Journal of the Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement

Motherlines

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Featuring articles by Fiona Joy Green, Jessica Spring Weappa, Sarah Epstein, Linn Baran, Kelsey Marr, Bianca Williams, Andrea O'Reilly, Josephine L. Savarese, and many more…

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Front Cover

Rachel Epp Buller, *Arbor 19*, 2016, monotype print, 12 x 9 inches.
(See more of her work on page 195 of this issue.)

FIONA JOY GREEN

Empowering Mothers and Daughters through Matroreform and Feminist Motherlines

Feminist motherlines, spoken in the mother tongue of relational discourse by mothers with their female relatives and children, help feminist mothers gain authority of their embodied knowledges of mothering. Along with matroreform—the self-determined mindful process of (re)claiming and (re)forming one's parenting power—feminist mothers develop alternative rules and different practices to those prescribed for them by others. Drawing upon research into feminist mothering over the past two decades, this paper explores the ongoing rich contributions feminist motherlines and matroreform provide families and feminist theorizing. By participating in matroreform and feminist motherlines, mothers and children often develop a life-cycle perspective and a worldview of interconnectivity with each other, with others, and with the world that offer them opportunities and ways to create feminist mothering perspectives and practices countering those prescribed by the patriarchal institution of motherhood. Discovering and nurturing matroreform and one's motherline is often an idiosyncratic and a chaotic process that takes a lifetime, yet through it, mothers and their children can often reconcile intergenerational rifts. Findings shed light on the potential that matroreform and feminist motherlines have in presenting children with opportunities to engage with their own mothering practices and motherlines should they become parents.

> The quality of the mother's life … is her primary bequest to her daughter, because a woman who can believe in herself, who is a fighter, and who continues to create livable space around her, is demonstrating to her daughter that these possibilities exist.—Adrienne Rich (246-47)

One of the gifts and a positive outcome of motherlines—according to Sharon

Abbey, Anglo Canadian maternal scholar and professor emeritus of adult education at Brock University—is its ability to assist in resolving the intergenerational rifts that may be felt and experienced among grandmothers, mothers, children, and grandchildren (845). A motherline, first coined by American Jewish poet, author, feminist and Jungian psychologist Naomi Lowinsky, connects mothers to their female ancestors and helps them to understand how their life stories are linked with previous generations of women in their families and cultures. Motherlines are spoken in the mother tongue of relational discourse, as noted by Ursual Le Guin, which help mothers gain authority in various ways through exposure to an embodied knowledge of mothering that journeys back through encounters with ancestor women who have had experience with mothering. Discovering and nurturing one's motherline is not simple; it's an idiosyncratic and a chaotic process that takes a lifetime (Abbey).

This paper explores the ongoing richness and potential contributions that feminist motherlines, along with matroreform, can offer families and feminist theorizing. By drawing upon research into feminist mothering over the past twenty-plus years, I continue to develop my longstanding exploration and discussion of how matroreform and feminist motherlines afford mothers the opportunity to record, explore, and pass on their life-cycle perspectives of feminist mothering to their children and to others. I also consider the potential matroreform and feminist motherlines have in giving children opportunities to engage with their own mothering practices and motherlines should they become parents. By participating in feminist motherlines, mothers and children can develop a life-cycle perspective and a worldview of interconnectivity with each other, with others, and with the world that offer them opportunities and ways to create inspiring mothering perspectives and practices countering those prescribed by the patriarchal institution of motherhood.

Feminist Mothering and Matroreform

Feminist mothering involves matroreform—an empowering practice first theorized and articulated by Canadian scholar and psychologist Gina Wong-Wylie in 2006. Essential to feminist mothering, matroreform is a conscious exercise whereby mothers partake in the mindful process of (re)claiming their parenting power by establishing alternative rules and different practices to those previously prescribed and described by others for them (Wong-Wylie, "Introduction"; "Images" 135). It also requires "a cognitive, affective, behavioral and spiritual reformation of mothering from within, including [the] removal and elimination of obstacles to self-determination and self-agency" ("Images" 135).

Matroreform can include the active practice and empowering process of creating a meaningful motherline for mothers when they engage in reflective

understandings and narratives based on life experiences both before and during mothering. Matroreform and feminist motherlines may selectively honour the practices of previous generations of mothers by replicating attitudes and behaviours seen as valuable and worthy of reproduction. They can also interrogate, resist, revise, or remove behaviours hurtful to mothers, children, and others. Furthermore, matroreform and feminist motherlines can replace damaging actions with more nurturing parenting practices (Green, *Practicing*).

Drawing upon research with a small group of self-identified feminist mothers living in or around Winnipeg, Manitoba, during the mid-1990s and the first decade of the 2000s,[1] I summarize their shared understandings of feminism and mothering, which, in turn, inform their approaches to matroreform. Understanding the specificities of matroreform provides the context and backdrop for discussing the role and significance of empowering mothers and children through feminist motherlines.

Understandings of Feminism and Mothering

Even though each feminist mother engages in her own approach to and practice of feminist parenting, the mothers I interviewed share common understandings of their place within the world as women, feminists, and mothers. They also share a personal commitment to confront and resist unreasonable and often hurtful social expectations placed upon them as women and as mothers. For these women, feminism is an embodied identity. It is central to their sense of self and to the way in which they understand, view, and engage with the world around them. They recognize that humans live in largely patriarchal societies based upon unjust social systems that systematically create, support, and privilege men who commonly control a disproportionate share of power (Green, *Practicing*).

Feminists generally view patriarchy as an ideology central to and supported by, among others, familial, legal, political, economic and social organization, which generally disempower and disenfranchise girls and women (Green, "Patriarchal Ideology" 969). Patriarchy is understood to be a system of social structures and practices that take place within, but not limited to, relations in paid work, in the state, in the family, in sexuality, in cultural institutions, and in modes of production (Walby). Feminists understand patriarchy to be exceedingly damaging, as it limits almost everyone in varying degrees, which may be according to, but not restricted to, the identity and intersection of a person's sex, gender, class, race, ethnicity, education, sexual orientation, ability, age, religion, and spiritual beliefs.

The feminist mothers I interviewed understand motherhood to be a patriarchal institution—an idea originally posited by American feminist, mother,

novelist, poet, and theorist Adrienne Rich in her monumental 1976 book *Of Woman Born*: *Motherhood as Experience and Institution.* These mothers know, as did Rich four decades ago, that as a patriarchal institution, motherhood restricts women and children. They know, firsthand, how the culmination of social structures and patriarchal meanings of motherhood create restrictive and punishing environments under which they are expected to live and parent.

In their daily lives, these mothers contend with the resulting conditions and circumstances largely proscribed and shaped by the institution of motherhood (Green, "Cultural Bearing" 260; "Patriarchal Ideology" 969). For instance, they must confront the social pressure and demands to perform a particular kind of "good mother" (Wong-Wylie, "Images and Echoes") that practices "intensive mothering" (Hays) or "sacrificial motherhood" (O'Reilly, *Mother Outlaws*). They understand how these expectations placed upon them as mothers—to unconditionally give their time, money, emotional support and love to their children, and to be ultimately responsible for their children's welfare—are unrealistic and impossible to fulfill.

Being aware of and critical of the institution of motherhood, these feminist mothers also know that the type of intensive socialization of children expected within this form of mainstream motherhood contributes to sustaining the social production and practice of patriarchy. And, they know that this type of childrearing and parenting practice is also a self-fulfilling prophesy that feeds and sustains both the patriarchal institution of motherhood and patriarchy (Green, "Patriarchal Ideology"; *Practicing*).

As feminist mothers, they understand that what occurs in the larger world has an effect on each person and, conversely, what people do as individuals has an influence on the larger world. In other words, they believe that the personal and the political are categorically interlaced. They recognize that all humans have varying degrees of agency and influence in the world. Furthermore, they appreciate that each person is variously influenced by social systems and people that live within them.[2] Their positions as feminists and as mothers inform their understanding of not only the influence they have on, and the responsibility they have for, their children, but also the interconnection of the personal and the political and how they integrate them in their motherwork (Green, *Practicing*). They are aware of the social expectations placed upon them to mother in ways that ensure the replication of patriarchy, and also understand and enact upon their individual agency to parent differently if they so choose. And they do.

Feminists, including these mothers, believe that autonomy and choice are central to human self-determination and to freeing people from the social constructions of gender, sexuality, ability, class, race, and their resulting oppressive limitations. Ensuring that everyone, and especially girls and women, can make conscious life choices—regarding, among others, their gender, sexuality,

relationships, education, work, religion, reproduction, and family—is central to how these feminist mothers develop and support the autonomy of their children as individuals (Green, *Practicing*). Having and enacting upon their agency within the context of parenting assists mothers in reforming patriarchal mothering practices to suit their needs and the needs of their children. Being autonomous entails knowing that putting one's personal and political understandings, beliefs, theories, and knowledge into practice both individually and collectively involves enacting one's potential and capacity to be self-determined, self-directed, and engaged as social-change agents in their families and in the world (Green, *Practicing*).

Simply put, feminist mothers engage in praxis when they consciously integrate their feminist understandings and theorizing in their everyday lives. In this case, by linking their feminism with their mothering, they create parenting practices that disrupt the institution of motherhood and offer alternative models and practices of mothering to their families and to others. In doing so, they use matroreform and create feminist motherlines that empower themselves and their children. As such, they contribute to feminist theorizing around parenting and feminism by offering alternative ways to raise children and be mothers (Green, "Developing a Feminist Motherline"; "Feminist Motherline"; "Matroreform").

Matroreform: Breaking the Rules of Motherhood

Reforming and contesting the institution of motherhood is not easy. As my longitudinal research has found, it requires various strategies and actions in multiple locations over long periods of time. For instance, some feminist mothers create alternative models of mothering by choosing to parent alone. Some expand their families to include other biologically and/or nonbiologically related adults to co-parent and/or support and assist their parenting. Others consciously inhabit the socially sanctioned position of "mother" recognized within the institution of motherhood to covertly trouble and contest the ideals of the good mother from within (Green, *Practicing*).

Keenly aware of the influence they have in the lives of their children, as well as the contribution their children make to the world, feminist mothers are critically attentive to the interactions they have with their children. They are acutely attuned to the values they demonstrate, model, and teach. They are also mindful of, and sensitive to, the possible damage they can inflict upon their children through their actions, especially by misusing the power they have as adults within their mother-child relationship. As such, they choose to interact with their children in ways built on the feminist principle of not replicating patriarchal values and structures based around hierarchies and domination.

Within their mother-child relationships, feminist mothers actively resist the dynamics of power and control prescribed by the institution of motherhood. For instance, they may speak directly with their children about the expected and socially supported power dynamic of adults over children within society. They may also acknowledge and disrupt their own power as mothers within their own family relationships. As feminists, they respect their children's human rights[3] and respect their children's right to autonomy. They consciously work to develop non-hierarchical relationships with their children, and attempt to be open and honest about their own feminist understandings about their relationships with their children.

When speaking directly with their children about the ways in which gendered relations and power operate in the world, they participate in ongoing age-appropriate conversations. This may begin during the child's early years by having discussions with their children about characters and storylines they see together as they read children's books, watch movies, view television shows, or go online. As their children mature, mothers may progress to more complex and in-depth conversations about community-related activities, as well as news items, current affairs, and global concerns. They may, for instance, discuss issues around violence against girls and women. They may also talk about the current epidemic of missing and murdered Indigenous girls and women in Canada. Or they may speak about the high incidences of transphobia, homophobia, and queerphobia. They may address the general exploitation of women in the paid labour force, or they may talk about the exploitation of women who work as migrant or domestic workers.

Aware of the patriarchal gaze of others and its need to significantly control and punish mothers who do not conform to patriarchal notions and standards of motherhood, feminist mothers are strategic in the ways in which they challenge and question their socially prescribed roles and duties as parents. Although mothering in one's own image can be liberating, it is often isolating and lonely for both mothers and their children. This is especially the case when mothers refuse to participate in socializing their children into the expected gender binary—when they do not enforce in their children the socially prescribed gender-specific expressive behaviours. Furthermore, mothering in one's own image, when that image does not reflect the expectations of motherhood held by society, also means mothers must be aware of and be able to negotiate the burden of contending with the real consequences of having social services scrutinize them as mothers and potentially relinquish their children to authorities.

Living one's feminist principles while mothering means trusting that approach is better than the one offered by mainstream motherhood. Matroreform requires a faith in one's feminist worldview and unconventional

parenting methodology. It also means taking risks and being cognizant of the very real and harmful potential social sanctions for oneself and for one's children. Being consciously aware of injustices—caused by patriarchy, sexism, racism, homophobia, queerphobia, transphobia, ageism, class bias, capitalism, colonialism, ableism, as well as the violence often accompanying these interlocking and intersecting social systems—is central to the matroreform of these mothers (Green, *Practicing*). These mothers defy and contest the institution of motherhood by defining and creating mothering for themselves and their children.

Feminist Motherlines for Mothers

Feminist mothering, asserts Anglo Canadian maternal scholar Andrea O'Reilly, "begins with the recognition that mothers and children benefit when the mother lives her life, and practices mothering, from a position of agency, authority, authenticity and autonomy" (*Feminist Mothering* 11). Feminist mothers draw upon and develop these values in their daily lives. This includes their mothering practices in which they model their feminist identities, politics, culture, and strategies of living for themselves, their children, and others. Their feminism is central to their sense of themselves as women, to their understandings and reconstructions of motherhood, to their commitment of introducing their children to a feminist worldview, and to developing and honouring their close and non-hierarchal relationships with their children. By living their lives in this way, they engage in matroreform and generate feminist motherlines, which demonstrate to their children the crucial lessons and skills of critical awareness, survival, independence, and autonomy (Green, "Patriarchal Ideology" 261).

Motherlines for feminists encapsulate their commitment to and practice of acknowledging and articulating the many struggles, pressures, and conflicts involved in the complex embodied experiences of feminist motherwork. Their feminist motherlines are just as dedicated to transforming the institution of motherhood (Green, *Practicing*). Not only do feminist motherlines involve self-discovery and empowerment for these mothers, they equally help daughters conceive of themselves as autonomous agents in their own right.

Feminist Motherlines for Daughters

Within the past decade, I have had the good fortune to interview five adult daughters of four self-identified feminist mothers about their understanding of their mother's feminism and about their own perceptions and beliefs regarding feminism. And within six months of this writing, I had the pleasure of speaking

with two adult daughters of mothers they define as feminist. Between the ages of twenty and forty years, these seven daughters speak of the ways in which their mothers have demonstrated the necessity of feminism in their feminist parenting practices.

Each daughter spoke passionately of the particular need for a feminist gender-based analysis of social systems, including patriarchy, as well as interpersonal social relations in the world. They note, for instance, how they value both the lessons they were taught by their mothers and their continued conversations with their mothers about the ways in which society is constructed and functions. They appreciate learning from their mothers how to recognize that all people are located within that constructed society and appreciate how people can be positively and negatively affected by it in several ways. One daughter specifically thanks her mother for teaching her how to understand the world as patriarchal as well as to challenge its ideology and practice. She specifically notes her mother's lessons to try to respectfully speak her own truth when she feels safe enough to do so, and to demonstrate nonpatriarchal ways of engaging with people.

These daughters admire how their feminist mothers have confronted social expectations placed upon them as women and as mothers. They appreciate how their moms have struggled to live life, as much as possible, on their own terms. They see this in how they've often made personal decisions and have taken on the responsibilities of mothering in ways that confront and challenge social expectations of them as mothers and as women. Like their mothers, they agree that feminist mothering is a political act.

One daughter acknowledges that her queer mother had to take on more battles than she has had to. She understands her mother's generation was forced to live within and deal with a society that was more hostile towards young, single, and queer mothers than it is now. She believes she has grown up in an era far more accepting of feminism and the fluidity of gender and sexuality than during her mom's time. She feels she is better understood and accepted as a bisexual than those of her mother's generation. She also believes there are more role models for her as a queer woman wanting to mother a child alone. She specifically credits her mother for breaking the rules around sexuality and mothering when she was growing up, and for demonstrating the power of always being true to herself.

These daughters also speak about the respectful and egalitarian relationships they have with their mothers. They treasure their ability to have open and frank conversations about a plethora of topics and life issues. Although they understand that nonfeminist mothers may have close, frank, and honest discussions with their children, these daughters believe it is their mother's feminism that is the source of their conscious and deliberate non-hierarchal relationships

with them. They believe their mothers' engagement with feminism in their everyday lives has strongly influenced the parenting decisions they make in their mothering practices (Green, *Practicing* 111).

Their mothers candidly model ways to challenge ideals around motherhood, and make visible and validate feminist mothering practices within the institution. They note that their mothers advocate and push for their daughters' autonomous sense of self, and support them in being whoever and whatever they want to be. They give examples of being supported by their mothers in their unconventional, unexpected, and sometimes risky decisions about education and work. One daughter speaks of the encouragement she received from her mom when first studying fashion design and then engineering. Two others are grateful for their mothers' steadfast backing as they pursue feminist graduate studies. And three daughters speak with admiration and appreciation for their mothers who support them in their careers in popular music and acting in theatre and film.

All daughters speak to the influence their mothers have had on their own understandings and practices of feminism, and note the respect each has for the other, particularly when their daughters' feminism may not replicate that of their mothers'. They recognize their moms grew up in a different historical period, and that their feminisms developed within and reflect the context of particular situations connected with that era. One daughter, for instance, explains whereas her mother's commitment to fighting for women's rights is centred on women, she sees her own support for women's rights as an attempt to gain equality (Green, *Practicing* 126). Another daughter, who is a mother herself, speaks highly of her close relationship with her own mother, and how together, they have very similar perspectives on feminism and the world at large. As single women, they often talk about and share the parenting of their grand/children, which is based on similar feminist principles (Green, *Practicing*).

The daughters affirm their mothers took risks and struggled to ensure that they were raising them in the ways faithful to their feminism. They are grateful for their mothers' matroreform and for their feminist motherlines. They especially acknowledge the prominence of these influences in their own conversations and decision making about their current or future parenting practices. One daughter says she and her mom have spoken at length about her decision not to have children now or most likely in the future. Her mother was supportive, encouraging her to live her life as she wants to, not as others may want her to. Two other daughters speak of the ways in which their mothers supported their plans to have children with other women. And another daughter thanks her mother for encouraging her when she was planning to conceive and raise a child alone and on her own terms.

Conclusion: The Power of Matroreform and Feminist Motherlines

Feminist motherlines have been created and continue to be nurtured by this particular group of feminist mothers and daughters. Their collective and insightful understandings of matroreform continue to cultivate feminist motherlines challenging patriarchal norms of motherhood and empowering them to live their lives with agency, authority, authenticity, and autonomy.

We can all learn from these lessons, as they inform both individual personal feminist actions and feminist theorizing. The intergenerational power and influence of matroreform and feminist motherlines cannot be understated. Although this research is based on a small number of self-identified feminist mothers and a few of their daughters, together they conclusively demonstrate the power and longevity of feminism in matroreform and feminist motherlines.

They demonstrate, for example, the ability of matroreform and feminist motherlines to resolve intergenerational rifts that may be felt and experienced between mothers and their daughters, as theorized by Abbey. They also show how a feminist motherline, as posited by Lowinsky, connects mothers and their daughters to help them to understand how their life stories are linked with previous generations of women in their families and cultures. They also illustrate how feminist motherlines are spoken in the mother tongue of relational discourse, as noted by Le Guin, and can help mothers gain authority through exposure to an embodied knowledge of feminist mothering.

This paper has explored the ongoing contributions that feminist motherlines, along with matroreform, offer families and feminist theorizing. It continues to develop my longstanding exploration and discussion of how matroreform and feminist motherlines afford mothers the opportunity to record, explore, and pass on their life-cycle perspectives of feminist mothering to their children and to others. It also considers the potential that matroreform and feminist motherlines have in presenting children opportunities to engage with their own mothering practices and motherlines should they become parents. And finally, this paper has demonstrated how feminist motherlines give mothers and children the ability to develop a life-cycle perspective and a worldview of interconnectivity, which offer them ways to create mothering perspectives and practices countering those prescribed by the patriarchal institution of motherhood.

Endnotes

[1]My initial research into feminist mothering began in the mid-1990s as part of my PhD research, when I interviewed sixteen self-identified feminist mothers about their understanding of feminism, mothering, and the interconnection and influence of the two upon each other. Collectively, they were the parents

of thirty-five children—nineteen girls and sixteen boys between the ages of newborn and early twenties. Between 2005 and 2007, I contacted and interviewed ten of the original sixteen mothers. We discussed the influence of their feminist mothering upon their children as well as some of the lessons they learned about parenting and about feminism in the intervening decade. I am grateful for their generosity of time and willingness to share their experiences and knowledge with me.

[2]Though not specifically using the term "intersectional," these feminist mothers and their daughters understand and apply the theory of intersectionality developed by Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw.

[3]See UNICEF Canada listed in works cited for a list of the rights of children under the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Declaration of Human Rights, which extends to humans at the age of majority, was adopted by the UN General Assembly in Paris on 10 December 1948 during its 183rd plenary meeting. Resolution 217 A (III), listing all of the human rights, can be found under the Office of the High Commission United Nations Human Rights in the works cited.

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JESSICA SPRING WEAPPA

The Motherlines of Asclepius

Ancestral Female Healers in the Origins of Medicine

There is a need to retrieve subsumed women's stories and traditions from Western patriarchal overlays and to recentre empowered matristic ways of knowing in present-day consciousness. This paper is an organic inquiry examining symbols in the myth of the Greek healer god Asclepius and tracing these to earlier sources, while relating its origins to this critical moment in time when species loss, climate change, and widespread violence devastate our planet. I approach the power of the secret accompanying the underground dream temples this god is known for, and discover ancestral female healers personifying the union of microcosm and macrocosm. Honouring the natural and cyclic processes of birth, life, death, and regeneration, I illuminate the deep origins of the caduceus symbol. Considering how medical care and the process of attending to dreams are fields that have been dominated by androcentric worldviews, I ask what dreams may come when empowered women and mothers create definitions of health and wellbeing for themselves and unite in the creation of interdependent futures that may still have a chance to come into being.

Asclepius and Sacred Life on Earth

I first encountered the Greek god Asclepius (also known as Asklepios and Aesculapius) as a doctoral student researching motherlines through the lenses of mythology and women's spirituality. The symbol of the god Asclepius is a single serpent entwined around a staff. It is often associated with the caduceus image, which is used today to promote the capitalist medical system. In this paper, I theorize about the lone snake on the rod of Asclepius to examine the loss of primordial structures of deep relationality connecting human beings with one another, with our animal kin, and our planet. I invite a collective

remembering, reimagining, and reauthoring of symbols and stories that were usurped to legitimize an unstable and destructive patriarchal world and ask how a recentring and reclaiming of subsumed ancestral wisdom may be practised towards more than human healing.

Through a process of "organic inquiry" (Clements 26), I encounter the following as motherlines of Asclepius: the Sleeping Lady of Malta, the social organization of Catalhöyük, mother deities in Sumer and Babylonia, Sheela na gigs, Nordic deities, ancient yogini temples in India, matristic fertility-of-the-earth people of Neolithic Europe, female and mother deities of ancient Crete, Persephone and Demeter myths, and Gaia. I continue to engage the origin story of Asclepius and his legend, and see it as one significant turning point of many that eventually crystallized into ideologies that linguist and cultural theorist Luce Irigaray describes as a "forgetting" corresponding to "a certain sleep," which veiled "the real" (34).

Ancient Greek influence in the development of Western cultures cannot be overstated, nor can the impact of the Western world on all life on our planet be minimized. Although we do have stories of Ancient Greek goddesses, they are not the original stories of pre-Hellenic female deities who were "body-honoring and nature-oriented" (Spretnak 18). Considering this summary, and how Ancient Greek perspectives and practices continue to affect lives and bodies today, there is value in tracing Western modalities of healing back to the symbols and stories of a time in which the value of women's lives rapidly diminished and the contributions of female healers were marginalized or erased. I find this process of reclaiming has much to offer us in the renewal of images for revitalizing contemporary cultural landscapes.

The son of Apollo and a mortal woman, Asclepius became known as the god of healing and medicine, and is often referred to as the first doctor. The Hippocratic Oath, still recited ceremoniously by new physicians today, invokes the god Asclepius in the very first line. The historical and mythic figure Hippocrates eventually became known as a human agent of the god Asclepius and the father of scientific medicine. Although Asclepius is not one of the twelve major deities of the Greek pantheon, he was clearly a very powerful figure. All physicians in ancient Greece came to be known as "Asklepiads" (Downing, "Hippocrates" 4).

Those who wished to be healed in the temples of Asclepius were led by attendants into dark spaces just under the surface of the ground to rest directly on a stone slab, or "*kline*" (source of our word "clinic"), and then left alone to sleep and dream. If the god Asclepius appeared to the dreamer in images, this would signify a transition to wellness. A vast collection of testimonies describes how the god would often appear theriomorphically as a snake or a dog. (Downing, "Asklepios" 17-18) Dogs would lick wounds to heal the ini-

tiates. Snakes often promoted fertility. There are detailed accounts of a great number of miraculous healings in the temples of Asclepius that cured ailments such as paralysis, blindness, and epilepsy. When the god appeared in human form, he enacted radical procedures and surgeries far beyond the capacities of human healers of the time.

Though not consistently considered a chthonic deity, Asclepius was the only Greek god to experience death and a return to life after Zeus, intimidated by his powers, struck him down. If not a deity of the underworld realms and not a god who dwells on Olympus, Asclepius may be considered a representative of sacred earthly life. Interestingly, Asclepius is surrounded by his wife, Epione, whose name means "soothing" and their daughters whose names carry such meanings as health, healing process, remedy, and radiance. Two of the daughters' names predate Asclepius. The breasts of a great earth mother, Rhea Koronis, were called Hygeia and Panaceia—"source of the Milk of Kindness and the balm of healing" (Walker 766). Authors of the Theoi Project state, "Gradually, the sphere in which Aesculapius acted was so extended, that he became the representative or the personification of the healing powers of nature" (Theoi para. 3). The pre-Greek word Asclepius and its prehistoric origin is considered by classical scholars Emma J. and Ludwig Edelstein, authors of *Asclepius, Collection and Interpretation of the Testimonies* who write, "Asclepius must originally have been a heroized mortal who attained godhead in prehistoric centuries. Again, speculation on the etymology of the name alone has prompted the assumption that Asclepius was a pre-Greek deity" (66).

The Mother of Asclepius

Though it is common to find multiple versions of myths, there are primarily two stories about Asclepius's human mother. I consider both at once. In the most documented versionof the myth, her name is Koronis. Here again, the use of a name belonging to an earlier earth mother deity is evident. When she discovered she was pregnant with Asclepius, Koronis wanted to partner with a mortal man to create a family. Apollo learned of this and was furious that she would prefer a mortal mate to a divine lover. In a rage, he brutally murdered the groom and had the wedding party killed as well. Apollo then commanded his sister Artemis to slice open the womb of Asclepius's mother and extract his near-term son. After submitting to Appollo's orders and slaying Koronis, Artemis was considered tainted by the evil of the offending mortal mother body and, according to classical philology scholar Károly (Carl) Kerényi, she was also "placed on the pyre" (95). It is important to consider the pre-Hellenic iterations of Artemis associating her with "untamed nature," mothering, and kinship with animals (Spretnak, *Lost Goddesses* 75). However gruesome and

tragic, I find it is necessary to emphasize the impact of this goddess-mother burning pyre and to magnify how the ordinary power of a human female giving birth was violently bypassed. I cannot help but imagine infant Asclepius taking his very first breath and inhaling the smoke of his murdered mother's flesh and the death of nature untamed.

Earth and Cosmos: Saying Her Name

Although the name Koronis is more commonly recorded in history, Kerényi discusses how the true name of Asclepius's mother was not to be uttered (90). He explains a motif of light and darkness in the origin story and unites the mother of Asclepius with the rising of the moon when "the new moon had just appeared" (93). He considers the true name of Asclepius's mother to be "Arsinöe" meaning "The Luminous" (93). Impressively, there seems to be no mother of The Luminous. Kerényi writes, "she had been motherless like the primordial maiden of mythology: *the first woman*" (my emphasis 94). The purpose of the visit to the Asclepian sanctuary in Epidauros, according to Kerényi, was "to meet this divine power half way" (34). What is clear in the origin story that Kerényi reveals is how this sacred human mother figure was so powerful that it was forbidden to even speak of her. The silencing of her name and her stories, along with the wrathful murder narrative, set the stage for intensely patriarchal Greek culture, wherein the healing power of mothering was only available under the surface. To my mind, the co-equal to the lone snake on Asclepius's staff waited in the dark earth, in womblike territories, among roots that communicate through mystery, senses, and dreams. With this image, it is easy to understand why the ailing and grieving people of Epidaurus went underground to seek rest and a return to wholeness.

According to Carl Alfred Meier in *Healing Dream and Ritual*, Aristides stated, "Asclepius bade him always sacrifice to the Eleusinian goddesses as well as to Asclepius himself, and the Apellas stele says the same" (108). The Orphic *Hymn to Hygeia* also incorporates a reference to a female healing deity in the lines "Come then, blessed goddess, to the seekers of mystic healing" (108). Meier, likewise, points to an integration of a dualistic divide when he quotes Plato as stating, "[The doctor] ought to be able to bring about love and reconciliation between the most antithetic elements in the body. Our ancestor Asclepius knew how to bring love and concord to these opposites" (1). As various parts of an all healing wholeness, the presence of the wife and daughters further illustrates the importance of images of women as healers to the collective memory of the people of Epidaurus, and positions Asclepius as an ancestor of earlier earth-based matristic societies.

Gaia, or Earth, was once considered the mother of dreams. It was believed

that dreams emerged from her womb. The first people dreaming in Delphi did not need an intermediary until Gaia's python was slayed by Apollo (Downing, "Asklepios" 12). How the consequences of this shift to theophanies influenced philosophies of Western consciousness is described well in the following words by Irigaray:

> After nature or Goddess have vanished into the neuter, the place is opened for the substitution of them by a God, a God in the masculine—a God who sets his absolute entity against the fluidity of the neuter, and also the proliferation of words, of things, of gods. Thus a God, unique and in the masculine, has occupied the place of ecstasy opened and safeguarded by her. From then on, the world is closed upon itself, and the way is prepared for the hell at work today. (5)

Spinning Seeress

When first noting the attributes of Asclepius, I thought of the many women throughout the world who are known for ceremonial use of the staff, including the völur in my lineage who carried distaffs used for spinning thread and divination (Dashú 80). Those who have practised spinning know it is a meditative activity requiring skilled use of the hands. A spiral is created, which has been known to induce trance like states of consciousness. In Norse cosmology, three ageless female deities dwell beneath the roots of Yggdrasil, the evergreen World Tree, spinning and weaving the integral web of life through time and space. The serpent Jörmungmandr, kin of Fenriswolf and underworld goddess Hel, was cast out into the sea by Odin, eventually grew long enough to reach around the world to grasp its own tail in its mouth, which held life and its cycles together. This serpent also has the power to bring life to an end. Ouroboros is a repeating motif originating in an Egyptian funerary text, in which it is sometimes depicted as two serpents. Throughout world mythology, the ouroboros and mother-goddess seem to rise and fall together (Lundskow 55).

Anne Baring and Jules Cashford discuss the evolution of the serpent from the Neolithic era to Hellenistic and Roman periods. In support of their analysis, they write, "As we have seen, in images of the goddess in every culture the serpent is never far away, standing behind her, eating from her hand, entwined in her tree, or even as in Tiamat the shape of the goddess herself" (499). The authors offer an in-depth look at Genesis, the serpent, Eve, Satan, and the rise of opposition between the body and mind. They emphasize, "It was probably inevitable that once the association between Eve and the serpent was made in a pejorative sense (whereas, symbolically, the relation between goddess and serpent had been life-giving), the association of the serpent with the devil,

and of the devil with Eve, would follow sooner or later" (523). When Irish scholar Mary Condren discusses the crushing of the serpent and the end of matricentric Ireland, she writes, "The paradoxical and tragic view of human existence, where both life and death were intrinsic parts of the same process, lay shattered" (23). When compared to earlier images of infinity and double serpents, I sense a lack of movement and vitality on the rod Asclepius carries. Archaeomythologist Marija Gimbutas writes, "To express intensification, the cultures of Old Europe used images of doubles to indicate progressive duplication, and hence, potency or abundance" (*The Language of the Goddess* 161). Spinning and whirling are intrinsic elements of life evident throughout nature in a myriad of spiraling patterns from a twirled and pulsating umbilical cord to the swirling of galaxies.

Kundalini, DNA, and Cosmic Healing

As I am a longtime practitioner of Kundalini yoga, the distaff, rod, and sceptre all represent to me the tree of life, which mirrors the central axis of the spine, or in yogic terms, the sushumna. The vital energies moving around the sushumna are referred to as manas Shakti and prana Shakti or Ida and Pingala (Saraswati Ch. 1, Loc. 288, par. 1). When illustrated, these subtle energy pathways appear identical to the image of a staff, or sceptre, entwined with spirals or serpents. If a line is drawn along the two serpents to represent the energy centres of the body according to Kundalini philosophy, these subtle energies hold a remarkable resemblance to what we now know DNA looks like when magnified. Healing visions of DNA-like structures are described by indigenous healers all over the world, as anthropologist Jeremy Narby indicates in his book, *The Great Cosmic Serpent: DNA and the Origins of Knowledge*. Narby discusses his field work experiences with shamans in Western Amazonia and studies in molecular biology to reveal the connection between DNA and indigenous healers. Though initially skeptical about this connection, he ultimately agrees with other researchers making the DNA and shamanism connection such as Mircea Eliade. He writes, "They talk of a ladder – or a vine, a rope, a spiral staircase, a twisted rope ladder – that connects heaven and earth and which they use to gain access to the world of spirits" (17). Narby proclaims to have seen these snakes himself and concludes, "They were alive" (157). Although the caduceus is a symbol recognized from Ancient Greece, it appears in some of the oldest known stories as an image of regeneration illustrating our relational and creative human capacities as inseparable from nature and cosmos.

