that we have little awareness of the consequences that they face when they appear vulnerable to their male peers. When sons become emotionally distant, mothers may tend to accept this behaviour, believing it be the romanticised image of what a man should be—strong, silent, self sufficient. This relationship reinforces the stereotypical relationship of the remote male and the passive female, and perpetuates gender inequality. Smith went on to argue that women tend to underestimate boys capacity for emotional maturity and do not tend to challenge, and hence heighten, their sons emotional maturity in the same way they challenge their daughters. Smith sees this as a crucial dynamic. Unless men become emotionally responsible, they cannot fulfil their own needs, nor the needs of their partners and children. Smith concluded that men must play a role in gender equality; solutions cannot be imposed from without by feminist ideology and by achieving emotional maturity, men have the means by which they can begin to sort out problems within their specific male culture—a culture, which she points out, we, as feminists, have made assumptions about.

Babette Smith's theories came as a relief to me but I could also see how her stance may affront others. My seven year old son's school yard bravado has puzzled me; I have viewed it as aggressive and I can't eliminate it. It seems that Smith's message is that I can't stop the "wolf pack" mentality, but I should not surrender to it. Smith is short on concrete advice, admitting that the construct of masculinity needs feminist enquiry, but her strong belief that sons must be challenged, must be brought into the emotional spectrum instead of being allowed to drift away without accountability, overrides my anxiety and confirms my suspicion that masculinity can be damaging to males too. However, for women who have been damaged by male violence, Smith's call for understanding of the male culture may be too much; I would imagine that these women would want to distance their sons from the male sphere instead of monitoring their participation in it. I also believe that feminist ideology can be of help to men; challenging a construct can be an overwhelming task when it envelops you and a non-hostile feminist viewpoint could stimulate, even in very subtle ways, a male reassessment of "masculinity."

In the second paper of this plenary "Tuck Me In: Redefining Attachment Between Mothers and Sons," Marni Jackson shared her experiences of the "negotiation of distance or space" that occurs in the mother-son relationship, and she challenged the cultural assumption that maternal "over involvement" of mother inhibits male development. Jackson asked, "At what age do you stop tucking your son into bed?" What is the appropriate distance or amount of attachment between mothers and sons? Surprised by her lapse into conventional ideas of "motherhood" and unhappy about tensions that had arisen between her and her 15-year-old son, Jackson critiqued society's Freudian

obsession with sexuality. Jackson claimed that we are "oversexed in fears and under-eroticized in behaviour." In our society "sex" must be kept outside of the family circle and the intense love for our sons seems inappropriate. By confusing touch with sex, we withdraw physically and emotionally from our teenage sons but this withdrawal, deemed necessary for male development, can seem to boys that they are being pushed away at a time when they need trust, closeness and warmth. Instead of just focusing on the growth or development of the son, Jackson advocates a perspective that emphasizes the mutual growth of both mother and son. Instead of viewing "motherhood" as a set of rules to be applied, Jackson stresses that the mother-son relationship is a dynamic relationship: stay close and negotiate the terrain as you go.

The third speaker, Mary Kay Blakely shared her experience of mothering and challenging the rules of "motherhood" in "American Mom: Reflections of an Outlaw." Blakely's feminism grew from her experience of the pretence of "motherhood" versus the realities of mothering. She talked about the "bad days"—the long days of caring for small children when she felt unhappy with the person she had become. The strictures of motherhood demanded a pretence of continual confidence and capability that eluded Blakely, as it does for most, if not all, mothers; she was comforted by the "reality" stories of frustration, fatigue, fear and anger that she privately shared with other mothers. Mothering within the institution of motherhood is a powerless responsibility; mothers are to carry on rules that have been determined by philosophies external to the mother/child relationship. It is a political job and Blakely urges us to question the "laws" and determine how we want to mother—will we be inside the laws or will we become "outlaws?" It is always a relief to hear in public what you yourself have experienced and I valued Blakely's call for a realistic discussion of motherhood. Dispelling the myth of innate mothering capabilities would eliminate the guilt and tension that mothers feel when the job overwhelms them, and would stop that bitter cycle of inadequacy that attacks women's self esteem.

The first keynote address gave me a sense of relief, and validated the sense of uneasiness and conflict I have felt about observing the "rules." Smith, Jackson, and Blakely didn't provide pat answers but they imparted a powerful message: challenge the rules of motherhood that manipulate your relationship with your son. By challenging, it is possible to maintain a close and respectful relationship, it is possible to attain gender equality and it is possible to alter perceptions of the "norm." In the second keynote address entitled "Mothers and Sons: Race, Sexuality and Ability," speakers related the challenges and benefits of mothering modes that stand outside of the white, heterosexual and patriarchal society. In "Lesbians Raising Sons: Bringing up a New Breed of Men," Jess Wells asked the audience to consider lesbians as a "people beyond sexuality." She listed the challenges lesbians face in parenting, the largest being the prevalent belief that only men, and not women, can make men. Lesbians parent in a "village" context, and Wells argues that male role models don't need

to "sleep in mother's bed"; men in the extended community provide models for sons of lesbians. The initial fear of raising a son who is, by virtue of his sex the "other" or the "oppressor," was replaced by the hope that lesbian mothers can socialise their sons to become a new breed of man. Family arrangements allow sons to see women in "non-gendered" roles, demand self sufficiency and negotiation in the face of violence, and encourage acceptance of all emotions. Not pre-eminent in patriarchy, these values encourage respect for women. Wells believes that the concept of gender is a constructed reality that limits individual growth and she used clothing as an example. Not wishing to confine her son to imposed gender boundaries, Wells bought her two-year-old son a dress and, according to her, he revelled in the sensation and felt confident wearing it in public until the age of five. I became tense (as I suspect much of the audience did), knowing this to be a cultural transgression. Influenced by my personal feelings and Babette Smith's address, I wondered how much consideration she had for the consequences he would have to deal with. How much of "her" was she enforcing upon him? I sensed he was a "test case" for her personal beliefs and I disapproved. However, this story released a sadness within me because I had become the gender enforcer, censoring my son's use of nail polish and pantyhose. For his own protection, I was banishing him from the female realm because, essentially, patriarchy reviles homosexuality and rigidly defines masculine behaviour. My experience reinforces Well's theme that gender becomes enmeshed with concepts of sexuality.

Black women are not only subject to the rules of institutionalised motherhood, they are mothering in the violent context of racism. In "Black Mothers to Sons," Carolyn Mitchell discusses how the struggle for black mothers is different from that of white, middle class mothers. The African American mode of mothering is determined by racism as mothers focus on keeping their sons alive in a predominately white culture. The black matrifocal system, judged by the Moynihan Report to be the cause of damage to black men, is misunderstood by white society. The mother network strengthens African American society by perpetuating culture and protecting children. White sons have domain in the larger community, but black sons become "suspect." Mitchell informed the audience that the American Constitution historically regarded the black male as three-fifths of a man and she argued that the perception persists, citing the media's distorted focus of black crime as an example. She draws our attention to the re-enslavement of the black male body. The high number of black prisoners provide economic profit for white owners of privatized prisons, thus diminishing the incentive for racial equality. Clearly, the goal of gender equality pales in comparison to the challenge of defying the institutional racism that threatens African American boys. In "Native Perspectives on the Mother and Son Relationship," Jeannette Corbiere Lavell describes her experience of spirituality and sense of community in the Manitoulin Island Ojibway Reserve. She points to the position of respect that women have traditionally occupied within her culture: the grandmother's duty to name the

child, the communal caring for children, men's deference to women based on the native belief that the Earth is a Mother to her people. The pow-wow celebrates the community and the reserve is a collective home; Corbiere Lavell related, that despite the fact that she and her son lived in southern Ontario, Manitoulin Island is where they "belong." Oppression by government and church has eroded traditional skills and ceremonies, and "home" is where the process of healing and reclamation occurs.

Jacqueline Haessly is a peace educator and adoptive parent of four special needs children, three of whom are boys. In "Mothering Sons with Special Needs: One Peacemaker's Challenge," Haessly emphasizes that the act of nurturing, instead of solely being a mother's responsibility, should be a group dynamic. Haessly's personal experience of family abuse and her work as a psychiatric nurse motivated her to become involved in programmes for non-violence. Her commitment to the creation of a peaceful environment in which differences are appreciated, needs and feelings are shared, and conflicts are resolved in a positive way enabled the growth and development of her challenged children. In an atmosphere of mediation, skills are passed on to children and they in turn take responsibility for problem solving and the well being of family and community. This approach decreases the expectation that it is mother's responsibility to be the mediator, or emotional caretaker, of the family. By developing these skills (which tend to be idealized as female virtues), sons are empowered and can effect positive change.

The Session "Reconstructing Masculinity at Home" was well attended and provoked a great deal of discussion. In "How to be a Feminist Mom," Catherine MacGillivary, challenged the premise that an "essential maleness" exists and rejected the idea that feminists should mother their sons with this belief. Rather than viewing children as male or female, all children should be viewed as human beings and should be socialised in the same manner in order to encourage common values such as empathy and tolerance. MacGillivary warns feminists that they are capitulating their goals by accepting a notion that she considers is a means of assigning rigid gender roles and naturalising aggressiveness. She recognizes that feminist mothers fear sons will be alienated by their peer group and offers an analogy that she believes is helpful. She considers that the challenges of feminism and racism are parallel, and feminists could help their sons cope with their "distinction" in the same way that racial minorities do: using coping techniques to help with not "blending in." She suggests that the challenges of feminism and racism are parallel. However, Carolyn Mitchell's earlier address indicated that the challenges of racism are much more threatening than the challenges of feminism and with this in mind, I wonder whether such an analogy is applicable.

In "Neither Wimps nor Warriors: How Do Mothers Mediate Masculinity for their Sons?," Alison Thomas discussed the social construction of male gender and assesses the concerns of feminist mothers today. In this century, father's absence during the work day meant mother had to impart the values of

From left to right, Nancy Mandell, former Director of the Centre for Feminist Research, Andrea O'Reilly, Founding President, A.R.M, Marilyn Lambert, Acting Master of McLaughlin College, Jeannette Corbiere Lavell, keynote speaker, and her son, Nimke Lavell. Photo: Terri Urovitz

Participants at the conference, "Mothers and Sons Today: Challenges and Possibilities," held at York University in September 1998. Photo: Terri Urovitz

"masculinity" to the son. Thomas acknowledges other influences such as media and school existed but essentially, boys learned to be masculine by not being like Mom, who defined the "feminine." The feminist movement produced a "new kind of woman" who valued involved, communicative men, and women attempted to impart these values to their sons, hence developing a new construct of masculinity. Domestic responsibility and awareness of patriarchy were the goals of the new masculinity, but some sons reported that this knowledge made it harder to fit in with their friends—they had been made into wimps. Further results of an informal survey revealed that mothers risked their relationship with sons by critiquing their actions and attitudes, hence jeopardising the notion of unconditional love. Thomas suggests that, in the ongoing process of negotiating masculinity, feminists need to examine "masculinity," involve men in the process, and critique without undermining our sons.

This session was attended by a significant individual, the infant son of Catherine MacGillivary. Despite his inability to comment, he seemed to bring our sons into the room as we grappled with "masculinity"—how we view it and how it defines our sons. Many women talked of the emergence of specific behaviour in sons despite their efforts to socialise them otherwise. An artist described her growing appreciation of hockey; another mother observed her double standard of wanting her daughter to play soccer to encourage assertiveness and her reluctance to have her son play because of the same reason. One mother stated the "boys will teach you who they are" and it was a reminder that, despite mother's attempts to mediate "masculinity," a son, by virtue of his personality and his circumstances, will determine that too.

In conclusion, the strength of this conference was the diversity of the participants. The varying perspectives of the speakers had to have challenged the assumptions of each member of the audience at some point. While there was not always agreement, there was consensus that the mother-son relationship needs to be further explored by feminist study. More male participants would have provided interesting viewpoints, such as the inside experiences of "masculinity." I left the conference with a sense of possibility. I was fortified by the call to be aware of the forces of "masculinity" in your son's life, to challenge the "rules" that persuade you to retreat for the development of "healthy" masculinity, and I gained insight and strength from women who mother in models not approved or promoted by patriarchy. It was a privilege to attend.

Selected Papers from the conference will be published in Mothers and Sons: Feminist Perspectives, *edited by Andrea O'Reilly, forthcoming from Routledge, Spring 2000. As well, the* Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering *will publish an issue on this topic.*

Andrea O'Reilly

Maternal Resistance and Redemption in Toni Morrison's *Paradise*

The aim of this article is to situate Morrison's seventh novel *Paradise* in her maternal philosophy and politic as it has been developed in her novels, interviews, and nonfictional writings. I am currently completing a book on mothering in the writings of Morrison; in this piece I seek to incorporate *Paradise* into Morrison's larger maternal vision and consider how this novel elaborates, refines, and problematizes Morrison's maternal philosophy.[1] The article is divided into three parts. In the first, I will briefly delineate Morrison's maternal theory, next I will locate *Paradise* in this thematic framework, finally I will consider how this novel expands and enriches Morrison's maternal vision in its redefinition of maternal resistance and redemption.