Gimbutas repeatedly notes that too little attention has been offered to much earlier snake symbols found in figures and paintings of women, priestesses, and goddesses from various excavation sites she refers to as "Old Europe"

(*The Living Goddesses* 42). Although the caduceus is associated with the god Hermes as often as Asclepius, the winged rainbow goddess Iris—a lesser mentioned and lesser known messenger between the gods and humanity—was also often depicted carrying the symbol. An Athenian red figure vase painting dated to the fifth century BCE depicts Iris holding the caduceus in her hand as she breastfeeds infant Hermes. Iris is the divine messenger in the Iliad, but Hermes replaces her in The Odyssey. She is there nourishing life in the very foundations of Western traditions but then disappears. In Irigaray's critique of pre-Socratic philosophy and its multiple omissions, she writes the following:

> He claims to teach the true when he begins his instruction with: I say. He does not begin his discourse with she said, even though it is she, Goddess or nature, who inspired him. In fact, he repeats or he transposes the meaning that she, or they, transmit(s). But he appropriates it and presents himself as the master of the message received in secret from her. (35)

Serpentine Motherlines Weaving

A snake headed-pendant was excavated from the Hal Saflienei Hypogium, where the "Sleeping Lady" was discovered (Savona-Ventura 101). Perhaps one of the oldest images of the double serpent caduceus is pictured on the libation vase of Gudea portraying Mesopotamian vegetation deity Ningishzida, who has been considered both a male and a female deity. Archaeologist A.L. Frothingham associates Ningishzida with "The supreme Mother Goddess who gives birth to mankind" (190). On a relief referred to as *Inanna with Staff* pictured in Dianne Wolkstein and Noah Kramer's *Inanna: Queen of Heaven and Earth*, Inanna holds the staff entwined by two serpents in one hand (36). Sumerian mythology offers the story of Inanna's transformative descent through seven gates to meet her sister Ereshkigal, who dwells deep below. Although Inanna meets death there, she is resurrected by spirits of nature. Eahr Joan, curator of *Re-genesis Encyclopedia*, describes the stories from ancient Sumer and Mesopotamia as "fairly recent." Joan's work reminds us how mythological themes repeat throughout time and across cultures. Oral transmission of birth-life-death stories occurred long before cuneiform came to be. The myth of Inanna provides ample evidence to indicate how the myths of Ishtar and Isis, Persephone and Demeter, and others were later influenced. Although it is impossible to know the extent of meaning in stories that were not recorded, we can follow the continuity of patterns, motifs, and symbols to engage inquiry with our own minds and bodies.

We might wonder why Inanna's sister, Ereshkigal, whose name means

"Lady of the Great Earth," resided in the underworld and how she got there. Assyriologist Samuel Noel Kramer indicates how, like Persephone, Ereshkigal was seized and taken, too (Kramer 76-79). However, Baring and Cashford indicate in *The Myth of the Goddess* that the original goddess of the underworld was "serpent goddess of the deep" Nammu. (223) Here again, we must hold paradox and consider the spiritual potency of cultural images. As Wolkstein and Kramer write, "A passageway has been created from the Great Above, the conscious, to the Great Below, the unconscious, and it must be kept open. Inanna must not forget her neglected, abandoned older 'sister'—that part of herself that is Ereshkigal" (161). Resembling how one went to the temple of Asclepius alone to be healed, Inanna chose to enter the gates of the underworld alone. Whether feelings of desperation or determination begin a journey to underground realms, mythology often indicates to us that these realms offer a regenerative healing of a split, rupture, or divide.

The Regenerative Womb

How the womb and the tomb are related seems quite significant in Asclepian healing. Gimbutas has compared the famous voluptuous "Sleeping Lady" sculpture in Malta with the rites in the temples of Asclepius, as she describes the uterine and egg shapes of the underground temples and tombs there. Of the Asclepion, she writes the following.

> This rite probably derived from Neolithic practices that likened sleeping in a cave, temple, or underground chamber to slumbering within the goddess' uterus before spiritual reawakening. For the living, such a ritual brought physical healing and spiritual rebirth. For the dead, burial within underground chambers, shaped and colored like the uterus, represented the possibility of regeneration through the goddess' symbolic womb. (*The Living Goddesses* 62)

Perhaps this points to what is mysterious about the Eleusinian mysteries and the miracle cures Asclepius is known for. Gimbutas further notes how "both the Minoan and the Greek Demeter were the same goddess" and describes how the goddesses became "eroticized, militarized (especially Athena), and made subservient to the gods," which contributed to ideas of "female deficiency" still influential today (*The Living Goddesses* 160-64). Alexis Martin Faaberg traces the myth of Demeter and Persephone to anthropomorphic images of a triple goddess on the Phaistos Cup found at the Minoan palace of Ancient Crete and comments: "The snake-like plumage sprouting from their heads alludes to their regenerative powers" (259). Gimbutas mentions the Minoan snake priestess

figurines performing a ritual with exposed breasts and snakes winding around arms and hands and explains: "Found in a floor cyst repository, a storage area for sacred objects, these figurines further stress regeneration and the chthonic aspect" (136). She further describes cave sanctuaries to be "an important part of the Minoan archaeological repertoire" (138).

Physician Mother Gula

Asclepius was not the first healer, and Hippocrates was not the father of medicine. According to Kerényi, dogs and snakes can be seen as one and the same in the Greek mythology (32). The licking of the wounds by dogs in Asclepian temples prompted me to research deities with dogs. Bau of ancient Sumer later became Gula (Great) and is also known by the following names of assimilated female deities: Azugallatu (Great Healer), Belet Balati (Lady of Health), Ninisina, Nintinugga, Nimdindug, Ninnibru, and Ninkarrak. Joshua J. Mark, contributor to the *Ancient History Encyclopedia*, describes her as "the patroness of doctors, healing arts, and medical practices" (1-2). As he further describes, "Her iconography depicts her always with a dog, sometimes seated, and surrounded by stars. She is associated with the underworld and transformation" (1). Barbara Böck explains, "Originally, the Babylonian pantheon included several independent healing goddesses who, during the period from the third to the second millennium BC merged into the figure of Gula" (2). Böck describes Gula as a mother healer and explains how she assumed aspects of the goddess Inanna as the "great physician" who "gives life" (12-15).

Regardless of positionality about a matriarchal past, we can trace the threads of history backward through Western consciousness to cosmologies in which women were deified for having the power of the moon in their wombs and the ability to shed life-giving blood. Discovered in Turkey, the "Seated Woman of Catalhöyük," with two large felines at her sides, is strikingly similar to the images of Gula and her dogs. Ocher red is the colour of life in rooms painted with birthing images discovered at Catalhöyük. The dead were buried underneath the floors of living spaces, again offering themes of birth, death, and regeneration (Gimbutas, *The Living Goddesses* 11). The egalitarian organization of life and evidence of close kinship between these people are inspiring and meet a reclaimed definition of matriarchy detailed by scholar Heide Göttner-Abendroth, which considers specific social, economic, political, and cultural criteria:

> It is true that in patriarchal societies women are ruled by men. But matriarchal societies are in no way a simple reversal of this scenario. In matriarchies, women are at the center of culture without ruling over other members of society. The aim is not to have power over

> others and over nature, but to nurture the natural, social and cultural life based on mutual respect. (par. 9)

Mothers of Gods: Love and Sacred Sexuality

The dissertation of Harvard scholar Hector Ignatio Avalos compares the healing practices in temples of Asclepius with the temple practices of Gula and Yaweh (xxvii). Asclepius is sometimes referred to as ancestor and chief rival of Christ. He was born to a human mother and divine father, performed miracle cures and was considered a saviour, died and returned to life, released demons, etc. (Downing, "Asklepios" 21). *In Missing Mary: The Queen of Heaven and Her Re-Emergence in the Modern Church*, cultural historian Charlene Spretnak discusses the "bizarre extrapolations" about the chastity of the Mother of Christ, and how they "evolved to soothe the fears and insecurities of males who have been raised with patriarchal socialization" (207, 209). If we can trace elements of the Christ narrative to the myth of Asclepius and recover fecundity and relationality through the motherlines of both, perhaps we can begin to unveil a renewed cosmology of wellbeing for the future that honours all life and reveres all bodies.

Although Demeter is often thought of as a deeply grieving mother figure mourning the abduction, or rape, of her daughter Persephone by Hades of the underworld, women's spirituality scholar Mara Lynn Keller draws attention to Demeter's origins as an Earth Mother "of divine sexuality and procreation" (47). She explains that a central purpose of the mother-daughter mythologem was "to instruct girls about their fertility and the unfolding patterns of women's lives" (43). Keller discusses how the deep and enduring love between mother and daughter survives the worst of patriarchal overlays (45). I know this enduring love as a mother of sons, which calls me to consider in depth the enormity of loss and trauma experienced by motherless Asclepius and urges me to illuminate why this myth still matters today.

Looking at the relationship between Demeter and Healer Mother Bau, I consider how Marija Gimbutas describes the Egyptian frog deity Heket as "primordial mother of all existence" (*The Living Goddesses* 28). She relates her to Bau in representing "fecundity and regeneration after death" when discussing skirt-raising rituals in ancient Egypt (28). Goddess scholar Starr Goode further describes the Greek Baubo in the story of Demeter as an ancestor of Bau and mirror of the froglike Sheela na gigs, which have been found on the the walls of church ruins in Ireland. She considers these figures "recurring symbols of the energy rooted in the vulva" and her "ever renewing power of life" (91-92). She further explains:

> It is Baubo, the old servant, who brings Demeter (and thus the ne-

> glected, dying earth) back to life by making the goddess laugh. How does she accomplish what all the gods of Olympus failed to do? By lifting her skirts in an act of *anasyrma,* a ceremonial gesture of naked vulvic display. Here, the act of display conveys not a terrifying power but rather an invocation to joy. (91)

Lifeblood: Asclepius, Medusa, and Dionysus

Perhaps dream temple healings also evoked image perception and memory stored within the body. In his book *The Alphabet Versus the Goddess*, Leonard Shlain attempted to answer the question, "What event in human history could have been so pervasive and immense that it literally changed the sex of God?" (viii). His answers point to neurological changes: "When a critical mass of people within a society acquire literacy, especially alphabet literacy, left hemispheric modes of thought are reinforced at the expense of right hemispheric ones, which manifests as a decline in the status of images, women's rights, and goddess worship" (viii).

If Shlain's argument is accurate, the suppression of sacred female power began around the time when pictograms evolved into cuneiform script. This may explain my initial reaction to reading the myths of Sumer and encountering empowered female deities alongside patriarchal overlays, especially in the actions of god Enki, who does not seem clear about whether he should befriend the Queen of Heaven and Earth or seek power over her. In one part of the myth, Inanna seems to celebrate all the *me* Enki gave her to load up her heavenly boat. She is scripted as saying, "He gave me the staff.... He gave me the descent into the underworld. He gave me ascent from the underworld" (Wolkstein and Kramer 16, 127). However, upon the boats return, the story contains what I see as clues pointing to the principles of a matristic society being kept alive by the people of Uruk within a patriarchal overlay:

> As the *me* whom Inanna had received from Enki were unloaded, they were announced and presented to the people of Sumer. Then more me appeared —more than Enki had given Inanna … and these, too, were presented to the people of Uruk: 'Inanna brought the *me*.... She brought the art of women. She brought the execution of the *me*.' (emphasis in original, Wolkstein and Kramer 26)

In the heart of the myths from Sumer, a strong female presence does not seem to need permission from any male god. At the same time, a demand for approval from male gods is documented in the clay. I find Shlain's descriptions of a neurological transition from image rich, orally transmitted, and bodily ways

of communication to the analytical fixed power of the authoritative written word resonant in this example.

It is fascinating to consider Shlain's position about the left hemisphere of the brain being predominantly masculine knowing how Asclepius used the blood from the veins of the right side of Medusa's body for raising the dead (Downing, "Asklepios" 16). Gimbutas also discusses the fear of women's power and the magic of Medusa's blood as she describes how blood from her hair-snakes caused death, whereas blood from her veins renewed life: "The death-drop of Medusa's blood may have been a transposed and distorted memory of women's powerful moon-blood, and Medusa's terrible mask could reflect menstrual fears and taboos" (26). I agree with Jane Meredith who writes, "It is time serpents were released and wildness broke the stone face of what is acceptable and we saw behind the masks" (Ch.9, Loc. 1041, par. 15). Feminist scholar Donna Haraway highlights a need for Medusa in our time in her recent book *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*: "Perhaps Medusa, the only mortal Gorgon, can bring us into the holobiomes of Terrapolis and heighten our chances for dashing the twenty-first-century ships of the Heroes on a living coral reef instead of allowing them to suck the last drop of fossil flesh out of dead rock" (Ch.2, Loc. 1233, par. 1).

Shlain's discussion of the Greek god Dionysus offers another example of just how feared women's power was in ancient Greece. Dionysus was also cut from his mortal mother at the time of her death. Apparently, Zeus sewed Dionysus into his thigh and rebirthed him. Shlain also questions the origins of Dionysus: "Virtually all the Dionysian characteristics mentioned: figs, bulls, Muses, the moon, dance, music, moisture, serpents, sexuality, regeneration of the earth, the cultivation of plants, and the nonverbal expressiveness of the mask, were originally under the aegis of the goddess" (139). We might wonder what kind of impact wild and ecstatic Dionysus as a goddess might have had on the Western world. Perhaps harmful labels like "hysteria" and its successor "borderline personality disorder"—in which there continues to be a three-to-one female to male gender ratio—would not exist (Sansone and Sansone).

To Do No Harm

In *Greek Medicine as Paideia*, Werner Jaeger writes, "The Greek ideal of culture was the ideal of health" (45). To my mind, there is no ideal of health that excludes the wellbeing of at least half of a population. Distorted perceptions of female bodies and women's needs, created by male fantasies, certainly harmed women in ancient Greece and continue to cause harm today. In Aline Rouselle's *Porneia*, she discusses the consequences of Plato having "referred to the womb as a dangerous animal roaming around the body" (69). This idea is consistent

with the "wandering womb" mentioned in Nancy Demand's article "Hippocratic Medicine and the Epidemics." She explains that "Hippocratic anatomy viewed the womb as free to wander about the body, causing mischief wherever it settled" (55). As a woman and mother who values integrative medicine, I once applauded the values implied in the Latin "*primum non nocere*," associated with the Hippocratic Oath. However, to "first, do no harm" certainly requires some deeper consideration for bodies not male (Lloyd). In the absence of balanced knowledge about all bodies and their differences to inform how medicine is practised, the Hippocratic Oath is hypocritical.

The ghosts of patriarchs in ancient Greece continue to haunt modern medicine and to disrupt appropriate research for understanding the unique health needs of female bodies. Dr. Alysson McGregor discusses this in a TED talk titled *Why Medicine Has Dangerous Side Effects for Women.* She shares how over the last century laboratory testing and clinical trials of drugs have been performed almost exclusively on male cells and male bodies while pointing to medical studies that indicate at least 80 percent of the drugs withdrawn from the market today are due to side effects on women. She states, "Women are not just men with boobs and tubes. They have their own anatomy and physiology that deserves to be studied with the same intensity." We simply do not have appropriate definitions of what health and wellbeing mean for women, which begs questions about what life may be like if all bodies were considered equal and different bodies equally revered in contemporary models of healing and healthcare. As Elaine Showalter states in *Hysteria, Feminism, and Gender*, "Hysteria is no longer a question of the wandering womb; it is a question of the wandering story, and of whether that story belongs to the hysteric, the doctor, the historian, or the critic (335). In the etymology of the word "medicine" is the Latin "*medico*" from "*medeor*," which means "I heal, cure." ("Medicine") Clearly, the contemporary capitalist medical system itself is in need of healing and a cure.

Mind, Body, and Temple

Can we live postmodern lives that are embodied, relational, ecologically and cosmically attuned? As a women's temple practitioner, I am deeply curious about the authentic roots of yoga in pre-Vedic cultures. When practising with the energies of female deities from the Hindu pantheon, especially Durga, I have experienced and witnessed potent transformation. The Garbhagrha is the central shrine of Hindu temples and translates to "womb of the Goddess" (Amazzone 146). Art history professor Padma Kaimal has studied some of the oldest temples in India to see what she might discover relating to balance between male and female elements. She has discovered design aspects of

some temples as "an explicit invocation of female generative organs" and has described how unroofed spaces seemed to point upward to "frame views of cosmic bodies" (79).

When looking at the current extinction rate of both animals and plants today, it seems vitally important to explore ways of seeing such as Judy Grahn's. She includes the human and nonhuman world in her assertion that "we are all equally human, because we are all equally metaformic" (Grahn, "Cultural Obversity" par. 19). In her metaformic theory, human culture originated with the entrainment of human beings to both the menstrual cycle and the lunar cycle (Grahn, "*Are Goddesses Metaformic Constructs*?" xiv). In this critical time in human and planetary history, with so little time to ignore our common ground, I choose to tend a unitive image of feminisms as "interwoven" in ways that "address contradictions and unequal relations without ever losing hold of what is shared" (Mani 236). Although we have reached levels of abstraction today that seem insurmountable, perhaps we can simply agree that we all come from a mother and begin to see the vital importance of resacralizing our motherlines.

Swedish artist and activist Monica Sjöö posits that the "The Indian Kali was the Irish Cailleach" (222). Imagining how these powerful deities reemerging in our cultural consciousness today share the same blood root is a moving image of relational tension to support our inextricability as feminists, regardless of sex or gender. I agree with Sjöö that "ancient holism must be reconstructed in our own minds, by our own minds, helped by historic knowledge and imagination" (223). To this, I will add the importance of knowing our sacred earthly origins through the borderlands and third spaces of our complex postmodern identities and bodies. How might our great-great grandmothers meet and greet each other without the barriers patriarchy has created? Perhaps we can begin our reclaiming work together here, imagining this.

Toward Healing and Sacred Earthly Life

The healing practices in the temples of Asclepius were attempts to suture the horrifying ruptures created in the severing of humanity from our motherlines. Though glorified and positioned as a hero, Asclepius was a divine human profoundly wounded in a tragedy that became ours collectively. It is my conviction that the process of recovering subsumed ancestral mother knowledges, from as many lineages as possible, cannot be bypassed if renewal of life and sustainability are shared cultural, societal, and global goals. As we continue to meet extraordinary opportunities for transformation today, may we restore primordial wisdom by looking back as well as forward. This is not "a simple attempt to reinstate the Goddess religion of the Neolithic era" (Spretnak, *Lost Goddesses* xi). It is a necessary retrieval of models of deep relationality—a

collective cultivation of resilience and embracing what possibilities may still exist for interdependent living today and tomorrow. Our illusions of being separate from the natural world and each other are falling away because they must. In this shifting, may we remember the regenerative capacities in the depth of our motherlines. There are multiple wisdoms available to help restore equilibrium and create postpatriarchal futures.

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ANDREA O'REILLY

In Search of the Goddess

Creating a Feminist Motherline for Mother-Daughter Connection and Empowerment

The term "motherline," as Sharon Abby explains, "is a term that was first used by Jungian psychologist Naomi Lowinsky to describe the process of reclaiming aspects of the feminine self that have become lost, forgotten or repressed" (844). Current literature on motherlines conveys and confirms the potential of the motherline to empower women to achieve a reclaimed and renewed feminine identity. However, what is not specifically examined in the literature on motherlines is how a woman may reclaim aspects of the feminine self when she is disconnected from her familial and ancestral motherline. Drawing upon the insights of African American and feminist writings on the motherline, this article explores how women may resurrect a lost motherline through a psychic and embodied remembering of, and reconnection to, their ancestral lineage. The article begins with a discussion of the motherline as theorized in womanist and feminist literature, and then visits my own struggle to create a motherline for me and my daughters from a place of psychic and familial dislocation. The article concludes with narrative reflections written by me and my youngest daughter, Casey, about our 2015 journey to Ireland that explores how, in our search for the Goddesses of our Celtic lineage, we created a motherline for connection and empowerment.

The term "motherline," as Sharon Abby explains, "is a term that was first used by Jungian psychologist Naomi Lowinsky to describe the process of reclaiming aspects of the feminine self that have become lost, forgotten or repressed" (844). In her article "Empowering Mothers and Daughters through Matroreform and Feminist Motherlines" from this issue of *JMI,* Fiona Joy Green explores how "feminist motherlines afford mothers the opportunity to record, explore, and pass on their life-cycle perspectives of feminist mothering to their children and

to others" (10). Green emphasizes that mothers and children "by participating in feminist motherlines often develop a life-cycle perspective and a worldview of interconnectivity with each other, with others, and with the world that offer them opportunities and ways to create feminist mothering perspectives and practices countering those prescribed by the patriarchal institution of motherhood" (10). Current literature on motherlines—most notably from African American womanist theory as well as Anglo American feminist theory—conveys and confirms the potential of the motherline to empower women to achieve a reclaimed and renewed feminine identity. However, what is not specifically examined in the literature on motherlines is how a woman may reclaim aspects of the feminine self when she is disconnected from her familial and ancestral motherline. Drawing upon the insights of African American and feminist writings on the motherline, this article explores how women may resurrect a lost motherline through a psychic and embodied remembering of, and reconnection to, their ancestral lineage. The article begins with a discussion of the motherline as theorized in womanist and feminist literature, and then visits my own struggle to create a motherline for myself and my daughters from a place of psychic and familial dislocation. The article concludes with narrative reflections written by me and my youngest daughter, Casey, about our 2015 journey to Ireland that explores how, in our search for the Goddesses of our Celtic lineage, we created a motherline for connection and empowerment.

Motherlines in African American Culture

In African American society, the motherline represents the ancestral memory of African American culture. Black mothers pass on the teachings of the motherline to each successive generation through the maternal function of cultural bearing. Various African American writers argue the very survival of African American people depends upon the preservation of Black culture and history. If Black children are to survive they must know the stories, legends, and myths of their ancestors. In African American culture, women are the keepers of the tradition: they are the culture bearers who mentor and model the African American values essential for the empowerment of Black children and culture. "Black women," as Karla Holloway and Stephanie Demetrakopoulos explain, "carry the voice of the mother—they are the progenitors, the assurance of the line … as carriers of the voice [Black women] carry wisdom—mother wit. They teach the children to survive and remember" (123). Black mothers, as Wanda Thomas Bernard and Candace Bernard conclude, "pass on the torch to their daughters, who are expected to become the next generation of mothers, grandmothers, or othermothers, to guard future generations" (47). Alice Walker's classic essay *In Search of Our Mothers' Garden* is likewise a tribute to

her African American foremothers who, in Walker's words, "handed on the creative spark, the seed of the power they themselves never hoped to see: or like a sealed letter they could not plainly read" (201-2). Speaking of her own mother, Alice Walker writes: "so many of the stories that I write, that we all write, are my mother's stories" (203). As Sylvia Hamilton remarks in her documentary *Black Mother, Black Daughter*, "I am able to stand here because of all those women who have stood here before me."

The importance of motherlines and cultural bearing is a central theme in the writings of African American Nobel Laureate Toni Morrison (O'Reilly). Motherhood, in Morrison's view, is fundamentally a profound act of resistance—essential and integral to Black women's fight against racism and sexism and their ability to achieve wellbeing for themselves and their culture. The power of motherhood and the empowerment of mothering, for Morrison, make possible the better world mothers seek for themselves and their children. More specifically and similar to Sara Ruddick's writings on maternal thinking and practice, Morrison is attentive to the task of training children so that they are acceptable to their social group. However, with Morrison the aim of training is amplified to include the African American custom of cultural bearing—raising children in accordance with the values, beliefs, and customs of the African American motherline. For Morrison, training or more specifically cultural bearing means socializing the child in the values of their motherline, so they develop self-esteem as a Black person that will empower them to survive and challenge the racism of the dominant culture. Through cultural bearing mothers pass on and transmit what Morrison calls the ancestral memory of the African American motherline to sustain and empower children for today's world.

Feminist Motherlines

In *Stories from the Motherline: Reclaiming the Mother-Daughter Bond, Finding Our Souls*, Naomi Lowinsky explores "a worldview that is as old as humankind, a wisdom we have forgotten that we know: the ancient lore of women—the Motherline." She goes on to elaborate:

> Whenever women gather in circles or in pairs, in olden times around the village well, or at the quilting bee, in modern times in support groups, over lunch, or at the children's party, they tell one another stories from the Motherline. These are stories of female experience: physical, psychological, and historical. They are stories about the dramatic changes of a woman's body: developing breasts and pubic hair, bleeding, being sexual, giving birth, suckling, menopause, and of

> growing old. They are stories of the life cycles that link generations of women: Mothers who are also daughters, daughters who have become mothers; grandmothers who also remain granddaughters. (1-2)

However, Lowinsky argues that most women "are cut off from their motherline and [have] paid a terrible price for cutting [them]selves off from [their] feminine roots" (31). By disconnecting themselves from their motherline, these daughters have lost the authenticity and authority of their womanhood. Women may reclaim that authority and authenticity by reconnecting to the motherline. When a woman today comes to understand her life story as a story from the motherline, she gains female authority in a number of ways:

> First, her Motherline grounds her in her feminine nature as she struggles with the many options now open to women. Second, she reclaims carnal knowledge of her own body, its blood mysteries and their power. Third, as she makes the journey back to her female roots, she will encounter ancestors who struggled with similar difficulties in different historical times. This provides her with a life-cycle perspective that softens her immediate situation…. Fourth, she uncovers her connection to the archetypal mother and to the wisdom of the ancient worldview, which holds that body and soul are open and all life is interconnected. And, finally, she reclaims her female perspective, from which to consider how men are similar and how they are different. (Lowinksy 13)

The motherline, as Green emphasizes in her article in this volume, "helps mothers gain authority in various ways through exposure to an embodied knowledge of mothering that journeys back through encounters with ancestor women who have had experience with mothering" (10).

Virginia Woolf writes the following in *A Room of One's Own*: "we think back through our mothers if we are women" (72). Indeed, writing about Lowinsky's motherline in her book *Motherless Daughters: The Legacy of Loss,* Hope Edelman emphasizes that "motherline stories ground a … daughter in a gender, a family, and a feminine history [and] they transform the experience of her female ancestors into maps she can refer to for warning or encouragement" (201). Motherless daughters long to know and to be connected to what Lowinsky calls "the deep feminine," which Edelman describes as "that subtle unconscious source of feminine authority and power we mistakenly believe is expressed in scarf knots and thank-you notes but instead originates from a more abstract gendered core" (179). "Without knowledge of her own experiences, and the relationship to her mother's," Edelman continues, "a daughter is snipped

from the female cord that connects the generations of women in her family, the feminine line of descent ... the motherline" (200). Adrienne Rich writes in *Of Woman Born,* "The loss of the daughter to the mother, the mother to the daughter, is the essential female tragedy" (237). In Edelman's work, this loss refers to the daughter losing her mother through death, abandonment, or neglect. In these instances, separation occurs as a result of the mother's leaving the daughter. More frequently, in patriarchal culture, it is daughters who disconnect from their motherline.

Green, in her qualitative study on feminist mothers, likewise emphasizes the importance of cultural bearing and motherlines for the empowerment of feminist mothers and their children. Through interviewing, these women emphasized "the importance of feminist motherlines to carry the voices, wisdom and wit of feminist mothers" (Green, "Developing a Feminist Motherline" 8). A feminist motherline, she writes, "assists mothers in re/claiming their feminist mothering authority and grounds them in their knowledge and the knowledge of other feminist mothers. It also strengthens, and provides for some, a foundation for the ongoing political activism of feminist mothers" (8). Green further elaborates:

> A feminist motherline provides the space and place for feminist mothers to record and pass on their own life-cycle perspective of feminist mothering and to connect with those of other feminist mothers. Additionally a motherline ensures that feminist mothers have connection with a worldview that is centred and draws upon feminist's crucial gender based analysis of the world—including parenting. It also promises a legacy of feminist mothering and motherwork for others. (18)

Building upon my reading of cultural bearing in Toni Morrison, as discussed above, Green argues that mothers in sharing their stories of feminist mothering are also cultural bearers of feminism. "Through developing a feminist motherline, with feminist mothers being the cultural bearers of feminism in their daily lives," Green concludes that "empowerment for mothers and children are sure to follow" (20).

Mothering from My Motherline

In the mothering of my three children, I seek to perform and practise cultural bearing from a feminist motherline. Indeed, I would be a wealthy woman if I had dollar for every time my daughters said "Where do you think we get it from?" My daughters, often to my surprise, understand their spirited and often

risky resistance to patriarchy in terms of a feminist lineage of foremothers. Through my mothering, I seek to connect my daughters to their feminist motherline and impart to them the lessons of their foremothers in order to instill in them, I hope, pride in their feminist heritage and lineage. Similar to womanist theory, I believe that if my daughters are to survive in a patriarchal world, they must know the stories, legends, and myths of their foremothers. With Lowinsky, I long to share with my daughters "stories of the life cycles that link generations of women" and bequeath to them "carnal knowledge of the [female] body, its blood mysteries and their power" (13). However, because of my own complicated and troubled family history, I have become disconnected from my motherline. My paternal grandmother passed away when I was a teenager, and my maternal grandmother, with whom I was close as a teenager and young woman, passed away in my late twenties before I was able to truly learn from her ancestral wisdom. My mother, for reasons that I only partially understand, was never close to her sisters or brothers, and I have met my extended family on my mother's side only a few times and know very little about their lives or their family history. On my father's side, there is a large extended family with seven cousins and many aunts and uncles with whom, as a child, I enjoyed a close relationship with. However, when I was eighteen years old, my father's suicide put an abrupt end to these relationships, and all connections to my paternal family were severed. As a Catholic family, they could not cope with the death of my father by suicide. I have only seen my paternal aunt and uncle three times in the thirty-nine years since my father's suicide, and I have only recently reconnected with some of my cousins as adults. Estranged from my extended family, I could not positon myself in a familial motherline nor could I perform cultural bearing for my children. However, as a feminist scholar, I knew that motherlines are crucial for feminine authority and power for both me and my two daughters, so I sought to create my own motherline from the herstory of our Goddess heritage.

In 1983 as an undergraduate student, I had the good fortune to take a course on the Goddess with Professor Johanna H. Stuckey, and ever since then, I have been enraptured by the Goddess's herstory and empowered by her presence. I have read widely in Goddess studies, my home is adorned with countless Goddess statues and prints, and I have travelled to Crete, Cyprus, and Turkey on a quest for her history and knowledge. The knowledge of women's power—held for thousands of years in Goddess societies before the rise of patriarchy—imparts to me the magnificence of the feminine and empowers me to reclaim the authenticity and authority of my womanhood. Discovering and nurturing one's motherline is not simple: "it's an idiosyncratic and often chaotic process that takes a lifetime" (Abbey 845). Bereft of a familial motherline, I sought to create one—not from a lineage of ancestors but from the ancient lore of

my Goddess heritage. And similar to the teachings on the African American motherline, I sought to pass on and transmit to my daughters, through the practice of cultural bearing, the ancestral memory of Goddess culture so that they too may be empowered as women.

In Search of Our Celtic Motherline: A Mother and Daughter Goddess Journey in Ireland

In her introduction to *The Serpent and the Goddess: Women, Religion and Power in Celtic Ireland*, Mary Condren writes the following: "I hope this [the book] will empower other women to explore [their herstory], uncovering the past for the sake of their future" (xviii). I bought Condren's book on my second visit to Ireland in 2005, and its worn and torn pages are a testimony to the many times it has been read and reread by me and my youngest daughter Casey; our comments and underlines in the text converge to form a coded subtext of revelation and connection. In June 2015, I was invited to Ireland for a keynote address, and Casey accompanied me on the trip. (My eldest daughter unfortunately could not join us due to her own conference travel.) In planning our two week visit to Ireland, Condren's book became our inspiration and guide. Although I had visited Ireland three times before my daughter's and my planned trip, I did not have the opportunity then to discover the Goddesses of Ireland other than to feel Her presence on the burren of County Clare. For this trip, I was determined to meet the Goddesses of my ancestral land and to visit her sacred sites so to connect myself and my daughter to our Celtic motherline However, not willing to drive in Ireland for this trip (after a hellish experience of this on an early holiday with my partner) and unsure of what to see and how to see it, I turned to the Internet for possible guided tours. And even though I found a few escorted Goddess tours, none were offered for our dates, and I was left with only coach tours and their predictable and touristy itinerary; moreover, the tours were longer than our available five days and at a cost that far exceeded my budget. The evening I resigned myself to booking the four day Paddywagon tour of Ireland (yes the name says it all), I came across a website offering Goddess tours by Bee Smith. I truly do not know how I found the site as Googling her name and/or Goddess tours as I wrote this paper yielded her blog but no specific reference to Goddess tours. After much email exchange, Bee created for us the Goddess pilgrimage of a lifetime. In the next section of the article, Casey and I share a few of the many highlights of our mother-daughter quest for the Goddess in Ireland as we came to find revelation and empowerment in our Celtic motherline through connection to the archetypal mother and to the wisdom of the ancient worldview.

Andrea's Reflections

In her superb book *Sheela na gig: The Dark Goddess of Sacred Power,* Starr Goode writes the following: "Nothing represents the necessity of reimagining the female in Western culture more than the startling Sheela na gig. The power of her image signifies a wholeness that can never be completely understood" (2) The image of a Sheela, Goode continues, "is astonishing to behold. The Sheela has been called 'whore,' 'hag,' 'witch,' 'evil-eye stone,' 'devil,' 'healer,' and 'Goddess.' She embraces a conundrum of opposites: She clearly offers up her ripe sex, yet she emanates a repelling menace from the upper half of her body" (4). However, as Goode explains, "No written records remain to unravel the mysteries of the Sheelas…. All interpretation is speculation…. However, one can say with certainty that her image survives, and the fascination with the mysterious Sheela na gigs has only continued to grow" (14).

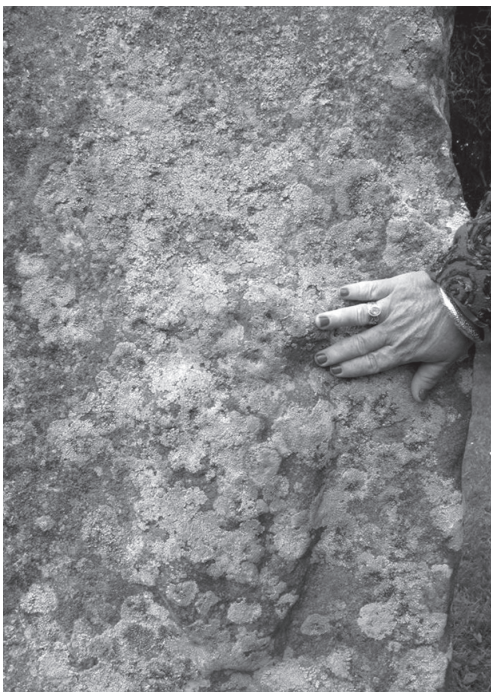
I do not remember when or how I came to know about the mysterious Sheelas but I have been captivated by her enigmatic power for many years. On my trip to Ireland with my partner in 2005, my partner surprised me with a gift of a poster of the Sheelas of Ireland and Britain. In a small store in rural Ireland, the poster was on display, but we were told it was not for sale. A few minutes later, as I awaited my partner in the car, he arrived with poster in hand having convinced the shop keeper to sell it to him. The poster, having adorned many a wall in my home, now resides in my recently built Goddess bathroom sanctuary. For this trip, I read several books on the Sheelas and was determined to see as many as possible on our pilgrimage. However, only

a few are exhibited at museums, and the remaining are scattered across the country and often in inaccessible locations. When I told Bee of my interest in Sheelas, she told me, via email, that many Sheelas are warehoused in the basement of the National Museum in Dublin and that I would be able to see them if I emailed a certain person explaining I was a professor visiting from Canada. Well the email was sent, and the time of our visit was confirmed. The visit was arranged for our first full day in Dublin, and Casey and I, beyond excited, arrived at the museum hours before our scheduled visit. We decided to explore the museum while we waited for our scheduled appointment. We somehow got lost on the second floor of the museum, and as we turned a corner to find our way back, what did we encounter completely unplanned and unexpected: the only Sheela on display at the museum. I am sure our ecstatic cries of delight and our frantic attempt to find someone to take a photo of us with the Sheela were unusual occurrences at the stately and sombre National Museum of Ireland on that June afternoon.

A half an hour later, we met the museum archeologist. She led us down several flights of stairs, through a security clearance, and then through room after room in the basement of the museum. As Casey and I gasped at one historical item after another, she cheerfully asked us about our visit and chatted about the unusual sunny weather in Ireland that week. At the very back of what seemed like an endless labyrinth of priceless artifacts, we

arrived at what she affectionately called the Sheela room. And there they were lying ramshackle on the floor and haphazardly stored on shelves. She said we could touch them and we could take as many photos as we would like. A few minutes later, she explained that she had to take a personal call in another room, and we could stay as long as we liked. So there were Casey and I completely unsupervised in the basement of the National Museum among dozens of centuries-old Sheelas.

Words could never capture what we experienced and shared just the two of us among and with the Sheelas in that basement (so these pictures will have to suffice); their power was palatable, and their presence stays with us until this day. I learned later that our long and unsupervised visit was certainly an

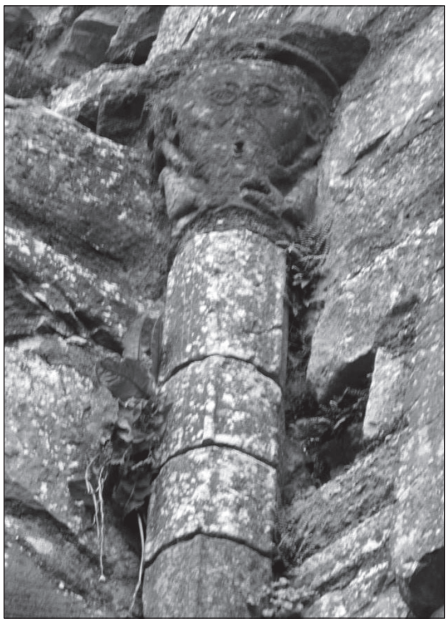


anomaly; with other visitors, their time was very limited and fully supervised. Perhaps the woman sensed our respect for the Sheelas and our affinity with them, or perhaps the Sheela herself made it happen. Either way, I am forever thankful for this precious blessing from our ancestral motherline.

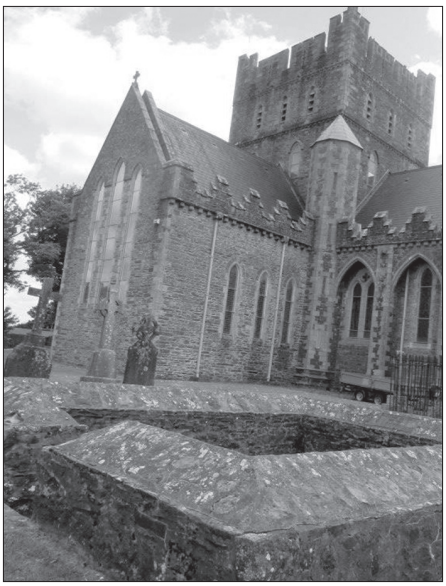
The next day we visited herstoric New Grange; a five-thousand-year-old temple in the Boyne Valley—a place of astrological, spiritual, religious, and ceremonial importance. New Grange is famous for the passage chamber aligning with the rising sun at the winter solstice. We then visited the Hill of Tara where we saw our first Sheela in her original location. Goode explains the significance of Tara Sheela: "[It] is carved on a standing stone. This rare Sheela is located in a church graveyard on the famed Hill of Tara an archaeological complex where the Irish high kings where crowned. She is half-standing, half dancing, with one arm straight, while the other arm makes the typical Sheela gesture toward her sex" (67) Look closely at the picture below, and you can see her left eye, just next to my ring finger. She is on a stone that kings would have passed through at the Hill of Tara before mating with Goddess Maeve to guarantee their kingship.

The next Sheela we met was in the town Boyle in County Roscommon; she is partially hidden above one of the central Romanesque arches in the Cistercian Abbey founded in the twelve century. Little has been written on this Sheela. I did find, through a Google search, a comment on Trip Advisor describing the abbey as "home to some of the oldest graffiti I have ever seen!" The comment, I suspect, refers to the Sheela because during our visit to the abbey we overhead a tour guide gleefully describe to a group of tourists, as they giggled in embarrassment, that the Sheela was an example of early pornography. Several months after our return home, we learned that the town of Boyle, where we visited the Sheela, is the town from where Casey's paternal ancestors emigrated from during the Potato Famine.

We met our next Sheela on our visit to Kildare to see St. Brigid's Cathedral; there she adorns a tomb of the bishop Walter Wellesley in Kildare Cathedral. The Sheela, as Goode describes in her book, "grasps both feet to affect her display of flight as the bishop makes his last journey" (59). Outside in the graveyard of the cathedral are the remains of the famous fire temple of Brigid, whose flames were guarded by priestesses and later by nuns.



Sharing with you our quest for the Sheela and her splendid images, I am reminded of the words that conclude Goode's book: "possible interpretations come and go, rise and fall. Whatever contradictory meanings we may project onto her, the image endures: powerful, mysterious, eternal" (317). For me, the Sheelas we met on our Goddess pilgrim-



age throughout Ireland exemplify and embody the archetypal mother, and in connection with Her, I connected with my own ancestral motherline to reclaim the power of the feminine.

Casey's Reflections

Domestic and farm animals play a prominent role in much of Irish legend and mythology, and often they stand in as representations of the Goddess herself.

From the epic of the *Táin* (also known as the *Cattle Raid of Cooley*) and Queen Meave's desire to possess the giant bull, to Brigid's description as a guardian of domestic animals, and similarly Baerra's intention to create stone enclosures at Carrowmore to provide safe shelter for her animals, to Boinn (Boann/Boand) the cow Goddess of the river Boyne, and Macha the horse Goddess who could run faster than even the king's fastest horses, and to the shapeshifting Morrigian transforming herself into a raven, black eel, wolf, and red cow, it is clear that animals are integral to Irish mythology and culture. While journeying to Blacklion, County Cavan in search of Brigid's cursing stones, my mother and I were to witness the sacred connection between the Goddess and domestic animals firsthand, and to discover how much power these animals actually wield.

Brigid's cursing stones rest on the edge of a pasture on the southern shore of Lake Lough Macnean adjacent to a small cemetery and the ruins of a Killinaugh church, and they are comprised of a large rock containing "ballauns" (hollow impressions carved into the rock) containing several smaller stones. As legend has it, the stones are meant to be turned in one direction to deliver a curse and in the opposite direction to deliver a blessing or cure. In a 1998 interview, a resident of the area, Harold Johnston explains, "If you wanted to put a curse on someone, you turned the stones anti-clockwise in the morning." However, if the curse in question was an unjust one, it "would rebound on yourself before night" (qtd. in Killinagh).

Upon our arrival to see the stones, my mother and I, along with our tour guide Bee, crossed the cemetery stopping to admire the old grave stones and their intricate and unique designs featuring various animals and intersecting snakes.

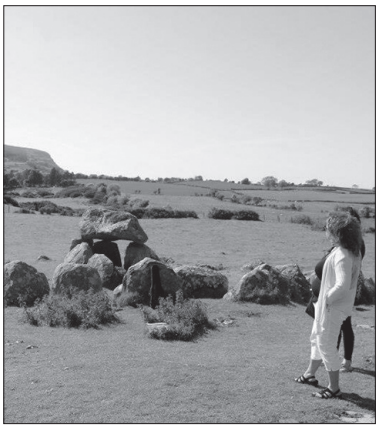
As we approached the entrance to the pasture, we were met with displeased and disapproving faces. A small herd of cows had heard our footsteps in the cemetery and brazenly crossed the pasture toward the gate.

At first confused and taken aback, we soon learned the reason behind their bold behaviour; nestled behind one of the cows stood three calves.

Bee informed us that because the cows stood between us and the stones, it would be too dangerous to cross the pasture, as the cows were likely to attack in defense of their young. These mama cows meant business, and they were not about to let us anywhere near their babes. We respected their space and kept a safe distance. We were able to see the stones and snap a few pictures through the close-up lens of our camera.

Although we were unable to actually get close enough to the stones to touch them, the sentiment behind this experience in many ways meant so much more than that. The cows held the power to either permit or deny entrance, and because of their maternal, Goddess-like instinct, we were denied access by the chosen gatekeepers of Brigid's sacred stones. A both humorous and beautiful experience, it certainly felt in the spirit of our mother-daughter voyage in search of the Goddess.

A day later, we journeyed to Sligo with our tour guide Martin to see the megalithic site of Carrowmore. Legend has it that the Goddess Bearra gathered a collection of stones with the intention of building enclosures to keep her animals safe. However, after gathering the stones in her apron and flying across the area of Carrowmore, she accidentally dropped a number of stones, and the fallen stones created the ancient cairns and rock formations there. It was truly a privilege to see, touch, and even sit upon these formations, which have endured since approximately 3700 BCE.



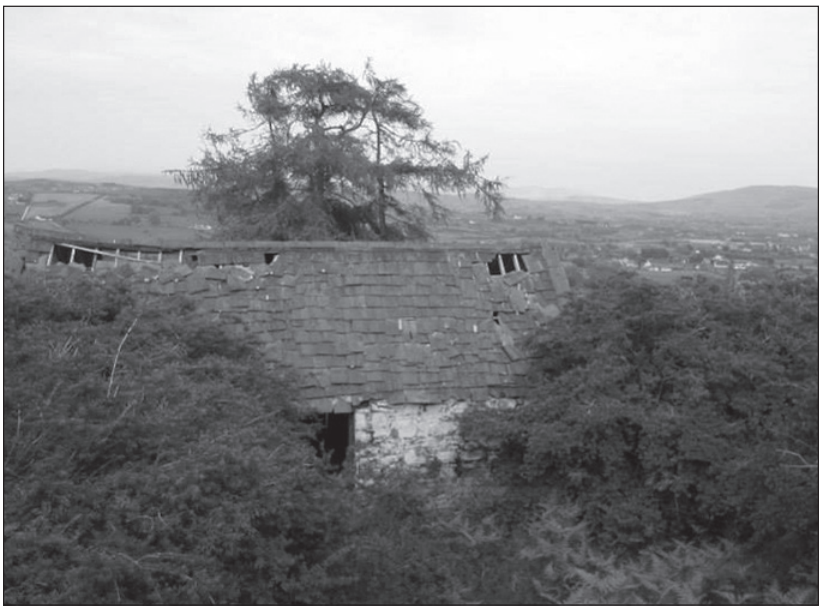
We were also shown many holy wells. Surrounded by the beautiful and luscious green landscape and grazing cows and sheep, the tranquil energy of these wells created a perfect opportunity to relax in the peacefulness of our surroundings and to sip the sacred and powerful waters of the well.

We visited St. Hughs Well in Leitrim, where the water ran red with iron, Tobernalt in Sligo, whose waters are said to cure madness, and the sacred wells of St. Brigid in both Faughart and Kildare. Then, with our tour guide Delores, we travelled to Killeavy in Armagh, and visited the ruins of the all-female convent and grave site of St. Monnina—a contemporary and friend of St. Brigid.

We then made the six-hundred-metre climb to the slopes of Slieve Gullion to sip the waters of her holy well. A winding path covered in yellow gorse and white mayflower, with wire fences littered in sheep's wool, guided our way until we came upon an abandoned and a dilapidated cottage nearly completely covered in overgrown brush.

A short distance later, we were at the well. Surrounded by rolling pastures of grazing cows and trees decorated in scraps of fabric left as offerings, there stood a white structure topped with a large white cross and holding a statue of St. Monnina. Below the structure was her sacred well.

But St. Monnina was not alone at her well that day. An elderly woman, whom we learned was named Christine, stood by the structure, broom and bucket in hand. Christine informed us that every so often she would make the climb up Slieve Gullian, armed with various cleaning supplies, to visit and maintain the well. While talking with her, we learned that the ramshackle cottage we had passed on our journey upward had been the



place of her birth. A rather spirited and forthright woman, she also let us know how the scraps of fabric left as offerings on the nearby trees irritated her as she found them unsightly.

She agreed to take a few pictures of us at the well with our digital camera, although she had a tough time figuring out how it worked and didn't hesitate to tell us so.

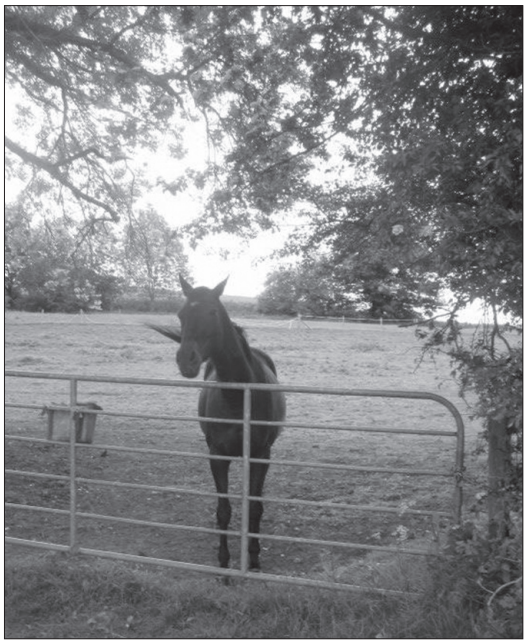
We expressed how impressed we were at her devotion to maintaining the well despite the long, steep journey there, to which she nonchalantly replied that somebody had to do it, and it might as well be her. I couldn't help but feel as the four of us women conversed, shared stories, and laughed that St. Monnina herself was with us, listening intently and laughing along.

For me, one of the highlights of our trip happened in Armagh. The name Armagh comes from the Gaelic "*Ard Macha*" which translates to "Macha's Height." I had first heard of the Goddess Macha in Mary Condren's *The Serpent and the Goddess*. My mother and I knew we needed to travel to Armagh's capital Emain Macha to visit her sacred mound, nowadays known as Navanfort. The site seems little more than a large hill, but archaeological excavation has revealed a roundhouse-like structure dating back to 95 BCE, which was deliberately and ritualistically burned down and covered in a mound of earth and turf. It is believed to be one of the royal sites of pre-Christian Ireland and is associated with the Goddess Macha.

Macha is known as a Horse and Sun Goddess. One of the most famous stories surrounding her is known as the "Curse of Macha" which is instrumental in explaining the events of the infamous Irish epic the *Táin* (or the *Cattle Raid of Cooley*).

In short, Macha came upon a lonely farmer named Cruinniuc, who had recently lost his wife. She tended to his fire and slept with him. When he asked her name, Macha would repeat "my name cannot be spoken here" and warned Cruinniuc not to mention her presence in Ulster to anyone. One day, despite warnings from Macha, Cruinniuc decided to attend a festival held by the king of Ulster. During the king's festival, there would be chariot races, which the king's horses

would inevitably win. During the race, Cruinniuc foolishly boasted that his wife could run faster than the king's horses. The king, outraged, demanded that Macha be seized and brought to the festival immediately. He then commanded her to race against his two fastest horses and threatened that if she didn't, he would kill her husband. Macha at this time was heavily pregnant and pleaded with the men of Ulster to not make her race. She cried out to them to show sympathy: "For a mother bore every one of you!" They did not listen to her plea and forced to race. She easily beat the king's horses, but upon finishing the race, she fell to the ground and gave birth to the Emain Macha, the twins of Macha.



In some versions of the story, Macha dies shortly after giving birth to the twins, but before her death, she curses all the men of Ulster: every man of Ulster would become as weak as a woman in childbirth during his time of need. The curse of Macha is significant in that it explains why the male warriors of Ulster were too weak and unable to fight during the Táin Bó Cuailnge (Cattle Raid of Cooley), with the exception of the warrior hero Cúchulainn who was born outside Ulster, and, therefore, was not affected by the curse.

After paying our respects to the Horse Goddess Macha at her sacred mound, we began our walk back to the Fairylands Bed and Breakfast where we were staying. We leisurely strolled past a large pasture only to see a great, dark brown horse galloping toward us.

We stopped as the horse approached the gate. The horse seemed eager to interact with us and was extremely friendly. We learned from a man who was walking his dog that the horse was a female. I felt, in that moment, the overwhelming presence of the Goddess Macha. It was truly a magical experience. Mere minutes after paying our respects to the great Goddess and offering her our devotion, we were spending time with an incarnation of Macha in the form of a gorgeous mare.

Conclusion

"Feminist motherline," as Green reminds us, "connects mothers and their daughters to help them to understand how their life stories are linked with previous generations of women in their families and cultures" (18). Disconnected from my family's history and my foremothers, I could not locate myself in a familial motherline to access or retrieve the ancient lore of women and its feminine wisdom. In our journey to Ireland, I was able to discover the feminine wisdom of my Celtic foremothers to create a feminist motherline for me and my daughter. As I was writing the conference paper in spring 2017, from which this article is developed, a Facebook memory appeared from our trip. As I struggled to write a final sentence or two to conclude the conference paper, I looked again at the 550 photos in that Facebook album hoping that I would find inspiration to find the right words to capture in conclusion the meaning

of our pilgrimage in our ancestral land. Since the words still elude me, I will end by reimaging Alice Walker's words: in search of the Goddess, I created my own motherline, among my Celtic foremothers and, most importantly, with my beloved daughter Casey.

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SARAH EPSTEIN

Progressive Judaism and the Bar Mitzvah

A Rites of Passage Ritual that Repositions the Mother in Her Sons' Lives

Ritual is a way of acknowledging our relationship to each other, to our culture, to our community, and to our past. Ritual is also a way of reminding ourselves of what is important and who is important. I am the Jewish mother of two sons, both of whom have now been bar mitzvah. I am also the sole Jewish parent, and along with my husband, we are members of a progressive Jewish community in Melbourne, Australia. The progressive Jewish bar and bat mitzvah ritual offers a way to capture the deep movement and meaning of our lives as we transition from childhood to young adulthood. The bar/bat mitzvah process engenders individuation yet adheres the individual to community and others. However, traditional bar and bat mitzvah rites of passage are deeply gendered with separate roles ascribed to the mother and father depending on the gender of the child. Furthermore, patriarchal mother-son discourse marks the father as a crucial mentor through a boy's transition to manhood. The mark of gender displaces the mother in relation to her son as he moves toward manhood. This paper draws on my personal experience to suggest that the progressive bar mitzvah process can both bind our sons to the Jewish community and their history, and help sanction a deep and powerful connection between mother and son.

I am married to a non-Jewish man. We have been together for more than half my lifetime and married for eighteen years. Together, we have a sixteen-year-old son and a fourteen-year-old son. I am also a white, able-bodied, educated, middle class, urban Jewish ciswoman. I have, and have always had, the privilege to figure out how I can best live a feminist life that matters both to me and hopefully to those around me. My domain has been of my own picking, and a few years ago, I explored feminist mothers' experiences of raising boys in my PhD work. "The personal is political" shapes my sense making of the world.

From my privileged location, I have tried hard to use feminism as my guide for living well and for working out ways to challenge the things seeking to diminish me and women in general (Ahmed).

For this reason, I believe it is important to talk about traditional bar mitzvah rites of passage, and how, if left in the quagmire of gendered difference, they diminish the mother and threaten to destroy the motherline. I have chosen to start this conversation by sharing my experience, within the progressive Jewish community in Melbourne, of the ways to take something as old as Judaism itself and use it to reposition the mother in boys' lives. This is a story of how progressive Judaism's deregulation of gender (as a response to gender inequality) created a space in the bar mitzvah ritual where I could step into my sons' transformation from child to adult, and in so doing, honour the motherline through Jewish culture and ritual.

Patriarchal Discourse about Rites of Passage

Jewish rites of passage are traditionally deeply gendered for both the ritual participant and for their parents. There are usually separate roles ascribed to the mother and father depending on the gender of the child. In traditional rites of passage ceremonies, the boy or girl is prepared for manhood by men or for womanhood by women (Biddulph). Within a rites of passage ritual constructed around gender difference discourse, this is the point at which the boy becomes a man and the girl becomes a woman. For boys, it is usually male elders who take on the responsibility for turning boys into men. Gender difference discourse structuring the traditional bar and bat mitzvah imposes a patriarchal stranglehold on girls, boys, and mothers (Shoham).

I argue a core assumption of gendered rites of passage is that manhood and womanhood are the primary defining identity markers—gender not only defines us but separates us, and it defines the gender binary, gender difference, and gender inequality. There are different roles and responsibilities attached to masculinity and femininity that separate us, and this difference is ensconced in ritual. This patriarchal discourse is perpetuated in myth, theology, popular psychology, and Anglo American culture: a man acts as the crucial mentor and special witness of a boy's transition to manhood (Biddulph; Bly). As a result, the mother becomes marginalized and displaced, and the discourse persists.

Patriarchal discourse about the bar mitzvah itself—proclaimed by both Jews and non-Jews—refers to this ritual as an "initiatory and sacred process for moving boys into manhood" (Biddulph 171). For example, Steve Biddulph, Australia's preeminent orator on raising boys, makes specific reference to rites of passage: "It's only by leaving the world of women that young men can break the mother-mould and relate to women as fellow adults. Domestic

violence, unfaithfulness and the inability to make a marriage work may all result not from any problem with women but from men's failure to take boys on this transforming journey" (23). Biddulph's argument for male initiation of boys is that they will otherwise remain in an infantile relationship with their mothers. Unless boys are initiated as men, and by men, they can never escape dependency on women and will remain immature. Biddulph warns that "Not having entered the community of men, they are distrustful of other men and have few real friends. They are afraid of commitment to women because for them it means being mothered, and that means being controlled. They are real 'nowhere men'" (25).

Orthodox and Progressive Judaism—Same But Different

A cursory analysis of contemporary Judaism is useful to better explain the progressive Jewish bar and bat mitzvah context. The Jewish community is not homogenous. Primarily, we vary according to our relationship to the Torah and Jewish Law, or Halacha (Averbukh et al.). For Orthodox and Ultra-Orthodox Jews, the Torah is the word of God. Thus, the Jewish Law stemming from the Torah positions men as rabbis and as cantors, allocates different seating for men and women in the synagogue, and determines that only boys at the age of thirteen will be allowed to read directly from the Torah scroll as they bar mitzvah. In Orthodox bar mitzvah ceremonies, the boy will commonly start his *d'var Torah* (sermon) with the proclamation "Today, I am a man."

For girls, at age twelve and usually in groups, they are presented in synagogue, but they are not allowed to read or sing from the Torah (Mail), and when they are finished, they return to sitting—segregated with the women. The practice of segregation, the Mehitzah, is the physical manifestation of the institutionalized and cultural and spiritual organization of gender identity (Wolosky). However, as with all expressions of Judaism, inconsistency abounds because of Jews in the diaspora—an ever changing context that imposes political, cultural, economic, and survival exigencies (Wolosky). Consequently, there are debates about the level of a community's religiosity. And, often, a community's effort to maintain gender separation in all aspects of Jewish life is held up as the beacon for who is more Jewish than the other.

Progressive Jews or Reform Jews consider the Torah inspired by the idea of God but written by men at a specific time in history. As such, the Torah is contextual; it is a living document existing within a sociocultural, political, historical, and religious context. One of the most eminent progressive rabbis in Australia, Rabbi John Levi, recently used his sermon to describe the Torah as the Jewish people's dreamtime stories—myths that guide our lives, our relationships, and our community, but myths nonetheless. Within

the progressive Jewish movement, there are both male and female rabbis and cantors, and men and women sit together. And within my progressive Jewish community, where many of us are married to non-Jewish partners, women (and mothers) are actively involved in the religious and cultural teaching of our children.

Progressive Judaism deregulates gender by offering both bar and bat mitzvah in absolute equivalence (Joseph). Whether it is a female or male rabbi, both boys and girls when turning thirteen step up onto the Bimah, lead a Saturday morning Shabbat service that goes for two hours, sing around twenty-two verses of their portion from the Torah scroll itself, and conduct their own commentary on what this means to them (Mail). It is also common practice in my community for the mother to be involved in all stages of the ritual process marking the bar/bat mitzvah rites of passage.

My Experience

As stated earlier, I am married to a man who is not Jewish. Although he still has a formal paid membership at my synagogue, I, as the sole Jewish parent, was the only one who formally guided my sons through their bar mitzvah rites of passage ritual. Furthermore, women as mothers are not situated problematically within progressive Judaism in my local synagogue. Because of my own experience of a progressive bat mitzvah I was also called upon by the synagogue to share my knowledge, beliefs, and experience in order to help teach my sons the skills necessary to pass the tests of their own rites of passage. This progressive framework, combined with my own feminist maternal practice, provided a perfect context for activating the motherline.

Ritual is a way of reminding ourselves about what is important, about where we have come from, who we are connected to, and the responsibilities we have to the world around us. The bar/bat mitzvah rites of passage ritual offers a way to capture the deep movement and meaning of our lives as we transition from childhood to young adulthood. The ritual supports the construction of identity and of a preferred future self, within reach but not yet grasped. This ritual engenders individuation yet attaches the young person to the community and to others. When space is created for the mother to be involved in ritual as an authoritative guide and mentor, then she is afforded the opportunity to determine, for her sons, what is important and to extend their sense of responsibility to issues around social justice (including gender equality). Furthermore, the mother's presence (as material symbol and agentic subject) means that her son's sense of self is constructed in relationship to his mother instead of in rejection to her. This contributes to the activation of the motherline.

In general, rites of passage are about the transition of one state of being into a new one (Van Gennep). The purpose of transition is to move from one social status (in this case as a child) to a new social status (that of a full member of the Jewish community) (Joseph).

Prior to becoming bar/bat mitzvah, the young person's parents are responsible for their behaviour, particularly in relation to their spiritual, religious, and ethical practice. The bar/bat mitzvah ritual marks the formal acknowledgment by the community and by the child that they are now taking on these obligations and are full members of the Jewish community (Mail).

Ritual involves three distinct stages (Van Gennep). The first stage of the bar mitzvah ritual involves separation. The young person is taken aside, and told they are now on an important journey about preparing for the construction of a new identity (Johnson). In order to fully transition, the young person learns that they will have to pass multiple and difficult tests and that there are elders whose job it is to impart the necessary knowledge required to pass the tests. In the progressive synagogue where my sons were bar mitzvah, I was positioned as one of these elders. The tests are designed to teach the young person what it means to be the person they are becoming and how to behave in this new life (Mail). As an elder, I had the authority to shape the context in which my sons becoming would be framed. My feminist ethics and progressive ethics (both complementary and similar) helped demarcate these standards and expectations.

The young person also learns that these tests require endurance (Shoham). As their mother, who has also been bat mitzvah, I was proof of the ability to endure the tests, and I could share strategies for a successful completion of the ritual. My sons trusted my knowledge, and I understood their journey, their fear, anxiety, and trepidation. I reiterated over and over the belief that if I could do it so could they, that this was a process as old as Judaism itself, and that millions of children had done the same thing and thrived. Rites of passage rituals like the bar/bat mitzvah, though symbolized by a defining moment, can take months or even years to prepare for (Mail; Norris). Throughout the preparation, my sons and I were connected, sometimes by their resistance (often at the amount of effort and hours), yet always in conversation.

The separation stage of the bar/bat mitzvah ritual often starts when the child is eight or nine, when they learn to read Hebrew and learn about Jewish history, culture, and tradition. However, things speed up around a year before the day they stand before the community in synagogue. Different elders have different roles during this stage of the ritual. Over the course of the year, the children spend weekly meetings with the rabbi about the significance of the ritual and about the portion of the Torah selected for them to read.

The rabbi demands that they read and reread their Torah portion, consider what others have written about their portion, and work out what the portion

may mean for them. This work results in a sermon, a *d'var Torah*, in which they stand before the community and provide an analysis and try to make sense of myth, story, and history.

Over the course of the year, they also sit weekly with the cantor (the liturgical leader of prayer) who teaches them verse by verse the tune that they must sing in Hebrew of both their Torah portion and the Shabbat morning prayers. At home, they must practice night after night and week after week. This was done with both of my sons nightly at home in private regular practice and ultimately in public in front of scores of family and friends and community members.

Night after night, we sat together side by side as they read the Hebrew and sang the Hebrew. And together we deconstructed their Torah portion. Together, we questioned the myths, and questioned the relevance to their lives, to their world, and to the world around them. Backward and forwards, I questioned them. "What do you mean?" "Why have you said this?" "What is resonating for you?" Do you really believe this?" "Yes," I said, "you can be a Jew without believing in God." "Yes," I said, "questioning the decisions in the Torah is your entitlement. The word Israel means to wrestle, to query, to question." "Yes," I said, "this is hard, but this is worth it. You can do this." Then as their scribe, they spoke and I typed, and, over the course of time, they put together a treatise of meaning about the myths and about what they believed and who they felt they wanted to be. For me, this long and detailed process of encouraging critical thinking connects to my intentions as a feminist mother. I work hard to raise consciousness and to ensure that critical reflectivity and the questioning of truths are a core practice for both of my sons.

The second stage of the rites of passage ritual is about liminality, about transition itself (van Gennep). During transition, the young Jewish person is in limbo between worlds—no longer a part of their old life yet not fully inducted into their new life (Johnson; Norris). On the day of the ceremony, family sits in the front row of the synagogue along with a hundred others. Standing beside the rabbi on the Bimah (the podium upon which the service is conducted and the Torah scroll is read), the child begins transitioning. And just as my sons were on the precipice of stepping into the liminal space of the ritual, it was me, their mother, who handed my sons their Talit, the prayer shawl they wear as they utter their first prayer.

When I was bat mitzvah, my father handed me my grandfather's Talit, brought from Glowno in Poland—a place he miraculously left six weeks before Hitler invaded and wiped out his entire family. As my youngest son stood before me one last time a child, I handed him this Talit, my Talit, my grandfather's Talit, and it embraced his shoulders and tangled the motherline into the fabric of his journey toward adulthood.

My sons then began their formal transition. For the first hour and a half,

they led prayers for the community, as their voice sang out over the crowd. Then, they must leave the Bimah and not return until the Torah scroll is taken out of the Ark and opened before all.

All rites of passage rituals have a significant moment, a tipping point, at which the transformation is formally marked. Usually this requires the attempt and completion of a difficult ask, a defining activity signalling the point of no return, which marks the movement between the transition stage and the third and final stage of ritual called reincorporation (Joseph; Van Gennep).

My sons' names were called out loud, and in so doing, their parents' names were also called to herald each's origins. They stepped forward, and up onto the Bimah, to speak their sermon and say what they have learned and why it is important to them. Then, they touched the Torah parchment and sang. All of the work led to this moment; this is the final and most difficult test.

As the bar and bat mitzvah complete the final task of singing from the Torah, they stand before the community, who validates and honours their new status. This is the act that marks their new status; this is the act that entitles them to full and equal membership of the community. This is the act required for them to be reincorporated and to return as something new precisely because they connected to the old.

Implications of Bar and Bat Mitzvah Rites of Passage When Situated within Gender Difference Structures

Rites of passage rituals like the bar and bat mitzvah are coming of age ceremonies. The question here, however, is what are young men coming of age to? What kind of manhood will they be adopting? And is it necessary for a rites of passage ritual to be constructed by gender difference? Is it necessary for the transformation to be from girl to woman and boy to man? And if not, what else can the ritual signify?

Our lives are often organized around gender difference identities (Kretschmer and Meyer). The traditional bar mitzvah is no different: the mother's gender influences who she is in relation to her son, and in relation to men. The traditional bar mitzvah rites of passage structure has constrained the route available for the mother to make a claim on her son. Because this traditional rite of passage does not question gender difference, the ability for women to think about their interests and the opportunities available to them has been curtailed. The gender binary, as an organizing system within traditional Judaism, has shaped what is expected from both Jewish child and Jewish mother. This is not unique to the Jewish community of course; gender structures expectations, establishes opportunities, and maintains constraints in culture, politics, organizations, and personal interactions (Kretschmer and Meyer).

Traditional bar mitzvah rites of passage require the father and other male elders to mentor the boy toward manhood. I query what becoming a man means in this context. Displacing the mother in traditional ritual reinforces patriarchal discourse and misogynist practices, which not only diminishes mothers and women, but valorizes a masculinity devoid of any semblance of femininity.

However, when gender is deregulated, I believe our sons are offered the opportunity to construct relational masculinity (Dooley and Fedele), which recognizes those a boy is surrounded by, including his mother. I cannot claim that this is true of all progressive bar mitzvah experiences, but I can see this in my own experience. I have included below an excerpt from my thirteen-year-old's sermon in the hope that reading his words will go some way to demonstrating how deregulating gender can foster the relational self.

> Shabbat Shalom. Today is a very important part of my life. I have been on a journey leading up to this point and started preparing myself for my bar mitzvah when I was in grade three! Back then, I did not think I could do what I am doing today. But now, I am saying to myself I have done it! I feel accomplished…. I feel a sense of satisfaction.
>
> Over this time, I have had to learn many new things, and this has not been easy. But as I look back, it all seems worth it. My bar mitzvah also marks the beginning of a new journey, a journey toward adulthood.
>
> For me, today is also about understanding that the decisions we make and the connections we have are important; they can affect our lives in the present and the future…. And the meaning I would like to make of this is being willing to face difficult decisions and to understand the struggle. This stage of my journey, marked with my bar mitzvah, I hope has prepared me well to struggle, to keep going and know that it is all worthwhile. For me, this portion, the meeting between two brothers, tells me that if you do something wrong, own up to it. Don't let it ruin your life. Don't let it bottle up inside of you. For me, it is about sharing my feelings, about not hiding from them. It's better to have someone on your journey, your friends and family, than being without.

Conclusion: Progressive Judaism Authorizes the Motherline

Within progressive Judaism, the structural, cultural, and spiritual movement toward gender equality has created space for identity to be conceptualized in relation to gender but outside of gender difference discourse. By facilitating

equal access to Jewish values and ritual, women can claim authority for teaching ethics and for sharing with our sons what it looks like to put values into action. My knowledge of history and culture as well as my feminist ethics have been visible as I have been my sons' guide. And so, as they separated from their childhood, I was able to take a place alongside traditional cultural, spiritual, and ethical sources of knowledge such as the rabbi and the cantor. This process has repositioned me as central in my sons' lives.

As both my sons undertook becoming bar mitzvah, who I am in relation to them has been paramount. I have been formally called upon. Our connection has been honoured, and the mother and son relationship has been constructed as meaningful and value laden. This experience has facilitated both a private and public alignment between my sons and me. The deregulation of gender has facilitated a redefined gendered interaction. The motherline is formally honoured, whereas the patriarchal sanctions between mother and son are disputed.

My experience of guiding my sons through the progressive bar mitzvah process has highlighted two key things. First, as a legitimate authority, my history mattered to my sons, and as their mother, I was vital to their transition. As their mother, I was one of the elders entitled to lead them to the precipice and prepare them for the jump. And as they jumped, it was not away from their mother but toward something we shared; it was our connection that enabled them to jump, and they fell toward me at the same time as they were falling toward their own adulthood. The motherline pushed them off the cliff and held them as they jumped into the next phase of their life.

Second, I think that my authoritative presence has offered my sons a way to conceptualize their future—a way to establish preferred ideals and practices as adults that do not fit into preconceived gendered expectations and categories. My knowledge (and therefore my power) was not conceptualized as problematic or something to be concerned about. Rather, it was something celebrated and necessary, which is vital to maintaining the motherline.