Motherhood, for Morrison, is a profoundly public and political enterprise. Morrison advocates a mothering centred on what she calls the ancient properties of traditional black womanhood. Black women, according to Morrison, are providers and nurturers; they inhabit the public sphere of work and the private realm of home and do so unproblematically; they are both "ship and safe harbour, inn and trail." "Our history as Black women," writes Morrison, "is the history of women who could build a house and have some children and there was no problem.... What we have known is how to be complete human beings ... you don't have to have to choose anything. You chose your responsibilities" (qtd. in Wilson, 1994: 35). Morrison argues that the "ancient properties" of traditional black womanhood, carried along the motherline and assumed by each generation of women, are at the core of black women's empowerment. Morrison explains:

> If women are to become full, complete the answer may not be in the future, but the answer may be back there. And that does interest me

> more than the fully liberated woman, the woman who understands her past, not the woman who merely has her way. (qtd. in Koeneny, 1994: 81-82)

The ancient properties of black womanhood, in Morrison, also position mothers as the cultural bearers who, in their connection with African American culture and history, serve as ambassadors for their people, bringing the past to the present and keeping African American culture in the community of black people. "[Ancestors] are DNA," explains Morrison, "It's where you get your information, your cultural information. Also it's your protection, it's your education" (qtd. in Washington, 1994: 238). In her essay, "Rootedness The Ancestor as Foundation" Morrison elaborates: "When you kill the ancestor you kill yourself. I want to point out the dangers, to show that nice things don't always happen to the totally self reliant if there is no historical connection" (Morrison, 1984: 344). Morrison insists that the well-being of African Americans depends upon them preserving what she calls the "funkiness" of black cultural identity; defined in her first novel, *The Bluest Eye,* as the "funkiness of passion, the funkiness of nature, the funkiness of a whole wide range of emotions" (Morrison, 1970: 68) and a term used by Morrison to signify black folk values.

However, in her insistence upon historical connection, Morrison does not advocate, as do the town Fathers of Ruby in *Paradise*, strict adherence to tradition.[2] Rather, ancestral memory for Morrison, is to be called upon to sustain, not restrict, growth, both personal and cultural. While ancestral wisdom is literally written in iron, if not in stone, in the town of Ruby in the Oven's motto, in Morrison's view history is continually retold and relived by each generation and is remembered (Morrison's term is rememory) to enable African Americans to live well in *the present.* Speaking specifically of a female motherline but applicable I would suggest to Morrison's thinking on the African American motherline, Hope Edelman comments: "Motherline stories ground a ... daughter in a gender, a family, and a feminine history. They transform the experience of her female ancestors into maps she can refer to for warning or encouragement" (Edelman, 1994: 201). Of concern to Morrison is the disconnection of African Americans from their motherline and the ancient properties and the funkiness it embodies and how such may be resisted. "From the onset of her literary career," as Angelita Reyes has observed, "Toni Morrison has been deeply concerned with the preservation of black folklore, and with sustaining positive black cultural values" (Reyes, 1986: 19).

What further distinguishes the motherline in Morrison is her insistence upon what may be termed the politics of the heart. Morrison argues that self love depends on the self first being loved by another self. Before the child can love herself, she must experience herself being loved and learn that she is indeed valuable and deserving of affection. Informing Morrison's writing is her belief that mothering is essential for the emotional well-being of children because it

is the mother who first loves the child and gives to that child a loved sense of self. Morrison's children thus move from mother-love to self-love to selfhood. Mother-love, in a racist culture that deems black children unlovable, is thus an act of resistance. Morrison thus places mother-love, along with the ancient properties and the funk, at the centre of black resistance and emancipation.

Morrison's motherlove and motherline as empowerment trajectory may be examined under five interrelated themes. The first theme considers women's disconnection from their motherline and how this results in the loss of their ancient properties of traditional black womanhood . Of interest to Morrison in *The Bluest Eye*, for example, is Pauline's loss of the ancient properties and the devastating consequences of such for herself and her daughter, Pecola. Morrison's concern in this, her first novel, is how women become disinherited from their motherline through assimilation in the dominant culture, particularly through interpolation in the normative discourses of the family and female beauty, and the impact of this on women's ability to mother. *Tar Baby*, Morrison's fifth novel, details a daughter's disconnection from the motherline, in this instance Jadine's disconnection results not in a failure of mothering as with Pauline, but in an inability, as with Sula, to achieve the authentic selfhood of traditional black womanhood championed by Morrison. In *Tar Baby* Jadine's disconnection from the motherline is occasioned by the death of her mother and results in her disavowal of the ancient properties of black womanhood that would afford her authentic selfhood.

The second theme, entitled "Disruptions of the Motherline: Slavery, Migration, Assimilation and the Loss of the Funk" examines how the African American motherline and the sustaining "funk" values it conveys is fractured by historical trauma, in particular slavery, migration and assimilation. *Beloved*, a novel of slavery and its aftermath, shows that slavery, more so than any other cultural institution, severed the African American motherline by separating families through sale and by commodifying African Americans as property, robbing them of their subjectivity and their history. *The Bluest Eye* with Pauline, *The Song of Solomon* with Macon and Ruth, and *Jazz* with Violet and Joe examine how identification with the values of the dominant culture results in the loss of the funk.

The third thematic is an exploration of how Morrison's characters may be reconnected to the motherline. Central to this exploration are the questions: how is reconnecting made possible and by whom? *Song of Solomon* describes how African Americans may reconnect to their lost motherline and reclaim the ancient properties and funkiness of their forebearers. Milkman's successful quest may be contrasted to Jadine's failed quest in *Tar Baby*. Jadine's failed quest is due, in large part, to Son's inability to fulfill the function of cultural bearer as Pilate did in *Song*. Ultimately the novel argues that men, as they are currently gendered in patriarchal society, cannot be the cultural ambassadors of the motherline because the masculinity they are expected to assume under patriarchy is predicated on mother-son separation.

The next theme considers how Morrison represents motherlove as an act of resistance. *Beloved* positions nurturance as a political act and situates homeplace, to use bell hooks' words, as a site of resistance (see hooks, 1990: 41-49). This theme first emerges in *The Bluest Eye* in Mrs McTeer's defiance of the hegemonic discourse that defines her black daughters as unworthy and unlovable. In *Beloved* Sethe claims a maternal subjectivity in defiance of the construction of slave mothers as breeders in order to instill in her children a loved sense of self so they may be subjects in a culture that commodifies them as object. Loving her children, for Sethe, is a political act of resistance.

Mothering as healing is the final theme. Morrison's sixth novel, *Jazz*, tells the story of unmothered children who never take the journey from mother-love to self-love, and thus never come to know their own selves. *Jazz* emphasizes how essential mothering is for the emotional well-being of children. The children in *Jazz* are orphaned, abandoned, and denied nurturant mothering; as adults, they are psychologically wounded. The loss of the mother for Violet and Joe fractures and displaces their developing selfhood; only when they mourn the loss of their mothers and reconnect with them is recovery of their child selfhood made possible. *Jazz* is thus a story about the wounding and healing of the unmothered children.

Paradise both elaborates and problematizes the above themes of Morrison's maternal philosophy. The mothering as healing theme is expanded to embrace the healing done by and for women. This theme can be traced in Morrison's fiction from the three whores in *The Bluest Eye*, to Alice and Violet's friendship in *Jazz*: women in Morrison function as mothers to each other, providing the care and nurturance that make survival possible. In a recent interview Morrison commented "The real healing is often women talking to women ... Hester Prynne now ... or Madame Bovary: they needed a good girl friend to come along and say, "Honey, you did what with him.... But these women were written by men, so they didn't have girlfriends to confess to, or laugh with. Laughter is a way of taking the reins into your own hands" (Ross, 1995: C1)." In "Mothering and Healing in Recent Black Women's Fiction" Carole Boyce Davies writes: "Mothering and healing are intricately connected and of central thematic importance in recent novels by Black women....These writers reveal that Black women, at certain junctures in their lives, require healing and renewal and that Black women themselves must be the healers/mothers for each other when there is such a need" (Davies, 1985: 41).

In *Paradise*, as the women take refuge in the convent, they nurture and sustain one another. The convent itself, Connie's home and the women's refuge, signifies maternal nurturance; kitchens, and cooking, both metaphorically and literally central to the convent, represent in Morrison fiction care and healing. Upon her arrival at the convent, Mavis reflects, "Here in the kitchen she felt safe; the thought of leaving it disturbed her" (Morrison, 1998: 41). The kitchen with "no windows," is also described by the men as they invade it, as a womb; and significantly, as Morgan stands in the kitchen he recalls being

bathed by his mother as baby and drinks milk in "long measured swallows" (1998: 7).

Connie, described by the narrator as, "a new and revised Reverend mother," is, like Baby Suggs in *Beloved,* a Healer to the cast-off and troubled women who arrive at the Convent. When Pallas arrives, unable to speak or cry because "the pain was too far down" (1998:172) Seneca brings her to Connie who, as the narrator tells us, "stretched out her hand and Pallas went to her, sat on her lap, talk-crying at first, then just crying" (1998: 173). Connie was, as Seneca observes, "magic" (1998: 173). Connie is indeed magical and, in this, may be compared to Pilate in *Song of Solomon*; both women possess supernatural other-worldly powers; as Pilate is visited by her dead father, Connie brings dead people back to life. However, as both women are spiritual and magical healers, Connie, more so than Pilate, is likened to a priestess or Goddess. Connie's home was once a convent; it is called a coven by the Town Fathers. As the men come upon the convent they speculate there may be "witch tracks" hidden beneath the mist (1998: 5). The cellar is described by the men as "the devil's bedroom, bath room and nasty playpen" (1998: 17).

Later in the text when Connie is in deep despair she is visited by a mysterious magical walking man (1998: 252); this visit it would seem inexplicably gives rise to her spiritual transformation (1998: 262): after this visit she once again performs her sacred food preparation. And when she calls the women together she is described as high priestess "With the aristocratic gaze of the blind she sweeps the women's faces and says 'I call myself Consolata Sosa, If you want to be here you do what I say. Eat how I say. Sleep when I say. And I will teach you what you are hungry for" (1998: 262). The women, the text tells us, "look at each other and then at a person they do not recognize" (1998: 262). In the cellar Consolata oversees, as would a high priestess, a highly ritualized healing ceremony (1998: 263-266) wherein the women are cleansed of their suffering through a self purification in the circles of their bodies' silhouettes (1998: 266). The women, as Jill Matus has observed, "begin to dream collectively, each entering and experiencing the traumatic re-enactments of the other." (Matus, 1998: 164). Together they return to Mavis' Cadillac: "They enter the heat in the Cadillac. They inhale the perfume of the sleeping infants and feel parent cozy ..." (1998: 264). Seneca, when overcome with the urge to cut herself, marks the image of her body instead. Anna when she later sees the templates recognized, as the text tells us, "the terribleness K.D. reported, but it wasn't pornography he had seen, nor was it Satan's scrawl. She saw instead the turbulence of females trying to bridle, without being trampled, the monsters that slavered them" (1998: 303). "Life, real, and intense, shifted to down there in limited pools of light, in air smoky from kerosene lamps and candle wax" (1998: 264) "They had to be reminded of the moving bodies they wore, so seductive were the alive ones below" (1998: 265). The exorcisms give rise to rebirth; cleansed and purified the women are baptized into a new self and world:

> [The rain] was like lotion on their fingers so they entered it and let it pour like balm on their shaved heads and upturned faces. Consolata started it; the rest were quick to join her. There are great rivers in the world and on their banks and the edges of oceans children thrill to water. In places where rain is light the thrill is almost erotic. But those sensations bow to the rapture of holy women dancing in hot sweet rain. They would have laughed, had enchantment not been so deep" (Morrison, 1998: 283).

Reborn, these women, as the text tells us, "were no longer haunted" (1998: 266).

The healing potential of maternal care as shared among the women parallels the mothering resistance theme present in Morrison's earlier novels and reconfigured in this novel through what may be termed reproductive loss or failure. In *Beloved*, Stamp Paid, speaking to Paul D. about Sethe's act of infanticide explains that she was "trying to out hurt the hurter." In *Tar Baby*, Online, discussing Margaret's child abuse of her son, Michael, says "she didn't stick pins in her baby. She stuck'em in his baby, Her baby she loved" (Morrison, 1981: 279). Margaret and Sethe in these acts function as Medea figures; resistance against slavery in the instance of Sethe and patriarchal motherhood in the case of Margaret are enacted through maternal failure; rage and revenge are represented through harm to children. This theme is elaborated in *Paradise* in the character of Mavis. The deaths of her twins, I want to suggest, may be read as Mavis' resistance, albeit conveyed unconsciously, against her oppression as a battered wife and disempowered mother. Significantly, the suffocation of her twins occurs when she is buying Wieners for her husband because, as she explains to the interviewer "He was fit to be tied. Spam ain't anything for a working man to eat" (Morrison, 1998: 24) this symbolizing, I would suggest, patriarchal power.