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MARIANA THOMAS

The Mother Becomes Time

Exploring Altered Temporality in Contemporary Motherhood Memoirs

This paper contends that the contemporary mothering experience disconnects women from dominant temporal structures—situating them as outsiders to its rhythm—and in doing so, it connects them to a maternal temporality associated with generational linearity and visceral understanding. Through the lens of Kristeva's notions on women's time, the paper begins by comparing the experience of modern neoliberal time to the temporality of mothering, and asserts that the continuous present of maternal time is incongruous to linear, clock time. It then turns to the question of dual temporality—how the mother's sense of futurity becomes aligned with her child. The central texts, Sarah Manguso's Ongoingness: The End of a Diary and Denise Riley's Time Lived, without Its Flow, *are discussed as reflecting a trajectory of temporal unity. It explores Heidegger's "moment of vision" theory, and discusses the generative potential of the mothering experience. Following this, the paper examines the connection between birth and death, paralleling Manguso's text with Maggie Nelson's* The Argonauts. *Both writers suggest the potential for these events to position the mother within the motherline, within the "great unity." Finally, the paper discusses the motherhood memoir form as reflective of the altered temporality portrayed. It contends that motherhood memoirs value the experimental and open nature of the form. They are less concerned with linear progression.*

This paper is concerned with the representation of altered temporality in a selection of contemporary motherhood memoirs. Its main focus is on "pure states of being," which are suspended between temporality and mortality (Manguso 91). I contend that the mother memoirists present maternal time as being experienced as diverging from and at times in conflict with the everyday linear time of neoliberalism. The temporality of mothering is

experienced as a return to and remembrance of the unity and familial care in the motherline. I also suggest that the conditions of modern neoliberalist society, which champion time as a controllable resource, present a substantial temporal challenge for new mothers. Finally, the paper draws parallels between the form of these memoirs and the experience of time portrayed within them; it suggests that the writers attempt to construct a narrative shaped by the temporality of mothering.

The so-called motherhood memoir has exploded since the turn of the century. As a genre, these memoirs are hard to pin down; forging into the relatively uncharted territory of the matrifocal narrative, they seek to explore the maternal experience in all its visceral depth. Often in the memoirs, the adjustment to motherhood is felt through an altered temporality— whether it is the steady marching on of pregnancy, the relentless interruption of everyday childcare, or a deeper sensation of a shift in one's place within history. This paper discusses texts that either make temporality their main point of focus or a central theme. The first text to do so is Sarah Manguso's *Ongoingness: The End of a Diary*, in which the author correlates the interruption into her obsessive diary keeping with the birth of her son. As the title suggests, the memoir's task is to attempt to reconcile Manguso's sense of ruptured temporal identity with her new motherhood. Acting almost as a parenthesis to Manguso's text is Denise Riley's memoir *Time Lived, without Its Flow*, a cathartic essay detailing the temporal struggles of dealing with the death of her son. The paper will also briefly discuss Maggie Nelson's *The Argonauts*, which shares with the other texts a desire to narrate an ontologically aware maternal experience.

Maternal Time versus Neoliberal Time

In order to interpret the confrontation between the temporality of mothering and the everyday encounter with modern temporality, it is firstly important to define and explore the experience of both. In her essay "Women's Time," Julia Kristeva suggests that the female experience was traditionally aligned with cyclical or monumental time—the time of history, particularly linked to women's maternity. In comparison, male time was "time as project, teleology, linear and prospective unfolding," and was associated with the public realms of professional work and industry (Kristeva 17). Some scholars have suggested that the rise of neoliberalism and the capitalist economy in recent decades have combined to create a culture that constantly strives for autonomy, financial success, and individual achievement, and that prioritizes personal responsibility. Julie Stephens suggests that the aims of second-wave feminism, those of independence and equality, have been hijacked by the growth of neoliberalism in Western society. She claims that we have transformed into a "postmaternalist" culture

in which the "new, unencumbered (motherless) self is celebrated and defined by its separateness, autonomy, and purported freedom of choice" (Stephens 15). Ruth Quiney supports this analysis of modern capitalist expectations of women, and indicates that the single middle-class woman's "self-conception before pregnancy is as comparatively genderless beings, a perception reinforced by 'post-feminist' cultural conditions" (30). Viewing this shift through the lens of women's time, Karen Davies asserts that women "have been socialised into a modern, linear time thinking but certain parts of their lives and needs are bound up by a different temporal consciousness" (152).

Before motherhood, Manguso's obsessive diary keeping reflects a temporal anxiety concerned with capturing memories and controlling the movement of time: "I started keeping the diary in earnest when I started finding myself in moments that were too full … I'd be able to recover from today if it weren't for tomorrow.… If I allowed myself to drift through nondocumented time for more than a day, I feared, I'd be swept up, no longer able to remember the purpose of continuing" (11). She equates documenting daily events with proving her existence and is fearful of the "nothing" that exists between them. She senses her task is futile, yet is compelled to continue (Manguso 3). With motherhood comes an interruption into this dedicated documentation of passing time—an elongation of the present tense and eventually an acceptance of a temporality that is neither controllable nor structured in a way she once recognized. Voicing a familiar admission, Manguso says the following: "Sometimes the baby fed at seven thirty and cried again until feeding again at eight thirty. My life had been replaced with a mute ability to wait for the next minute, the next hour. I had no thoughts, no self-awareness" (55). Referred to by Lisa Baraitser as the "pitilessness of the present tense … like one long cinematic take [acting] to obliterate the passing of time from what is to come, to what is, to what has been," Manguso's maternal present stretches into infinity and obscures the relevance of the modes of past and future (Baraitser, *Maternal* 66). But is this temporal shift problematic? Manguso's memoir represents her journey to feeling at home in the experience of "ongoingness"—a greater acceptance of the fallacy of linear time, a loosening of her reliance on the dominant contemporary temporal structures, which presume the constancy of past, present, and future as well as beginning, middle, and end. She concludes that the "future happens. It keeps happening" (Manguso 88).

Through the death of her adult son, Riley's temporal experience is radically altered for a second time. She is thrust back into the endless maternal present; she recognizes that "her old stance is changed … by the shattering of that underlying intuition of moving in time, which you cannot register until it's collapsed" (Riley 36). Like Manguso, Riley describes feeling suspended in the present and existing outside the structures of linear time. Although the

cause of this suspension in lived time is deeply traumatic, Riley asserts that the experience of temporal alterity "only becomes a trial if you attempt to make it intelligible to others who've not experienced it (10)." Both writers describe the isolation and loneliness of being pushed into a temporal reality markedly different and in conflict with the increasingly universal experience of everyday time as linear and predictably structured. Perhaps it is not the experience of suspended time itself that is onerous for these writers, but the effort of its exteriority and conflict with public everyday time.

Futurity

In reference to Riley's text, Baraitser claims "it is one's relation to everyday life that goes through a dramatic shift, one in which time can no longer unfold predictably or reliably as a crisis has occurred in the reliability that the future will unfold" ("Time and Again" 6). It is here that we may link Manguso's and Riley's narratives, as both are concerned with the question of futurity (or lack of) and the aftermath of a "life that could be said to unfurl itself inside your own life" (Baraitser, "Time and Again" 6). Manguso has a crisis of futurity, of individual development, after her son is born, which affirms that "the mother becomes the background against which the baby lives, becomes time" (53). One could suggest that this cessation in sequential, productive movement is an oppressive force, as a loss of autonomy is perceived as destructive to the postmaternalist individual, yet Manguso's text presents this maternal temporal unity and loss of singular futurity as ultimately liberating. She remarks that "I've basically been the same person since I had my son. I know this is true for all new mothers, especially those that are younger than me (and most of them are). But I feel like a monolith now" (Manguso 69). The image of the monolith is recreated throughout the text as a symbol of Manguso's deeper understanding of lived time. Through Manguso's meditations on the landscape of memory and time, she speaks of forgotten people whose identity lives on in thirty-thousand-year-old cave paintings and in a great cathedral bearing the work of generations past. Through motherhood, she finds herself connected to an ancient timeline, to Kristeva's cyclical and monumental time. In stark contrast to the temporal anxieties described at the beginning of the memoir, Manguso feels relief in "knowing time will go on without me"—like the cave paintings, she is "dancing my little dance for a few moments against the background of eternity" (81).

Riley's work provides an echo of this experience. Further on in her mothering experience, she reflects that "In the past you had sensed your living child's time, including the physically interior time of its gestation as well as its early growing and independent life, as if it were your own. You had aged in tandem with it"

(72). Her sense of futurity is intimately tied to that of her son's: by becoming crystallized in time, as her son has, she may remain temporally connected to him. Baraitser suggests that Riley experiences a similar temporal alterity as that experienced in early motherhood, a "parallel register." in which "the maternal subject bears the suspension of time, a kind of impossible waiting which is the time the child's futurity requires of her" ("Time and Again" 6). Riley's memoir is an exploration of what happens when one's temporal development is indivisible from one's child and when a child's futurity is halted. Whereas Manguso's narrative is a process of coming to terms with this shift in temporal development to seeing the passing of time as taking place within her son, Riley's presents a rupture in this development. Like her son, she is "pulled right outside of time, as if beached in a clear light" (Riley 12).

Manguso's and Riley's texts present a maternal trajectory of unity and severance felt temporally—a duality that presents itself in a unique temporal flow. As Manguso begins to see the markers of time in the life of her son, Riley feels her "double inner time … untimely ripped … That was the space of the child's past, which used to lie like an inner shell enveloped by your own time … a child you grew up with, nested like a Russian doll whose shorter years sat within yours, gave you time that was always layered" (44). Continuing the parallels between the texts and highlighting the severance between the experience of autonomy and dual temporality, Riley refers to her maternal grief as a "partial rebirth … like a pregnancy run in reverse" (45). As Manguso begins to come to terms with dual temporality and futurity, Riley finds that hers is undone; her son's death produces a cessation in any movement. She insists that "Time 'is' the person. You're soaked through with it. This enormous lurch into arrested time isn't some philosophical brooding about life's fragility. It's not the same 'I' who lives in her altered sense of no-time, but a reshaped person. And I don't know how she'll turn out" (Riley 46).

Moment of Vision

Both memoirists describe moments in which they were able to perceive the fallacy and unrealness of everyday time. Through their experience of mothering and the maternal identity, they become external observers of the flow of linear, clock time. Manguso questions the futility of her diary postmotherhood—a record that she believed once allowed her to control time and retain her memories. Yet she writes it was "ridiculous to believe myself powerful enough to stop time just by thinking" (82). From her vantage point on the temporal plain of maternal grief, Riley senses a deep detachment: "Only from your freshly removed perspective can you fully understand how our habitual intuitions of time can falter" (35). The experience of being "beached in a clear light" (Riley

12) is comparable to Martin Heidegger's idea of a "moment of vision"—a moment in which the subject can freshly perceive their place in the world as well as their inescapable finitude. In a Heideggerian sense, becoming a mother produces a renewed recognition of the self as a "Being-towards-death." The experience of mothering accentuates and illuminates one's existence in an ancient timeline. When a woman becomes a mother, she moves across an intractable barrier; she is still a daughter, but there is a shift into the space and time of the mother and into an altered perspective, which produces a moment of vision and clarity. For Manguso, her progression into motherhood provides a sense of clarity and perspective on the flow of time. She returns to the memories of her childhood—times that were "preverbal"—as she enters into a world of pure experience: "I'm forgetting everything. My goal now is to forget it all so that I'm clean for death. Just the vaguest memory of love, of participation in the great unity" (Manguso 86).

Riley's and Manguso's narratives are about seeing themselves as outsiders to the dominant time structures dictating everyday life. In a "moment of vision," subjects can separate themselves from the world of the "they-self," described by Heidegger as a world of social norms and an assumed adherence to linear time, through a crisis or event. Although Heidegger does not specify the event that justifies this "moment of vision," for Riley and Manguso it is the everyday yet monumental experiences of birth and death. In these events, they can perceive themselves as simply existing within the vastness of human history; they were born on a certain date and their death is also a certainty. This finitude is beyond their control.

Yet this "moment of vision" is not exclusive to significant events but reverberates through the experience of everyday mothering. We may suggest that the daily and hourly interruptions constituting the mothering experience—ruptures that punctuate the flow of time—work as a kind of cumulative moment of vision, which constantly reestablishes the present mode of immediacy for the mother. These interruptions necessitate a different way of thinking and a different kind of reflective thought that come from a "moment of vision," which illuminates our innate position as a "Being-in-the-world." Referring to her premotherhood anxieties, Manguso reflects that the "time I spent sitting and nursing and holding the baby and cleaning up his messes could have borne the worry from me as completely as I bore the baby, which in my experience marked a change of mind that by now seems permanent" (84). Heidegger believes that the "moment of vision," of renewed awareness, may produce a feeling of "angst" and anxiety, but it also has the potential for feelings of emancipation: "once one has grasped the finitude of one's existence, it snatches one back from the endless multiplicity of possibilities" and brings the subject "into the simplicity of its *fate* (emphasis in original,

435)." It is the endless multiplicity of possibilities that compel Manguso to maintain her diary; the removal of these possibilities releases her from a state of temporal anxiety.

Rachel Robertson analyzes maternal temporality through her background in disability studies. She claims that through the mother's continued struggle to situate herself within "chrononormativity," by the incessant interruptions of childcare, she becomes a "disabled" subject. In this way, mothers become "outsiders" and present "a challenge to chrononormativity [by] disrupting ideal linear development and exhibiting a failure to 'fit' within normative time and space" (Robertson 8). As in Heidegger's "moment of vision," Robertson suggests a generative potential to this altered state of temporality—the encumbered mother "may, by virtue of their non-normative embodiment and experiences, contribute specific ways of knowing the world" (7). Riley comments that the experience of temporal alterity, of "stepping outside of the entire sheltering sky of temporality," brings one into a "not unpleasant state of tremendous simplicity, of easy candour and bright emptiness" (50). It may not be the encounter with altered temporality itself that produces a crisis in the mother, but a sense that one's experience is no longer congruent to societal norms.

Birth, Death, and Everything in Between

Questions of mortality are often raised in maternal memoirs; these questions portray the potential for the birth of a child to generate new understandings and experiences of mortality within the mother. Manguso observes the following: "I became a mother. I began to inhabit time differently. It had something to do with mortality" (53). We may now turn to Maggie Nelson's memoir *The Argonauts*, which is particularly significant in its direct paralleling of the birth of Nelson's son and the death of her partner's mother, although it is clear that these events did not coincide. Manguso uses the same connection between birth and death, but in her case, she describes how her mother-in-law "was given twenty-four hours to live on the day I was told my cervix was 50 percent effaced" (51). The connection between these two events predicates Manguso's musings on mortality and memory and on "pure states of being" (91). It can be no coincidence that Manguso and Nelson have paralleled the end of one mother's life with the beginning of their own. For Manguso, considering these events helps her to comprehend her "participation in the great unity" (86). She begins to see herself and her son to be part of a monumental sequential movement, unaffected by the structures of modern time. As if to emphasize this difference in temporality, the birth of Manguso's son and the death of her mother-in-law happen within weeks of each other, a coincidence that is illustrated in the text. The phenomena of

birth and death are figured as existing on an opposing temporal plain and as impervious to control through the use of clocks and schedules, which have the power to untether us from time.

The section of narrative in which Nelson alternates between the birth of her son and the death of her mother-in-law is also described as taking place in "the time that is no time" (156). Waiting for birth and waiting for death are juxtaposed with the timings, measurements, and schedules of everyday life. Nelson's partner Harry, who the narration switches to during the sections involving his mother's death, is "desperate to get there in time" (158), yet when he arrives at the hospice where his mother is receiving care, he finds himself waiting, as Nelson waits for her birth. He finds that it takes thirty-three hours to come around to the fact of her imminent death, yet this is really the time it takes him to join her on an altered temporal landscape. After she has passed, he stays "another 5 hours with her body, alone," and time seems to fluctuate: "i felt like i lived a hundred years, a lifetime with her silent, peaceful body … the ceiling fan above her was whipping air, holding the space of cycle, where her breath had been. i could've stayed another hundred years right there" (Nelson 166).

In the descriptions of her labour, Nelson speaks of being in a cavern, which has its own flow of time—the interventions of people around doing little to alter its movement. Nelson describes her labour and birth experience as "touching death," darkly declaring that "you will have touched death along the way. You will have realized that death will do you too, without fail and without mercy (167)." In her study on pregnant embodiment, Iris Marion Young recalls an interpretation of Kristeva's "jouissance" as being a "pregnant and birthing woman" who renews her "connection to the repressed, preconscious, presymbolic aspect of existence" (Young 53). Again, Heidegger's "moment of vision" comes to mind, predicated as it is on the subject's renewed recognition as a "Being-towards-death." This is not moment in which one fears death but a moment in which one can see themselves as being thrown toward one's end—as being part of the journey of existence (Heidegger 296).The effect of this "touching death"—"moment of vision" that jolts the mother's temporal experience onto a level of consciousness—may be described as primordial and visceral. Through her mothering, Manguso finds herself remembering "preverbal memories"' she remembered "how it had felt to be wordless, completely of the physical world" and how her "body was an instrument for language it had been an instrument for memory" (66). Nelson concludes her memoir in a similar contemplative stance to Manguso; she seems to be referring to Manguso's "great unity" when she wonders "is there really such a thing as nothing, as nothingness? I don't know. I know we're still here, who knows for how long, ablaze with our care, its ongoing song (178)."

Narrating Maternal Temporality

At this point, it is valuable to interpret the formal presentations of the maternal memoirs and to ask how the experience of altered temporality affects the narratives themselves. Through the analysis of these memoirs, I have discussed the phenomenon of the mother existing in the infinite present, an "ongoingness," in which the modes of past, present, and future become less relevant, at least in their modern incantations. To return to Kristeva, she suggests that not only is linear, teleological time associated with maleness and the realm of professional work, but historically it is also the time of "language considered as the enunciation of sentences (noun + verb; topic-comment; beginning-ending) (17)." Riley and Manguso discover that the existing forms of narrative expression—the "well-worn metaphors" (Riley 36)—are no longer adequate vehicles to tell their stories. Reliance on beginnings and endings, journeys, chapters, is no longer possible. They can see only the "middle" of time, the "ongoingness"; they do not see the endings or conceive of the beginnings language demands. Both writers have a crisis of communication, prompted by their altered temporality: Manguso maintains that the "essential problem of ongoingness is that one must contemplate time at that very time, that very subject of one's contemplation, disappears" (72). She must transform her "preverbal," deeply experiential understanding of temporality into a suitable literary form. Riley, too, suggests a connection between her altered temporality and the paralysation of her writer's hand: "this is also a question about what is describable, what are the linguistic limits of what can be conveyed … it seems that the possibilities for describing, and the kinds of temporality that you inhabit, may be intimately allied" (8).

The form of the maternal memoir itself, or rather the seeming formlessness, becomes relevant. The structure and form of Riley's and Manguso's texts reflect their temporal position. They lack chapters entirely—the only hint of a traditional structure coming in the form of Riley's subheadings directly lifted from her diary. Manguso's memoir contains sporadic memories and musings presented in a seemingly structureless form on each page. Yet perhaps, as a writer, she seeks to compel her readers to experience her own temporal consciousness through the construction of her writing. Both writers are aware that the experimental and loose structures of their texts reflect their temporal experiences and subsequent disillusionment with traditional writing practices. Riley states that if "time had once ushered you into language, now you discover that narrative language had sustained you in time. Its 'thens' and 'nexts' had once unfolded themselves placidly. But now that time has abruptly gone away from you, your language of telling has left it" (59).

Returning to Kristeva, she asserts that written language is traditionally aligned with a temporality that is regarded as masculine and incompatible with the daily

repetitive and cyclical nature of mothering. It is also poignant to realize that literature has a long history of excluding mothers from its narratives—both in the form of matrifocal narratives and the historic lack of mother writers—and to question whether this is linked to the temporal structures of traditional narratives. Suzanne Juhasz discusses how women's autobiographies are shaped by their lives and how they value process rather than solution; they show 'less a pattern of logical and linear development to some clear goal than one of repetitive, cumulative, cyclical content and hence meaning" (644). Riley's and Manguso's texts prioritize process rather than conclusion; their writing feels cyclical and organic, as if their readers could open them at any page.

The rise of the motherhood memoir in Western society since the turn of the century suggests that they are among the most popular literary vehicles for the new wave of mother writers. Alex Zwerdling states that memoirs are "open-ended, not rule-bound, a flexible form without predictable terminus, rooted in the accidental record-keeping of diaries and correspondence, and in a life that shapes us rather than is ours to shape" (5). He goes on to suggest that memoirs may not be tied to a distinct literary genre and that it "is the very freedom from the weight of tradition that has appealed to writers" so in need of a vehicle to record their experiences (Zwerdling 7). Kristi Siegel states that the "fragmented, disjointed style deemed characteristic of women's autobiographies is often theorized as being imitative of the disrupted 'dailiness' of their actual lives. To illustrate the point, as I write this I am continually interrupted by my young daughter" (21). Yet Siegel goes on to question the legitimacy of viewing mother writing as merely mimetic, and suggests that this too may be an attempt to characterize and therefore limit the scope of the motherhood memoir. Perhaps we may characterize these motherhood memoirs by their experimental and philosophical approach as well as by the importance placed on experiential understanding.

The mother writers discussed in this paper are part of a new wave of writers whose work represents an original form of literary expression, which reflects the temporal conditions under which they were produced. They seek to portray the "pure states of being" that arise out of maternal temporality, both on the level of "dailiness" and the vast untold time of the motherline. Their narratives, which break away from traditional ill-fitting forms of literature, may be read as subversive to the dominance of modern temporalities as they find themselves to be outsiders to "chrononormativity." Ultimately, these memoirs can be read as representing as meditations on the experience of alterity.

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JOANNE L. DETORE

Tanka Series

Mother and Daughter Estrangement

I

Your room waits for you—
bed made, desk cleaned, floor tidy.
A closet full of clothes
abandoned along with me,
estranged mother and daughter.

II

My beautiful girl
running into my arms at
full speed, I hold you
tightly, cheek-to-cheek, eyes closed.
Only a memory now.

III

Where did my girl go?
Blonde curls bouncing behind you
skipping happily through life
until the teen years found you
trudging into adulthood.

IV

Pain worms a hole in
your heart, deeper and wider
like tendrils snaking
into your mind, winding round
your brain squeezing out sunshine,
steals hope, deposits darkness.

V
Outstretched hands offer
to pull you from that dark edge
precipice of your despair
take them, let me enfold you
into love, never ending.

KELSEY MARR

Being a "Woman Woman"

Performing Femininity at the Intersections of Motherhood, Womanhood, and the Academy

Global trends of delayed motherhood, long-term postsecondary education, and the proliferation of assisted reproductive technologies have been associated with women who work in the academy as post-graduate students and professors. In 2015, I worked with postgraduate students at the University of Saskatchewan to explore how these trends affect students' imagined reproductive futures. In this paper, I examine the relationships among delayed motherhood, studenthood, and performances of femininity in the imagined reproductive futures of women postgraduate students. Whereas previous studies have focused on the disruption and (re)performance of gender within the context of infertility, I examine how in participants' imagined reproductive futures, it is their careers and education that they highlight as they negotiate gendered identities. I argue that by engaging with discourses and performances of "being a good mother" and the "superwoman" identity, participants repair the threat posed by academic and professional lives to their femininity, and they naturalize their imagined reproductive futures in which they are both academics, professionals, and mothers. In doing so, femininity is an assemblage enacted through participants' own actions, words, and performances. By examining how postgraduate students enact performances of femininity in their imagined reproductive futures, motherhood scholars can open a discussion on the tensions between the cultural norms of parenthood and student culture.

The relationships among delayed motherhood, studenthood, and performance of femininity in the imagined reproductive futures of postgraduate students demand attention. The lives of academic and professional women leave little room for the traditional feminine role of mother. Women pursuing long-term higher education and professional careers are often met with the cultural image

of the defeminized, older, lone woman (Evans and Grant). In light of such tension, both academic and nonacademic women increasingly engage with masculine traits valued by the academy and society itself. Through undertaking a larger project examining the relationships among long-term educational attainment, assisted reproductive technologies (ARTs), and delayed parenthood, it became clear that women participants draw upon scripts of femininity to perform their femininity in the face of the competing tensions of the status as current nonmothers and academics. I coin the term "imagined reproductive futures" to refer to participants' anticipated and projected understandings of the relationships among (in)fertility, ARTs, parenthood, school, and work. I suggest that participants enact an anticipated vision or expectation of their reproductive trajectory. They draw upon experience, cultural assumptions, and norms in order to inform an "imagined" future corresponding with their understanding of reality. I argue that by engaging with discourses and performances of "being a good mother" and the "superwoman" identity, participants bring together norms of motherhood, nurturing, and individuality as scripts of femininity to repair the threat posed by academic and professional lives, and they naturalize their imagined reproductive futures in which they are academics, professionals, and mothers.

Cultural Scripts and Femininity

In *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler argues that gender is not a stable identity, but an "identity tenuously constituted in time … through a stylized repetition of acts" (140). In Butler's conception of gender, femininity is not simply a static state of being directly tied to biology, but rather is a set of norms, values, ideals, and actions with which those who identify as women constantly and repeatedly engage. Scholars have suggested that those "acts" one must stylistically repeat in the performance of gender can be read through cultural scripts. These are the articulation of cultural norms, values, and practices in clear and precise facets. As suggested by Charis Thompson in her work on performances of masculinity within in vitro fertilization clinics, the scripts defining performances of gender (and other facets of identity) are generally most observable when they are challenged (118). Research into infertility, the separation of mothers and their children (Sykes), and representations of femininity within visual culture (Ussher), has identified traditional cultural scripts of femininity as rooted in conceptions of passivity, quietness, nurturing, unselfishness, and beauty (Ussher). By drawing scripts together, in particular contexts, motherhood scholars can thus understand gender not only as a guided performance, but as an assemblage of actions, meanings, understandings, and knowledges, which together bring a particular identity into being. We are women because we act

like women. By engaging with discourses and performances of "being a good mother," and the "superwoman" identity, the postgraduate students with whom I work bring together norms of motherhood, nurturing, and individuality as scripts of femininity in order to enact femininity in their imagined reproductive futures as academics and professionals.

The Femininity-Mother Conflation

A script through which femininity is performed in Western society is one's acceptance and performance of the identity of "mother." Valerie Walkerdine and Helen Lucey claim that the naturalness of this conflation is cemented in the fact that "when we think about the idea of mothering, we are immediately drawn to the incontrovertible fact of biology: of women bearing children" (233; also see Ireland 1). The tenacity of the mother-woman conflation is clearest when it is troubled or disrupted. As Cheryl Krasnick Warsh argues, "Motherhood in North America, as in virtually all societies, is considered to be an essential part of womanhood. Therefore, women who do not wish to have children are condemned as unwomanly, while women who cannot have children are pitied as incomplete" (16).

Although this conflation needs to be further problematized, it was clear in my research that the women participants believe motherhood is an essential part of being a woman. Every time a participant spoke of a mother, or being a mother, they seemingly assumed that they were referring to a woman. In several interviews, participants explicitly mentioned that in order to be a woman one must be a mother. For example, Leona[1] said the following:

> There's always pressure on women to be mothers. You're not a woman unless you're a mother. Society always tells you, either directly or indirectly, as a woman, you are a woman because you are a mother…. If you don't have kids, then something is wrong with you. You're not a woman woman.

Similarly, Hope felt that women graduate students are under particular pressure to have children because "you are expected to have kids as a woman." These views, and similar ones expressed by other participants highlight the femininity-mother conflation within their imagined reproductive futures.

The Failure to Repeat: Academic and Professional Women

Studies conducted with postgraduate students and professors have suggested that academic life can be problematic to the femininity-mother conflation.

Elrena Evans and Caroline Grant argue that mothers in the academy "stand at a significant disadvantage to their childless peers as they try to balance the vagaries of academic life with the demands of offspring" (xix-xx). Many academic women feel that there is not time to have children among pursuing tenure, teaching, mentoring, publishing, researching, and attempting to maintain some semblance of normal work-life balance. Unsurprisingly, the majority of women pursuing academic careers actively postpone motherhood as children do not "agree with their current life situation" (Kemkes-Grottenthaler 216).

The choice to forego, or at the very least delay, motherhood in order to pursue an academic career can have a negative impact on women's feminine identity (Gerten). In an eye-opening compilation titled *Mama PhD*, women discuss the continuing expectation to have children, and if they do not, then they are not really women:

> It's true that the academy structurally and financially rewards those who work eighty hours a week on their research, but there is still the assumption that something must be wrong with you if you don't have kids: you are seriously, perhaps pathologically, career driven; you are inherently selfish or obsessed with material things that you don't want to sacrifice; you are too unattractive to get laid (i.e., the sad old English prof with thirty cats); or you have biological "problems" that prevent you from fulfilling your biological destiny. (Warner 9)

It is important that in examining the intersections of the feminine script with both motherhood and academic life that we keep in mind that women are agentic in their performances of femininity. As Jane Ussher argues, "We are critical readers and viewers, actively negotiating and resisting the various representations of 'woman' which pervade our daily lives. We continuously sift and select from the different scripts we are offered, creating and recreating the story that is femininity" (10). To make sense of their experience, women do not simply follow the feminine textbook. They selectively draw upon culturally available discourses of femininity (Stoppard). Although motherhood remains one of the most widely available discourses, women, academics and nonacademics alike, can also alternatively evoke performances of nurturing, patience, softness, independence, and the "superwoman" identity (Liss and Erchull 139). Furthermore, performances of femininity tied to motherhood do not necessarily have to follow the established script word for word. In examining how employed mothers navigate these tensions, Karen Christopher argues that mothers engage with and construct scripts of extensive mothering "in which they delegate a substantial amount of the day-to-day child care to others and reframe good mothering as being 'in charge' of and ultimately responsible for

their children's well-being" (73). In so doing, they emphasize "the benefits of employment for themselves—not only their children" (73). By choosing to engage with various cultural scripts, and not others, women can find the space to perform femininity in the tensions among motherhood, womanhood, and paid employment.

Between April and August 2015, I conducted twenty one-on-one, semistructured interviews with postgraduate students at the University of Saskatchewan. These participants were recruited through an online network accessible only to the faculty, staff, and students of the university. The majority of the interviews took place in one of the private group study rooms on the ground floor of the main library. All interviews were audio recorded with the participant's permission, and later transcribed verbatim from the audio files. In the fall and winter of 2015, I spent considerable time in the Law Student Lounge, and developed relationships with a core group of ten law students. These students became the main informants of my participant observation. The information and insight I gained through my interactions and discussions with these students provided crucial insight into the extent to which reproductive futures were a focus in participants' everyday lives. A number of interacting themes emerged, including postgraduate students' notions of "being a good mother" and the "superwoman identity."

The participants came from a wide range of backgrounds and situations. Approximately half of these students were international students; the group included law, master's, and PhD students, as well as postdoctoral fellows studying a wide variety of disciplines. I partnered with both men and women. Although the majority of these students did not yet have children, seven of them were parents. Furthermore, these students ranged in age from twenty-two to fifty-seven. The diversity of the participant pool was intentional, as it was my intent to explore imagined reproductive futures generally and to focus on student culture. My research, analysis, and the discussion that follows, therefore, focuses on the shared cultural scripts participants engage with within the academy, rather than the varied experiences of their nonstudent lives and backgrounds. Moreover, this discussion primarily draws on women participants' imagined reproductive futures. Even with men participants, discussions of femininity and motherhood were much more common than those of masculinity and fatherhood. This may be due to the reported assumption that the tensions among education, careers, and parenthood are more negative for women (Gerson).

Being a "Good Mother"

In the Western world of varying types and definitions of mothers, simply being a mother, either biological or social, is not enough to fulfill the social

contract of womanhood. In order to "be a mother," women are expected to engage with and fill the role of a "good mother." In failing to be a good mother, a woman risks not only having her children removed from her care, but failing to perform as a mother and a woman. The amount of time that academic women devote to their education and work poses a threat to their good motherhood. They are unable to devote the extensive time to mothering that some believe is essential to be a good mother. The female participants of this research frame their imagined reproductive futures within a script of good motherhood. They unanimously wanted to be mothers and position themselves discursively as good mothers by drawing upon predominant "good mothering" ideologies of spending quality time with their children and focusing upon their children.

The participants unanimously agreed that a good mother spends time with her children, but they elaborated on what "spending time" with one's children means in various ways. It was very important to Margo, who was entering her first year of law school, that she have time to be home with her children. Until she could do so, she did not want to be a mother. Despite this, Margo did not feel that being in the same room as one's children, physically "spending time" with them, equated to being a good mother. She explained to me that a good mother focuses on her children: "There's always compromises involved, and I have to be realistic that I can't pretend to be a stay at home mom if I'm working, you know, eight or ten hours a day. But my priority as a mother would be to be a mother."

By emphasizing the need to be with her children, Margo engages with a script of femininity, which suggests that good mothers are actively involved in the nurturing and upbringing of their children. She actively performs an imagined reproductive future which incorporates her femininity, despite her plans to pursue an involved professional career. Jenn echoes a similar view. By explaining to me that she does not want to have children until her schedule is "less hectic," Jenn also engages with the ideal of a focused, good mother. She told me the following: "I still feel that I will get a very hectic schedule. And I wouldn't want to have children who I'm not going to be able to give time to. So, I know myself, I'm not good at multi-tasking. If I focus on one thing, I just do that."

To be a good mother, Bella feels she would have to find the time to spend with her children and nurture them. Planning a career in law, and knowing that she easily gets sucked into her work, Bella already anticipates the struggle to maintain both a career and motherhood: "One, I would want to be a good, involved, not too involved [mother]. I would want to be a dedicated mother…. It's very easy for me to get into like research that I'm doing, or school stuff or work stuff, so I could see it would be difficult to maintain like enough time

for both sort of things. Or feel like it was even possible to do both … so, it would be hard."

In framing good motherhood as focusing on one's children rather than simply being home with them, Margo, Jenn, and Bella evoke a script in which a woman does not need to stay home to be a good mother. In this conception of motherhood, the time a woman spends with her children takes on an important purpose, one of guiding and nurturing. The performance of such femininities in participants' imagined reproductive futures creates a space for co-existing feminine-mother identities. By emphasizing a form of motherhood in which women are focused on their children and devoted to guiding and nurturing them, participants enact imagined reproductive futures in which they are good mothers, and thus feminine, despite spending hours each day away from their children.

The "Superwoman"

Although many women recognize the connection between motherhood and femininity, femininity is not a simple set of procedures one must follow to be a woman. It is a manuscript continuously edited, rewritten, and (re)enacted by the agency of the women who engage with it. Motherhood is not the only script women can perform to enact their femininity. The cultural script of the "superwoman"—the woman who finds balance between the boardroom and her family—provides an opportunity to preform femininity outside of the motherhood-femininity conflation. This trope allows women to maintain their feminine identities while engaging in careers by embodying the "woman who can do it all" persona. By being "superwomen" in their imagined reproductive futures, participants maintain space for their personal, possibly nonmaternal, feminine identities in those futures.

Eliana has been living in Saskatoon for the past six years as she nears the end of her PhD in clinical psychology. She has sacrificed a lot for her education over that time, and has missed out on sleep, and time with friends—she has been living, in her words, "under constant stress." She sees her family and her fiancé just twice a year, and constantly misses them. Despite this, she would not change her life for anything. When she talks about her future, Eliana focuses on her love for clinical psychology, and her dreams to build a career in the field that she has be pursuing for so long. She said the following:

> In five years, in an ideal world, I would be working in the Toronto area. That's cause that's where my family is, that's where my fiancé is … and I would be working in clinical practice, but I would want to be affiliated with a university, whether it be seasonal [sic] or… not

> like a full time academic position; I don't think that's what I would want. But I also do like research quite a bit.

Eliana envisions a future in which she is not only a mother but also a fulltime, working clinical psychologist. She does not situate her future employment as something that would benefit her children, by providing financial support, but rather as something which would benefit her—her love for the discipline and the time and effort she invested in it. In doing so, she engages with the cultural trope of the superwoman, which highlights her projected ability to seamlessly balance an active career with a family life.

As with Eliana, Sophie enacts an imagined reproductive future in which she balances her future career with her family. After spending eight years studying at the university level, she knows what kind of lifestyle she wants: "So not like a Monday-Friday, nine-to-five kind of job. Not sitting in an office—if it incorporated a variety of tasks so I'm not always doing the same thing all the time. I'm really eager to get out and like learn some awesome skills and become a little more self-sufficient and well-rounded of a person. Like that woman in a suit with a family and a briefcase." Sophie highlights how work is not only an integral part of many women's lives because they have invested in their education, but because it provides "an autonomous, individual identity which confers title, status, and prestige" (Markle 7). This script ties to the trope of the "superwoman," in which the self-empowered, intellectual, and successful woman manages to maintain her self-identity by striking the balance between family and career. For these students, their field or career is an integral part of who they are. Thus, it is unsurprising that they draw upon their future careers when enacting their future performances of femininity.

Discussion and Conclusion

Social expectations, norms, and cultural scripts do not themselves inform a singular, static performance of gender; people perform gender by choosing and selecting particular scripts meaningful to them (Ussher). The participants in this research engage with cultural scripts of "good mothers" and "the superwoman" in their imagined reproductive futures in order to negotiate the tensions among femininity and the academy. In doing so, they highlight norms of student culture and their role in the constitution of their imagined reproductive futures.

Examining the performance of gender in imagined reproductive futures provides crucial insight into the saliency of particular cultural scripts. Although the participants draw upon cultural scripts in their performances of femininity, the norms they emphasize elucidate the framework of student culture; these enactments emphasize particular scripts salient to postgraduate students within

the context of the academy. Further research considering the enactment of imagined reproductive futures—while also acknowledging diverse constructions of race, class, education, kinship, and experience—is needed. What role does gender play in the imagined reproductive futures of nonheteronormative individuals? Of young people not engaged in the academy? Imagined reproductive futures draw upon individuals' lifelong experiences; as such, those experiences need to be given consideration.

By examining how postgraduate students at a Canadian university perform femininity in their imagined reproductive futures, motherhood scholars can begin to unpack their tangled identities as academics, professionals, mothers, and women in relation to reproduction. These women actively and simultaneously engage in cultural norms of parenthood and those of student culture. They successfully negotiate the tension between academic and feminine identities, and highlight the need for further discussion of theses tensions within the academy.

Endnote

[1]All names of participants are pseudonyms

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BIANCA WILLIAMS

Francine Krause

Reconnecting Women to the Motherlines through the Practice of Pregnancy Belly Masking

In the early 1990s, academic feminists concerned with essentialism were skeptical of an excessive focus on motherhood and the pregnant body, yet in popular culture, the pregnant body was being galvanized as a symbol of female empowerment. At that time, Naomi Lowinsky also introduced her concept of the "motherlines," calling for women to regain a sense an embodied connection to the stories of their lifecycles and maternal lineage. Interpreting the motherlines in a nonessentialist way, I introduce Californian artist Francine Krause's 1991 "In Honor of Pregnant Women" exhibition of belly masks (i.e., plaster casts of the pregnant torso) as an example of a cultural practice working toward reconnecting women to the motherlines through the language of visual art. Krause's exhibition provided a forum through which everyday women's stories and feelings about pregnancy could be publicly transmitted; it called attention to women's entry into, and complex relationship with, the "mask of motherhood." Krause's exhibition was also an important way for women to mediate their complex feelings about pregnancy, which allowed the audience to question established cultural discourses about pregnancy as well as consider their own connection to the motherlines.

Until the early 1990s displaying pregnant bellies was taboo in mainstream Western culture; pregnant women were expected to hide their bumps under conservative maternity fashion. Academic feminists, concerned with biological essentialism—that physiological traits, especially in regards to reproduction, could be used to justify social inequities between men and women (DiQuinzio 2)—had also been by and large skeptical of an excessive focus on motherhood and the pregnant body. Thus while many feminist texts on the female body were released from the late 1970s to late 1980s, references to pregnancy were routinely omitted (Matthews and Wexler 9). Yet a counterculture had begun;

in 1987, Rosalind Petchesky questioned the fetal imagery used in prolife campaigns, and argued that pregnant mother's bodies and stories must be made visible and contextualised, so as not to remove the mother from the picture (8). In 1992, Naomi Ruth Lowinsky introduced the concept of the "motherlines," calling for women to regain a sense an embodied connection to the stories of their lifecycles and maternal lineage: "We are so full of judgements about what mother ought to be that we can barely see what mother is. This has been shattering to a woman's sense of self and her connection to roots" ("Introduction" xi). As this paper demonstrates, in popular culture the image of the pregnant body was galvanized in ways challenging established feminist and cultural discourses of pregnancy (and maternity) as both invisible and disempowered.

Whereas work to date has primarily focused on exploring women's connection to the motherlines through personal interviews (Green), oral histories (The Motherline Story Project), and literature (O'Reilly, "A Politics"), Lowinsky's work makes clear that both visual imagery and tactile experiences with artworks can also connect women to the motherlines ("Mother of Mothers" 227). In this article, I explore the prospect of healing women's connection to the motherlines through art by introducing a 1991 visual art exhibition of pregnancy belly casts—plaster molds of the pregnant torso—conceived and curated by Californian artist Francine Krause in which everyday mothers were given an opportunity to display their self-decorated belly masks. This paper seeks to contribute to recent literature that has uncovered and celebrated professional artists who have taken the maternal as their subject (Chernick and Klein; Buller; Betterton; Liss). It also explores the use of art by everyday women during pregnancy, a subject that has largely fallen outside the scope of this literature.

As Andrea O'Reilly suggests, women become disconnected from their motherlines by negative cultural practices including, "the devaluation of motherhood and the reinforcement of maternal powerlessness, mother-blame and matrophobia" ("Across the Divide" 85). To this list I would also add the "mask of motherhood"—a concept developed by Adrienne Rich and Susan Maushart to acknowledge the ways in which mothers put on a false front to hide challenging experiences from one another. In 1976, Rich described the telling of mothers' complex stories, including their socially unacceptable feelings of resentment and rage, as "cracking through" the "masks of motherhood" (25). Maushart later highlighted the mask of motherhood as the facade of a complicit good mother that "keeps us quiet about what we know, to the point where we forget we know anything at all, or anything worth telling" (26). Krause originally adopted the term "pregnancy belly casting" to describe the plaster moulds she made of pregnant bellies, but she soon changed it to "pregnancy belly masking" because she saw the concept of the mask as "an external expression of an internal feeling or thought process" (Krause, Personal interview, 26 June 2017, Tape

A). At first glance the concept of the mask of motherhood seems somewhat at odds with Krause's work of masking pregnant bellies. After all, the aim of the critical discourse on the mask of motherhood is to escape masks, not cast women in them. Yet one could hardly expect that one generation of mothers would be able to simply sidestep the mask altogether. Rich was keenly aware that escaping the masks is not an easy endeavour, and may even be one of the greatest challenges faced by mothers (qtd. in Maushart 309). Instead, what Krause's work did was draw attention to one's entry into the mask of motherhood as a conscious process that could be shaped by the mother in ways that gave women the confidence to tell their stories.

As I will demonstrate, Krause's belly casting process—displayed in her exhibition "In Honor of Pregnant Women," held at The Family Gallery in Duncan's Mills, California—was important for three reasons. First, it provided a forum for pregnant women's bodies and stories to be on display, which enabled them to be seen in both popular culture and feminism at a point in time when they were hidden from sight and memory. Second, the belly casting and decorating process afforded scope for women to use the language of art to explore their experiences of pregnant subjectivity, if not fully unmasking pregnancy at least exploring new possibilities through art. Third, the exhibited belly masks were an important way for women to mediate their complex feelings about pregnancy that had been previously masked by simplistic cultural discourse, which prompted some female spectators to reflect on their own relationship to the motherlines.

Francine Krause: "Godmother of all Bellycasters"

In 1986, Francine Krause, a professional artist, decided to create a series of plaster moulds of her own pregnant belly with the aim of decorating and exhibiting them as "just one person's journey through pregnancy" (Personal interview, 3 Mar. 2016, Tape A). However, Krause ended up making belly casts for friends and establishing an early, if not the first, belly casting business in 1989 (Personal interview 19 Oct. 2016). Although there is evidence of isolated instances of the practice of pregnancy belly casting since the late 1960s, Krause, who ran her practice from 1989 until 2009, was a key figure in the proliferation of the practice; she estimates that she created 750 belly masks and sold 16,450 belly masking kits, and provided training on the technique to at least forty midwives and spa therapists (Krause, email message to author, 11 Apr. 2018). Indeed, she came to be considered as "the godmother of all bellycasters" (Canger). In 1991, Krause decided to invite women for whom she had made belly masks to exhibit alongside her own artworks because she "realized how significant" the process of belly casting "was to each of the women" (Personal interview, 3 Mar. 2016,

Francine Krause at the 1991 in Honor of Pregnant Women exhibition.

Tape A). Displayed in the exhibition were 34 pregnancy belly masks decorated by 26 women and two men (Krause, email message to author, 7 July 2017). Most women decorated their own belly mask; however, others collaborated on artworks and some created multiple artworks. Most contributors were not professional artists, although some were. Accompanying each belly mask was an artist statement and a photo of the mother with her child. In this article, I primarily focus on the exhibition as an example of an early orientation toward restoring the motherlines, rather than the broader discussion of pregnancy belly masking in relation to class, racial/ethnic diversity, and consumer culture.

Contributors to the exhibition were mainly white, middle-class women, although one woman had Native American heritage and Krause herself is Jewish. There was also some diversity in the families represented, including interracial couples (Krause, Personal interview, 26 June 2017, Tape A). Over the course of her business, Krause served women from a variety of racial and ethnic cultural backgrounds as well as socially disadvantaged women for whom she would sometimes create a belly cast at no charge (Krause, Personal interview, 26 June 2017 Tape A). Although Krause's clients needed to be pregnant to have their own belly cast, mothers who did not have the biological experience of pregnancy (e.g., mothers of adopted children) could still engage with the practice of belly casting. Krause provided the example of women finding healing through painting on someone else's belly mask (Krause, Personal interview, 26 June 2017, Tape A) and also, as discussed later, through viewing the exhibition.

Making the Pregnant Body Visible

Reflections of Life *by Jean Williams*
Photo: Francine Krause

In contemporary popular culture, the practice of pregnancy belly masking is fairly commonplace and normative. By contrast, journalist Carolyn Lund's comment that Krause's exhibited belly casts were "not an ordinary memento of a life experience" (D1) highlights that belly masking was still a highly unusual art practice in the early 1990s. Krause's exhibition must be viewed in the broader context of the early 1990s as a time in which the pregnant body needed to be made visible in both popular culture and feminism. From Lennart Nilsson's 1965 images of a floating fetus in *Life* magazine onward, the pregnant woman had often been left "literally transparent" (Matthews and Wexler 198). Rosalind Petchesky's 1987 call to reclaim the pregnant woman from obscurity was pivotal in reorienting feminist focus back to the maternal body (Matthews and Wexler 11). In August 1991, *Vanity Fair* released a landmark cover image of a nude and heavily pregnant Demi Moore. This image "re-envelop[ed] the foetus within the pregnant body" and, therefore, highlighted "ways for women to re-envelop themselves as the subjects of their own gestation" (Tyler 81). Krause's exhibition occurred before Moore's image, which suggests a tide of feminist consciousness about the pregnant body was already awakening at a grassroots level.

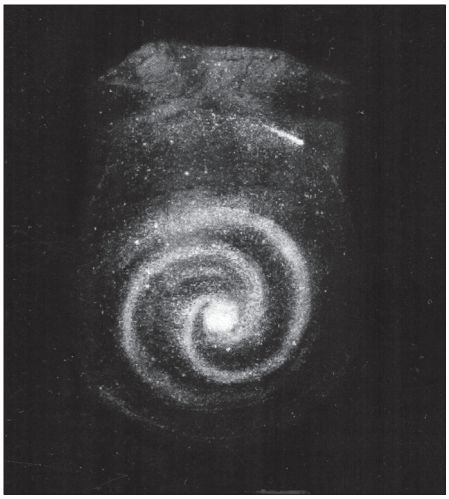
Krause's exhibition provided examples of women putting the unborn child back into the maternal body, seemingly in line with Petchesky's call for the creation of "new images that recontextualize the foetus: that place it back in the uterus, and the uterus back into the woman's body and her body back into its social space" (78). Some women painted neonates' bodies on the front of the mask; one painted red lines flowing from twins to the mother's heart. Another cast titled "Reflections of Life" was simply left in the plain white plaster bandage on the outside, perhaps speaking to the medicalized view of the pregnant body as needing fixing. However, the inside was painted with a navy background with tiny white stars upon which was painted a life-sized image of a neonate sucking its thumb. Yet another belly cast displayed a stylised image

of a woman crouching in a birthing position, her belly full and yoni enlarged. This belly mask was perched on a stand above a circular mirror that reflected the image on the inside of the mask: a neonate tucked up in the womb. That the view is mediated by the mirror suggests the complexity of the entwinement of mother and child. These belly masks break what Imogen Tyler argues was a "taboo surrounding pregnancy" because they highlight "the unsettling effect which pregnant embodiment has upon dominant cultural understandings of the individuated or individual self" (73). These masks highlighted the dual embodiment of pregnancy, and affirmed that the mother's story cannot be removed from that of the unborn child. They contributed toward healing women's relationship to the motherlines by creating a much needed "cultural mirror" for pregnant women's experience (Lowinsky, "Introduction" xi).

Using the Language of Art to Explore Pregnant Subjectivity

Krause's act of encouraging women to decorate their own masks allowed women to use art to explore a complex range of self-expression and feelings. For Julia Kristeva, birth and pregnancy bring women back into contact with the mother and the presymbolic "pre-linguistic" state (239). Perhaps then, art is a preferable medium for giving voice to the unspeakable nature of pregnancy. As Maushart notes, pregnancy can be "experienced as a form of *dispossession* for many women" (my emphasis, 70). Though writing more generally on mothering, rather than pregnancy, the work of Nané Jordan illustrates how masks can ease a sense of dispossession for mothers. Jordan found that facial masks worn by herself and her children during meal times transformed mundane repetitive everyday tasks into "something more than hurried habits, a way to dwell within the moment" (Jordan 233). For Jordan, then, the mask itself, rather than inhibiting authenticity, actually allows for a more connected experience of motherhood because it focuses awareness on the present. This is similar to Krause's observations of the pregnancy belly masking process as assisting women to focus on the baby growing within: "I think when the women do the belly mask they take time for themselves; they slow down and they focus on their body and their baby…. I heard that many times, 'now I am ready to have my baby, now I have had a belly cast'" (Krause, Personal interview, 3 Mar. 2016, Tape B). Thus, belly masks may ease the sense of dispossession experienced during pregnancy, and enable women to focus on the present and the transition to birth.

Rich called for the revolutionary possibility of women being sovereign over their own bodies. She argued that "in such a world women will truly create new life, bringing forth not only children (if and as we choose) but the visions, and the thinking, necessary to sustain, console and alter human existence—a new relationship to the universe" (285-86). Seeming to echo Rich's metaphor of a new



Cosmic Mother by Caren Catterall

Om to my Daughter by Windi Braden

relationship to the universe, many of the images on the pregnancy belly masks displayed in Krause's exhibition included motifs such as stars, suns, moons, and milky ways. One woman wrote "I am the Cosmic mother. I give birth to the Galaxies and Planets…. I give birth to myself" (Catterall, "Cosmic Mother"). These could be read as women's attempts to symbolically represent the transformations of their relationship to their own bodies as echoed in Rich's words. Maushart also attempts to capture the boundless qualities of women's experience beyond the mask of motherhood: "what lies beneath the brave and brittle face of motherhood is a countenance of infinite expressiveness, a body of deep knowing" (319). The images of the universe drawn upon the literally brittle plaster casts, then, could be a metaphor for the transformation of women's relationship to the mask of motherhood as a more active participant in their creation.

Additionally masks can be thought of as healing. Krause joked that when people saw her advertisement they sometimes mistakenly thought a belly mask was "some kind of a spa mask like a mud or seaweed mask" (Personal interview, 19 Oct. 2016"). Just as one may wear a mud mask to improve a skin condition such as acne, masks can provide the potential for calming and healing. Krause did in fact view her work as a healing modality, which allowed some form of relief for pregnant women. Many of Krause's friends were midwives and doulas, and Krause came to see her vocation as an opportunity to work with pregnant women in a way that used her gifts as an artist rather than medical

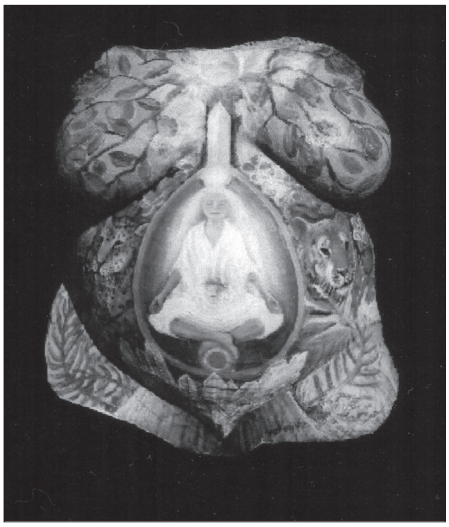
skills (Personal interview, 3 Mar. 2016, Tape B). For instance, she stated: "A lot of women came to me who did not feel good about their bodies and who were afraid of their pregnancy and childbirth and went through a really healing process" ("Personal interview," 3 Mar. 2016, Tape B). This seems to concur with one artist statement from Krause's exhibition: "I used artistic expression to heal unresolved fears and to create positive visualisations of how I wanted my birth experience to be" (Catterall, "You in Me, Cassidy").

Krause's exhibition must be thoroughly historicized. The majority of the artworks in Krause's 1991 exhibition presented pregnancy, childbirth, and mothering in a positive light and associated it with positive emotions; it would certainly not appear radical to a contemporary audience. There is an absence of the "grief for the apparently fully individuated, normal body that preceded maternity" as well as the "overwhelming sense of loss of self in the transition to motherhood" (Quiney 36), which are so often witnessed in contemporary accounts of motherhood. Maternal ambivalence is also strikingly absent. One of the exhibitors in Krause's exhibition, for example, dressed up her belly cast with a pink tutu and wrote in her "Om to my Daughter": "Your presence in my life makes me feel so very complete" (Braden). Though a beautiful sentiment, such a statement may have rendered women with ambivalent emotions toward their child isolated. Thus, although to a contemporary audience accustomed to "warts and all" stories such examples may seem to be hiding something, the exhibition achieved much for the era in which it was held. Just the fact of putting the pregnant body on display broke an entrenched taboo and would have chipped the mask of motherhood.

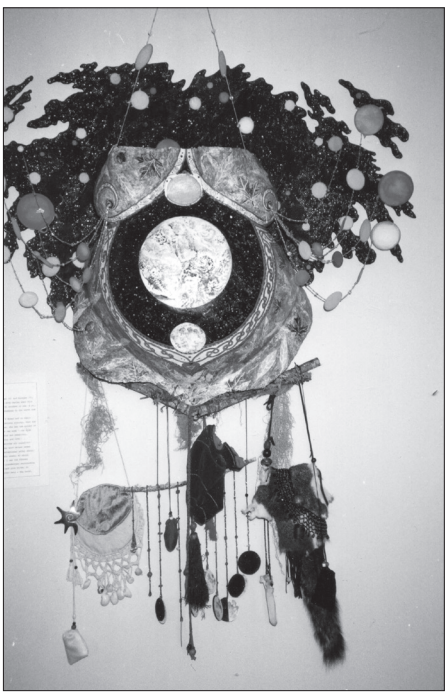
Public Reactions to Krause's Exhibition

There was significant public interest in Krause's exhibition with three hundred people at the reception as well as another three hundred visitors to the gallery during the exhibition (Krause, email message, 30 July 2017). Although most comments in the guestbook were positive—along the lines of "So beautiful, so inspiriting" and "so exuberant" (*Guestbook*)— Krause recalled that a small percentage of visitors had negative reactions to her exhibition. Some people found the casts "ugly." For others, particularly devout Christians, the belly masks were "just total obscenity [even] pornography" (Krause, Personal interview, 26 June 2017, Tape B). This accords with the contemporaneous example of Moore's *Vanity Fair* cover being placed on the "top shelf alongside pornographic publications" (Tyler 75) and again highlights just how radical it was to display naked pregnant bodies in the early 1990s.

At the outset of the exhibition Krause explained that one aim was "to help people relate to the sacred aspects of pregnancy" (Krause qtd. in Lund). In



Pure light being by Suzanne deVeuve



Goddess Creation: Woman of Stars by Alexandra Genetti

this way, the masks in the exhibition mediated an alternative countercultural discourse about the pregnant body. Some of the belly masks, for example, featured Goddesses in both the imagery and accompanying text. To the modern viewer, such masks raise the spectre of essentialism that feminists have largely sought to move away from, but this Goddess art could also be seen in another light: it reconnected women in the early 1990s to the Goddess imagery used in 1970s feminist art and thereby provided an alternative feminist spiritual tradition (motherline) through which to view the pregnant body as sacred rather than an obscenity. (For a discussion of 1970s Goddess art see Dekel.) Exploring contemporary artistic representations of birth and motherhood, Anna Hennessey found that "when women re-sacralize religious and secular objects during pregnancy, labour and birth, they are performing an ontological transition of these objects between *the religious*, *the secular* and *the re-sacralised*" (my emphasis, 209-10). Similarly, the women in Krause's exhibition were able to resacralize the meaning of pregnancy by drawing upon images of Goddesses.

The fact that pregnancy belly masking is a casting and a re-presentation of the body rather than the body itself afforded scope for the transcendence of the essential,

real body. Lowinsky emphasizes stories of the changing landscape of women's bodies, such as developing breasts and birthing, and argues for these to be regarded as "stories of the life cycles," which link women to former generations ("Mother of Mothers" 227); however, this can suggest essentialism. O'Reilly, writing on African American maternal culture, interprets the motherline as "ancestral memory" transmitted through the process of "cultural bearing" ("A Politics" 12). I also interpret motherlines as the transmission of culture and memory rather than of an essentialist feminine quality. I believe that Krause's pregnancy belly masks, which literally created a second skin, served as a metaphor for the socially constructed nature of pregnancy. As one observer of the exhibition remarked, "It looks to me like you've given each woman a new avenue into her own creativity *beyond the biological*" (my emphasis, *Guestbook*, italics).

One of the mother-artists wrote in the accompanying text to her belly mask titled *Goddess Creation; Woman of Stars* of the sense of connection to her motherline past, present, and future: "I see a vision—the wombs of women full—women within women: my child, myself, my mother and endless grandmothers surrounding me. I see the future: my children's children, grandchildren, and I, the ancient grandmother surrounding them" (Genetti).

As Lowinsky suggests, bearing witness to other women's stories creates "sympathetic vibrations so that we can begin to hear our own" ("Introduction" xii). So perhaps it is not surprising that the masks also healed some of the spectator's perceptions of their own and their mother's bodies. Some visitors left comments in the guestbook attesting to the effects of the exhibition on their own and other's wellbeing: "So healing. I've traced my fear of my baby back to my mother's belly. This kind of healing can transcend generations and lifetimes!" (*Guestbook*). Another wrote: "You are providing such a beautiful and unique healing journey for all who encounter you" (*Guestbook*). Krause herself observed that many visitors were touched emotionally by the exhibition; she felt that it provided spectators with "another way to look at their mother, that perhaps their mothers were as proud as these women who were in the show, had those same feelings about them" (Personal interview, 26 June 2017, Tape B). Krause's comments suggest that the exhibition afforded scope for women to explore and potentially heal intergenerational trauma surrounding pregnancy and maternity.

Conclusion

In creating an early public display of pregnant body masks accompanied by narratives, Krause's exhibition highlighted women's complex relationship to the "mask of motherhood" and sowed the seeds for its unmasking. Although they could not fully unmask motherhood, they did nonetheless provide draw

attention to the potential for pregnant women of transitioning into the mask of motherhood in a conscious way. This transition, in turn, has the potential to challenge established discourses of the pregnant body and to create an avenue through which the mother-artists and the audience alike could explore their relationship to their bodies and their own maternal lineage.

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THERESE M. MADDEN

Toward a New Understanding of Maternal Self-Care During Family Crisis

Initiating a Shared Legacy of Strength and Hope

This narrative explores the author's experience of suddenly becoming a caregiver for a spouse while also caring for minor children. The author uses reflection and research to describe what she learned about self-care, how she integrated her needs with the needs of her children, and why prevailing concepts of self-care as an individual construct can undermine its effective conceptualization and practice. The importance of self-care for caregivers is well documented, as is the failure of most caregivers to successfully achieve it. This failure carries particular poignancy for mothers of minor children. Studies document the academic, social, and emotional challenges that children experience when families face the upheaval associated with serious health problems. The children's need to navigate new ways of being within their families requires the support of their mother, which can be difficult if she becomes too overburdened by her caregiving role. Avoiding this cycle requires better education for families in caregiving situations and the adoption of a new understanding of self-care for mothers. This article combines the experiences of one family with research about caregivers, the effect of paternal brain injury on children, and typical recovery phases. It shares insights about the importance of modelling effective self-care as a healthy maternal legacy.

Every mother knows the challenge of self-care—our propensity to put the care of others before our own needs and the subsequent toll that has on both our physical and emotional health and on our professional and intellectual identities. In my decade of being a mother, I have had fairly typical struggles with this challenge, but it wasn't until our family faced a serious crisis that I had to confront my weaknesses, reflect on my most essential needs, and readjust how I define self-care to sustain our family for the long-term challenges confronting us.

Through time, muddled efforts, and reflection, I learned a lot about new ways of being that sustain me through the ongoing difficulties associated with this crisis. I learned I needed to adjust my reasonable expectations of self-care to the stage we were experiencing within our crisis. I also learned it was appropriate for a time to let go of the expectation that I should engage in self-care at all because sometimes that expectation becomes more a burden than a reasonable objective. I gained understanding about the effects of ignoring my own needs for too long, finding that my neglect of essential self-care affects my strength and ability to give to my family. In neglecting my own needs, I miss opportunities to care for my children, and I also run the risk of negative modelling that could affect their understanding of their own roles in relation to others in the world.

Over time, I realized my understanding about how to approach self-care was hindered by the way self-care is conceived and defined, both by me and within our broader culture, including those in the medical establishment upon whom we relied during an unfamiliar journey. The primary narrative of self-care in much popular literature focuses on individual needs, but this directly conflicts with my role and responsibilities as a mother. Through an unexpected journey of challenges and loss, I struggled to adapt this narrative into a reality I could reasonably achieve, both for the sake of my own care and to create a healthy legacy for my children to model. In the end, I rejected the more individualistic definitions I previously understood as the very essence of self-care and instead learned to integrate the needs of my children into the emerging rhythm of my care in both understanding and practice.

My journey toward this new understanding included acknowledging that the healthcare system inadequately addresses the needs of caregiving in families, although these medical experts laboured in so many other effective ways to help us. Their orientation reflected appropriate respect for the importance of caregivers, but did so in an often cursory way that perpetuated an individualistic approach to self-care and overlooked the more holistic needs of the families, who are so essential to patient recovery. A descriptive explanation of our anticipated challenges should have been possible—as research I did later confirms that the stages we experienced were predictable—yet the prevailing message we repeatedly received was one of superficial optimism. This rather vague and artificial approach left my children and me unprepared for the difficult journey ahead of us, which, in turn, created repercussions within my own journey toward better self-care. For me, this experience suggests that a more robust understanding of maternal self-care needs among medical providers could lead to more dialogue and, possibly, improved patient recovery outcomes.

Our journey began as a family road trip with my husband, daughters who were aged eight and ten, and our Golden Retriever. Six states into our vacation,

my husband had a massive stroke so serious that he was not initially expected to recover. My role immediately became one of rescuer, as he was driving, and we were on a mountain road with steep cliffs threatening at each curve. When his driving became erratic, I beseeched him to pull over, at which he alarmed me further by responding in a vague tone that he was not sure how to do so. From the point where I began helping him pull over, to getting him back into the car after we realized that he couldn't walk, and to figuring out the nearest medical centre in a remote corner of Colorado, emergency was for too long the operative word. After finally arriving at a medical clinic, my role quickly switched to one of caregiver to support his emergency medical needs and, almost simultaneously, to address the immediate emotional needs of daughters who were traumatized by his strange behaviour, my alarmed response, and the state of emergency with which medical personnel had greeted our arrival. Although I did not know it at the time, we had entered the "opening phase" of the post-stroke journey, in which, according to a review of literature in the *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, "the initial shock is lived through. Medical stabilization and damage minimization are absolute priorities. The family grows closer together and directs all its energy toward the injured person" (Verhaeghe et al. 1007). Other researchers affirm this stage is traumatic, but note that it does not require particular attention to self-care, as "in the early stages of caregiving, negative effects may not occur" (Schulz and Sherwood 4).

Learning that research clearly defined our "opening phase" reassured me; recognizable patterns within what felt like evolving chaos showed me that our journey was one that other families had weathered effectively before us. Although this stage occurred even before the need for new understandings about self-care emerged, learning its definition felt prescient, for I later began to improve my own understandings of self-care both by integrating my children's needs within my own, which started at this stage, and by remembering my own values. A lesson I had learned through years of backpacking reemerged as one that informed both my approach to motherhood and my not-yet-emerging sense of self-care in this new journey. My memories of backpacking operated as an analogy that reminded me that I find strength when engaged in activities for which I have competence, feel joy, and have opportunities to simultaneously support others. As a backpacker, I have pushed myself on extended trips until I have literally wept alongside the trail. However, the worst days were always relative, and if someone else was further back and in more agony, that knowledge gave me the strength to get beyond my own exhausted pain to help. Throughout the agonizing journey of creating a new understanding of maternal self-care after my husband's stroke, I found myself relearning lessons I had learned while backpacking and integrating them in ways that moved away from an individualistic focus to

one that opened up my definition of maternal self-care to incorporate values of community, friendship, solicitude, and conversation.

Relearning those lessons and integrating them within the context of motherhood in crisis was a long process of discovery. The "opening phase" description reflected our reality, although the experience at the time felt magnified because of our remote location and isolation from the resources we would have had at home. Within a few hours, the medical clinic had my husband on a medical transport plane en route to the nearest stroke centre, which was several hours' flight away. In the meantime, I embarked on a seven-hour journey with our children through the night over pitch-black rural and mountain roads. Arrival at the stroke centre very early in the morning meant a continuation of this chaotic stage of emotional, medical, and logistical challenges, now exacerbated by a lack of sleep. Locating a place to stay the next night, finding a way to clean the car of his vomit, reassuring and being attentive to our children, and then searching for more affordable lodging options occupied the first few days of our emergency. Self-care was tied to family survival, and my actions in support of it went no further. I recall trying to do laundry during this time—managing to get quarters for the machines, then returning out of necessity twice to get more coins because I kept mistaking the washer for the dryer and putting the clothes in the wrong place. I do not normally face challenges with appliance use, but I was at that point befuddled to the point of incoherence. Although self-care did not cross my mind during this time, in retrospect, this initiation into our poststroke world carried prescient warnings about the way that my own self-care would remain intricately tied to the needs of my family.

For the six weeks my husband remained in this Colorado hospital before transferring to a rehabilitation centre close to home, we stayed in that survival mode. Even though the situation certainly took a toll, the very concept of self-care was postponed as I felt suspended between the crisis event and some measurable conclusion. During this stressful time, well-meaning friends did begin to ask me what I was doing to take care of myself—a question often posed and interpreted in individualistic terms. At this stage of our crisis, away from home and dealing with daily challenges of finances and lodging and childcare, that question did nothing to relieve my burden. I recognized it intellectually as the right question to ask—indeed, I had posed similar queries to friends in difficult situations in the past—but at the height of my stress, the very concept seemed to be yet another obligation cast upon me, something more to do, something else to solve. The gap between what I needed and what life was throwing at me was just too big to bridge with the little imagination I could conjure, and I found myself frustrated by the good intentions of questioners. I felt berated by a question that I could not even begin to act upon. A more cohesive understanding of maternal self-care and the expected stages of our

journey would have relieved my angst with more a more realistic approach to appropriate and needed support.

Getting home was a long and complicated process, and was a continuation of the emergency mode. After the hospital discharged my husband to my care, I spent a physically and emotionally taxing day dragging, pushing, pulling, and manoeuvring him in and out of wheelchairs, cabs, and airplane seats across four states to a rehabilitation centre within an hour's drive of our home. He spent the next seven weeks there, and we experienced what researchers have labeled "phase two," which involves "emotional relief, denial, and unrealistic expectations with regard to the evolution of the injury" (Verhaeghe et al. 1007). Although the degree to which our expectations were unrealistic emerged only later, our return home did reflect a milestone that prompted me to face the question of self-care again. Unfortunately, I continued to experience the question as a burden, not only because my caregiving obligations continued but because my family leave had ended and my professional obligations emerged. But now it was with the added pressure of knowing that I was likely to be the sole financial provider for my family for the extended future and that that future included considerable debt associated with the medical bills. This dynamic of new obligations conflicted with my need to figure out how to meet my physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. And it was exacerbated by the fact that I had neither the support nor the wherewithal to discern what I needed in terms of self-care. The situation was still too new, too raw, and too complex for me to extricate my own needs from those for whom I was caring in a thoughtful way, and I did not have the wherewithal to begin to redefine self-care within the context of motherhood. My failure to do so would catch up to me.

To provide substantial care for an extended period of time, I needed to stay strong myself. Multiple research studies affirm the importance and challenge of self-care for caregivers. A 2008 article in the *American Journal of Nursing* highlights the health effects of family caregiving by summarizing caregiving as a process that "creates physical and psychological strain over extended periods of time, is accompanied by high levels of unpredictability and uncontrollability, has the capacity to create secondary stress in multiple life domains such as work and family relationships, and frequently requires high levels of vigilance (Schulz and Sherwood 1). An article in the *American Medical Association* indicates that family caregivers provide care "at considerable cost to themselves" (Schulz and Beach 2215), and a 2004 article in the *Journal of Clinical Nursing* notes in a review of literature about stress and recovery among families of people with brain injuries that stress is greater when it involves children living at home" (Verhaeghe et al. 1006). Literature in other recent articles continues to document this issue while lamenting the lack of research on the needs of family members. For example, a 2004 study notes that "the sometimes profound losses

and individual suffering of the children of parents with a head injury have been neglected in the literature" (Butera-Prinzi and Perlesz 83), and a 2015 article in *Community Mental Health* notes that in the recovery of patients of brain-related injuries, the effect on the family "has been neglected" (Spaniol and Nelson 761).