In Morrison's previous novels, maternal failure of nurturance and abandoned/abused children signified an individual woman's inability to mother. In *Jazz*, for example, Rose Dear's despair and death prevented her from being a mother to and for her daughter. Pauline's Breedlove in the *The Bluest Eye* is unable to nurture her daughter because of her identification with the normative discourses of the family and female beauty. In *Beloved* under the institution of slavery, "Sethe could not, as she explains to Paul D., 'lov'em proper because they wasn't mine to love'" (Morrrison, 1981: 162). In each instance, the mother is unable to nurture her daughter and this "failure" is attributed to a disconnection or disruption of the motherline. Whether it was occasioned by assimilation as with Pauline or slavery and its aftermath as with Rose Dear and Sethe, the mother is disconnected from her motherline and can not bequeath to her daughter the ancient properties or the sustaining values of the "funk."

As *Paradise* bears witness to the loss of maternal nurturance; it also links maternal loss to maternal redemption. In this, the novel marks an important

development is Morrison's view of mothering as resistance. Maternal "failure" in *Paradise* engenders a maternal community. The death of her twins bring Mavis to the convent; while it is her mother's betrayal that brings Pallas. Seneca's suffering is attributed to her mother's abandonment of her as a child; likewise with Gigi. So too with the town women. Billie Dee arrives at the convent following a fight with her mother that almost killed her. Annette comes in search of an abortion; Soanne seeks assistance to bring on a miscarriage. Sweet, the mother of four sickly children, visits the Convent as does Lone, the now scorned midwife. While the convent women, both guests and residents, have experienced loss and discord as actual biological mothers and daughters, they form a female community based on maternal roles and relationships. They mother each other in and through healing that is both motherly and daughterly; they engage in othermothering, as described by Patricia Hill Collins (1990) and perform maternal healing as noted by Carol Boyce Davies (1985) above.

These fractures or failures in maternal roles and relationships also, I want to suggest, mark a much larger communal failure of care and nurturance. In *Paradise,* maternal failure signifies not so much an individual woman's inability to mother because of her disconnection from her motherline, but a *community's* failure to nurture because of its denial, disparagemt and displacement of the funk and the ancient properties. The well-being of a community may be measured, it is often argued, by the well-being of its children. The barreness, abortions, miscarriages, sickly children, and dead babies, as well the maternal abandonment and neglect, motherlessness, mother loss, mother-daughter estrangement described in this novel represent Haven and later Ruby's inability to sustain community. And this is precisely because it is not a real community, modeled as it is on patriarchal values of power, status, ownership, control, demarcated by the Oven's words and enacted through the town's philosophy of racial seclusion and selection. In so doing, the town Fathers have exorcized the ancient properties and the funk that Morrison positions at the centre of black resistance and empowerment. In Haven and later Ruby the sustaining values of the funk are lost through the hegemonic rule of the masculine and the subsequent marginalization of women and the feminine. In contrast, the convent woman create a maternal community from their own individual maternal losses; a community that affirms both the funk and the ancient properties.

Morrison's renditions of motherhood are truly horrifying: a son burnt to death; a baby whose throat is slit; children who are abused, abandoned, beaten and neglected by their mothers—these harrowing events permeate her first six novels and in *Paradise* this reproductive horror bespeaks a much larger and greater communal loss of care and connectedness. Yet while her meditations on motherhood cause despair, they also bring hope, and this I would suggest is particularly true in *Paradise.* The women, embodying funk and the ancient properties, "endure" while the text suggests that the town, in its present

patriarchal configuration, will not. At the conclusion of the novel, after the storming of the convent and the disappearance of the women, Anna discovers five eggs in the Convent hen house. This, I want to suggest, signifies both the "survival" of the five women and the hope that, despite the women's "death," the sustaining values of the funk and the ancient properties have prevailed. Eggs have always signified in Morrison' fiction the funk and the ancient properties; Milkman is captivated by the image of Pilate peeling a hard-boiled egg and Jadine is mesmerized by the African woman who carries the eggs cupped beneath her chin. At the conclusion of this novel, Anna stands holding the eggs in the Convent garden that is described as:

> Beyond was blossom and death. Shriveled tomato plants alongside crops of leafy green reseeding themselves with golden flowers; pink hollyhocks so tall the heads leaned all the way over a trail of bright squash blossoms; lacy tops of carrots browned and lifeless next to straight green spikes of onion. Melons split their readiness showing gums of juicy red. Anna sighed at the mix of neglect and unconquerable growth. The five eggs umber in her hands. (Morrison, 1998: 304-305)

The garden and the brown eggs, I would argue, metaphorically signify the tenacity and ultimate triumph of the funk and the feminine.

Paradise has been called Morrison's most feminist novel. While I would agree that this novel exposes, perhaps more so than her previous books—though this point is debatable—the horror that is patriarchy, I would argue that in labeling the book feminist and in reading it as a "woman's novel" we are left with an incomplete and truncated understanding of the novel and Morrison's larger vision. Morrison insists that the well-being of African Americans depends upon them preserving the funk and ancient properties of their African American cultural identity; of concern to Morrison in all of her novels is the disruption and disconnection of the motherline that would bequeath these values to each generation. In her first six novels slavery, migration and assimilation sever the motherline. In this novel, the motherline is ruptured by the black community itself in its repression of the folk and the feminine, symbolically enacted through the murder of the women. The murder of the women, unspeakably tragic in itself, thus also signifies the death of what Morrison has deemed essential for the survival of African American culture. At a recent symposium on Toni Morrison's *Paradise* the presenters debated whether this book delivers salvation or merely conveys despair.[3] I think the novel, at least symbolically, ends with the promise of redemption. The funk, the feminine and the ancient properties of the motherline have survived and, will triumph over the Town: "The Oven" (symbol of the town), the text tells us, "shifts just slightly, on one side. The impacted ground on which it rests is undermined" (Morrison, 1998: 303). And at the novel's end the women, we are

told, "rest before shouldering the endless work they were created to do down here in paradise" (1998: 318). Am image of hope, if not salvation.

[1]My book, tentatively entitled *Morrison on Motherhood,* will be published by Ohio State Press, Summer 2000.
[2]Jill Matus in *Toni Morrison,* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998) writes "Wheras Morrison's previous work has articulated the importance of bearing witness to the past and of coming to terms with traumatic history through memory and narrative, her most recent novel explores the excesses of commemoration as a sympton of enduring trauma" *Paradise,* Matus goes on to explain, is about a town "deafened by the roar of it own history" (306).
[3]"International Symposium on Toni Morrison's *Paradise,*" February 24, 1999; co-ordinated by Dr. Andrea O'Reilly and hosted by McLaughlin College, York Univerity, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

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Redefining Motherhood: Changing Identities and Patterns

Sharon Abbey and Andrea O'Reilly, eds.
Toronto: Second Story Press, 1998.

Reviewed by Brigitte Harris

The 18 chapters in this engaging, multi-authored book present diverse ways of investigating and making meaning of "mother," "mothering," and "motherhood." Qualitative methods—autobiographical, biographical, ethnographic, phenomenological, historical, case study, and participatory research—elicit women's stories. These stories demonstrate the complexity of women's experience and their meanings of mothering. Each chapter presents women's stories and a lucid discussion of the literature, providing a basis from which to question, criticize, support, refine, and rethink existing theories. Reading the book engaged me in an active reflective process.

The reflective process, both collaborative and individual, is illustrated throughout the book. For example, Andrea O'Reilly describes how her course leads students to "dismantle" the patriarchal mother-daughter estrangement narrative to build a new relational narrative. Elizabeth Diem engages in participatory research discussions with mothers of problematic adolescent daughters which allows them over time to "unravel" the disempowering myth of the perfect mother. Martha McMahon reflects on how the loss of her mother brought insight into her choice to not have children, questioning conceptions of motherhood by examining her subjectivity as a non-mother. Her use of "creatively reconstructed letters to a friend" is a particularly effective means of allowing the reader an "in" on her deliberative process. Rishma Dunlop questions patriarchal assumptions negating the embodied knowledge of female experience and demonstrates the power of writing, especially poetry, to capture and examine women's lived experience.

A particular strength of this book is in the insiders', outsiders', and

marginalized voices it presents. Motherhood issues are examined from the perspectives of mothers: academics, teachers, and foster mothers. Those who are not mothers provide an outsider's perspective: adolescent and grown daughters, and the legal and medical establishments. Of particular interest are chapters dealing with those whose stories have not been, or are not often told. A lesbian mother reflects on her daughter's coming to terms with her "different" family. A researcher describes the dynamic between mothers and daughters in families with a disabled parent. A filmmaker reclaims her historical roots by telling the stories of black mothers in their Nova Scotia communities. Another researcher recounts black women's experiences of motherhood to counter the

Mourning the Dreams: How Parents Create Meaning from Miscarriage, Stillbirth and Early Infant Death

Claudia Malacrida
Edmonton: International Institute for Qualitative Methodology Press, 1998.

Reviewed by Sharon M. Abbey

Having experienced the perinatal deaths of two of her own babies, Claudia Malacrida's recent book *Mourning the Dreams: How Parents Create Meaning from Miscarriage, Stillbirth and Early Infant Death* examines how other parents create sense or meaning out of the deaths of their pre- and at-term infants by interviewing 25 white middle-class Canadian parents who had suffered similar losses. Malacrida speculates that the untimely death of perinatal babies has traditionally been regarded as a topic better left unexplored because it is intrinsically tied up with the sacred cows of both motherhood and death and also because it has ambiguous connections to contested issues of abortion and choice. By uncovering many of these silenced stories, this book is intended to "illuminate the complexity and profundity of perinatal loss" (Malacrida, 1998: 1) as well as to help others gain some perspective of their own loss as they deal with their feelings of isolation and inappropriateness.

Acknowledging that there is some ambiguity about how to name perinatal death, Malacrida uses the term to include miscarriage within the first trimester, pregnancy loss, stillbirth and death of a new-born infant. She is critical of medical definitions that refer to infant loss prior to 20 weeks of pregnancy as "fetal wastage" or "spontaneous abortion." Regardless of the duration of the pregnancy, she argues, such a loss is experienced as a death to be mourned and profoundly changes the lives of family members forever. For the mothers, in

particular, it is also a death that occurs within them and their bodies become the sites of a terrible trauma. As these women attempt to heal emotionally they must also cope with physical changes their bodies are undergoing as well as intense feelings of emptiness. Not only do they lose a child, they physically participated in that loss.

As such, Malacrida points out that perinatal loss meets all the criteria of trauma - an unexpected and irreversible event or profound shock that threatens one's sense of identity and induces feelings of blame or guilt. Citing the work of Kenneth Doka's (1987, 1989) and his notion of "disenfranchised grief," Malacrida pays particular attention to the consensual grieving rules imposed by Western society that are intended to negate and delegitimate grief feelings. Paradoxically, she argues that tendencies to silence and ignore perinatal loss actually complicate and intensify feelings of grief and by compounding them with feelings of shame, isolation and a sense of alienation from traditional sources of solace such as rituals, compensatory benefits and even the right to compassion, time or privacy. She concludes that the silence and ambivalence surrounding issues related to perinatal loss, results in a lack of information, sensitivity and appropriate resources. Even worse, since Western culture places a high value on stoicism and self-reliance, mothers are not encouraged to talk about their fears of never producing healthy children, their loss of innocence, their sense of inadequacy for letting others down, their blame about not being able to protect their unborn child, their guilt for being self-absorbed, their anger at the medical profession for not being taken seriously or their regret for not taking time to grieve properly. In fact, the need to perform rituals that confirm the loss or that attempt some semblance of respectful care and protection for a dead child are often deemed dangerous, strange or pathological.

Malacrida's work relies heavily on Therese Rando's (1992) description of grief as "the process of experiencing the psychological, behavioral, social and physical reactions to the perception of loss" (11). She devotes a chapter to each of these aspects of the process. Psychologically, she emphasizes that the assumptions inherent in becoming a mother contribute significantly to her grief. The relationship between the mother and the child-to-be is "highly charged and has a great deal to do with [her] sense of self" (Malacrida, 1998: 36). Madacrida points out that a mother's ability to successfully complete grief work relates more to interpretations of "role-loss" than to "object-loss." In other words, how strongly does she feel the loss of her dreams and opportunities to play out her ideal of a 'good' mother, to live up to the hopes and expectations of significant others and to prove her worth through motherhood? Being perceived as a failure or feeling betrayed by her own body can set up barriers to healthy recovery.

Socially, Malacrida draws attention to the silence of bureaucratic institutions and legal systems surrounding perinatal loss. For example, there are no birth or death certificates issued and no insurance claims to process. These babies are given no status, no legitimacy. Moreover, many participants in her

study were even critical of family members, friends and workplace colleagues for simply failing "to understand that any support was required" (Malacrida, 1998: 64). Their intolerance for persistent sadness inferred that mothers undervalued their living children or that these feelings of bereavement were, in fact, under the grieving mother's control. Malacrida claims that there is a stigma to losing a baby and mothers are ultimately held accountable.

From the physical perspective, Malacrida is critical of the negative effects of psychopharmacological agents who sedate women and induce emotional numbness that "often works to hamper women's ability to be fully present at the only opportunity they will have to know and care for their child" (84). Normal postpartum symptoms such as lactation, bleeding and flat stomachs are also painful reminders of their loss. Drawing from her own experiences, Malacrida captures the powerful sense of this loss when she emphatically points out that, "The physical intimacy a pregnant woman shares with her child, beginning long before birth, binds her to that child in a way that is simply, physically impossible for another human to share. In this way, her physical connection to the dead child sets her apart from everyone else, even those who share the loss" (Malacrida, 1998: 89).

Using Rando's six 'R' stages in "complicated mourning," Malacrida then offers strategies, which she refers to as "postmodern creativity," to deal effectively with perinatal loss: recognizing the loss, reacting to the separation, re-experiencing, relinquishing, readjusting, and reinvesting. Malacrida believes that those who are most adaptive in their grief resolution "are able to go beyond the traditional norms of perinatal mourning that society imposes on them" (Malacrida, 1998: 94). She also points out that hospitals play a crucial role in providing direction and time in order to accommodate the baby as an individual, to honour and acknowledge its short life and to encourage the mother to claim her own legitimate feelings and needs. The insensitive "these things happen" mentality of medical practitioners is no longer acceptable. Some of the healing strategies Malacrida advocates involve reevaluating one's sense of self, reframing grief as a triumph, understanding that vulnerability has its own rewards and appreciating new-found resourcefulness and assertiveness with authority fi-gures. She offers hope for developing a new way of being that reflects a changed relationship and belief in oneself and claims that her participants "rebirthed themselves as a by-product of the 'failed' births of their children" (Malacrida, 1998: 117).

In the last chapter, Malacrida offers suggestions for further work in this field and also addresses the limitations of her study. As a feminist scholar, I would recommend this book as an exemplary model of qualitative research which might serve as a useful prototype for graduate students or forms the basis for further studies related to culture, class or health policy issues as well as to the social construction of motherhood. I am sure that many readers who can identify with experiences of perinatal loss will feel inspired to confront their own pain, anger and helplessness and use this book as a vehicle in their own

healing journey toward a stronger sense of legitimacy. Other readers will gain a deeper appreciation for an aspect of maternal experience that is still largely marginalized and silenced. Although Malacrida herself felt empowered and healed by conducting this research, she wanted to assure herself that her participants felt some of these positive benefits as well. To this end, she reports on a follow-up survey at the end of the book that validates her claim that others also gained new insight into their loss and its effects and that their participation in the study had been helpful. By dissecting the social, psychological and physiological interplays in perinatal grief, complicated mourning, and postmodern creativity, Malacrida confronts questions that are seldom asked and a type of death that is seldom validated.

Lesbians Raising Sons

Jess Wells, Ed.
Loss Angeles: Alyson Books, 1997

Reviewed by Mary F. Brewer

This anthology, according to the editor Jess Wells, shows how the "current baby boom among lesbians ... is challenging concepts and constraints of the family and, perhaps most important, raising men in a completely new way" (ix). It is divided into three sections, addressing the hybrid identity of lesbian families: how typically they transgress borders not only of sex and gender, but also race and class; the relation between living-out new models of family life and constructing new (self)images of lesbians and lesbian community; and the way in which the inherent sexism and homophobia within the legal system and society at large continues to victimize lesbian parents and their children.

The central theme within this collection rests on the various strategies employed by lesbian mothers to raise healthy, happy sons—boys who will have access to their full range of emotions and who will grow up to behave in ways that do not support systems of oppression—within the context of a society that denigrates women and homosexuals.

Rather than attempt to review all the articles, all of which document and provide valuable insights into lesbian's parenting skills and the wider impact lesbians raising sons may have on traditional gender roles in society, I shall attempt to look at how some of the above themes are addressed throughout. Most contributors follow a similar format of giving some history of their own experiences raising sons. Many of the lesbian mothers admit to some fear, even in some cases loathing, at the thought of raising a 'little patriarch,' and most also

make the telling connection between raising sons and having to re-evaluate their own generalizations of the 'other' gender. Robin Morgan's entry is especially noteworthy for the way it demonstrates that it is possible to "erode the allure of male entitlement," without giving boys a negative self-image. (Wells, 1997: 41) Other issues explored are: the advantages as well as the drawbacks of being out outside one's immediate circle of family and friends, how to protect children from the negative attitudes of teachers and peers who would hold their parents' sexual orientation against them, and to what extent lesbian parents, or indeed any parent, can influence a child's sex-gender development.

For me, one of the most interesting aspects of the collection is the way it debunks the myth that lesbian parents will coerce their children into accepting their own particular sexual orientation: rather, what the book makes clear is that the essence of good parenting for lesbians is respect for the child's individuality. Most lesbian mothers assert that is it of little importance to them whether their sons grow up to be straight or gay; they do, however, acknowledge working very hard to socialize their boys to adopt non-violent ways of resolving conflicts and to respect other people's rights and preferences.

Ellen Lewin's research on mothering illustrates that most women's accounts of becoming a mother focus on the power of the individual to construct or to imagine herself as a mother (1994: 338). In one of the books' most moving testimonies, Tryna Hope writes of giving up her son because "The truth is, I didn't see how I could be a lesbian *and* a mother" (Wells, 1997: 206). Studies such as this one point the way for lesbians to develop this sense of agency and a belief in their parenting capabilities. Its positive representation of lesbian families provides a valuable contribution to contemporary lesbian feminism.

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Maternal Personality, Evolution, and the Sex Ratio: Do Mothers Control the Sex of the Infant?

Valerie J. Grant
London: Routledge, 1998

Reviewed by Laura Lynn Mielke

In *Maternal Personality, Evolution, and the Sex Ratio: Do Mothers Control the Sex of the Infant?*, Valerie J. Grant suggests that indeed the mother does control the sex of the infant. Her "maternal dominance hypothesis" runs as follows: Women who score high in dominance on a personality test are more likely to give birth to boys than women who do not. This is because dominance is linked to higher levels of testosterone in the mother's blood, and testosterone affects whether the female reproductive system favors the X- or Y-chromosome-carrying sperm. In addition, stress can increase the amount of testosterone in a woman's bloodstream. Thus, the mother's personality and responsiveness to her environment are connected to her tendency to conceive a boy or a girl. This hypothesis makes sense in the evolutionary scheme, implying that mothers give birth to the children they are most suited to raise and at the appropriate time. The hypothesis also helps explain sex ratios (the ratio of males to females born in a given population) of populations under stress (higher than average). Grant suggests that if her hypothesis is correct, each mother "may be contributing to a kind of grand-scale psychological homeostasis which both sustains and limits psychological difference between men and women" (5).

Grant weaves examples from fiction and history and thought-provoking questions into her accessible synthesis of scientific studies. She carefully explicates research, evaluating each experiment's design and relevance to her hypothesis. Grant claims she "gathers all the relevant information" from the research, and as a result, her book incorporates work in bio-statistics, reproductive physiology, animal behavior, developmental psychology, evolutionary biology, and bio-ethics (1998: 4).

Maternal Personality, Evolution, and the Sex Ratio repeatedly considers evolutionary order and the problems that arise when humans meddle with nature's prescriptions. Of particular interest is the final chapter that discusses the social effects of technologies that determine, and perhaps one day control, the sex of any given fetus. Grant concludes that if a woman conceives a child of the sex she is most suited to raise, she should not attempt to preselect its sex. She believes that recognition of and respect for the maternal role in infant sex determination will correct the "son preference" in some societies.

Grant raises troubling questions surrounding developing technologies for manipulating the sex ratio. She also leaves us with troubling questions about the

role of scientific discourse in reinforcing dominant masculine power structures. Grant is aware that her linking of maternal dominance and the sex ratio not only (re-)naturalizes sex roles many feminists have sought to deconstruct but also identifies mothers as the "natural" perpetuators of those sex roles: "There may be an irony here," she writes toward the end of the book, "in that it appears that women themselves, by their very nature, are the ones who maintain psychosocial sex differences" (180). As a result, she encourages women "to develop those potentials that are unique to women," to embrace their psychological-social-biological role in evolution (196). In the maternal dominance scheme, differences in mothers' personalities "ensure the continuation of psychological sex difference, thereby laying the foundations for interpersonal relationships and maintaining the basic structure of human society" (198). This "basic structure" seems to be women's dominance in the family and men's in society. At the heart of Grant's hypothesis lies unspoken, politically conservative assumptions about the role of women in human society as well as in human evolution.

Going to an Aunt's: Remembering Canada's Homes for Unwed Mothers

Anne Petrie
Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1998.

Reviewed by Jeanne Marie Zeck

Feminists, sociologists, and historians will be pleased to know that Anne Petrie has researched a significant and often neglected phenomenon: homes for unwed mothers. Petrie's book is a social history of such homes in Canada focusing on the period from 1950-1970. Balanced, intelligent, and well-researched, this book offers a view of the sometimes well-meaning, but often judgmental and punitive culture that found it necessary to hide unmarried pregnant women. This is a well-integrated study: Petrie draws on the work of historians, sociologists, and psychologists; she cites documents and administrators from the homes; and, most effectively, she interviews the girls themselves. Petrie's greatest offering is the voices of these women, some of whom have never before told their stories. Nearly all of the dozens of women Petrie interviewed were coerced into giving up their children for adoption. In her book, Petrie focuses on seven women, including herself. She tells each story sequentially beginning with the relationship that resulted in pregnancy through to the days and months after each baby's birth. Theirs are powerful voices of

authority in this important volume of personal, national, and world history.

A most salient and disturbing truth that Petrie describes is the dearth of information about sexuality, birth control, and child birth available during the middle of the twentieth century. Until 1969, distribution of information about contraception and contraception itself was illegal (Petrie,1998: 120). Although the pill was developed earlier, doctors only prescribed it for married women. This was the era immediately before the Women's Movement and the sexual revolution transformed our lives. Petrie's book recovers a time when "an unwed pregnancy meant a girl's life was over in many ways. She couldn't go back to school, she would be ruined for marriage" (Petrie,1998: 45). Many girls were thrown out of their own homes. After telling her parents she was pregnant, Allie F. of Vancouver found "a note [from them] saying that she wouldn't be expected for dinner again, ever" (Petrie,1998: 44). Yet Petrie resists labeling these young women as victims; instead, she records each individual woman's story and circumstance. The seven young women who are the focus of the book come from a variety of ethnic and class backgrounds and geographic locations from British Columbia to Newfoundland.

Most of the homes for unwed mothers were run by churches: Roman Catholic, Protestant, Anglican, and Pentecostal. Others were run by government agencies and still others by individuals. Petrie states, "Like the circles in Dante's inferno, there is a kind of descending order of homes....[Yet they] saved many [young women] from far worse fates" (61). She explains the social mores that resulted in the girls being shut away: "These girls had fallen ... from the evil inherent in every [woman].... She was the fount of original sin. Historically, it was this demonization of women that informed and undermined much of the charitable Christian rescue work" (Petrie,1998: 78). Petrie illustrates how the patriarchal order robbed these women of their self-esteem and identities. Without the last name of the baby's father to legitimate her status as a mother, the young woman lost control of her identity. In the home she was stripped of her last name (her father's name) and, in some cases, assigned a new first name. Ostensibly these acts were performed to protect the girls; yet it was the girls' families who were actually spared the humiliation with which their "wayward" daughters threatened them. The girls were shut away from "decent" society, restricted from looking out windows and using the front door of the home. They learned the price of non-conformist individualism" (81). While some girls felt they were imprisoned in the homes, for others, the homes were welcome havens from alcoholic, abusive families (Petrie,1998: 55). Through interviews, Petrie offers portraits of several compassionate, well-loved directors of homes including Sister Frances Cabrini at Misericordia's Edmonton home and Molly Breen, who opened her own home in St. John's, Newfoundland "to girls in trouble."

Expertly, Petrie reveals the commonalities of the experience: the lack of judgment or responsibility society placed on the fathers of the babies and the lasting effects of the experience on the young women: depression, loneliness,

shame, rage, and the years of grieving for their lost children. *Gone to an Aunt's* is a scholarly work that is accessible to undergraduate students. This is an excellent text for women's studies and sociology courses, students as well as general audiences and readers.

"Bad" Mothers: The Politics of Blame in Twentieth-Century America

Molly Ladd-Taylor and Lauri Umansky, Eds.
New York: New York University Press, 1998

Reviewed by Jill R. Deans

This recent anthology is an amalgam of social and historical criticism useful to researchers, students, and anyone interested in the culture of blame that taints twentieth-century American motherhood. Editors Molly Ladd-Taylor and Lauri Umansky, whose own accomplished scholarship appears in the book, have gathered some impressive contributors, many well-known, others emergent, speaking from a range of disciplinary view points from the historical to the legal, the personal to the political.

Divided by era (early, middle and late twentieth century), the volume demonstrates how ideas and stereotypes—like Philip Wylie's poisonous concept of *momism*—took hold and shaped public and professional opinion. It provides origins for the culture of expertise that continues to influence perceptions of "good" and "bad" mothers today. Different articles often refer to the same culprits—the Philip Wylies, Margaret Mahlers, social workers, therapists, and more recently, the courts, fetal rights groups and the media. Overlap between articles, however, builds consensus that the power of "choice" to determine and define motherhood, as Rickie Solinger describes it, does not always belong to mothers.

While the anthology consists primarily of critics, it also contains a short selection of actual mom-bashing, presumably to historicize from a more primary angle. This section, however, offers a mere taste of what the critics are reacting against. Individual articles work better to prove the injustice of those who blame mothers for everything from violent children to communism.