I had begun searching for resources about care for children of a parent with brain injury within weeks of my husband's stroke, but inquiries of therapy teams and social workers revealed no insights, nor were they able to suggest appropriate research. This lack of information, juxtaposed with apparently contradictory yet solicitous questions about my self-care, suggests a need for a broader understanding of self-care within the maternal construct as an essential component of sustaining caregivers. Instead, I found some resistance to the very idea that children should need support during this time, as some adults openly criticized our girls for their imperfect behaviour, especially around their father. Keeping the patient's needs a priority makes sense, but these criticisms were an early warning of the emerging conflict between their needs and his. I later found that research supports rather alarmingly that minor children of a parent who have experienced brain injury are, indeed, vulnerable. A study that looked at the effects of parental brain injury on children concludes that "children living with a parent with a head injury are negatively impacted at a high risk of emotional and behavioral difficulties" (Butera-Prinzi and Perlesz 96). The discussion in the study notes that in one very small sample group, the children were "at risk of high levels of anxiety, sleep and eating disturbances, withdrawal, depression and anti-social problems such as aggression" (96). The *Journal of Clinical Nursing* reaches similar conclusions: "children find it especially difficult … [as a result,] they have lower self-concept, behavior problems, [and] symptoms of depression" (Verhaeghe 1006). These studies reinforce the importance of focusing on our shared self-care needs during a recovery process because the wellbeing of children is intricately tied to maternal self-care within such a shared journey.

Other research supports that link. Factors that protect children from some of the negative effects of a parental brain injury include "the presence of supportive and consistent or 'healthy' figures" (Butera-Prinzi and Perlesz 84). Thus, though initially counterintuitive both to me and to many who offered well-meaning suggestions, I learned that I needed to define "self" broadly as encompassing all three of us, both because we were all involved in the logistics of the care and because we alone were at the heart of the dramatic changes associated with my husband's stroke recovery.

Although at that stage of our journey we assumed that the worst was over, we were, in fact, just beginning to confront some of the complicated elements of self-care when there are conflicting needs. When our children visited my

husband in the rehabilitation centre, the toll of the stroke began to reveal itself in his changed cognitive understandings and different personality and preferences. The girls, in turn, began to show emerging signs of grief for the father that they had known, although I did not at first recognize their behaviour as such. Again, caregiver support oriented toward a holistic definition of maternal care would have helped inform our expectations because I later discovered that this grief is a normal and healthy:

> grief that results from a loss that is final, such as the death of a loved one, is a healthy and normal process that is often eased by the rituals and active support that come with such events, [whereas] the grief that accompanies ongoing caregiving does not come with that same sort of closure and is often ongoing, which can lead to a cascade of negative emotions and behaviors. (Sullivan and Miller 3)

Our children's grief manifested in a greater need for my presence—both as a reassuring sign of continued parental care and as their shared partner in a very small circle of people experiencing the more hidden effects of this intimate and unwanted journey. Their need again contradicted the popular narrative of self-care as individualistic, yet, ironically, it simultaneously postponed my changed understanding about defining self-care because I became focused on the behaviour resulting from the grief instead of the shared care that would alleviate it.

At this point, when others would ask me what I was doing to care for myself, I began to panic. I sensed I could no longer avoid doing something to support myself, but I had no idea how to add more to plates already overflowing with emotional, practical, and spiritual needs. The suggestion that I ought to be doing more, even if for myself, felt like a staggeringly unfair expectation. The question of self-care was especially irksome to me because in my exhaustion, I was beginning to need it so desperately. I was sleep deprived, and I had not exercised for months. I knew that I was stretched too thin, and I felt that I was failing daily in minor ways in every aspect of my identity—as caregiver, mother, and employee. The well-intentioned queries about self-care felt like loathsome reminders that I was failing yet again.

I did need to find time to be outside, to be alone, to run, to pray. However, even with the benefit of time and experience to inform my reflection, I can see that the pressure I felt to create this time for self-care came in ways that were too esoteric. The suggestions were focused in ways that seemed to hedonistic in comparison with the trauma that my children continued to experience. How could I pull myself away from time they needed with me to get a haircut or a massage? How could I miss a daily visit to my husband just to give in to

a need for sleep? These questions plagued my conscience, but the question I most critically needed to address was one that hadn't quite occurred to me: how I could merge my role as caregiver to others with my own need for self-care? How could I integrate these needs into a maternal understanding of self-care in a way that authentically addressed our shared journey of care of one another and of my husband?

Long before I had acknowledged this dilemma, my husband was released from rehabilitation suddenly and ahead of schedule, which felt like a happy surprise. I was certain that the transition's challenges would be minor in comparison to those we had already weathered. However, I soon realized that we had entered "phase three," in which family members of brain injury patients can experience "bewilderment, anxiety, dejection, depression, feelings of guilt, despair, and the feeling of imprisonment … [and some] families eventually evolve into a final phase or sorrow and mourning, role reorganization and role distribution" (Verhaeghe et al. 1007).

Indeed, rather than a smooth transition, we found wait lists for therapists that delayed needed care, and encountered new philosophies on care that differed from the ones in the rehabilitation center, which left his recovering brain frustrated and confused. Worse, the self-orientation required for a survivor's recovery was in stark contrast to the needs of young kids who had hoped and expected that their dad would return to his parental role, demonstrating care and showing interest in their activities. Instead, they found "a father with the same body but who appeared to be a different person" (Vergaeghe 1007).

Although they needed and had missed his reassuring and familiar presence, we were confronted instead with attempts at violent forms of discipline and terribly abusive comments that devastated the kids. None of his medical providers had warned me of this, and when I sought help from his primary provider, she dismissed the problem with a comparative description of physical abuse she had received as a child. Yet our situation deteriorated. On at least two occasions, we barricaded ourselves inside a bedroom while he shouted violent threats and tried to break down the door. Her implication that this behaviour was acceptable left me devastated, and I felt alone and exhausted beyond words. Research suggests that our situation should have been anticipated by medical providers had they integrated a holistic approach to caregiver needs in their concerns about my husband's recovery. One study with a small sample group notes the significance of "reported high level of violence" in every single one of the families they followed (Butera-Prinzi and Perlesz 90), even when there was no such violence in the home prestroke.

This nightmare of a transition period lasted for about two impossible months during which my own increasing needs for basic self-care were utterly thwarted and were buried under worry about daily confrontations between dramatically

conflicting needs. I felt determined to protect the husband I knew from the poststroke version of himself. I knew the man I married would have fought tooth and nail to protect, not threaten, the children he loved. Yet I was pummelled between his need to have me act as his advocate and the kids' need for physical safety and emotional security. Our days were filled with inauthenticity. I tried to present a calm and reassuring face to him, as I hoped to calm his responses so that he would return to a prestroke parenting style. I did the same with our children: I separated them from their father as much as needed and carefully monitored their time together to ensure peace. I was not always successful. Moreover, the nature of the situation intensified the isolation that we were already feeling as our community of support began to withdraw. This "social abandonment by family friends and even extended family" in which "expected supports … were reported as unreliable or absent" is evidenced in the research, which also shows that children experience this as "unexpected and extremely disappointing" (Butera-Prinzi and Perlesz 91).

The self-care I had postponed again took a back seat as I found us again in survival mode and in ways that felt more traumatic even than the original poststroke period. The *American Journal of Nursing* warns that this is part of a dismal and declining pattern: "caregivers first experience distress and depression, which are followed by physiologic changes and impaired health habits that ultimately lead to illness and possibly to death" (Schulz and Sherwood 5).

Later, after we worked through this horrible period, I was able to hear the self-care questions again and process the fact that I did need to take some action to sustain my new roles as caregiver and provider for all family needs. My state of mind was not unlike the confusion I felt in trying to operate the washer and dryer at the inn on the day after the stroke when normal activities created such challenges. I was too overwhelmed by the accumulated stress of the situation to conceive of solutions without relevant advice and support. In frustration, I began to push back on the questioners. I asked what they meant by self-care, and hoped for some insight or solution that my now-muddled mind hadn't happened upon.

In response, most people offered suggestions reinforcing individualistic understandings of self-care: a massage, a dinner out, or a weekend away, which was not realistic in terms of my needs, my time constraints, or our already-stretched finances. My frustration in feeling inadequate to reconcile these suggestions to my ability to meet my self-care needs in the face of other challenges associated with this stage of the caregiving process led to much reflection. I realized that my primary need was for more time with my children alone to express both the concerns and hope that we each felt within a journey we alone travelled. My husband was on a parallel path, to be sure, but his experience as survivor differed from ours as caregivers. The girls and I needed to find a way to honestly

express ourselves and to find relief in expressing our shared burden of sadness, frustration, optimism, recollection, and hope. Caregiving can be "isolating" and a "lonely and frightening feeling"; caregiver emotions "can range from anger (at their partner, the illness, their [G]od), to a depression and regret at their own weakness, to a deep sadness about the loss of the life they had hoped and planned for as an individual and a couple of family. Often grief is the root negative emotion" (Sullivan and Miller 2-3). When I realized the importance of combatting the inherent isolation of our experience by processing these emotions together, I carved out time to do special things with our children. I gave my husband a break from the chaos of living with rambunctious and intense kids, which simultaneously gave them a break from having to adjust to the poststroke and newly emerging personality of their dad.

At the time, this did not fit my definition of "self-care" because it was oriented toward others' needs. However, as time passed, I learned combining my own needs with those for whom I was providing care was the best way to give and receive the nurturing we all needed and that could only come from each other, since no one else carried our challenges or could understand our particular journey. Understanding that self-care is not necessarily an individual process but one that I could engage together with our daughters broke my existing paradigm and allowed our joint care and healing to begin. I was reminded of how intricately our identities are linked to those around us and how the concept of solicitude relates to self-care. In my preunderstanding, I was stuck between caring for them and caring for me—a dance of futility that only broke when I brought us into the same rhythm of care.

The time that we spent together also turned out to be necessary because my girls' behaviour began to manifest itself in additional expressions of sadness and anger. Understanding that they were processing the stages of grief allowed me to better understand their behaviour and to provide space and support so that they could work through their emotions safely. This focus allowed me to see the integration of our need for self-care in poignant ways. Research shows that "children worried about … their mothers' emotional state, her safety, and losing her altogether" (Butera-Prinzi and Perlesz 90). For us, this was revealed when someone with good intentions asked our daughters if I was doing enough to support them, and they responded with unexpected protectiveness. The intent had not been rude, but their response affirmed the time we had spent together as a supportive team—merging the care that they needed with my own needs and taking shelter in each other through a terrible journey that no one else could share.

Other research affirms similar findings that a mother's emotional strength is extremely important to the recovery of the family: "If … the mother displays symptoms of depression, behavioral problems among children rise significantly"

(Verhaeghe et. al 1008)—a finding that places even more emphasis on the importance of my own self-care. I did have personal needs, and acknowledging and sharing the grieving process with my children allowed me the clarity to understand them. These needs included time to address my professional obligations without interruption, exercise, quiet time to think and pray, and emotional support to replace the elements of friendship and camaraderie that my husband could no longer provide. I also needed to learn to say no as a caregiver.

The latter revelation was painful, whereas acknowledging the need for new friendships became a silver lining to the whole crisis. I found it difficult to say no to any of my husband's needs because his poststroke personality is so sensitive, and he seems to take every rejection personally. For example, when he asked for a ride to a volunteer event that he wanted to attend and I had to decline because of professional obligations at the same time, his shoulders slumped, and he slowly shuffled out of the room. My heart fell, as I was agonized by the knowledge that I had hurt him, however unavoidably. I had to remind myself that the stroke has left him disabled from a more reasonable reaction, and to commit to act with kindness and compassion despite feeling unfairly blamed for his disappointment. I have learned that kindness and compassion expressed as continuous daily actions have to suffice to express my commitment to him, though they cannot rectify the sadness that I feel for such manifestations of a reality that I can only carry, not fix (Lawrence). I do hope that my children will learn from this example and that one legacy of this experience will be a model of caregiving that accepts and even reframes elements of situations we cannot change.

My need to cultivate new friendships emerged for two reasons, and the appreciation of this need helped support our children's needs to similarly connect through friendship with others. First, because caregiving is so exhausting and time consuming, I had lost valuable time I needed for my intellectual work, which is part of my professional identity and a needed outlet. For me, exercising my brain is as important as exercising my body, and new friends who encouraged this element of my being aided my self-care. Furthermore, just as my girls had lost the father they had known, I had also lost a partner and co-parent, someone with whom I could share my parenting worries. My husband could no longer share this; the stroke had left him without the judgment to share reflective conversations about our children's behaviour, needs, or future. Finding a friend with whom I could share parenting challenges helped enormously and morning email chats became a lifejacket of self-care, which allowed me to vent about childcare issues while exploring new research pursuits. That said, admitting that our situation required I replace some parts of the friendship I had shared with my husband with new friendships felt like a betrayal. It helped again to recognize it as a shared journey—comparable in

many ways to what our children experienced when they began the difficult process of grieving for the father they had lost even while interacting with the very different version of him every day. Part of the process of learning to see self-care as a shared journey included giving one another the permission to acknowledge such sadness honestly, which, in turn, helped provide the strength to act with kindness toward one another and to my still-recovering husband.

The grieving process enables family members to "let go of old hopes and expectations and begin to create new ones," and this "new awareness also creates a crisis in meaning [and] [q]uestions about oneself, one's relationship to others, to one's living, learning, and work environments, and to meanings and purpose in life become important" (Spaniol and Nelson 764). Acknowledging the shared elements of self-care through an intentional approach to grief allows families to reassess their relationships, their careers, and their communities, and through this "seek a life connected but differentiated from their ill relative" (Spaniol and Nelson 764). Doing so requires ongoing negotiation. stroke recovery brings continuous changes, complicated by the fact that "the 'loss' for children [who have] a parent with a head-injury is never final" (Butera-Prinzi and Perlesz 84). Moreover, "achieving acceptance is neither realistic nor desired. Living with a person who has [a brain injury] demands a never-ending cycle of adaptation" (Verhaeghe et al. 1007). Spending the time researching this issue and at times reading studies together has helped us realize that others have walked this route before—a realization that came with the relief of much-needed solidarity.

My self-care remains imperfect, within and separate from the shared maternal self-care as I have redefined it for myself and my children. I should sleep more, pray more frequently, exercise more regularly. Still, changing my perspective about self-care has helped me to reimagine solutions that can work, even when they are not necessarily the solutions I most want. The hours I crave to train again for a marathon have not materialized in my life, but I have found ways to exercise a bit, to carve out some moments for prayer, and to attempt better sleep habits. I combine time with our girls with intellectual work by doing much of it while they sleep so that I can be responsive to their more acute needs for my presence while still engaging individually and collaboratively on intellectual interests. Most importantly, we continue to talk openly and without judgment about our feelings through this journey, and we discuss ways to support each other in providing appropriate support to my husband with kindness as a guiding principle as we navigate ongoing ways of being. Slowly, ever slowly, I am even finding time to increase my emphasis on my physical health, spending time outside together, walking to activities, and beginning to envision that next marathon, actual or as a metaphor for a different challenge. The lessons I learned backpacking—that I need to engage in activities that I love in a safe and healthy environment while sharing that experience and

helping others—continue to translate to my evolving understanding of my journey with my children. I know that continued and shared reflection with our children is essential to this journey because it brings forth imagination about future possibilities, which is essential not only to maternal self-care in the present, but for our children's own future possibilities of caring and of being in this world.

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MICHELLE HUGHES MILLER

Grandmothering in Remission

Xander, your Grandma is really sorry, but right now I can't concentrate on this upcoming milestone in your life, your first birthday, because today I'm having my two year scans.

In this personal narrative I explore grandmothering from a position of uncertainty—in this case cancer in remission. Using the framework of letters to my young grandson, I unpack my expectations for and experiences of the role of grandmothering, contextualized by my simultaneous effort to understand myself as a cancer survivor and the liminality of that particular status. How do I develop a relationship with my grandchild when he may not even have the memories of our interactions? How do I grandmother authentically while masking the health worries that sometimes threaten to consume me? How do I care for my daughter who has become a mother from a position of strength and confidence when the very ground I walk on feels unsettled and the future unclear? Considering issues of temporality, relationship directionality, caregiving, and authenticity, I place my musings as a grandmother and cancer survivor from my cancer journal, half-written letters, poetry, and reflective narrative into interaction.

I've been doing various writings, journaling, reflective musings, poetry, and letters since I was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2014. In this work, I focus on the writings that help me understand the intersection of what it has meant to me to be in remission—that liminal state of noncure but nonpresence of cancer I currently embody—and the simultaneous becoming of a grandmother for the first time. So, here are some of my very personal thoughts on being a grandmother in remission.

* * *

I was alone when I got the phone call that the biopsy was malignant. But I already knew. Since the moment I found the ridge in my left breast that couldn't be anything else. Since the ultrasound technician stopped mid-exam and said you're going to want to get this biopsied. I knew, I think, when the phone rang even before I answered it. It was January 2014. Happy New Year.

During my first conversation with my surgeon, she looked at me very seriously and told me that cancer was not a crisis; it was chronic. I didn't understand, and expressed frustration that it was taking weeks to make a plan for my treatment. I could not understand why she didn't have the same sense of urgency to get this tumour, this 4.5 cm ridge of hardness living in my breast, out of my body before it spread (spoiler alert: it already had).

Two more times during that conversation she used the word "chronic." We didn't have to hurry, her demeanour implied. Speed wouldn't cure me. She was preparing me: I would have to deal with cancer the rest of my life.

20 Oct 2016—twelve days until your first birthday

Xander, I have to tell you something, although I'm pretty sure you're not going to understand, seeing as you're not really talking yet. Your Grandma is really sorry, but right now I can't concentrate on this upcoming milestone in your life because today I'm having my two year scans. What that essentially means is that from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. today I will be lying on various tables after various concoctions have been pumped and/or drunk into my system while big machines take pictures of what is inside of me. "Something suspicious" is what they will find if the cancer has come back—and sometimes even if it hasn't and they need to run additional tests. So far, the second set of tests has always come back negative.

Anyway, I want to celebrate with you, I really do, as you take this next "step" into toddlerhood (we both know you've been walking for a while so all this is old hat), but frankly today is only midway in my semiannual worry fest (because my scans are twice a year, of course). Two weeks before the scans I start envisioning what would happen if they found something. If the cancer was back. Tears spring to my eyes unbidden, and I cough and claim a cold so no one notices. I meticulously soap my body in the shower and feel for any lumps or difference that may be a sign of what they will find. Any ache gets reconsidered in light of a potential discovery. I become convinced that this time around I won't get good news, and it gets harder and harder to concentrate on work, or even on you and the upcoming celebration.

The worry builds, and by the day before my scans I am practically incoherent. You and your mommy Skyped me that day, if you remember. That was only yesterday, but when you're almost one, your perception of time, I think, is a bit sketchy. Mine, on the other hand, is almost visceral, with each minute clicking off as the scans and their potentially bad news get closer.

Because we are flying up to be with you on your first birthday, we discussed the particulars of our trip—we fly to you the day after I get the official results from the scans—and for a moment I couldn't breathe as I considered having to tell your mommy a few days before your birthday that my cancer had returned. Yes, that was when I excused myself because I had something in my throat and needed a drink of water.

I'm actually not sure what made me cry right then. Maybe the thought of telling your mommy—my daughter!—that they found something or the overwhelming worry that this will never be over, and as much as I want to celebrate your birthday, I can't get away from this chronic disease that has me by the … well, I was going to say breast but that's gone now so maybe by the brain? That appears to be where all the hubbub is coming from right now anyway.

* * *

5/21/14, journal entry

I've been thinking about attitude. My ruminations started when my friend Ray—who has just gone through chemo for bladder cancer and been declared, finally, cancer-free—told me with glee in his eyes that I needed to be "aggressively optimistic." That's the trick, he assured me, to a full recovery. Believe, over-believe, that everything would be okay and eventually it is. Be so aggressive about it that you annoy people with your optimism.

I'm not sure how to do that. Pollyanna is not a role to which I've ever ascribed, nor one I've actually rehearsed. How is one aggressively optimistic about their cancer diagnosis?

* * *

43 percent.

I am not a math hater but odds of winning a lottery intimidate me and chance of rain annoys me and the tax forms have to be double and triple checked because numbers move when they shouldn't.

I am not a math hater but I would like to burn the piece of paper you gave me that said even with chemo and radiation and five years of tamoxifen I have a 43 percent chance of recurrence over ten years.

I'm fifty-two years old. I just became a Grandma. Nine years left.

* * *

Spring Break 2015, only a few months after I finish treatment, I get the news: a positive pregnancy test! A beaming daughter. A plea in her eyes to be happy, to see the future, to believe that 2015 was going to be a much better year. I was going to be a Grandma! I felt such an inhale of joy it permeated my body and emptied me of any stale breath of cancer fear I'd been holding onto.

I tried to be there for some of the major pregnancy events. I drove the fifteen

hours for the baby shower. I helped my daughter with the registry, painted the nursery with my son-in-law, and tried to provide support and encouragement to my daughter that it was ok to sit down, to put her feet up, to claim her own needs, and to relax. I tried to give care, whatever she needed, and I tried to encourage self-care. I thought the latter even more important, as I remembered clearly how little I cared for myself after I became a mother and I did not want that same fate for my daughter.

But the mom in me worried about her health (the mom in remission, that is). I worried because worry—railing against the unknown future because of exceedingly knowable possibilities of risk and danger (god bless the Internet)—seemed like one of the few things I could do because I was already doing it.

Throughout the pregnancy I kept getting called back to cancer; the joy air (tempered with worry) was forced to make room for breaths of doubt. Sometimes the worry and doubt, fuelled by doctor visits and scans, left little room for joy, and they merged into a generalized fear that I wouldn't be there, I couldn't help her, something would go wrong, and all my planning wouldn't be good enough. It didn't help that Xander's due date was almost a year to the day from when I finished my cancer treatments—an annual reminder of how long I've been in remission.

* * *

Xander—I take one step toward you, toward the future, and then I'm back in the present, in my body, for the quarterly search for where the cancer went. I wish it'd left a forwarding address so we could stop looking.

I went back to the doctors again and again … my list of appointments seemed endless, divided between my surgeon's PA, my oncologist's PA, my radiation oncologist, my scans. Blood tests every three months made me decide to keep my port in—a constant reminder that it wasn't over. Each person felt my scar, then my remaining breast, then my lymph nodes; each said I was doing fine and sent me on my way … with another appointment slip.

Dear Xander—I don't like playing hide and seek. I mean, I love playing hide and seek, but sometimes I feel like it's too real, you know. Something hides. Someone seeks (in my case using really expensive technology). Finding the something means you win. I'm not so sure.

* * *

My daughter watches me, sometimes. I don't know if she's watching me for the same reason the doctors are, or if she's watching me because she can tell how vulnerable I am sometimes around Xander.

Or maybe she's just watching to see what kind of grandmother I am. I'm pretty sure she has an idea about what kind of grandmother I should be. I wonder if

our ideas align. I want to be loving and fun and someone my grandkids want to talk to and hang out with (sometimes). I want to say "yes" more than their parents can but still teach them values important to me. I want to be someone who matters to them. I want to be someone they remember. I want them to have Grandma stories to tell.

I bought this book called *The Invisible String* before Xander was born. The story is a simple one: the mom explains to her children that they are never alone in the world because they are connected to everyone they know by an invisible string stretching everywhere. I'd read this book to Xander the day before heading home from a visit. I'd put him on my lap and we'd share a moment where I would read the story, and then tell him how special he is to me and how I'm never far away.

My daughter makes this happen; sometimes she asks me to read to Xander before bed on my last night, as she knows I'll take the opportunity to read our special book. Sometimes, she watches me read to him on the baby monitor. Does she worry I won't be here, too?

When I bought the book I was thinking about distance. Fifteen hours away. That is so far. If I could only wiggle my nose like Samantha on *Bewitched*, I could be where I want to be anytime. I could help my daughter mother. I could help my daughter by being her mother. I could help my daughter be the mother she wants to be.

But it's not really the distance that is the problem.

Xander—I do so much to try to create memories for you, even though you're just now two and chances are you won't remember anything.

Our weekly Skype ritual? So you don't forget me. PopPop gets annoyed that you seem to think the Skype call is passé—you're more interested in your toys than us most of the time. But I don't care. If I'm passé that means it's because you know me, and you are comfortable with me—I'm a presence in your life.

Sometimes, I play a game I secretly call "What does Grandma like?" Does Grandma like books or puzzles? What is Grandma's favourite colour? What does Grandma like to do? These are educational questions I can ease into the conversation anytime, like when I told you I liked when dinosaurs danced rather than stomped, and then we danced around the living room. I do this a lot, Xander. Maybe some of what Grandma likes, or what Grandma is like, will stay with you.

I sing to you every chance I get, even in the car when we're just driving some place. I know I don't have a great voice, but for some reason it's important you hear the songs I sang my children when they were little. I want you to hear some songs and think of me.

I write stories for you in my head. Some I record, some I write down, some I bring to you. You're so little! How will you ever know that you inspired me to write?

When you're older, and you read this, you'll probably feel like I was trying to imprint

on you— to make you subconsciously remember my voice, my smell, my laugh, my songs. And honestly, if I knew how to do that I probably would, even though that sounds a bit creepy. But I will do what I have to do so that years from now when you're talking about your "Ga-ma," you will have something to say. Just in case the cancer comes back.

I'm crying while I write this. I'm sorry. The need for you to know me is so intense. And it doesn't feel grandmotherly at all.

* * *

7/12/2014

The other night I found myself in a conversation with casual friends about my cancer. I didn't intend to be in this conversation, but it seems like that's all I get to talk about with casual friends these days. In the midst of this conversation, one woman claimed that I was soon going to discover that cancer was the best thing that ever happened to me. To explain this, she discussed her own lupus diagnosis from ten years ago, which gave her the ability to just say "no" to things that weren't working in her life. You'll see, she told me, you'll be better off now.

I let that thought percolate in my head. Cancer is the best thing that ever happened to me. Really?

Probably correctly reading the incredulity on my face, another woman in the conversation tried to temper the comment. Maybe your husband is the best thing, and cancer is just in the top five, she suggested. Maybe my children are somewhere above cancer in their importance in my life, I join in. I then have this surreal out of body experience in the middle of this conversation as I realize the three of us are trying to rank cancer in terms of its positive effect on my life.

March 2017

Dear Xander—

I hope I never have to talk with you about cancer. But Xander, I had cancer. (Is that the right tense?) In 2014, before you were even conceived. And I'm still dealing with the chronic part of this chronic disease. I just had another scan last week! I still worry I won't be there as you grow up—that I won't see you play your first ball game, or graduate from college. I want you to remember me as the woman who played with you, read to you, sang to you, laughed with you. I want to be present in your life. I want you to not just remember me, but to know me, as I'm getting to know you.

But there's something you need to know: the Grandma you know isn't the woman I was before you were born. I'm different. I feel different. The difference isn't in my missing flesh, although when you curl up against my prosthesis I wonder how it feels to you, this fake pillow under your cheek.

The difference is in me, my heart, my brain, my sense of self. And especially in my

sense of time. There's so little time, really, even in long lives. And the uncertainty of how much time and what kind of time makes me want to hold on tightly to time with you.

You never met the Grandma before cancer, the Grandma who worked, and loved, and partied, and mothered your mother, because throughout your whole life I've been in remission, wondering if the cancer will come back. Wondering when it will come back.

* * *

On one level, grandparenting is so much better than parenting. It's like eating cheesecake without the calories, or seeing a Broadway performance from the front row for free. You get to watch one of the loves of your life love and care for another, and your only real responsibility is to enjoy—although helping is pretty fun, too.

But grandparenting is also more tenuous because your own aging takes you further from your grandchild's future. That's the natural order of things, and I actually take comfort in knowing that I'm supposed to, I must, I will go first. It makes the time together sweeter.

At least it should—if it wasn't for the damn cancer, messing with my sense of self, screwing up the timeline, encouraging me to think of myself as an unwitting passenger on the chronic cancer journey, and pulling me constantly back into my body with the search for mutations.

I do not know this Grandma, this woman who thinks about herself as vulnerable. I do not like this Grandma, who worries about everything and sees life as fragile and dangerous. I do not want to be this Grandma, whose joy is constrained by what-ifs. I want to exhale all the fear, and only have joy left to breathe.

ROLA (HAMED) ABU ZEID-O'NEILL

Amneh

My Grandmother and My Feminist Inspiration

I dedicate this article to the memory of my grandmother, Amneh 'Awad Taha-Hamed.

Throughout the history of the Palestinian people, women have been involved with wars and upheavals, personal losses, and exile, as well as with social, educational, and economic changes. The Nakba's (Palestinian catastrophe of 1948) memories and stories are combined with fear, loss, violence, humiliation, and insecure feelings. Palestinian mothers and grandmothers, citizens of Israel play an active role in keeping the Palestinian identity and the traditional structures alive by passing their memories to the next generations. As a result of the Nakba, and the confiscation of lands, women started to stay at home and take on domestic roles to preserve Palestinian cultural and religious values. This was my experience with my grandmother, Amneh, who had many personal and diverse experiences within the context of the social and political changes that took place in her life, especially when my grandfather was detained. During that time, she remained with her four children and gave birth to her fifth child without the presence of my grandfather who was in Israeli prison. Amneh put it upon herself to pass her memories and reflections to her grandchildren, to keep her story, and her people's history and narrative alive.

On the evening of 28 December 2016, my grandmother Amneh 'Awad Taha-Hamed, ninety-three years old, passed away peacefully from our world. She was the eldest among her siblings. She was married to my grandfather Khalil Dakhil Hamed (his body rested in peace in April 1991), and they became parents of five sons and two daughters. My father, Yousef, was the eldest (his body rested in peace in March 2015). My grandmother was a happy, generous, and proud woman, and was a real fighter. She was never frightened or

intimated by the occasional visits of the Israeli police, who sometimes arrested her husband, or one of her sons, for their political activities—in fact, this was something she was proud of.

In this article, I combine some of the findings from my PhD research and my personal life experiences with my grandparents, especially my grandmother Amneh, who has been the greatest source of inspiration in my life. She showed me at a young age the importance of women's roles in public and private spaces.

Historical Background: Palestinians Citizens of Israel and the Nakba

I would like to give readers a short historical background about myself and my people. I was born in Nazareth, and lived there until 2007, before I moved to Ireland. I belong to a group of Palestinians who are citizens of Israel and who became a national minority in our homeland in May 1948—the year Palestinian history referred to as the "Nakba," which means the Palestinian catastrophe or the Palestinian disaster. It is a disaster that befell the Palestinian people after the Jewish forces (subsequently Israeli) embarked on a massive operation of ethnic cleansing[1] that aimed at ridding Palestine of its indigenous population in order to establish a nation-state for Jews (Zureik; Pappe). The Nakba caused the majority of Palestinians (about 90 percent) to be uprooted as refugees to the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and neighbouring Arab countries, whereas about ten percent (numbering around 120,000) of Palestinians remained in their homeland. They were, therefore, largely cut off from their own people and the rest of the Arab nation. The Palestinian citizens of Israel are Muslims, Christians, and Druze, and currently, they comprise around 20 to 22 percent of Israel's population. They still face many discriminatory laws from the governmental and nongovernmental institutions, as successive Israeli governments have refused to treat them as a national minority.

However, there are also displaced Palestinians inside Israel itself. In fact, they constitute 25 percent[2] of the Palestinian minority within Israel. As with the refugees, these internally displaced Palestinians (IDP) have also been deprived of their property, as their lands, houses, and assets were confiscated by the state. For this reason, they were absent from their homes on that day that the Israeli authorities started to register the Palestinians who remained on their land. In a Kafkaesque touch, these people are described in Israeli law as "present absentees"—that is, persons who are physically present inside Israel but are legally absent according to the state's property laws (Masalha, *Catastrophe* 23). They are citizens of Israel without the right to return to their original villages, towns, or lands that they were uprooted from in 1948 or some years later, which violates international law and UN resolutions, in particular UN General Assembly Resolution 194[3] of 1948. Most of their villages were

destroyed during the armed conflict or were later destroyed in order to prevent their return. Their lands and homes were subsequently confiscated by Israel under a variety of laws, but mainly under the absentee property law (1950).[4] This law protects the property of absentee owners, but in reality, this statute denies the absentee the right to return of his or her property. The present absentees are also known as the internally displaced. Most of the appeals for the release of property by present absentees have been rejected by the Supreme Court in Israel. The properties, mostly land and houses, were confiscated and later transferred to the Development Authority. The absentee property compensation law (1973)[5] removes the right of consideration for releasing the property and replaces it with the right of compensation only.

Furthermore, Masalha ("Collective Memory") makes the point that the internally displaced find themselves in a complex situation, given that they are like refugees in their homeland. Despite the historical, geographical, cultural, political, and national connections with, and similarity to, the other Palestinian citizens of Israel, they remain displaced in their own eyes and in those of the rest of the Palestinian minority. They are in a very weak position— "a minority within the minority." Nevertheless, they have created their own tools of protest and are demanding their rights in a state claiming to be the only democratic regime in the Middle East.

When my siblings and I were children, my parents used to take us to visit the remains of Palestinian towns and villages near our home in Nazareth in northern Israel, or in other areas, which had been destroyed to create the state. Although many residents of these places had been expelled beyond the 1949 armistice lines, others had become internally displaced persons, and, as such, they had lost all their property—they had become present absentees. The internally displaced persons issue resonates with me because at each village site we visited, my father could name families among our neighbours in Nazareth who had been expelled from that place.

My PhD research considers IDP women in Israel, as I examine how Nakba memories affect these women, how they remember the Nakba, and what they may remember about it. Moreover, the aim of this research was also to situate the Palestinian women narratives as speakers and listeners so to challenge the Palestinian history, social structures, and attitudes that have silenced and excluded these stories and narratives for decades, either with or without intention (Sayigh). My research focuses on the personal experiences of first generation IDP women since 1948, and seeks to link these memories and reflections to the lives of second, third, and fourth generation IDP women.

All of my research participants experienced the Nakba through the many roles they played as women (mothers, wives, etc.), as they were often the emotional centre in the family. As a result, they often found themselves having to

simultaneously manage their own anxiety while caring for others. But one of the most difficult things they experienced was the loss of economic resources, which affected their lives and their self-confidence. They were taken from their traditional environment and lifestyle without the aid of new knowledge or skills to help them manage their new lives, the consequences of which were devastating. Their resettlement to an unfamiliar space has left some of them depressed and unhappy, with deep feelings of loneliness and worthlessness. Based on my research interviews, I can conclude here that the research participants, like the rest of the IDPs, especially the female ones, found they had lost all of the freedom their living space had afforded before their displacement. This resulted in a lack of safety and security, and the social attitudes they experienced from the rest of their people, the "locals," did not help to challenge these feelings. They felt alone, uprooted, and without support; they were left to cope with their own feelings of agony and longing.