Widely-published scholars like Elaine Tyler May, Katha Pollit, and Betty Jean Lifton contribute overviews which are more thoroughly explored in their own books. Still, they represent important touchstones for such issues as childlessness, fetal rights, and adoption, respectively. Paula Caplan's "Mother-Blaming," an excerpt from her popular book *Don't Blame Mother*, might be a

centerpiece, if it weren't stylistically divergent from the rest of the volume which is more scholarly in tone and depth. Less familiar names were chosen, undoubtably, for both their readability and the rigors of their research claims. Elizabeth Rose's historical analysis of Day Care and Nursery Schools, for example, is an excellent preview for her own upcoming book. Here she explains the class-based distinctions in the 1920s and 30s that influence perceptions of the "bad" mother, the working mother who is forced to "neglect" her child and the affluent mother who "smothers" her child with attention.

While many of the articles approach the politics of blame in important but predictable ways, citing the tension between "experts" with power and voiceless mothers, Annalee Newitz confronts women who speak out, act out and even resort to murder to upset motherhood as a defining category. She uses recent examples of filicide to "begin thinking about the kind of woman who does not need violent crime in order to choose childlessness, and who does not think of childlessness as a violent crime." Newitz's piece works well beside articles like Umansky's on the Karen Carter breastfeeding case, and Annette R. Appell's on contemporary child welfare which also feature mothers "out of control" on some level.

None of the authors "mean to downplay real violations of parental duty," as the editors put it, but all work to illustrate how a system of power and control over the domain of motherhood can prevent some healthy choices and enable destructive alternatives. Exploring how and why we evaluate women as mothers in this century, can help to unpack the ever- contentious debate around the American family and the role of women in the next—some old issues for a new century.

When Mothers Work: Loving Our Children Without Sacrificing Ourselves

Joan K. Peters
Addison-Wesley, 1997

Reviewed by Denise Bauer

This book's subtitle is what attracted me; its promise was fulfilled. Joan Peters, a doctoral candidate, journalist, novelist and college teacher of writing and literature, persuasively and for me, reassuringly argues that working mothers *should* work. Working and having an identity and life independent of familial responsibilities, she claims, creates "freer mothers, stronger marriages (and) happier children (131)."

In a penetrating cultural analysis, Peters reveals the ways that motherhood is romanticized and mythologized in contemporary society and outlines the psychological and social effects these often institutionalized myths have on women and their families. For example, she points out that one of the central reasons for the divorce rate reaching 50% is the "tendency for partners to backslide into traditional roles" after having children (131). Fathers must take on more responsibility for childcare, although she admits that often when couples can afford help, mothers wind up coparenting with their daycare providers and nannies instead of their husbands. Peters claims that in order to effect serious social and political change, mothers must insist that fathers share equal responsibility for raising children. She provides portraits of real life families that demonstrate what some of these cultural problems and ideals look like and how traditional families can successfully be restructured.

At the heart of the conflict between working and mothering is a powerful "sacrificial mother" ideal which Peters describes as an outdated social artifact that needs to be radically revised. The cultural value of the "sacrificial mother ideal" creates conflicts for today's working mothers who have been raised to participate fully in public life and contribute economically to the family. Peter writes, "the nuclear family, in which mother is the linchpin of family life...rarely works anymore" (137). Instead she argues for equitable parenting, "extending family" so that parents are not isolated and alone caring for their children and that mothers replace traditional motherhood with "self-nourishing motherhood" as a way of caring most completely for themselves and their families.

In her final chapter, "Mothering, Growth of Self and Soul: A Philosophical Conclusion" Peters offers further inspiring reasons why mothers should work and not exclusively care for their children. While acknowledging that most middle class women are loath to leave their children in someone else's care, she argues that the overwhelmingly positive results show that working mothers live more balanced lives and "more fully experience how much children enrich life" (204). "It may even be that the psychological and social wealth of a woman's life contributes rather than detracts from the jubilance of mothering" (Peters 208).

While these truisms might be applicable to educated middle class women who have had the opportunity to find satisfying, not to mention adequately paying work, it remains less true for working class, less educated and single parent mothers. For example when Peters writes, "The most fundamental maternal tenderness often exists in inverse proportion to the amount of motherwork a mother must do" (209) she provides a good argument for why childcare should not be the province of one person, but does not acknowledge the fact that for many women this is not an option. Many poor and working class women cannot afford to pay for child care, many mothers are distanced from family and/or are isolated in inhospitable neighborhoods and communities. Similarly, the availability and quality of childcare is a huge variable that colors these solutions and complicates the attainment of these ideals. While

Peters addresses many of these caveats, the overall focus of the book is on middle class mothers. Ultimately, as Peters consistently point out, the final solution to the problems facing all mothers today is radical social and political change in the workplace and in business and government responsibility towards families.

Mothering and Ambivalence

Wendy Hollway and Brid Featherstone, Eds.
London: Routledge, 1997.

Reviewed by Astrid Henry

Motherhood, it is often noted, poses a problem for feminists. From the repudiation of motherhood found in early second wave texts such as Shulamith Firestone's *The Dialectic of Sex*, to the celebration of it that followed only shortly thereafter in books like Adrienne Rich's *Of Woman Born*, feminists have struggled with how to theorize the experience of mothering. As these earlier works suggest, feminism has not escaped the tendency toward either denigrating or idealizing motherhood that characterizes so much of popular discourse about mothers. *Mothering and Ambivalence*, edited by Wendy Hollway and Brid Featherstone, forcefully argues that both the impulse to denigrate mothers and the desire to idealize them spring from the same source: an inability to recognize ambivalence, whether the mother's ambivalence about her child, the child's ambivalence about her mother, or society's ambivalence about motherhood generally. As Featherstone writes in her introduction to this anthology, "Mothering is not all joy, but it is not all sorrow either. Let us hold on to both; let us not deny the ambivalence, either in practice or in theory" (1997: 12).

The eleven new essays which make up this volume address a wide range of issues pertaining to mothering, including: mother-daughter relations; the role of fathers; the ways in which race, class, and nationality reflect the experience of mothering; single parenting; mothers who are violent and abusive; and the psychodynamics of divorce. Written primarily by therapists and social workers about their clinical experience, these writers persuasively argue that psychoanalysis—and by that they mean primarily object-relations theory—is the one theory that can help us get beyond the cultural and psychological impasses blocking a more complete and complex understanding of motherhood. One of the most interesting aspects of this book, in fact, is its insistence that we must, as feminists, reclaim psychoanalysis in order to transcend the polarization that typifies so much of the debate about mothering.

The theorist whose work is perhaps most central to this volume is the American psychoanalyst Jessica Benjamin, whose writing on maternal subjec-

tivity is cited in many of these essays. The difficulty of articulating this maternal subjectivity, whether in the therapeutic setting or within feminist discourse, has left the experience of mothering and all its contradictions in the hands of others, to be described, yet again, in the most idealistic or denigrated terms. As these writers argue, it is only by recognizing the mother's subjectivity—her autonomy, her sexuality, her ambivalence—that the institution of motherhood will ever change. It is imperative that feminists rejoin the debate about the changing institutions of motherhood and the family. As Susie Orbach argues in an interview compiled in this volume, "We ought not to keep relinquishing ground and letting the Right run the debate on this" (91). At a time when conservatives on the Right seem to have all but taken over contemporary discourse on the family, this book provides a useful intervention.

Engendering Motherhood: Identity and Self-Transformation in Women's Lives

Martha McMahon
New York: Guilford Press, 1995

Reviewed by Erin E. MacDonald

Martha McMahon's book is based on her Ph.D. research as a feminist sociologist. Using a social interactionist approach that emphasizes qualitative data, her findings are based on what participants told her about their lives. From 1988 to 1989, she recorded both on paper and on microcassette the experiences of 59 full-time working Toronto mothers of preschool-aged children, both those with and those without partners. Although her original intention was to explore the balance of work and childcare in these working- and middle-class mothers' lives, McMahon focused her attention instead on the identity-transforming influence of having children, because the mother-child relationship was considered of the greatest value to the participants. Including a wealth of charts and statistics to support her findings, the author presents a convincing and thought-provoking new study of an old theme. While past feminists tended to concentrate on the oppression of women as housewives, she turns her attention to the symbolic and real importance of the mother-child relationship in these women's lives. Her book moves through an analysis of "the social processes through which women became pregnant and sustained their pregnancies through to motherhood" (McMahon, 1995: 15) to an analysis in the final chapters of "the processes whereby these women developed conceptions of themselves as mothers" (McMahon, 1995: 15).

McMahon found that in spite of the non-traditional situations of the mothers and the fact that each woman experienced her transformation to motherhood differently, "what emerges from this study is that women, pursuing what they experienced as their private and personal choices and decisions, reproduced many of the gendered patterns of their culture" (McMahon, 1995: 16). Even though "womanliness" and "motherhood" are today recognized as socially constructed roles rather than essential identities, the experience of raising a child seems to reinforce many of society's naturalized conceptions of these roles. However, McMahon also stresses that factors such as race and class play an equally important part in the process, and cannot be separated from the experience of mothering. Using modern gender and sociological theories and comparing them to the psychologically based theories of the past, McMahon successfully applies theory to her research in clear, revealing ways.

Her detailed descriptions of the reactions of working- and middle-class women to motherhood demonstrate her point that " the personal and political in motherhood cannot really be separated" (McMahon, 1995: 29). In an interview setting, McMahon discovered that while numerous similarities existed between the experiences of both groups of women, class did make a significant difference. With less financial constraints on their lives, middle-class women tended to wait to have children until they felt they had achieved the "right" relationship, career, and personal sense of self. In contrast, "working-class women's accounts suggest that many of them saw themselves as achieving maturity *through* having a child" (McMahon, 1995: 91). While in both cases, women's own lives and identities were dramatically transformed after giving birth, middle-class women seemed to be far more surprised by the changes. Contrary to common belief, alone mothers saw their new identities as redemptive even though the culture of liberal individualism "carries the historical class and gender priorities of liberal democracies and is empirically unachievable by many women and minority persons" (McMahon, 1995: 127). As one middle-class mother, Anna, puts it "I think [without a child] I would have viewed myself as an administrator/teacher instead of—now I view myself as a ***human***" (McMahon, 1995: 147). In general, when asked questions about the daily realities of having children, most women responded in terms of feelings, suggesting further the deeply rooted connection of motherhood to self-transformation.

In the end, McMahon stresses that we must learn to see social relationships, not biology, as the primary cause of cultural experience. Motherhood represents a fascinating opportunity for researchers and enthusiasts alike to explore the complex political, social, and personal phenomenon of identity transformation in the modern woman's life. According to the author, "Social transformation is the responsibility of everyone" (McMahon, 1995: 277), not just mothers.

Motherland: Writings by Irish American Women About Mothers and Daughters

Caledonia Kearns, Editor.
William Morrow, 1999

Reviewed by Bridget Matthews-Kane

When I was in high school, my father gave me a dog-eared article that analyzed the dynamics of the Irish American family. As I read it, a mix of fascination and horror crept over me because it seemed as if someone had been following my family around, observing our every move, listening in on our conversations and, even worse, creeping around inside our brains. How was this possible, I wondered? Wasn't I, the great-granddaughter of Irish immigrants, far enough removed from Ireland to have shed these personality traits and patterns of behavior? I put the article aside, but continued to ponder how ethnicity could influence the most immediate, personal, and seemingly unique relationships in my life.

Perhaps my fascination with this led me to pick up Caledonia Kearns' *Motherland: Writings by Irish American Women About Mothers and Daughters.* This well-chosen anthology contains fiction, autobiography, and political writings from well-known authors such as M.F.K. Fisher, Anna Quindlen, Doris Kearns Goodwin, and Mary Gordon, newer voices such as Lisa Carey and Karin Cook, and more neglected, out-of-print writers such as Elizabeth Gurley Flynn and Ellin Mackay Berlin. An appendix supplies succinct biographies on the book's Irish American and Irish immigrant writers. While weighed more towards contemporary stories, the well-chosen assortment contains twenty-four pieces from the past seventy-five years.

As the subtitle suggests, the stories focus on relationships between mothers and daughters. Besides this central theme, issues of guilt, faith, loyalty, tradition, silence, secrets, and storytelling resonate through the book. The range of contributions is matched by the quality. Several of the best stories come from memoirs; in an excerpt from "A Likely Story: One Summer with Lillian Hellman," Rosemary Mahoney recounts her childhood with her alcoholic mother and in an excerpt from another memoir, Mary Cantwell's "Manhattan, When I Was Young," the author relates her bout with postpartum depression. Another particularly fine piece is Maeve Brennan's short story "The Eldest Child," about the loss of a new-born infant. Included as well are humorous pieces: an excerpt on guilt and goldfish from Martha Manning's "Chasing Grace: Reflections of a Catholic Girl, Grown Up;" a clever piece by Jean Kerr, "The Child as Houseguest," on returning adult

children; and M.F.K Fisher's story of her mother's relationship with the local librarian, "Mother and 'Miss E.'"

While this fine collection presents a unique opportunity for readers to trace the faint patterns of ethnic behavior through the anthology the same way I, years ago, traced them through the whole of my own family, the universal appeal of these accessible and moving tales is sure to please a more general readership simply interested in the complex and rich relationships between mothers and daughters.

Maternal Justice: Miriam Van Waters and the Female Reform Tradition

Estelle B. Freedman
Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996

Reviewed by Beth Ann Bryant-Richards

Estelle B. Freedman's biography of women's prison reform leader Miriam Van Waters offers a glimpse into women's involvement in social work in the decades following the Jane Addams generation. Freedman manages to cover an amazing amount of historical ground in her superbly researched work. Although Freedman undoubtedly intended her book for a scholarly audience, any reader would enjoy this compelling story of a remarkable and charismatic woman.

Freedman begins her narrative by examining Van Waters's early days as a caretaker of her family, which sets a pattern for her entire life as a mother figure for incarcerated women. The author takes us through Van Waters's childhood, which she spent as a minister's daughter with a strong sense of responsibility for others. Our extremely bright and curious heroine excels as an undergraduate at the University of Oregon and remains there for a master's degree. Her matriculation at Clark University in Massachusetts, however, finds the young idealistic Ph.D. student under the thumb of an egotistical, conservative advisor. Van Waters's struggles to gain a solid foothold in the midst of academic quicksand would resonate with any late-twentieth century graduate student.

In part as a result of her difficulties at Clark, Van Waters turned her professional sights away from academia and to work in juvenile delinquency and women's prison reform. Beginning with her career in California and throughout her days as the Superintendent of the Massachusetts Reformatory for Women in Framingham, Van Waters took her role as surrogate mother with utmost earnestness. She mothered teenaged girls in Juvenile Court in California, her professional colleagues and personal friends, her younger siblings and family members, adult women inmates, and an adopted daughter,

Sarah. Often ahead of her time, in 1929 the never-married Van Waters adopted a young girl she met through her work with the Juvenile Court in California, another act that would resonate with current trends.

Freedman is quick to point out that Van Waters's maternal impulse to "save" those around her did not extend to saving herself. Thematically, Van Waters built her life around helping others, yet found it extremely difficult to stop and take care of herself—another postmodern theme in women's lives. Taking care of Van Waters often became the task of Geraldine Thompson, her lifelong friend, benefactor, and "Guardian Angel" (Freedman, 1996: 234).

The only troubling part of Freedman's biography, in fact, deals with the unfortunate lack of primary source material covering the forty-year Van Waters-Thompson relationship. Due to a 1949 political attack against Van Waters's suitability as Superintendent, Van Waters burned Thompson's letters, destroying a lifelong record of their devotion. Van Waters's motivation in burning the letters centered around her political opponents' allegations of institutionally-approved lesbianism at the Women's Reformatory. Freedman deals expertly with the gap in her sources and freely admits that her research into that particular area of Van Waters's life proved difficult.

Estelle Freedman deserves recognition for bringing Miriam Van Waters's life of maternalistic service to our attention. Put *Maternal Justice* on your reading list.

Single Mothers and their Children: Disposal, Punishment and Survival in Australia

Shurlee Swain with Renate Howe.
New York. Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Reviewed by Elizabeth Yeoman

Elizabeth Smart, celebrated poet and single mother of four, wrote of getting "twenty year's hard labour for a big begetting sin' (1978: 122). This book examines in detail the forms this hard labour took in Australia between 1850 and 1975—the earlier part of this period being a time when society was so harsh that abandonment and even infanticide often seemed like the only alternatives, and the latter date representing the abolition of the legal status of illegitimacy. The author describes this historical period as a "time when the survival of single mothers and their children depended on their silence" (1978: 5). The silencing took many forms, from denial of benefits and the refusal of accommodation, education and employment, to ostracism, to what amounted to imprisonment in 'homes' and the removal of babies for adoption by 'good' families.

The book is extensively researched. It draws on a variety of quantitative and qualitative data sources with an emphasis on enabling the women's (and to some extent the children's) own voices to be heard. Sources range from newspaper and magazine references (including 'problem pages' or advice columns), charity records, court transcripts, diaries and letters to oral interviews with fifty women. In addition to its focus on the actual experiences of single mothers and their families, the book also discusses related issues such as birth control and abortion, sex education, sexual mores and so on, thus providing a history of sexuality as well as single motherhood.

While it is a fascinating and informative source of facts, figures and quotations, the book is less successful in its attempt to provide a coherent narrative based on the stories of real women. It is difficult to follow at times, lumping information from different data sources into the same thematic sentences and paragraphs, and jumping back and forth from one historical period to another. For example, on page 56 the author discusses the situations or opinions of eleven different women, but only two dates are given, and little background information. While each example is footnoted, it is tedious to go back and forth from the text to the end notes so frequently; yet without doing so, the reader is left confused as to when the events occurred, what their context was and which data sources were used.

While the book is essentially a history of white women's experience, the author has included considerable documentation of the experiences of Koori mothers and their families. However, since Koori society was, especially in the earlier days of the period under discussion here, very different from white, and approached differently by those in power at the time, this information might deserve a book of its own rather than the"'add-on" treatment given here.

Despite its shortcomings, *Single Mothers and Their Children* is a useful, and, at times, powerful and moving contribution to our knowledge of the history of sexuality, motherhood and family life. The book certainly counteracts the argument that oral history produces 'a cosy view of the past' (Hay, 1981: 41). The women's stories are, for the most part, ones of pain, bitterness and regret but also of survival and eventual social progress. More than anything, this book makes me reflect on how good it is to be living in the nineties. It is also a timely reminder that the recent trend of blaming single parent families for many of society's problems—from a perceived rise in crime to the deficit to and the conservative call for a return to "traditional family values"— may have chilling implications for those who do not or cannot fit into that repressive mold.

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Families in the U. S.: Kinship and Domestic Politics

Karen V. Hansen and Anita Ilta Garey, Eds.
Temple University Press's Women in the Political Economy Series.

Reviewed by Ginny Crosthwait Lane

Families in the U. S.: Kinship and Domestic Politics, an interdisciplinary anthology edited by Karen V. Hansen and Anita Ilta Garey, is part of Temple University Press's Women in the Political Economy series. In their astute yet accessible introduction, Hansen and Garey explain that this 920-page collection investigates the relation between the family and larger social structures. We can only understand the family, they state, by examining it "within a historical moment, an economic system, a political process that shape what is possible in family life" (xv).

Hansen and Garey have chosen essays that approach the family from a feminist perspective. Given that a basic tenet of feminism is that "the personal is political," the editors' feminist project reflects the ways in which these essays discuss the connection between family (personal) and social structure (political). The introduction explains that structural inequalities and power differences in society are often reflected and reproduced in family structure. The essays also locate the family within the larger category of "kinship systems," thus broadening the definition of family and challenging the norm of the nuclear family.

Family structure, the editors note, changes over time. In fact, family structures, and the definitions of "family" are constantly in flux, since the larger social structures which shape the family are constantly changing. By examining changes in family structure over time, as well as by situating the family in a historical and cultural context, the essays in this volume explode the idea that certain family structures or definitions are "natural," "normal," or "universal."

The anthology includes essays from a variety of fields, including social policy, anthropology, economics, sociology, and history. The essays are grouped according to analytical topics: "Families and Community," "Caregiving," and "Violence, Power, and Families," to name a few. And the editors have included a helpful "Guide to Topics" that allows their readers to develop different organizational strategies.

Of special interest to A.R.M. members is the section "Mothering, Motherhood, and Mothers," in chapter three. This section begins with Nancy J. Chodorow's classic essay "Why Women Mother" and depicts mothering both as a gendered activity and as an ideology. In accordance with the editors' aim of expanding the definition of "family," it contains essays on Chicana/o, Jewish,

lesbian, black, Native American, and disabled mothers. Grouped with sections titled "Fathering," "Kin Networks," and "Marriage and Divorce," under the larger rubric of "Webs of Family Relationships," this section situates motherhood in a larger context than the dual-parent, nuclear-family norm.

It is useful to consider the appropriateness of an anthology for a feminist project such as Hansen and Garey's. If feminism is a collective movement, then the inclusion of many different voices is an apt expression of that movement. Each essay is one voice in a larger narrative and contributes to the text of feminism itself. One might also consider the sorts of biases or assumptions that shape the compilation and organization of this anthology. The "Guide to Topics," for instance, makes clear that the editors do not distinguish between gender and biological sex, despite their attempt to broaden the possibilities for family and positions within the family. Such a distinction would allow us to pose questions like "Can men mother?" or "How does a single mother fill the shoes of an absent father?" In addition, it is revealing that the "Guide to Topics" includes the category "Men and Masculinity" but not "Women and Femininity" or another female counterpart. Perhaps this is no oversight on the editors' part, but a sign of our own times and our cultural anxiety about the role of men in the family.

The editors end their introduction with an acknowledgement of a popular misconception: that feminism and family are incompatible. It is their hope, and my belief, that this anthology counters that misconception. This collection contributes to a larger feminist project which demonstrates that, in Hansen and Garey's words, "Feminists care passionately about families" (xx).

Death and the Mother from Dickens to Freud: Victorian Fiction and the Anxiety of Origins.

Carolyn Dever.
New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998

Reviewed by Monika Elbert

Carolyn Dever's book is a well-researched and excellent study about the actual medical and the idealized literary versions of mothers dying in childbirth in Victorian England. Dever claims that there are parallels between the construction of family origins in mid-Victorian novels and Freud's psychoanalytic paradigm of family and gender. They depend upon the same principle: the death of the mother, the absence of the mother, or the inefficacy of the living mother. In the Victorian and Freudian narrative, there is a longing for an

idealized mother, but when that mother becomes too real through an actual encounter, there is a deep sense of maternal loss. Thus, the missing, spectral, or dead mother who can be embodied and embraced in one's imagination is preferable to the all too real mother, who evokes anxieties in the child about his/her own personal history or genealogy. Indeed, in the imagination of the Victorians, "the only good mother is a dead mother" (19).

Dever traces the formulation of the melancholic narrative of the absent mother back to eighteenth-century developments in the novel, the Gothic and the "Bildungsroman," which both necessitate the character's separation from the mother as a move towards adulthood. According to Dever, there are three types of melancholic novels: the sentimental novel, which employs maternal absence to create an idealized picture of the family; the erotic novel, which uses maternal absence to illuminate the conflict of the adolescent sexual coming-of-age; and the emancipatory novel, in which maternal absence implies potential freedom for the motherless child in choosing her life direction outside of conventional marriage.

Dever very effectively applies her paradigm of the melancholic maternal narrative to three representative mid-Victorian novels: Dickens's *Bleak House*, Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White*, and George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*. Indeed, there are other novels (by these authors and others) that fit and which she mentions in passing. I was a bit disappointed that she did not show the implications of maternal absence in the late-Victorian novel, as in Hardy, where Darwinian notions of motherhood complicate the picture and which strip the ideal, the psychological, with a more biological picture of motherhood. Her book ends with two short chapters—an excellent psychological reading of Darwin's relationship with his mother, a chapter which could have been applied more carefully to the entire study, and a less effective and very short chapter on Virginia Woolf, which seems to have been added as an after-thought. Finally, though Dever broaches the subject of missing, absent, or effete fathers in Victorian novels (and there are countless numbers, especially in Dickens), she seems to privilege the space of the missing mother.

To Dever's credit, she has a long introductory section focusing on psychoanalytic critics who examine the child's relationship with the absent or phallic mother. Leading off with Freud, Dever then explores challenges and modifications to Freudian theory with Melanie Klein's and D.W. Winnicott's notion of maternal subjectivity and objectivity, and the child's ambivalent desire for the all-powerful mother and fear of abandonment. While Dever appropriately uses Kristeva's notion of the semiotic maternal, she might also have used Kristeva's notion of the maternal melancholic to strengthen her case. The most unsettling feature of Dever's study is her suggestion that Freud's concept of maternal loss grew out of the paradigm which informed mid-Victorian novels. It might have been more culturally or historically accurate to examine some of the Germanic novels (perhaps even fairy tales) which Freud would have known or read instead of placing him exclusively

within an English literary context.

I was most stunned and awed by the epigraphs which are interspersed between chapters. Here Dever shows her meticulous research into the actual causes of maternal death or madness in Victorian England, and her poignant epigraphs, taken from contemporary medical records, manuals, and journals, show just how far removed the picture of the fictional idealized dead mother was from that of the real dying or diseased mother. But these corpses remind us, as Dever's study suggests, that the Victorian novels are really not "concerned with the woman behind the mother they mourn" (35).

A Tradition That Has No Name: Nurturing the Development of People, Families and Communities.

Mary Field Belenky, Lynne A. Bond and Jacqueline Weinstock.
New York: Basic Books, 1997.

Reviewed by Anna Mae Duane

As the title suggests, *A Tradition that Has No Name* deals with a maternal mode of experience largely unarticulated in established scholarly discourses. The authors argue that nurturing feminist leadership has been practiced for centuries, but the tradition's alternative methods and largely invisible clientele have kept it from getting the recognition it deserves. Through the description of their own work and that of various feminist organizations, the authors hope to elucidate this nameless tradition, and expand its capacity to empower the lives of marginalized and silenced people. Building on the insights gained from Mary Belenky's 1986 *Women's Ways of Knowing* in conjunction with the epistemological theories of Carol Gilligan, Paulo Freire, and Theodor Adorno, the authors delineate a comprehensive leadership model for families, communities and organizations. This alternative model privileges inclusion, discussion and empathy rather than the hierarchy, argument and competition that pervade mainstream thought.