All of my PhD research participants emphasized that their hometown or village was ethnically cleansed in 1948, and they have lived in a "host" or 'shelter" town since. It was important for them to tell this to their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, for if one day they were allowed to return there, they would straight away syntax. Fatma Kassem has found the same in her research as IDP women told her they were not from the towns in which lived, and such a viewpoint "indirectly represents the interviewees' perception of historic events … [to] emphasize their pre-1948 origins" (Kassem 97).

My grandparents and their relatives are not IDPs, as they are originally from Nazareth, and most of them remained in Nazareth (only very few relatives became refugees in Syria). Yet there are some similarities between the IDP stories and my grandparent's story. My grandparents' family, and other families from Nazareth and surrounding villages, had their lands confiscated by Israeli authorities in 1948-1949. The land was used to establish new government offices in 1954, as well as to build a new Jewish development town next to Nazareth, which was called "*Natzeret I'illit*" (Upper Nazareth) in 1957.

As a result, my grandparents had to rent a house with a garden, before they bought an old house close to their lands. This situation caused much pressure and stress, especially to Amneh, who was expected and forced to manage the household with very limited resources. But Amneh was a very strong woman with an inspiring personality, and she ended up managing her household, planting vegetables and grains in her small garden, and participating in political and social activities in her city.

I grew up listening to Amneh's stories and adventures, and this had a great effect on me and my personality. I wanted to be like my grandmother—a strong and active woman. Furthermore, this affected my academic life, as during my

undergraduate and postgraduate studies, I chose Palestinian women's lives, private and public ones, as my research topic.

The influence of my grandmother on her family, as well as my research participants on their families, is very strong, and links to the Palestinian appreciation of motherhood, which is highly regarded in "political and cultural texts" (Abu-Duhou 85). Jamileh Abu-Duhou concludes that "what is more significant for Palestinian women is the need to resist and to survive this ongoing violent oppression—needs which are strongly linked to the national aspirations of the Palestinian people" (89).

Why Amneh?

Amneh was a model of feminism and freedom. When I was as a ten-year-old girl, she held my hand as we attended a protest together in Nazareth in September 1982 against the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the Sabra and Shatila massacre.[6] During the protest, Israeli policemen and soldiers attacked us, but my grandmother held my hand and never let go of my hand as we started to run away for our own safety.

Amneh was very generous in sharing with others her personal and collective stories and memories, as many researchers and activists came to hear from her until her last days, since her memory was very strong and sharp. In addition to her engaging way of telling her narrative and stories about women's struggle since the 1920s, she had a very strong personality and was both self-assured and self-confident. Amneh used to tell us about the difficult life that Palestinians had under the British Mandate (1918 until May 1948), during and after the Nakba in 1948, and with Israeli military rule,[7] which lasted until 1966. She talked about the poverty, unemployment, resistance, and managing the family life alone while my grandfather was in the jail for his political activism. I still remember her stories about the Israeli occupation of Nazareth in July 1948; my father was only a two-day-old baby when the soldiers brutally collected the men and discarded the women, as they entered the houses in search of guns and ammunition.

Amneh was not secular. She was a Muslim who used to pray and fast during Ramadan,[8] but she believed in humanity and justice more. She had a great sense of humour, and was a real model of giving without limits. She was courageous, and she managed to organize both her public and private life—out of a strong belief in the importance of her role and its impact on change. My grandmother followed my grandfather and became a member in the communist party in Palestine, and after 1948, she also became a member in the democratic women's movement in Israel. She used to protest with other female members and activists demanding the release of the male members of the communist

party and other political prisoners. She used to attend seminars and meetings weekly; members and activists would gather in her small house to plan various programs and activities. She worked tirelessly, and did her best to raise a family while combining her political activities.

What Have I Learned from Amneh?

I have vivid memories of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982.[9] I was ten years old then, and I can say that it was the beginning of my political life and awareness. I participated with my grandmother in demonstrations against the Lebanon war and the Sabra and Shatila massacre in my city, Nazareth, and we faced police violence and harassment on an ongoing base. As a child, I could not forget these events; and those memories are still vivid in my mind today. Since September 1982, I have been active in many organizations for Palestinian minority rights and women's rights.

During high school, I was elected twice as the pupils' council chairperson and a member of the National Arab High Schools Committee. During my undergraduate study in Haifa University, I became a member of the Arab Students Committee. The seeds of my adult political awareness were, thus, formed during those significant years. The fact that I was born into a political family was very helpful and was a supporting factor for personal new experiences that most of my colleagues and friends did not have.

My participation in the September 1982 demonstrations was a shared experience for me and my grandmother. I had previously joined her in other demonstrations and activities in Nazareth, but they had not included police harassment. My grandfather and grandmother from my father's side used to tell stories about life before 1948, during the British Mandate, the Arab revolt in Palestine (1936-1939),[10] and about the Nakba period. They talked about what happened in Palestine-Israel more generally and about what happened in Nazareth. They explained how in 1948 they both lay in front of the trucks that came to take Nazareth's citizens to the north to the Lebanese border. In this way, they prevented Nazareth's citizens from eviction. We, their grandchildren, were so excited to hear these stories, and after my grandfather passed away in April 1991, we continued to listen to my grandmother's stories, especially those times when she was active while my grandfather was jailed for various political activities. She took his role and did what he was supposed to do for our struggle as Palestinian minority citizens of Israel. She used to conceal guns for the fighters during the British Mandate, and used to distribute in secrecy the party's newspaper, on Tuesdays and Fridays, especially when my grandfather was detained.

She told us about the time that they used to host displaced people from

other villages and towns who came to Nazareth. Some of these were internally displaced, whereas others became refugees in neighbouring Arab countries. Right up to the time of her death, my grandmother refused to allow anyone to video-record her stories, our people's stories. She was concerned about the first generation of Nakba survivors who experienced military rule. The Nakba's memories and stories are combined with fear, loss, violence, humiliation, and insecure feelings (Sa'di and Abu-Lughod 9). Isis Nusair has written about her grandmother's and mother's experiences: "both my grandmother and mother related to the year 1948 as a demarcating event in their lives. In 1948, my grandmother's life was turned upside down. My mother would subsequently bear the results of that new situation of poverty and fear of the unknown" (Nusair, "Gendered" 98). Furthermore, many of the second and third generations were born in different circumstances, especially the IDPs who were not born in their original villages. They only have heard their parents' and grandparents' narratives and memories. I know how the passing of time and circumstances can affect the stories told, when I compare my grandmother's recounting of stories ten and twenty years ago from those she told before she passed. It is not an issue of fiction, creation or lies; it is a reflection of the years—losing her husband, sickness, or sometimes simply not talking about the past.

Why Is It important?

In general, the lives of Palestinians have been turned upside down since the Nakba, and women in particular have been impacted upon because the majority of them have lost their property, their lands, their freedom of movement, and their financial security (see Nusair, "Gendered"; "Gendering"; Kassem). The story of Amneh, similar to the stories of many other invisible women, will not be found in history or academic books. After she interviewed her grandmother, on the same evening she passed away, Nusair wrote the following: "The life story of my grandmother, as well as the life stories of the majority of Palestinian women of her generation, will remain absent from the official history books and academic analyses. They are 'invisible and marginalised' whose story does not count. They are the 'reproducers of society,' but not necessarily recorded as the 'makers of history'" (Nusair, "Gendered" 92).

After the Nakba, my grandmother and my research participants, like the rest of the Palestinian women, had to cope with the loss of land and tradition. In particular, they faced the loss of economic resources, which influenced their lives and their self-esteem, and today, most of them still feel deprived of skills and knowledge of land cultivation. The multiple losses and stresses the first-generation women faced led to feelings of insecurity and caused them to develop survival strategies. They needed these strategies to survive the pressures

of being marginalized and being socially, politically, and financially excluded. This marginalization is deeply embedded in structure and practice, and some of the research participants said they still feel isolated and traumatized, especially since they were robbed of their traditional lifestyle without any preparation or replacement skills or support to help them cope with their new lives, and this had a devastating effect on them. After their displacement, the research participants found that they had lost all of the freedom that their living space had afforded. They were also deprived of the safety they experienced within their traditional lifestyle.

My grandmother Amneh used to tell us these stories as well—about how she used to help IDP families who settled in Nazareth, especially in the early stage of their displacement. Amneh used to share her garden's products with them; she used to offer them the garden's shed to store their belongings to make their settling process easier.

As a result of the Nakba, the research participants felt alone and uprooted; they were left to cope with their own feelings of agony and longing. In their previous lives, their physical efforts, knowledge, and contribution to daily life were essential to the family. Most of the research participants expressed their feelings of worthlessness after 1948, and they expressed their longing to return to their previous life and what it offered them.

Andrea Pető and Berteke Waaldijk have written about women's invisibility in official history because it only describes the public sphere, whereas women's history takes place in the private sphere. Women's stories were not visible, and they were not told. These historians aimed to recover women's political agency in history, therefore during their teaching they introduced their students to the methodology of oral history and combined this with assignments to write about the life of a female ancestor. They concludes their experiences as

> the foremother stories used in these classes and seminars represent an emotional opportunity to tell a story that might help the participants to think about themselves in different historical terms, and also help them to understand how the national, canonised history taught in the history textbooks is connected to personal histories. (Pető and Waaldijk 20)

This analysis applies to the Palestinian case as well: mother and grandmother are those who pass on the memory of the village origin. They remember Palestinian women through turns of phrase, songs, food preparation, home cures, ways of raising children, stories of the past, and the local dialect.

Finally, for me personally, my grandmother Amneh has been my main source of inspiration in life; she stimulated and fuelled my interest in politics

and feminism. Although she never read any article on these topics—she was an illiterate woman—yet, she taught many the meaning of feminism, women's empowerment, politics, and socialism, as she lived her beliefs and practised them. My grandmother taught me self-confidence, courage, and tolerance. She kept her concern and interest in others, as she kept watching the news and various educational television programs. She used to express her anger when she heard about the deaths of young men and women—Palestinians, Syrians, Iraqis, Libyans, Yemenis, or others.

Amneh's concerns about disadvantaged communities and people affected her sons and daughters who decided to follow their mother and father's way—to be a politically and socially active. Furthermore, my grandmother's stories influenced me strongly, as I decided to choose my public involvement at an early stage of my life, and joined her and my parents for different meetings, activities, and protests. In high school, I helped arrange a protest against Israeli harassment of Palestinians in West Bank and Gaza Strip. My grandmother was very proud of me, and she started telling me more about her days and her different roles, especially in the public space, and how she managed to keep the balance between the public and private roles and duties, something that was not easy at all, especially when my grandfather was in the Israeli jail, or not allowed to work as a result of not gaining a work permit from the authorities. My mother's influence and inspiration on me is bigger than the academic books and articles that I had read; Amneh's stories are the seeds of my adolescent and awareness on social, gender, political and cultural issues around me. Furthermore, Amneh's life story and experiences are a source of pride and self-esteem, and I have since started to pass them onto my own sons

Rest in peace Amneh. I will remember you until my last day.

Endnotes

[1]This began in December 1947 and continued until mid-1949. The most terrifying events and massacres were done between 10 March and August 1948, it was named "Plan Dalet." By the end, "close to 800,000 people had been uprooted, 531 villages had been destroyed, and eleven urban neighbourhoods [had been] emptied of their inhabitants" (Pappe xiii).

[2]Nihad Boqa'i states the number of internally displaced Palestinians in Israel today is estimated to be around 274,000 persons. This, however, does not include the Bedouins displaced after 1948 in the Naqab; the urban IDPs—e.g., from Haifa and Acre (Akka)—who were permitted to return to their cities of origin but were denied the right to repossess their homes and properties; Palestinians who were transferred after 1949 from outlying village settlements (khirba) to the village proper in the Wadi A'ra area; and the Palestinians who remained

in their villages but lost their lands. If all these categories of displaced persons are included, their total number would today exceed 300,000. (74, 105)

[3]The UNSCR 194 was passed at the 186th plenary meeting on 11 December 1948. The resolution consists of 15 articles, the most quoted of which are: Article 7: protection and free access to the Holy Places; Article 8: demilitarization and UN control over Jerusalem; Article 9: free access to Jerusalem; and Article 11: calls for the return of refugees (for full text, see www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/IP%20ARES%20194.pdf).

[4]The Absentee Property Law 5710-1950, Laws of the State of Israel No. 37, was passed in the Israeli Knesset on 20 March 1950. This is the main law in a series of statutes that regulate the treatment of property belonging to Palestinians who left their houses, fled, or were deported during the 1948 War, either within or outside what became the State of Israel. Raja Shehadeh writes that the law referred to "someone who left to go to a country which is in a state of war with Israel" (35).

[5]In 1973, Israel passed an amendment to the absentee law, which was designed to prevent East Jerusalem residents from reclaiming their pre-1948 property in West Jerusalem and designed to prevent IDPs from reasserting their rights to their properties.

[6]The Sabra and Shatila massacre was the mass killing of Palestinian and Lebanese civilians carried out between 16 and 18 September 1982 by the Lebanese Christian Phalange militia with tactical support supplied by Israel under the command of Israeli minister Ariel Sharon, following their leader Bachir Gemayel. The number of victims is estimated to range from 328 to 3,500 (see al-Hout).

[7]The Palestinian citizens of Israel were placed under military rule from 1948 until 1966. This rule prohibited movement outside their villages and towns without a special permit from the minister of defense. Under other clauses of these emergency regulations most of the land was confiscated. These martial laws were originally practised under the British Mandate in Palestine (Kanaaneh 66-6).

[8]Ramadan is the most venerated month of the Islamic calendar, during which Muslims must fast between dawn and sunset.

[9]The war began on 6 June 1982 when Israel invaded southern Lebanon, with the initial goal of destroying the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Israel withdrew from Lebanon in 2000, except for keeping Shabaa Farms under their rule (Fisk).

[10]The Arab revolt in Palestine was an uprising against mass Jewish immigration during the British Mandate of Palestine by Palestinians and small number of Arabs from Iraq, Syria, and Jordan and a few Muslims from India. This revolt

was unsuccessful, but it proved influential for the Nakba events. More than five thousand Palestinians and Arabs were killed, along with four hundred Jews and two hundred Britons. The revolt did not achieve its goal, but it is credited for forcing the issuance of the 1936 white paper, which renounced Britain's intent of creating a Jewish homeland in Palestine as proclaimed in the 1917 Balfour Declaration (Swedenburg).

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LINN BARAN[1]

Mother Lode

Memories of My Mother Outlaw(s)

This personal essay is a most special tribute to the author's own mother Bernadette Sheila Ledgard Baran (1930–2015) and includes a re-visioning of her own feminist research and several papers that she has presented at conferences over the past decade inspired by the stories based in her own motherline. As a life writing "love letter" for a mother and daughter's mutual project of bearing witness to Adrienne Rich's continuing vision for "mother outlaws" to embody a more empowered mothering within the institution of motherhood, this essay equally acknowledges the challenges of reclaiming the possibilities for such a feminist mothering of resistance when a legacy of potentially misunderstood "outlaw mothering" is present within one's own maternal past.

> *We need to remember across generations that there is as much to learn as there is to teach.*
>
> —Gloria Steinem

> *"The mother lode" also signifies what we hear … the mother load ... the work that is never done (the endless laundry) ... the labour of "hanging out the wash," emphasizing the necessity of grounding our current work in the wisdom of previous generations—earlier waves of feminism—while also inviting the need for new stories. A laundry line of white bed sheets transforming into written pages asks the viewer to ponder the immense changes that have taken place in the past decade in how we represent motherhood. The writing on the sheets is intentionally somewhat illegible, our ideas only partially realized; the work is not done.*
>
> —Linn Baran, "The Mother Lode Painting-Artist Statement"

One of the last video recordings I filmed of my mother in the spring of 2015 involved a laundry line of white sheets. The layers of deeper meaning captured on film at this time were most poignant for me in remembering the same image in a painting titled "The Mother Lode" that I had created in collaboration with my sister to represent the extensive history of research on motherhood. My mother and I were sleeping side by side in a room of my sister's bed and breakfast in Prince Edward County, Ontario. My mother was deeply embedded in the palliative stage of her terminal cancer. On this particular morning, we began our regular routine after what had become a consistent pattern following her difficult and broken sleep: a sponge bath, a fresh diaper, a clean night gown. I then supported my mother's laboured movements into a comfortable seated position in front of the big picture window overlooking the lake surrounding us. We sat in silence for a while taking in the sunlight and the deep-blue vista. I was thinking about the journal entry I had written in the middle of the night. I had been ruminating about the root meaning of certain words as I often do when I am feeling overwhelmed. The previous night's word was "palliate," which means to cloak and protect. I glanced at my mother's face and could see that she was again in one of her melancholic moments as her eyes glossed toward those faraway places stored deep in her memories. I turned on my video recorder. She spoke of her contentment to be with her two daughters at this most precious time of her life and also addressed the "big trunk" in the room. Beside her was the actual trunk she had brought to Canada in 1956 when she emigrated from England, which had now been made into a beautiful coffee

"Laundry Lines." Photo: Linn Baran.

table with wooden legs and a glass top by her son-in-law. As my mother shared her appreciation for the beautiful restoration of this piece from her past, I noticed that my sister had just finished hanging out the laundry below us. The white sheets were blowing and dancing in the fresh spring wind. I happily announced to my mother "The washing's on the line, Mum." My mother quickly replied in her ever thick Yorkshire accent "Isn't that luvly. Can't beat washing on the line!"

Introduction: The Liminal Lines of Motherhood

> *Some of the most reflective maternal thinkers have been moved deeply about motherhood precisely because mothering does not come easily to them.*
> —Sara Ruddick ("Thinking about Mothering" 5)

On the window sill above my kitchen sink, I have a set of nesting dolls lined up accordingly in their increasing or decreasing size. My mother and I were always fascinated with these wooden female figures that separate to reveal a smaller figure of the same sort inside, which has, in turn, another figure inside of it, and so on. This particular set is painted with owl-like faces of wise women that I found soon after my mother's passing. As I wash dishes, I think about the liminal spaces of motherhood in my own motherline and the women who have occupied those positions.

These nested figures of women always appear to me as the perfect visual representation of the motherline—a concept developed by Jungian analyst, Naomi Lowinsky, which suggests that an invisible thread links women to one another across generations. In her notes on the motherline for *The Encyclopedia of Motherhood*, Sharon Abbey states that this term is "a central organizing principle in the psyche of women, involving a surge of feeling of the oneness of body and soul that goes beyond words to provide a sense of both mortality and immortality" (844). Abbey also highlights that the mother line often refers to "the process of reclaiming aspects of the feminine self that have been lost, forgotten, or repressed" (844). It is in this place of remembering my own unforgettable "mother outlaws" that my own story begins.

In *Motherless Daughters: The Legacy of Loss*, Hope Edelman explains how the bereavement attached to maternal loss can become a resistant and returning trope in a daughter's life; situated at the edges of her awareness and often resurfacing at various moments in a woman's life in the least expected ways. As I continue to sort through all that my mother has left behind for me, unforeseen re-visions emerge from how the concentric circles of "like mother, like daughter" worked within our relationship and extended towards my continuing feminist research to understand the "othermothers" who came

before me. My dedication to engage in what Andrea O Reilly has termed matricentric feminist research remains grounded within a retrospective analysis of my own motherline and an understanding of how a mother and daughter connection built on maternal (dis)connections can possibly become one of mutual empowerment.

It is my intention in this essay, including both the autobiographical and the academic, to bear witness to both the resilient and resistant experiences of mothering existing in my own heritage. I will revisit those mother outlaws who attempted to negotiate the fringes of prescriptive scripts for good motherhood with their actions that essentially challenged the status quo of the period in time in which they were being embodied. These stories from my motherline have been tucked away carefully like old children's clothing—outgrown but never forgotten. My mother's long life was strung together with many stories. Some of these she herself had previously unfolded and ironed flat, whereas some remained tucked away and hidden for me to eventually uncover.

My essay itself unfolds like the white sheets on a laundry line. Six pegs of maternal thought hold each section together while marking those spaces existing between maternal grief and maternal loss and between maternal ambivalence and fierce maternal love.

I: Beginnings and Unbecomings

> *In pronatalist societies, in which becoming a mother is naturalized and reified, unbecoming a mother—the process of coming to live apart from biological children—is variously regarded as unnatural, improper, even contemptible.*
>
> —Diana Gustafson (*Unbecoming Mothers* 1)

For many years, I have been drawn toward expressions of transgressive mothering and distilling those maternal stories that often remain unnameable and unspoken within dominant discourses of motherhood (Baran and Palko). In a 2004 conference paper titled "If These Trees Could Talk: The Deep Roots of Maternal Absence and Ambivalence over Three Generations of Women," I publically revealed for the first time the so-called bad mother in my own motherline who had engaged in what Diana Gustafson describes as that most "unbecoming mother" act. My maternal grandmother who did the worst thing a mother could supposedly do: she deserted her child, abandoning my mother when she was three years old.

My grandmother, Mary Ann, was born in 1897 in Leeds, England, and married my grandfather Edmund in 1915. I know this detail from their marriage certificate—the only official document my mother had in her possession

to prove her mother's existence. My grandmother was seventeen at the time of her marriage. My grandfather was twenty-one. On this document, he was defined as a bachelor and she a "spinster." Between 1916 and 1926, she gave birth to five children—two died as infants. On 21 January, 1930, her last child, my mother, was born.

On one unknown day in 1933, as the story goes, my grandmother came home drunk one evening and fell asleep on the sofa in the front room. Her suitcase was already packed and hidden behind a chair. The eldest sister Mary, holding the youngest child Sheila, was told by her father to take the baby up to bed.

The slamming of a door was heard.

The next morning, Mary Ann was gone.

My mother was eventually told by her older sisters that her mother had attempted to come back on several occasions after she first left, yet it was unclear for what purpose—to return to her role as a mother or to claim her mother's allowance and leave again?

My mother herself had only one vague memory of Mary Ann's attempted returns:

> I couldn't have been much older than Palmer [my son, who was four years old at the time of this telling] because I remember when my sisters and brother said "She's coming! … Mother's coming!" and me not knowing who that was, what that was. Mother?! I tried to peer out the window by pulling myself up to the ledge, but I was too small. And Mary locked all the doors and closed all the windows, just as father had ordered her to do upon any return of mother when he was not there. She had been drinking—I understand. No one answered the door as she knocked and knocked, and then I guess she just left. Again.

In the mid-1960s—when my mother was then living in Canada with one young daughter and another child on the way—she was told in a letter by some distant British relative that her mother Mary Ann had died and that she had actually lived in a flat for years just around the corner from my mother's original childhood home. My mother later told me that although she had mixed emotions upon hearing about her mother's passing, she began to seriously wonder if they had ever passed each other on the street.

Not long after this discovery, my mother legally applied to change her name. She chose to reposition her given name of Sheila Bernadette to become Bernadette Sheila. Although there were still many beloved people in her life who still referred to her by her original birth name, almost everyone else knew her primarily as Bernadette or more affectionately as "Bernie."

II: Life Lines and Life Supports

> *What woman has not dreamed of going over the edge.*
> —Adrienne Rich (*Of Woman Born* 279)

A favourite photo of mine is one I snapped myself with my mother in the last weeks of her life; it is of our two hands clasped together. Her beloved granddaughter and namesake Vanessa Bernadette had just given her Nana a manicure complete with a beautiful blue nail polish. My mother and I were having tea together alone as my sister and niece started gathering the chickens below us. My mother was in great spirits that day. She was most content to be with both her daughters and her only granddaughter in this country setting that was so reminiscent of the Northern England farms she most cherished from her days as a Land Girl with the Women's Land Army. Her happiness in this moment was exemplified when she placed the teapot cozy, decorated with her favourite licorice allsorts, upon her head as a most fanciful hat. She then took my hand and started a palm reading, which had always been one of her well-known party tricks. (She also read tea leaves.) As she gently traced the life line extending upward from the palm edge between my thumb and forefinger, she told me I would have a very long life with a lot of hard but important work still to do. She was quick to add that I would

"Hands." Photo: Linn Baran.

always be surrounded by much love and support while doing this essential work. I asked her bluntly to finally share with me her secret understanding of this ancient knowledge of reading forecasted truths between the lines in one's hand. She reached out for me with a gentle grasp, winked, and said, "A Gypsy can't reveal all her secrets." I knew exactly what she was trying to tell me, and I snapped this precious photo of our hands together in a lingering moment of maternal generative power.

In 2001, I became a mother at the age of thirty-four. In so many ways, I felt like I had been waiting for this magical moment for what seemed like my entire life. Not only was I then working as a practice administrator for a midwifery collective, but I also had a wealth of previous experience supporting teen mothers, homeless mothers, and mothers living in safe shelters following experiences of abuse. I had indeed been drawn toward the frontline fields of othermothering for many years inspired by the activist work my own mother had been engaged with since I was a little girl . It was, thus, with a great feeling of personal disappointment, I began to experience somewhat dark ambivalent thought processes soon after I gave birth. I had thought that I would never be one of those mothers who developed postpartum depression. I literally felt "torn in two" to reference Rozsika Parker's influential study on the experience of maternal ambivalence.

I reached out to my many other mother friends for support and engaged in various community programs assisting new mothers. But in actual fact, it was truly my own mother's voice that became my most transformative life line of support during this time. Bernadette's own shared experiences of difficult mothering helped me to understand that I was not alone and that the anxiety ridden, ambivalent thought processes endlessly ruminating in my head would eventually pass. She didn't simply state "this too shall pass" as others often do; she was literally there beside me every day. She never judged my behaviour and kindly suggested ways for a more empowered sense of mothering that worked for her. She also cared for my son for extended periods so I could get the rest and respite she instinctively knew I needed. She was, indeed, a most helpful guide across this troublesome terrain, and I will always feel blessed that she was there alongside me. She never hesitated to stand with her daughter in all of those murkier moments of motherhood.

It was never lost on me that my mother was most helpful in this caregiving role even when she had been so under-mothered herself. As Kathryn Black explores in her book *Mothering Without a Map*, there are many paths to discovering the good mother within, and wounded daughters themselves can become healing mothers who give their own children a legacy of tremendous support.

I had always had a very close connection with my mother Bernadette. In fact, I never hesitated for a moment in my later years to introduce her to oth-

ers as my "bestest" friend. My special relationship with my mother was truly one of my most precious gifts in this life. Bernadette was a genuinely lovable woman who always wore her heart on her sleeve and offered everyone her hugs and kisses as well as her empathetic ear. Many of my childhood friends came to her with their concerns even before they discussed them with their own mother. Bernadette was also very spunky and rebellious in all the right ways. She became my strongest ally when I was a teenager and developed my own feminist consciousness. She also was most supportive for my decision to study women's studies at university and to leave home so I could find a place of my own.

Yet our deepest connection as mother and daughter was built on something unique—a connection established from the disconnection existing in her own motherline. I can still recall in vivid detail the day when my simple adoration for my mother shifted toward a more deeper admiration of her as a woman as Bernadette began to take me into her confidence and share the most difficult stories from her own life.

I had always understood that my mother's fierce survival in living her own long life was fuelled in equal parts by both her vulnerability and her resilience. Bernadette's own experience of maternal loss was at the forefront of her continuous quest to become not only a different kind of woman but also a different kind of mother. As Joanne S Frye details in her prologue to *Biting the Moon: A Memoir of Feminism and Motherhood*, Bernadette's own story was one of "pain and guilt, but also of joy, small pleasures, felt accomplishments, survival, and love" (3).

III: Memoirs and Mementos

> *As soon as she was gone from this earth, I felt an overwhelming need for more of her. I had to find her again. But how do you find someone after they've gone for good?*
>
> —Myrl Coulter (*A Year of Days* 12)

Immediately following my mother's passing, I found myself consistently drawn towards the shelves in bookstores lined with memoirs by other women writing through their grief to find their mothers again. I would read these personal narratives with a voracious appetite in between the moments I spent sorting-crumb by crumb and petal by petal-the bread and roses of my own mother's life. In a conference paper titled "Memento Mori Maternal" from 2016, I explained how the grief process of searching for sustainable sources of a mother's continued existence often resemble the prehistorical mothering work of hunting and gathering. The Latin origin of the word "memento" means to remember and

to bear in mind. In art, "mementos mori" are symbolic reminders of those who have departed yet remain a part of our ancestral history, specifically referencing the bones left behind. I added "maternal" to this phrase to emphasize the heart of my own "maternal darkness" (echoing Adrienne Rich), which was central to my grief as I sorted through Bernadette's personal belongings, her extensive library of books, her personal papers, and her paraphernalia.

In *What Remains: Object Lessons in Love and Loss*, Karen Von Hahn expresses this similar state of being for a daughter seeking to reconnect with her deceased mother: "I found myself on a sort of scavenger hunt to find her, excavating her life and our relationship with the things that surrounded us, looking for clues" (4). Indeed, it was by holding onto all of my mother's things that I could contain the intensity of my own grief. I had a very difficult time in letting go of anything that had once belonged to my mother. Her everyday familiar objects and simple treasures took on the totemic power of sign and signifier because now everything she left behind contained a story. In her collection *Her Paraphernaila: On Motherlines, Sex, Blood, Loss, and Selfies*, Margaret Christakos ponders how a woman in mid-life can write about her transgenerational attachments formed by the interwoven themes of a tumultuous motherhood. . Christakos also highlights that the word "paraphernalia" itself denotes property owned by a married woman apart from her dowry, her own things, which can be "raffled off, riffled through … her stuff, her stuffing" (160). Prior to my mother's death, I began to assist Bernadette in the process of compiling all her personal stories, as she intended to finally publish her memoirs. For this reason, I was indeed feeling very protective about my mother's stuff as I found myself becoming hesitant in choosing which of Bernadette's things to pass onto her grandchildren, nieces and nephews, and her close women friends. Would they appreciate their meaning to my mother as I did?

Many of my own close friends were moved when I told them that almost every book from my mother's extensive library contained an inscription. I wasn't referring to an author's signature specifically but words written to Bernadette. And if she bought a book for herself, she would write a self-inscription explaining why she felt the desire to have this title on her own bookshelf. So many of her books also contained margin notes, book marks or dampened dog eared pages, which revealed the passages that spoke most deeply to her. As I opened each and every one of her many books that were left to me, I remembered how my mother had always mothered me differently— not just differently compared to my friends' mothers but also differently in terms of how she herself had been mothered..

Whereas many young girls upon a certain age were given either a complicated and boring "*This Is Your Body*" manual or a copy of Judy Blume's *Are You There*

God? It's Me Margaret, my mother gave me Liv Ullman's personal story of womanhood titled *Changing* when I was a pre-teen. On the dedication page, Ullmann herself had written "To my daughter, Linn," and underneath that line, my mother wrote in her fanciful scrawl and using her Yorkshire dialect, "To my daughter, Linda… Luv Mum xoxo." I never imagined how that book would predate and foreshadow the life I myself would lead as a woman, an academic, a feminist activist, a lover, a mother, and a writer. Almost twenty years later, I made a personal decision to change my first name from Linda to Linn to reflect significant transformations happening in my personal and professional life. This feminist renaming process was inspired by my own mother's decision to change her first name that is discussed earlier in this essay and also to honor the central plot of a mother and daughter connection as mutual empowerment that remained a continuing trope in my life.

My mother lived many different lives and within many different skins over the course of her eighty-five years. She was also very aware of the fact that every woman's life contains many secrets that can only be shared with certain others when the time was right. There are the public stories everyone knows about a woman, mother, and grandmother, and then there are the private stories that are kept slightly hidden, available to only those willing to listen and understand. My mother understood that one woman's history has the potential to repeat itself down the mother line in similar yet different ways.

IV: The Mud and the Muck

> *I love people who harness themselves, an ox to a heavy cart,*
> *who pull like water buffalo, with massive patience*
> *who strain in the mud and the muck to move things forward,*
> *who do what has to be done, again and again.*
>
> —Marge Piercy ("To Be of Use," *Circles on the Water* 106)

From a very young age, I understood that my mother was someone other mothers in our working-class 'hood of Toronto's Junction turned to for support, guidance, and advice. Mothers with small children were often around the table in our sunroom drinking copious pots of coffee and tea. while planning and organizing. (I would understand years later that some of these mothers were actually meeting with my mother to plan their escape routes to leave a violent husband.) My mother regularly organized holiday parties for the children in both the burn unit and special needs unit of our local hospital. My mother planned letter writing sessions with other activists who were beginning to strategize the movement to have free mother and child

community gatherings recognized for their essential work as family resource programs via supportive funding from the City of Toronto. My mother, as the wise Snowy Owl, organized the Brownie, Girl Guide, and Scout camping programs, insisting that any costs for low-income parents be lowered. And when I was around four years old, Bernadette became a fostering othermother. She took into our home several children who had witnessed abuse or suffered neglect at the personal request of a school principal who admired her tenderness and tenacity.

My mother somehow managed this volunteer work alongside mothering three small children of her own, caregiving for two of her nieces, and cleaning other people's houses. When Bernadette eventually obtained a nine-to-five job, with all her children in school fulltime, she still spent many evenings and weekends engaged in her many passion projects assisting mothers and children who were in challenging and vulnerable positions. Even after her retirement and until her passing at age eighty-five, Bernadette remained consistently busy. She was a classroom assistant, lunchroom lady, and recess monitor at a local public school. And later she held annual Easter fundraising sales of "Bernadette's Knitted Bunnies and Baskets" to support several community based programs, including The Toronto December 6th Fund that assisted women to escape domestic violence.

V: Doors and Windows

> *So it's not your past if it never was. It's a longing for something you never had.*
> —Gloria Vanderbilt (*Nothing Left Unsaid*)

In the same year of my mother's passing, journalist Anderson Cooper made an HBO documentary with his aging mother Gloria Vanderbilt titled *Nothing Left Unsaid*. In the trailer to his film, Cooper says the following: "I just always remember my mother having this look behind her eyes. It was almost a faraway look.… As a young kid, I did not know the origins of this sadness that permeated her life." My mother was always obsessed about Gloria; she seemed to have a deep empathy for Vanderbilt's s plight in life—maternal abandonment, a major custody case, and the loss of her son to suicide to name a few. But most of all, my mother held an admiration for this woman who despite her grief was always plodding forward. A most moving moment in this documentary for me is when Gloria discusses one of her own paintings; she has processed her personal pain for years through visual art. Her paintings often entail scribbled written lines around the edges—a multi layered palimpsest to understand her art in a more familiar way. Gloria herself reads the following from one of her paintings of a window into a home:

> This one is called "Hiraeth," … which is pronounced with a kind of lilt. It's a Welsh word, and I have written here around my painting what it means … a homesickness for a home to which you cannot return, a home which maybe never was. The yearning, the grief for the lost places of your past … a longing for something that never was.

My own mother's response to my queries about her deeper feelings about maternal absence was always: "You can't miss what you don't have." Indeed, Bernadette appeared to strongly resist being her own mother's daughter, with its resonance for Nancy Chodorow's theories of the "reproduction of mothering" cycle for women's identities. However, I did remain keenly alert to the possible undertow of emotions attached to the "presence of absence" that Hope Edelman explains is most unique to daughters who are abandoned by their mothers: "Like the child whose mother dies, the abandoned daughter lives with a loss, but she also struggles with the knowledge that her mother may still be alive yet inaccessible and out of touch. Death has a finality to it that abandonment does not" (30).