The book's first section describes the Listening Partners project, a public service program the authors created to bring impoverished and undereducated women "into voice" through verbal and written dialogue. The authors describe individual cases (such as a rape victim who moves beyond shame and silence to finally confront her rapist) and—in so doing provide an overview of the project itself to present a pedagogical model with striking interdisciplinary potential. The study represents a particularly significant contribution to the fields of social

work and/or public policy, but the project also offers a worthy model for educators. For instance, writing instructors will likely be struck by the centrality of narrative and revision to the project's mission. Perhaps most important, the authors link the evolution of the way one thinks to a parallel progression in the way one relates. For instance, the study suggests that a mother "who perceives herself as a capable collaborator in the construction of knowledge will be more likely to engage her child in the active and collaborative creation of ideas" (Belenky, Bond, and Weinstock, 1997: 151).

In the second section of the book, Mary Belenky provides a succession of laudatory portraits culled from interviews with leaders of various feminist organizations. Unfortunately, Belenky here abandons the rigorous attention to detail that makes the first half of this book an important interdisciplinary resource. Although intended to elucidate a previously unarticulated tradition, the language used to describe the nurturing model in practice often slips into distressing generalizations.

In short, *A Tradition That Has No Name* is an important book that often works at cross-purposes with itself. The success of the Listening Partners project argues strongly that a nurturing, maternal pedagogy deserves inclusion in standard public policy. But instead of claiming the territory this model deserves, Mary Belenky's overly simplistic treatment of the philosophy itself provides scarce opportunities for practical application, and does little to bring this silenced tradition into the professional conversation. The book is at its best when it specifically addresses the struggles of marginalized women to claim the power of their own minds, but the rose-colored glasses the authors use to examine the tradition of female leadership often renders the pertinent details blurred and unreadable.

Contributor Notes

Sharon M. Abbey is an assistant professor of Education at Brock University where she teaches courses in social studies and women's studies and is a founding member of the Centre on Collaborative Research. Previously, she spent 20 years as an elementary school teacher, curriculum consultant, and school principal. Currently, she is the president of the Canadian Association for Studies on Women in Education, the book review editor for *Teaching Education* and a member of the Board of Directors for the National Foundation for Eating Disorders. She is the co-editor of the recently published books, *Redefining Motherhood: Changing Identities and Patterns* (1998) and *Mothers and Daughters: Connection, Empowerment and Transformation* (1999).

Denise Bauer teaches women's studies at SUNY New Paltz and is a founding member of the National Women's Studies Association's Feminist Mothers and their Allies Task Force. Currently she is organizing a exhibit of four women photographers' images and texts on feminist families at the Page Coleman Gallery in Albuquerque for the 1999 NWSA Conference. She is also writing a book on the American painter, Alice Neel and her portraits of women (Hudson Hills Press, 2000).

Christine Bellini is a pyschotherapist in private practice in Toronto. She holds two bachelor degrees from York Univeristy and has always been interested in the Arts. Christine has also worked as a freelance writer for the past six years and has been published both in Canada and in the United States.

Inga Bergman, or "Ingigerður Guðbjörnsdóttir," is an artist and a midwife, born and raised in Iceland. Since first leaving home in 1969 she has lived in New Zealand, Canada and England. She recently returned to Canada after spending the last 18 years in Iceland raising her two children. Inga is short for her first name and Berman is her married name. For reasons of convenience, mostly because of pronunciation difficulties, she usually goes by the name Inga Bergman outside Iceland.

Angela Bosco is a single mother of three boys. She is currently completing her fourth year in Women's Studies at York University and will be attending the

Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto next September. She states: "Mothering has added a certain richness and dimension to my life that I would not be able to experience any other way. My life without my children would be like viewing a Van Gogh exhibit in black and white."

Kara Lynn Braun is currently working on her M.A. thesis at the University of British Columbia. While she has not yet found the time to write her own children's book, her interest in mothering issues grows exponentially as she negotiates the often conflicting arenas of academic feminism and being a stay-at-home mom. She lives with her family in Kingston, Ontario.

Mary Brewer is a lecturer in the School of the Humanities and Cultural Interpretation at the University of Plymouth in the United Kingdom. Her first book, *The Construction of the Category "Woman" in Contemporary Theatre: Representation and Gender,* will be published by Sussex Academic Press in August 1999. Her research interests are nineteenth- and twentieth-century women's writing and feminist theory.

Beth Ann Bryant-Richards was born in Germany and raised in North Carolina, but has called Chicago home for the last 17 years. She teaches—of all things—business writing to university juniors and seniors. She also writes and produces solo performance work. Beth Ann holds a Master of Arts in Writing from DePaul University.

Jeanette Bushnell is a visiting instructor at University of Alaska Anchorage,. She received her B.S. in Nursing in 1975 and M.N. in Nursing and Anthropology in 1979, both from University of Washington. Next fall she will begin studies toward a Ph.D. in Women Studies at the University of Washington. She is mother of three daughters and a member of the Pembina Band of Turtle Mountain Chippewa.

Kim Chase is a second-generation Franco-American, a French teacher and a mother of two boys. She has published poetry, articles, essays, and one short story. She is currently working on a collection of short stories entitled, *Pagan Baby Certificates.*

Jocalyn Clark has a M.Sc. in Community Health from the University of Northern British Columbia. She is currently a doctoral student in Public Health and Women's Studies at the University of Toronto, focusing on the health effects of and health care responses to violence against women. She is based at the Centre for Research in Women's Health (University of Toronto/ Women's College and Sunnybrook Health Science Centre).

Camillia Clark is a Chartered Psychologist in Alberta, Canada and is listed

with the Canadian Register of Health Service Providers in Psychology. During her 13 years in Calgary, she was an active member of the Women and Psychology Special Interest Group of the Psychologists Association of Alberta, a feminist group of mental health professionals. Currently, she is pursuing her Ph.D. in clinical psychology at The Fielding Institute.

Robbie Clifton Pinter teaches English at Belmont University in Nashville, Tennnessee, where she has served for ten years as the director of the Writing Program. Her research interests include learning beyond the cognitive and its applications to the classroom, leading her to do extensive work in the genre and practice of journal writing. Her most recent articles include "Post-Chernobyl Children," and "Write from the Heart: Making the Invisible Visible Through Journal Writing." She is married to Mike Pinter, a mathematics professor, and they have one son, Nicholas.

Jennifer Conner is currently working towards her Master's Degree in the School for Women's Studies at York University in Toronto. Her research interests include gender, whiteness, race, and racism.

Sudharshana Coomarasamy came to Canada 13 years ago from Srilanka as a refugee. Her work has been published in two anthologies, *Aurat Durbar*, an anthology of South Asian women writers and *Intricate Countries*, an anthology of women writers in Canada. She is currently working towards publishing a volume of poems in English and Tamil. She lives in Toronto with her teen-aged son and daughter and has been working for the past nine years with newcomer communities, especially refugee women and their families.

Ginny Crosthwait Lane is a doctoral candidate at Rice University in Houston, Texas. She is working on a dissertation entitled, "Tainted Character: Narrative, Mass Culture, and Victorian Criminal Reform."

Jennifer A. Culik is the owner of Greenroom Press, a small press which publishes the work of Michigan poets, and production designer of the scholarly journal, *Post Identity*. She finds her daughter Nora's ability to scramble the papers of her projects a wonderful reminder that they are part of a larger life.

Jill R. Deans is assistant professor of English at Kansas State University where she teaches Twentieth-Century Literature and Film. Her research interests and publications focus on adoption in American cultural texts.

Andrea Doucet is assistant professor of the department of Sociology and Anthropology at Carleton University. Her publications combine her interests in feminist theory, qualitative research, and caring. Her current research, funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada,

explores the links between economic restructuring, fatherhood, and masculinities. She has three daughters, Vanessa (9), and Hannah and Lilly (5).

Anna Mae Duane is a doctoral candidate in American Literature at Fordham University in New York City. This fall, she begins writing her dissertation, which will examine the cultural work of the child in American Puritan captivity narratives and African-American slave narratives.

Monika Elbert is an associate professor and graduate coordinator of English at Montclair State University. She has published extensively on nineteenth- and early twentieth-century American literature. Her studies on motherhood include essays on Poe, Hawthorne, Wharton, and Toni Morrison. She is also associate editor of *The Nathanial Hawthorne Review.*

Robin Etheridge is mother, teacher, and writer living in Tacoma, Washington with her four-year-old son Liam. She graduated with her M.A. in Education from Seattle University the same month Liam turned one. He not only attended classes with her at S.U., but accompanies her these days to teach English language classes.

April L. Few is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Child and Family Development at the University of Georgia. Her research interests include intimate violence against women of color, family diversity, and Black women's narratives.

Doreen Fumia is a doctoral candidate at OISE/UT in the department of Sociology and Equity Studies. The shifting ground on which she and the members of her reconfigured family tread influences her academic work. She shares "home and hearth" with Colleen and their six children.

Marilyn Garber is a writer, freelance artist, professor of history at California State University Dominguez Hills, Los Angeles, attorney, mother, wife, and grandmother. Her recent work explores issues of representation of dreams and self, utopias and the nature of silence.

Fiona Green is the mother of a ten-year-old. She is finishing her dissertation "The Politics of Feminist Mothering: The Hidden Praxis of Feminist Pedagogy and Activism" for an Interdisciplinary Ph.D. (Education, Sociology and Women's Studies) from the University of Manitoba. She has been teaching in the Women' Studies Program at the Univeristy of Winnipeg for the past ten years..

Janet Griffiths-Maxymiw is an Atkinson College student majoring in Canadian Studies at York University. She will remain ever grateful for

AndreaO'Reilly's vision and the "Mothering and Motherhood" course. Janet is the mother of Anna and Julian, and the daughter of Edna Lee.

Robin Hemenway is a doctoral candidate in American Studies at the University of Minnesota, and studies the social and cultural history of the family. Her tentatively-titled dissertation, "Not Their Own: The Social America, 1870-1920," examines the biological politics of motherhood through the history of step-, adoptive, and foster mothers.

Susan Hendricks manages the Library of the Lakeridge Health Corporation, a large community hospital east of Toronto. Since the death of her daughter, Kristina, in 1991 she has facilitated self-help groups and served as a Board Member for Bereaved Families of Ontario. She is presently pursuing part-time studies in the M. Ed. (Counselling Psychology) program at the Ontario Institute of Studies in Education of the University of Toronto and after graduation, hopes to pursue a career in grief and transition counselling.

Carol Hult is a mother of three teen-aged daughters and a writer of creative and critical nonfiction. She teaches writing composition at the University of Alaska in Anchorage. Her work has been published in *The Peirce Seminar Papers* and in *We Alaskans.*

Robbie Pfeufer Kahn is Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Vermont and author of *Bearing Meaning: The Language of Birth* (University of Illinois, 1995) winner of the Jesse Bernard Award 1997. She is the mother of a twenty-six year old son. "Family Album: 1943" is an excerpt from the book she is currently writing.

Laurie Kruk is Assistant Professor, English Studies at Nipissing University, North Bay, Ontario ... and a new mother. She is also a published poet (*Theories of the World*, 1992).She is presently enjoying a sabbatical and time at home, learning to co-parent her daughter with her partner, writer Ian McCulloch.

Molly Ladd-Taylor is Associate Professor of History at York University. Her publications include *Mother-Work: Women, Child Welfare And The State, 1890-1930; "Bad" Mothers: The Politics Of Blame In 20th-Century America* (co-edited with Lauri Umansky); and "Saving Babies and Sterilizing Mothers: Eugenics and Welfare Politics in the Interwar United States" in *Social Politics.* She has three children.

Susan MacCallum-Whitcomb teaches American Literature at the University of New Brunswick (St. John). Her most recent work, *"This Giving Birth": Pregnancy and Childbirth in American Women's Writing,* a critical anthology co-edited with Julie Tharp will be published later in 1999. She is a grassroots

feminist and the mother of two young children. She is proud to be a member of A.R.M.'s advisory board.

Erin E. MacDonald is a doctoral candidate at the University of Waterloo, focusing on Victorian literature and gender studies. She has published on Vernon Lee and given conference papers on Olive Schreiner, Victoria Cross, and others. She is currently working on cross-dressing in the writings of Vernon Lee and Arthur Conan Doyle.

Bridget Matthews-Kane is currently a doctoral candidate in English at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Her interests include Irish literature and post-colonial studies. She has published a number of book reviews and an essay on the Irish novelist Emily Lawless.

Laura Lynn Mielke is a graduate student of English at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She holds a B.A. in English and Philosophy from Saint Olaf College, Northfield, MN.

Dolana Mogadime's M.A. thesis entitled "A Daughter's Praise Poem For Her Mother: The Life History and Teaching Practices of South African/Canadian Educator Goodie Tshabalala Mogadime," examines the way her mother's roots in apartheid South Africa informed her mother's activism and teaching in multi-racial Canadian schools as well as her pioneering work toward establishing Pietermaritzburg College in South Africa during the late 1980s. Taking a global perspective on Black feminist research and theoretical writings, Mogadime's research addresses the experiences of Black female immigrant teachers as change agents in education systems. She is currently a doctoral candidate at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto.

Ruby Newman teaches women's studies, humanities, and Jewish studies at York University. She is Faculty Coordinator of the Women's Bridging Program at the School of Women's Studies. She lectures widely in the community and is the mother of a daughter and two sons.

Renee Norman is a poet, writer and part-time teacher (and mother of three daughters), currently completing her doctorate at the University of B.C. Her autobiographical dissertation considers issues of mothering, writing, teaching and women's autobiographical writing. Her work has been published in various literary and academic journals. She gratefully acknowledges a Doctoral Fellowship from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

Andrea O'Reilly is an assistant professor in the School of Women's Studies at

York University where she teaches courses on Toni Morrison, motherhood, and on mothers and daughters. She has presented her research at numerous international conferences and she is the author of more than a dozen articles and chapters on these topics. 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, 1999) and the special 20th anniversary issue of *Canadian Woman Studies/les cahiers de la femme* (Summer/Fall 1998) on "Looking Back, Looking Forward: Mothers, Daughters and Feminism." She is the author of *Toni Morrison on Motherhood* (forthcoming from Ohio State Press) and she is currently editing *Mothers and Sons: Feminist Perspectives*, with Routledge Press. She is founding president of the Association for Research on Mothering, (A.R.M.). She and her common-law spouse of sixteen years are the parents of a fourteen-year old son and two daughters, ages nine and twelve.

Christine Peets is a mother, writer, editor, and researcher who works at home in Eastem Ontario with the financial, and more importantly, the emotional support of her husband, her two teen-aged sons, and many friends.. She is also a freelance writer, editor and researcher. Her work has appeared in *WOMAN* news magazine, *Farm and Country*, *Herizons*, and other independent magazines and journals.

Gillian Ranson is an assistant professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of Calgary, where she teaches courses on gender relations and families. Her research explores the intersections of gender, paid employment and family life. She is also the mother of two children, who help make the study of motherhood particularly interesting.

Fakete Rexha is journalist and writer living in Kosovo. She is the author of two books of poetry and one of prose. Some of her work has been translated into French and published in France. She is the mother of one child and currently volunteers with the Centre for the Protection of Women and Children in Prishtine. She is an acclaimed poet in Kosovo.

Jacque Roethler has an M.A. in Library and Information Science from the Univeristy of Iowa. She is employed by University of Iowa Libraries, and has had work published in *African American Review, The Iowa Journal of Cultural Studies,* and *100 Words*, among others. She lives in rural Johnson County with her husband and two sons.

Suzanne Stutman is a professor of English, American Studies, and Women's Studies at Penn State University's Abington College. She is the author of six books, including *Broken Feather: A Journey to Healing*. She is a survivor of child sexual abuse working on behalf of women and children around the world.

Christy Taylor is a mother and artist living in Toronto. She is an activist for mothers with post-partum depression and does extensive volunteer and comunity work with mothers. She established a self-help support group, a community garden, and facilitates life skills groups for mothers. She is currently the Administrative Assistant of the Association for Research on Mothering.

Alison Thomas's interest in mothering stems from various sources: research, teaching, and personal experience. As a feminist social scientist working in the area of gender relations and the social construction of gender, becoming a mother of boy/girl twins in 1990 provided an added dimension to her academic interests, and motivated her to explore the topic of feminist mothering, especially the mother-son relationship, on which she co-edited a special feature for the journal *Feminism and Psychology* in 1996. Later that year, she and her family emigrated from the UK to Canada, and since then she has been further developing her interest in work on mothers and mothering through her teaching in the Sociology Department at the University of Victoria.

Carolyn I. Wright is a clinical member and approved supervisor of the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy. She is a medical family therapist in private practice in Syracuse, New York. A mother of four daughters, she has been published in the *Journal of Feminist Family Therapy* (1996) and the *Journal of Contemporary Family Therapy* (1997). Recently she co-authored a chapter in *Subtle Sexism: Current Practices and Prospects for Change* (1997), titled *Feminist Family Therapy: The Battle Against Subtle Sexism*, (N. Benokraitis, Ed.)

Elizabeth Yeoman is an associate professor at the Faculty of Education, Memorial University of Newfoundland where she teaches courses in language teaching and curriculum, and women's studies. Her current research interestes are teachers and social justice, oral history, and the narrative construction of identity, and issues of language, culture, and pedagogy.

Jeanne-Marie Zeck is a visiting assistant professor at Susquehanna University in central Pennsylvania. She teaches in the English Department, the Women's Studies Program, and the Honours Program. Her research and teaching interests include multicultural literature, especially African-American fiction, and the maternal voice in literature. Zeck is the mother of a budding feminist.

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Motherhood and Feminism

Prof. Andrea O'Reilly is currently conducting, as part of her SSHRC-funded research project on "Motherhood and Feminism," interviews with faculty who teach Women's Studies courses or courses related to Women's Studies to assess if and, in what way motherhood is taught in the feminist classroom. Andrea O'Reilly will be in Norway from June 22nd to July 4th, 1999 and in London, England from July 5th to 8th, 1999. As well, Prof. O'Reilly will be interviewing faculty from across Canada and the upper parts of the United States from July 16th to August 16th, 1999 as part of her research trip. Finally, Prof. O'Reilly will be on sabbatical next year (1999-2000) and will be conducting research throughout Canada, the United States, and Portugal (in December) and Europe (during the summer 2000).

If you are interested in being interviewed and being part of this reserch project get in touch with Prof. O'Reilly at the address indicated below. Prof. O'Reilly is also willing give a talk on this research, the Association for Research on Mothering, or any of her other research projects: Toni Morrison on Motherhood, Mothers and Sons, Mothers and Daughters, or on her Motherhood course to students and/or as a formal talk.

Please Andrea O'Reilly, Ph.D, Assistant Professor, School of Women's Studies, and Founding President of the Association for Research on Mothering, can be reached at 726 Atkinson College, York Univeristy, Tel: (416) 736-2100, ext. 60366, Fax: (905) 775 1386, or Email: aoreilly@yorku.ca.

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Please direct all inquiries to:

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WORKMOMNET NEWS

Since June, the Working Mothers Network E-mail Tree—at "workmomnet@aol.com"—has served to encourage dialogue on a variety of issues and topics of interest to working mothers and families. Please feel free to email any questions to pose for group discussion and we will send it out to the "workmomnet" list and forward all answers. As well, please pass along any pertinent news and/or information useful for "workmomnet@aol.com" interested parties. We look forward to hearing from all of you, and your opinion of "workmomnet" news. Thanks!

DO YOU WANT TO BE PUBLISHED?
IF YOU ARE A WRITER, ARTIST, OR PHOTOGRAPHER BETWEEN AND INCLUDING AGE 11 TO 18 READ THE FOLLOWING:

A NEW MAGAZINE!

I AM CREATING ANEW MAGAZINE CALLED YUB. IT IS FOR GIRLS AGES 11 TO 18. IT ALREADY HAS 200 PEOPLE READY TO READ IT!

YOU CAN WRITE STORIES, ESSAYS, POEMS, OR ARTICLES; DRAWINGS (ON WHITE PAPER IN BLACK INK); OR PHOTOGRAPHS ON ONE OF THE FOLLOWING TOPICS:

1) HOW FEMINISM EFFECTS YOU
2) GIRLS IN THE YEAR 2000
3) MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS

ALL WRITING MUST BE TYPED AND DOUBLE-SPACED ON COREL WORD PERFECT 6 OR HIGHTER AND NO LONGER THAN ONE TO FOUR PAGES. PLEASE SEND A DISK, TOO.

SEND YOUR STUFF TO:
O'REILLY CONLIN
RR2 , BRADFORD, ON
L3Z 2A5

IF YOU HAVE A QUESTION YOU CAN EMAIL ME AT YUBBER GURLMAIL.COM OR SEND ME A LETTER AT THE ADDRESS INDICATED ABOVE, OR FAX ME AT (905) 775-1386.

Association for Research on Mothering

In September 1997, 150 women from Canada, the United States, and Europe participated in the first international conference on mothering and motherhood sponsored by the Centre for Feminist Research at York University, Toronto, Canada that focused on "Mothers and Daughters: Moving into the Next Millennium." The interest and enthusiasm generated by the Mothers and Daughters conference motivated us to do a second Mothering conference in September 1998 entitled "Mothers and Sons Today: Challenges and Possibilities." Three books and a special journal issue have been and will be published from the conferences: Sharon Abbey and Andrea O'Reilly, *Redefining Motherhood: Changing Identities and Patterns* (Second Story Press, Toronto, 1998); Andrea O'Reilly and Sharon Abbey, *Mothers and Daughters: Connection, Empowerment, Transformation* (Rowman and Littlefield, forthcoming summer 1999); Andrea O'Reilly, *Mothers and Sons: Feminist Perspectives* (Routledge, forthcoming, winter 2000); and "Looking Back, Looking Forward:Mothers, Daughters, and Feminism" a special 20th Anniversary issue of the *Canadian Woman Studies Journal/les cahiers de la femme*, Volume 18, nos. 2,3 (Summer/Fall1998).

The overwhelming response to the conferences and the subsequent publications demonstrate the compelling need for women to come together and share their experiences, insights, and concerns about motherhood. In response to this demand, we have formed the first international feminist organization devoted specifically to the topic of mothering-motherhood. At the Mothers and Sons conference held in September 1998, the Association for Research on Mothering (A.R.M.) was officially launched. We are delighted to announce that the response to our new association has been phenomenal! In less than six months we have seen close to 200 people join our association. We aim to have a membership of 500 by fall the of 1999.

A.R.M. is an association for scholars, writers, activists, professionals, agencies, policy makers, teachers, parents and artists. A.R.M. is housed in Atkinson College at York University, Toronto, Ontario. Our mandate is to bridge academe and activism providing a forum for the discussion and dissemination of maternal theory and praxis. In other words, the association will establish a network of individuals working and researching in the area of mothering-motherhood. To this end, we will host annual international con-

Association for Research on Mothering

ferences on Mothering. For example, in October 1999, A.R.M. will host a conference on "Mothers and Education: Issues and Directions for Maternal Pedagogy"; in the year 2000 the topic will be "Mothering: Literature, Popular Culture and the Arts", and in the year 2001, "Mothering and Public Policy." Next year, in celebration of African Heritage Month, we will host the international conference "Mothering in the African Diaspora: Literature, History, Society, Popular Culture and the Arts," which will be held from Februrary 4th to 6th, 2000. A.R.M. will have its own List serve and Website. In addition, A.R.M. will publish an academic journal twice annually—*The Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering.*

Our first journal issue, to be published May 1999, will contain more than numerous articles on subjects such as maternity poetry, lesbian mothering, children's literature, mothering in the academe, motherloss, mothering and writing, feminist mothering, maternal redemption in Toni Morrison's *Paradise*, stepmothers in the nineteenth century, work and home, and lots more. As well, the issue will feature numerous book reviews, poetry, and will include notices of upcoming events/conferences/publications on mothering. Future journal issues include: "Lesbian Mothering," "Mothers and Sons," "Mothers and Education," and "Mothering in the African Diaspora."

A.R.M. will also host several thematic symposiums each year. In March 1999 A.R.M. sponsored a four-part lecture series entitled "Redefining Motherhood" in celebration of International Women's Day. For Mother's Day, A.R.M. will sponsor a fund-raising Mother's Day Dance celebration on May 8th,1999, as well as launch our first journal issue. A.R.M. will also host a one-day international symposium on "Lesbian Mothering," to be held June 12th, 1999 in celebration of Pride Day. Attendance and participation are free for A.R.M. members.

We hope that you will consider joining this new and vibrant feministorganization. Please join *today*! We need your membership! We are currently applying for governmental funding; a successful grant depends upon a diverse and *large* membership. See the next pages for details on how to become a member! Best wishes, and thank you in advance for your A.R.M.. membership!

Association for Research on Mothering

Please copy and detach the portion below and mail to the address indicated on the back!

A.R.M. MEMBERSHIP FORM

Please indicate your membership option:

__ individual @ $25.00 Cdn __ individual @ $20.00 US
__ @ $45.00 w/t-shirt* __ @ $30.00 w/t-shirt*
__ institution @ $50.00 Cdn __ institution @ $40.00 US
__ @ $70.00 w/t-shirt* __ @ $55.00 w/t-shirt*
Full-time students only __@ $15.00 Cdn __@ $15.00 US

Please make cheque payable to A.R.M. in either Canadian funds, U.S. funds, or international money orders.

A.R.M. t-shirts and posters are also available:
If ordering a t-shirt please specify a size:
__small __xlarge
__medium __xxlarge
__large __xxxlarge

T-shirts are $20.00 Cdn/$15.00 US
Posters are $10.00 Cdn/$8.00 US
Single copies of *The Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering* are $15.00 Cdn/$10.00 US
Please include $3.00 for shipping and handling, per item, for any of the above.

Please indicate the following:

Where you found out about A.R.M.

_____

Your area of work/research/interest in mothering:

_____

Name/address:_____

_____

Email/fax/phone:_____

Mail in your membership form today!

Stamp

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