Indeed, the act of remembering my maternal grandmother—of looking back into the past—sometimes did feel transgressive, an act of defiance against my mother's own desire to forget this woman. But I was determined to more fully understand the matrix of the mother-daughter-grandmother triad of my own motherline that had always been somewhat submerged beneath the surface of my life.

I especially couldn't resist remembering that opening line of so many of those *Nancy Drew* mystery books that my mother would regularly gift to me and my sister on Christmas Day and our birthdays: "At the age of three, Nancy was without a mother." The case of my own "missing" grandmother was indeed this confounding mystery I was always determined to solve. I was forever looking with both longing and regret (and a flashlight in hand) at that one firmly closed door from my maternal past. I had yet to appreciate more fully the creative possibilities existing in those other doors and windows that had always remained opened for me by my own mother.

VI: Blossoms in the Dust[2]

> *And so our mothers and grandmothers have, more often than not anonymously, handed on the creative spark, the seed of the flower they themselves never hoped to see; or like a sealed letter they could not plainly read.*
>
> —Alice Walker (*Everyday Use* 47*)*

Looking back now, I know that any earlier self-perceived rebellious under-

standings of confronting this so-called monster mother in my own motherline was never about reconciling any competing allegiances and conflicting desires between me and my own mother. Bernadette did not need me to liberate her in any shape or form because she had always maintained her own empowered sense of maternal strength from before I was even born. I fully understand that the directions my feminist research and feminist activism have taken in my own life are formed from a closer desire to bear witness to the redemptive mothering my mother herself exhibited in the simple reality of her everyday life.

Maternal subjectivities are always discursive and continually being re-visioned and re-imagined over time and space. My mother sought to empower both herself and other mothers with the knowledge that a legacy of loss centred around any experience of maternal ambivalence can potentially transform into something very different. As a most dedicated othermother in her own long life, Bernadette understood that good mothering is comprised of many autonomous actions, which extend beyond a focus of one's own children to include a maternal social activism addressing the needs of a greater community.

My mother and I both understood that there were women who just do not "take" to motherhood and do not pretend that they do. And that we were both descendants from one of these "kinds" of mothers. But we also understood the truth about my grandmother's life, and the reasons behind her impulse to leave motherhood could never be fully known. All we had were bits and pieces, and scraps and shards of stories. Nothing was ever as smooth as the beach glass my mother collected into jars and placed on her own kitchen window sill, which would bring smiles to all her visiting grandchildren.

The grief accompanying a "maternal heart of darkness" can beat so loudly in one's life that we want only silence. However, Bernadette did not allow her own experience of maternal abandonment to define her solely in terms of its reflection as loss or absence in her own heart. My mother understood that few mothers are more stigmatized than those who are judged for having given up or abandoned their children. She also fully recognized the many pressures exerted on mothers to live up to persecutory maternal ideals; she worked long and hard to ensure other isolated mothers were supported for doing the best they could with the limited resources they had in their lives.

I like to believe that my maternal grandmother in her position of liminality—her permanent place on that threshold, hand on the door knob about to leave—was much more than only a failed maternal subject in my motherline. I believe her departure also represented the potential for engendering new maternal identities in the generations of women following her. As Alice Walker states in *Everyday Use*, "She has handed down respect for the possibilities … and the will to grasp them" (48). One door closed, but another door opened for women in my motherline. Alternative stories have been

lived that redefine and revision a truly empowered "outlaw mothering," which recognizes "that mothers and children benefit when the mother lives her life, and practices mothering, from a position of agency, authority, authenticity and autonomy" (O'Reilly).

Conclusion: What the Dead Awaken in Us

> *Re-vision—the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction—is for us more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival.*
>
> —Adrienne Rich (*Selected Prose* 34)

On the day after my mother's passing, my friends Renée and Melinda arrived immediately to be by my side. Not only did these "sisters" literally help me to breathe, but they took over the phone calling of my mother's many friends. They made me tea and comforted me as I wrote my mother's obituary and started planning her funeral. My mother's body was to be cremated. She had always wanted this, and I respected her wishes. A larger urn containing most of her ashes was to be placed in the grave alongside her husband. A smaller urn remains in my possession to eventually be dispersed in a special field in England that my mother knew I would always remember as the exact spot she would want a part of her to remain. On the evening of her cremation, I suggested to my friends that we all write some last letters to my mother and burn them in a glorious bonfire. The written pages flew up into the sky. I wanted to capture each one before they floated away above us or smouldered dangerously beneath us as embers to be stamped out. Yet I knew these letters contained private sharings that were not meant for my eyes only. And that's how my mum would want it to be. Bernadette believed every woman's life contained invisible seeds that were first grounded in their own past. And she also honoured the right for other women's secrets to be shared only when the time was right for them.

When thinking about my mother as I so often do, I reflect upon her own lifelong heart condition that she developed as a young girl from rheumatic fever. Bernadette had an enlarged heart. Indeed, she had a "very big heart" as so many others still share with me. I believe that the resilience that was embedded in her most big heart was indeed braver and bolder than even she herself realized. I remain resolute that the remnants of Bernadette's legacy continue to pass through the bones of her female descendants and all the women she so fiercely supported through their own challenges. Bernadette truly believed that hope could be forged from the ground up. And as her daughter, I carry forward this hope forged not only through the ashes of a

not so ordinary woman who won't be buried but also for all other mother outlaws who refuse to be forgotten:

> … i keep hearing
> tree talk water words
> and i keep knowing what they mean.
> … last night
> the fears of my mother came
> knocking and when i
> opened the door
> they tried to explain themselves
> and i understood
> everything they said"
> —Lucille Clifton ("breaklight," *An Ordinary Woman* 154)

Endnotes

[1]The author expresses gratitude to Andrea O'Reilly and the *Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement* for sustaining a community of feminist scholars and activists dedicated to furthering research about motherhood.
[2]My mother's all-time favourite film was *Blossoms in the Dust*. This 1941 biopic details the life of Texan Edna Gladney who opposed the unfair discrimination against children whose parents are unknown, and opened an orphanage for those children. Her main activism was to ensure the word "illegitimate" was removed as a stigma from these children's birth certificates.

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JOSEPHINE L. SAVARESE

Re-Imaginings

A Mother's Remembrance of her Murdered Daughter[1]

THE CONTEXT

We spent a day together when She was young. We loved lilacs—*they are so beautiful.* We found a lilac bush filled with blooms and gathered as many as we could. We had lilacs in every room.

Her body was found after two months buried in an isolated wooded area.

RCMP officers were led to the clandestine burial site by Him.

1. Imagined Statement

He raped and murdered my little girl.
—A Mother

A Monster kidnapped Her,
hurt Her—
THAT funny, precious girl,
My violet Universe.

2. When You Heard

Were you
remembering
Yourself,

Blossoming, dreaming in petals

ready …
For Her green
… wondrous
… slippery
birth.
Do you remember
Her emerging …
wrinkled
… beautiful
Scented in lavender
Wailing
in music.

3. When Her Remains Were Found

I said I wouldn't stop till I had my daughter in my arms.
I held my daughter in my arms.[2]
Did you encircle
Her crumpled body
Chest tight with grief
Clasp Her
Tenderly.
Did you wonder how
She—so small—
Cracked open the
World
from Her
borrowed earthen cradle.

4. The Earth

Her body was encased in a "clay cocoon"

in the fetal position, the jury at the murder trial heard on Thursday.[3]

Nestled Her,
as a mother.
Comforted Her, a daughter
… Bundled her tiny warmth

Against its smooth
clay heart.

5. Mother's Prayer

Now I Lay Her Down to Sleep
I pray the Earth her dreams
To keep.
Because She died
before She wake,
I pray the Gods,
His soul to

break.

6. Shopping List — 1993

five undershirts or onesies
two blanket sleepers
three pairs of socks or booties
five pajama stretch suits
one or two dress-up outfits
one hat
one sweater.

7. Shopping List — 2009

I don't even sleep ~~in a bed~~ anymore.
—A mother

Casket
1 Eagle Feather
~~1 Alarm~~
~~Clock.~~

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8. Found Poem: It *Doesn't* End

When you bury your child, it doesn't end there.

It's just the beginning of another kind of pain.

> They say time heals wounds. Not when you lose your child. Time doesn't heal that.[4]

Endnotes

[1]These poems are dedicated to Hilary Bonnell and her family. Members of the community were contacted for input during the development of the poems. For an image of Hilary shared by the family, see Tom Bateman.
[2] "Charges imminent in N.B. teen's death": RCMP, *CBC News*, Nov. 19, 2009, http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/new-brunswick/charges-imminent-in-n-b-teen-s-death-rcmp-1.814063. Accessed April 14, 2018.
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Mothering in the Aftermath of Forced Marriage and Wartime Rape

The Complexities of Motherhood in Postwar Northern Uganda

During northern Uganda's civil war (1986–2007), the abduction, forced marriage, and impregnation of females was a key military strategy of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). The LRA abducted an estimated sixty thousand children—30 percent of which were girls—who were used as combatants, porters, domestic workers, and were forced to marry male commanders. Roughly ten thousand of these abducted girls became pregnant from sexual violence, and gave birth to two or more children each. This paper explores the realities of mothering in the aftermath of wartime sexual violence. Drawing upon interviews with a sample of twenty-seven northern Ugandan mothers who bore children as a result of wartime rape, the paper explores the ambivalence and complexities of mothering in the postwar period—including sexual violence, pregnancy and mothering during LRA captivity, as well as stigma and rejection, and changing family structures in the postwar period. The paper highlights the ways in which war shapes and informs all aspects of mothering—both during and following the conflict—and how it alters how women come to understand their life stories as part of the motherline. We conclude with key implications for service provision and policy.

From 1986 to 2007, the Acholi of northern Uganda suffered the direct consequences of a bloody twenty-year war between the government and a local rebel faction, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). Led by Joseph Kony, the LRA was formed to counter the consistent and palpable abuse, exclusion, and oppression that the Acholi experienced at the hands of the Ugandan government (Allen; Finnstrom; Schomerus and Walmsley). Yet the LRA itself was responsible for brutal war crimes, atrocities, and gross human rights violations against civilians. Included in such war crimes was the abduction and recruitment of

children. The LRA abducted an estimated sixty thousand children—30 percent of which were girls—who were used as combatants, porters, domestic workers, and were forced to marry male commanders (Carlson and Mazurana; Veale et al.). Roughly ten thousand of these abducted girls became pregnant from sexual violence, and gave birth to two or more children each (Akello). Although not all of these children survived LRA captivity, thousands are currently living in postwar northern Uganda.

Sexual violence, forced marriage, and the reproductive roles of girls represent key gendered markers of women's and girls' experiences in armed groups. Moreover, both during armed conflict and following demobilization, pregnancy and maternity constitute key life events that significantly shape the lives and futures of women and girls. During conflict, given the precarious circumstances under which females live, pregnancy and the eventual delivery of a child represent situations of great risk for the health and wellbeing of both the mother and the baby, which make motherhood and mothering both during and following conflict of great importance (Denov and Ricard-Guay, 2013). In a conflict's aftermath—although it is now well known that many girls return from armed groups pregnant or with children, and despite a recent surge of research dedicated to girl mothers (Veale et al.)—mothers continue to be marginalized within postwar reintegration programs. Motherhood affects all dimensions of the reintegration process, whether in relation to education, employment and livelihood, health, or identity. Without adequate support, motherhood can become a barrier for girls and women in terms of access to educational and employment opportunities, which can lead to long-term poverty and marginalization (Worthen et al.). Furthermore, given that children conceived during armed conflict may be considered a violation of accepted community and cultural norms, mothers and their children may face ostracism, thereby increasing their realities of shame, guilt, and social exclusion. However, motherhood does not carry only negative implications or harmful realities for the postconflict lives of mothers. Instead, pregnancy and motherhood can be a source of hope, optimism, and security. These factors highlight the intricacies of motherhood and mothering both during and following war.

Addressing the complexities of motherhood in conflict and postconflict settings, this paper explores the realities of mothering for twenty-seven women formerly abducted into the LRA. Drawing upon the concept of the motherline, this paper also shows the ways in which war and armed conflict shape, form, and affect women's lives and motherline stories, while demonstrating how motherline stories of war may, at times, enable intergenerational rifts to be resolved. The paper begins with an overview of children's involvement in the northern Ugandan conflict, particularly as it relates to girls abducted into the LRA. Following a description of the study's methodology, we draw upon the

voices of women who, as adolescents, were abducted, forced into marriage, and raped, and then who gave birth to children born in LRA captivity. In particular, we address the ambivalence and complexities of mothering both during war and in the postwar period—including sexual violence, pregnancy and mothering during LRA captivity, as well as stigma and rejection, and changing family structures in the postwar period. All of these realities are vital to understanding participants' conceptions of their motherline and the fundamental role that war and captivity have played in their motherline stories and narratives. We conclude with the research's implications for service provision and policy.

Context: Armed Conflict, Sexual Violence, and the Lord's Resistance Army

Incidents of sexual violence have been documented with increasing regularity in contemporary wars, transcending countries and contexts. They serve as a weapon of war to intimidate the enemy and terrorize local populations as well as a form of gendered power relations, ethnic cleansing, and genocide (Weitsman). Literature on wartime sexual violence has explored important areas, one of which has examined the factors contributing to wartime sexual violence, its patterns, and its functions (Isikozlu and Millard). A second area has traced the consequences of wartime sexual violence on victims—such as stigma, exclusion, decreased marriageability and economic insecurity (Mackenzie; Mukamana and Brysiewicz). Other scholarship has studied perpetrators of wartime sexual violence: their motives, psychology, and their prosecution (Bensel; Henry). Research has also examined the legal implications and recognition of sexual violence, forced marriage, and forced impregnation as war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide (Markovic; Henry). An important area of study is the complexities of mothering in the aftermath of wartime sexual violence, particularly for those women who have given birth to children as a result of rape. Although some literature has addressed the realities of these mothers in multiple postwar contexts (Shanahan and Veale; Kantengwa; Umulisa; Zraly et al.), further research is important, particularly in northern Uganda.

During northern Uganda's civil war and in their battle against the Ugandan government, the LRA abducted approximately sixty thousand children into armed conflict (Shanahan and Veale). Although all children were potential targets, girls ages ten to fourteen were most commonly selected for abduction and were involved in multiple roles and tasks as porters, combatants, and cooks (Veale et al.; McKay and Mazurana). Moreover, as a critical part of his military and ideological operations, LRA leader Joseph Kony organized and implemented a forced wife system (Denov and Lakor). Within this system, captured girls—with a preference for those who had reached age twelve or

thirteen—were given to commander "husbands." The wives became the exclusive property of the commanders: they were required to obey any and every command and to never refuse their husband's sexual requests. The majority of these females became mothers, and their pregnancies were the result of continual sexual violence by their commander "husbands." This forced wife system had a clear objective—to produce a new clan. Kony repeatedly spoke of the need for "multiplying" and saw this as the solution for northern Uganda: to create a new class of people who had, from his perspective, benefitted from LRA training and life in the bush.

Within this context of war, sexual violence, militarized families, and ongoing fear, the relational dynamics between women and their children born in captivity (CBC) are complex and powerful for both mother and child. Women and girls living in LRA captivity, had their children at a very young age, conceived out of sexual violence, and born under extreme conditions of forced marriage and war. The birth of a child under these circumstances elicited a myriad of different, sometimes contradictory, responses from women and girls, which affected the process of carrying a child to term, giving birth, and protecting a child within ongoing, brutal violence. The goal of this paper is to highlight the complexities of motherhood and mothering under these challenging circumstances and to underscore the participants' abilities and capacities to mother in the wartime conditions of duress and violence, and in the postwar context of stigma and marginalization. Importantly, we also address how these realities ultimately shape the notion of participants' motherline and motherline stories. Before doing so, however, we address the study's methodology.

Methodology

This research was conducted by researchers at McGill University in partnership with researchers at Watye Ki Gen—a local community-based organization of women formerly abducted into the LRA—based in Gulu, Uganda. Data collection was carried out between June and October 2015 in Gulu, Pader, and Agago Districts of northern Uganda. The authors conducted qualitative in-depth semistructured interviews with twenty-seven mothers formerly abducted into the LRA, who gave birth to children while in captivity.[1] Interviews were primarily conducted in Acholi, with English translation for the non-Acholi speaking researchers. All interviews were audio recorded with permission and then translated and transcribed into English.

Participants were recruited through Watye Ki Gen, who had ongoing contact with these women as a result of their ongoing work and advocacy for women and children born in LRA captivity. The women participants, between the ages of twenty-two and thirty-three, were living in Gulu (eight), Pader (eleven), and

Agago (eight) districts of northern Uganda. These mothers were between nine and fourteen years old when they were abducted, and had been held captive in the LRA between three and nineteen years. The average time spent in captivity was ten years. Participants had between one and six children born in captivity.

This study received ethical approval from two research ethics boards: the first was from the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology/Office of the President of Uganda, and the second was from the Research Ethics Board of McGill University.

During interviews, women participants were asked questions about their abduction into the LRA, their lives during captivity, mothering during and after armed conflict, and postconflict realities—including mental and physical health; education; identity and heritage; stigma and community belonging; inheritance and land issues; marriage; and future goals and dreams.

Data was analyzed using a grounded theory approach whereby knowledge is generated by an iterative process involving the continual analysis of qualitative data. Through inductive analysis, researchers gain insights into patterns existing in the social world grounded in the experiences of individuals acting in it (Glaser and Strauss). In line with a grounded theory approach, transcribed interviews were analyzed, and prominent themes in the data were identified and coded using qualitative software, which allowed for significant themes and patterns to emerge. To facilitate analysis, a conceptual coding tree was created using qualitative software, allowing patterns and the relationship between themes to be visually mapped.

Mothering during LRA Captivity: Children as Sources of Resentment, Joy, and Ambivalence

Within the LRA, abducted girls were normally "given" to commanders as forced wives once the girl began menstruating. Commanders were expected to impregnate their wives and father children to be raised as Kony's next generation of fighters. According to Watye Ki Gen, Kony ordered his troops to kill older members within the LRA (and those with grey hair) in order to make way for his new generation of fighters born in captivity. Moreover, Kony began training his own sons as soldiers, and later instituted military training for all CBC. Within this context, the LRA valued children born within these forced marriages, oftentimes much more so than their mothers, and the children were a source of pride for fathers (Denov and Lakor). Among the twenty-seven mothers interviewed, the average age a girl had her first pregnancy within a forced marriage was thirteen, giving birth to her first child at age fourteen. For some mothers, the birth of their child was seen as a "gift from God" or a reason to continue living within difficult

circumstances. At the same time, however, the arrival of a child represented a profound burden. Girls knew that having a child to care for would seriously limit their chances of a successful escape from the LRA, or even their own survival. Having a child could also be dangerous and could slow girls down during ambushes and fighting when they were required to run. Girls and women were also harshly punished, including being beaten, if their babies cried and drew attention to their position in the bush. In the following section, we highlight the participants' perspectives on the realities of mothering during LRA captivity, particularly as it relates to their views on the experiences of pregnancy and birthing a child born in captivity. We demonstrate the ambivalence of mothering during war for participants, whereby children were perceived as sources of both resentment and joy.

Wartime Sexual Violence, Pregnancy, and Birth

Girls in captivity were forced into marriage, pregnancy, and motherhood as a result of threats to their lives and survival. The violence accompanying their forced impregnation, and the loss of power and agency over their bodies, further intensified the extremely difficult circumstances under which their children were conceived and in which they became mothers. These participants explained:

> [In the bush], there is no love and no relationships. They just select you and take you to be their women whether you like it or not. We never had any voice to make choices. Whether he is old or young, and you fear they will kill you, so you have no option.

> On Christmas, we were called to a wide field. We were told to line up, and they also told a group of men to line up and our line should face the men in line. Then they told those men to come and choose a lady … to pick a lady to be his. Then they picked us, and we started crying because it was not our wish to have those men as our husbands. They told us that if we continue to cry then they would kill us. We kept quiet. Then other ladies who were abducted before us started teaching us how we should adapt to those situations. And that was how we started living with them forcefully. For me, I refused to go and sleep with that man given to me for one week. He went and reported me to the commander that I refused to sleep and have sex with him. Then they decided that I should be killed the next day. My friend leaked the information to me that if I failed to sleep with that man today, the next day I would be killed. She said: "Have you seen those sticks spread in the sun? … Those sticks are for caning you until you

> die." On that day, I forced myself to sleep with that man given to me as my husband.

All participants in our sample became pregnant as a result of wartime rape. During their first pregnancy, participants reported a lack of knowledge of their young bodies; they did not know they were pregnant, or they were in denial when other women commented on the signs of pregnancy they observed. Some participants recalled feelings of fear, anger, or resentment during pregnancy. Reflecting on the very negative implications of having a child in the bush, some were fearful that their bodies were not physically mature enough to withstand childbirth. Others were resentful because they were young, and believed that their futures would be ruined because of the baby or because the pregnancy was not conceived out of love. Some wished to die or to abort the baby. These participants shared their feelings upon learning of the pregnancy:

> I was unhappy about the pregnancy. I saw that my parents were not there now. I'm pregnant and am going back with a child whose father is not there. My education is spoiled. How will I keep and care for the child?

> I felt bad [about getting pregnant] because if I give birth from the bush how will I escape with the child? How will I keep the child alive in the bush? [Being pregnant] meant that I will die in the bush.

For some participants, given their circumstances within the LRA, feelings of resentment, anger, and hatred continued after the child was born:

> I didn't like her [the baby] at all. In fact, I hated her with all my heart. I wished this child would be born dead so that it could give me time to be free … to escape [the LRA] just like as other people did.

> I was unhappy about the child and angry after seeing that the baby was a boy. If I had had a baby girl—in the future, she will look for a home and get married. But a boy, where will I keep and put my son? But I consoled myself that it is a God's plan, and I have to take it like that.

> I first wished that the child would die so that I could look for a way to come back home.

> I didn't have love for the child … I even wanted the child to die but God did not accept. I even feared that they [the LRA] would kill

> me. I wanted to strangle the child but I thought that if I kill the child they will kill me too, so I didn't.

In contrast, some mothers reported feeling love for their children after their birth, and viewed them as a gift from God—a source of joy, which gave participants the strength and a reason to keep fighting to survive within the harsh context of LRA captivity. These participants said the following:

> [The] situation [was not] easy, but when I look at my two children, I feel happy and try to forget the past. Like the two are symbols of what happened in captivity. When I look at them I get overjoyed and say to myself "God has done something good in my life."

> And I just loved my child, and I used to say that if God helps me and if I reach home, I will keep my child.

> I used to love the child, and when we were travelling in Uganda, my second born was still in the womb. So when UPDF [government military forces] launched their attacks, we were forced to love our children and care for them so that they didn't cry and bring the government soldiers to us. And I just loved my child.

However, what became evident in the participants' narratives was the ambivalence and contradictory feelings concerning the child, as birthing and mothering a child in captivity meant that chances of escape, flight from violent government ambushes, and basic survival became more onerous. Under such difficult conditions, participants struggled with conflicting instincts to save themselves and to protect their children. This tension was reflected in the participant's narratives, told as discrete moments in time where a choice was made between abandoning the child and running for their lives, or self-sacrificing to ensure the child's survival. These participants shared the following:

> They began firing at us. We were about five in number; they continued shooting at us without stopping. At one point, I ran, leaving my first born child behind. My son kept crying while shouting out my name saying; "Mother, why are you leaving me? Mother, do you want me to die while you remain alive?" I then stopped running and went back for him. I lifted him, and I continued running with my head lowered. When we crossed a certain river, I then carried him on my shoulders.

> My child grew so thin that I thought he would die, but it was God who helped me, and I took care of him. During those days where there was fierce fighting, I would drag my son on his chest. We would begin running from morning till evening. My son's throat would develop sores, and he was passing blood. When the fighting would begin, I would sometimes run for a long distance, leaving him behind. But after a second thought, I would go back for him. I would tell him that "I can decide to leave you behind because we will all die." I struggled hard to ensure that he survived. Sometimes the fighting would separate us; but after the fighting, I would look for him and find him.

These narratives highlight the complexity of motherhood during captivity, and, in particular, demonstrate the challenges, hardships, and also positive elements brought forth as a result of giving birth to a child born in LRA captivity. Abducted as girls, and surviving horrific forms of violence, the girls' experience of LRA captivity became deeply rooted in their motherline stories. Sharon Abbey notes that the motherline has been called a "primordial mirror" with which to envision the full sense of female development. Although armed conflict fundamentally disrupted girls' development, their motherline stories and deep reflection on their experiences can be seen as a mechanism, however small, to enable them to reconnect and reclaim what has been lost and taken away.

Mothering Postconflict: Ambivalence in the Context of Stigma and New Family Structures

Following their rescue, escape, or release from LRA captivity, participants transitioned through one of northern Uganda's reception and rehabilitation centres before being integrated back into civilian life. The length of time spent at a reception centre varied from a couple of weeks and months to a year. At the reception centres, participants received support in the form of medical care, food, shelter, and psychosocial counselling support. This support, however, was short lived. Returning to civilian life after years in captivity, the children they brought back with them only compounded the stigma and socioeconomic marginalization the women faced as uneducated single mothers transitioning into families and communities scarred by war. Important themes and challenges outlined by participants included stigma and rejection, the complexities of new family structures, and ambivalent mothering and motherhood. Each of these is addressed below.

Postwar Stigma and Rejection

Upon their return from captivity, mothers (and their children) experienced

pervasive stigma at the hands of family and community, manifesting as rejection and social exclusion, which severely affected their social reintegration. Returning with children who were fathered by LRA commanders, both mothers and children were stigmatized and labelled as "rebels"; they were considered to have dangerous mindsets and behaviours learned in the bush. As a result of their former affiliation with the LRA, both mothers and children were associated with LRA-led atrocities against civilians. In this way, many returnees were rejected by their communities and some or all of their family, and they were shunned or excluded from accessing family-owned land. These participants shared their experiences of stigma, violence, and rejection at the hands of family and community members:

> They started changing their minds and said they don't want rebel children in their home. That when these rebel children grow up they will cause problems because they have their father's minds. So they said I should leave; they threw me away with my things outside. I left—never to turn back.

> When I reached home, my brothers kept harassing me. Even my children are stopped from playing with other children from home. They say that my children are rebel children and they have those "bush behaviours." Most days, I am not happy because my children are beaten by people at home. I don't feel good about it. Most of the time, I just keep crying.

> [After] only two weeks, people from home started stigmatizing me. They said all my children are rebels and they are bad children because in the future, they will become chicken thieves, and they should drop my children in the toilet. So life is very difficult for us because even the land that we are on, people are struggling for it, and they want to chase us away.

Since these mothers were robbed of their chance of obtaining an education upon return from the bush, raising a child born in captivity led to additional and powerful forms of stigma for mothers. This stigma and rejection made it difficult for participants to reestablish and nurture family relationships, hold positions of status and power within their communities, and find sustainable employment to ensure their family's most basic needs.

The Complexities of New Family Structures

Another major concern for mothers returning from captivity was social

and economic advancement through marriage, which is considered an important mechanism for economic stability as well as an important cultural marker of social status. Most women had the desire to remarry upon return from the bush; however, as a result of stigma, formerly abducted women had difficulty remarrying, even more so if they had children born in captivity. For those who did remarry, participants reported that their new husbands did not accept the CBC as part of the family. They refused to support them, and they mistreated them:

> He [new husband] is not treating my CBC well, and he is not paying for my CBC to go to school. Because of my CBC, he even chased me away from his home for two years … No one normally accepts to keep a child who is not his. My child is in a difficult condition. She has very many problems and … my CBC is in a very difficult condition, and I am totally not happy about that. I feel that I should get someone to take care of my CBC, but I don't have any power and energy to do that. I have lots of problems because that husband of mine is very tough on my CBC staying at his home.

Some participants reported that their new husbands refused to allow the CBC to live in the family home, and believed the CBC was an outsider and a threat to security:

> My CBC remained with my parents at the time. I was with my current husband, but whenever my CBC came to visit me, he would stigmatize my CBC. He would say no one should bring a "rebel child" in his home. He said that someone who brings a rebel in his home is also a rebel and must leave his home.

Given the frequent rejection by the new husband, participants found themselves in a difficult position. Even if they felt deep love and concern about their child's welfare, they did not see a clear way out. As such, some participants were reluctant to continue to live with their CBC and, in some cases, sent the child away to live with extended family members in order to preserve the new marriage and family:

> I had to send her to live with my uncle because my new husband who is her stepfather does not have a good heart for my daughter. So I thought that sending her to my uncle would free my mind a bit.

Other participants chose to leave their husband to protect the CBC from

abuse, whereas others refused to separate from their CBC, which resulted in the husband abandoning the whole family:

> My husband doesn't want me to go and visit my child. If I want to go and visit her, I have to just escape. If I escape and I come back home, he beats me.… If he knows that I am paying school fees for my child born in captivity, he will fight me. So we mothers of CBCs, we are getting a lot of problems with our children born in captivity because we were given by force to our husband in the bush. We do not even know their [father's] family, so there is no way we can get these children father's family. These children are also breaking our relationships or making us divorce with our husbands because we would see our CBC sleeping hungrily, and the child has started moving to look for food, and you would see that your child is suffering and you find yourself coming back home to take care of them.

Changing family structures and the pressures and complexities of new relationships created challenging situations for mothers, and, ultimately, contributed to maternal ambivalence, vacillation, and uncertainty.

Ambivalent Mothering: Close Bonds versus Rejection

Several of the mothers interviewed described a fierce love and an unshakable bond between them and their children born in the bush, as they had to endure immeasurable suffering alongside them. In a few instances, mothers reported a closer bond with their CBC compared with their children born in the aftermath of the war. They stated that their CBC was all alone without a father and was therefore more in need of their love and protection:

> It's because the suffering that we both passed through when we were in the bush. That is the reason as to why today I see myself as a mother. So the suffering I passed through, fighting, sleeping hungry, sometime you sleep for two days without eating. Walking … you can walk for two weeks without sitting down. So I was suffering with my children that were somehow bigger, four years by then. He was conscious and aware … he too was walking on foot; sometimes there was no one to carry him. So I find that this child is so close to me.

> My children are so important to me. I cannot separate from them because I have suffered with them a lot. I find it important that I should not be separated from them. I don't want any of my children to stay away from me. My heart pains if they are not near me. I think

> much about my children every day. I don't treat these children differently [from my other children], but I love the two that I came back with from the bush because I see the pain I persevered with them.
>
> I'm very close to my child that I gave birth to in the bush because he listens to me and he also tells me that "Mum, I don't have any relatives on this world apart from you mum." I see he has love for me and he listens to my words.

When one participated was asked which child she is closest to, she responded, "More so for the first born. When the helicopters started shooting us in Uganda, she would be on my back and I would be running with her and hiding under the trees. She would be praying and telling me that 'Mum it is God who will help us; God help us so that we survive from this fighting.'"

Confronted with stigma, rejection, and violence, CBC and their mothers tended to lean on one another for mutual support and protection. Children were aware of their mother's marginalized social position, and CBC often appeared to take on a parental role—sharing or taking on the worries and responsibilities of a parent, and providing emotional support to their mother:

> I am close to and I love all of them. But I can share ideas to those three children who are older. But the one that I feel may be a good child in the future is [Milly] … She listens to how her uncle insults us … she finds me crying, and she consoles me that I should stop crying. And sometimes she even cries with me and tells me that she also feels angry.
>
> What I noticed from this boy is that he is so much into future achievement and concern. Because sometime if he sees me seated quietly even when he is playing, he will stop playing and he comes and asks me what am I thinking about, or is there anything the problem? … But I told him there is nothing [wrong]; he keeps on insisting a lot with assurance that all will be alright and I should stop worrying. He wants me to tell him all my problems and if I don't tell him, he will not go away from me. So I told him, my son, I am worried because I see the way my children are; you have no family home, and I don't have any financial support to buy a land for us to settle in. And about when you are all grown up where are we going to stay; when shall we stop renting a house? After this, he starts to cry again. He tells me: "Mom, God is going to help us; you continue struggling to pay our school fees. As for us, we shall study hard and in future, God is

> going to bless us with jobs, and so we will be able to buy our land for all of us. Now you stop crying because if you continue crying I will be more worried. Even when I am at school, I will be thinking about you knowing that you are crying, and it will affect me and my concentration at school."

Although the above narratives highlight the ways in which many mothers loved and supported their children in the postwar period, the realities of rejection and exclusion coloured relationships between many mothers and their children following demobilization. In fact, some mothers saw the CBC as a continuance of their suffering from the bush, and as obstacles to their happiness and security:

> I never felt well with her [CBC daughter], my heart was so bitter with her because even the reason as to why I switch men was because of her father. What her father did in my life that is why my life is all spoilt but her father died and she is still talking a very bad language on me, I was not happy with her at all. I even think the existence of her could be the reason as to why men are running away from me because she is always talking very bad thing in my life actually she is just hurting me.

The theme of maternal rejection (and leaving CBC with relatives) appeared to be more prevalent in the rural regions of Agago and Pader. In the post-war period, mothers in these regions received much less or no psychosocial counselling or maternal support surrounding their relationships with their children, compared to urban Gulu, where mothers could access counselling and psychoeducational workshops. Having little family support and being severely socioeconomically disadvantaged, the more isolated women faced the choice between enduring stigma and surviving on their own with their children, or disconnecting from their CBC and their bush identity to pursue a new marriage. Some CBC and family members interviewed reported that their mothers had abandoned them, and had rarely or never visited their children after leaving them with relatives. As this Agago grandmother raising her daughter's CBC described:

> This [rejection by the mother] is common; it is because at the time of their abduction, they were young. So when they happen to return home from captivity by God's grace, she will not want to continue enduring suffering. So she will end up leaving the children with their grandparents. This is common; they would want to go and have a fresh start with life without any child.

However, some participants indicated they were able to shift their negative feelings toward their child after receiving social support in the way of psychosocial and spiritual counselling; they developed a strong connection with the child through the process of navigating through many hardships together.

> When I started to pray to God, then I accepted him, like I am the one who produced him until now. I love him, but before that, I wasn't happy because he spoiled my future … I started to love him when I was two years at home here. Yes, at two to three years old because when I came back home, I stayed at the counselling centre where I could see people praying, but I could only think about the past. But because I was not praying with other people, I was counselled for three years and then I realized that I am ok. I had gotten lost to mistreat my baby, since I am the one who produced him. So that is how I started loving him at three years old.

The narratives demonstrate how despite profound stigma, structural and interpersonal violence, marginalization, and multiple oppressions, participants began to rewrite their motherline stories, which enabled them to resolve complex forms of intergenerational rifts and ambivalence.

Addressing the Complexities and Ambivalence of Mothering: Supporting Mothers and Children through Service Provision

This paper has highlighted the profound ambivalence and complexity surrounding the experience of mothering in relation to children born in LRA captivity. Participants' narratives have demonstrated the ways in which they experienced a broad range of negative, positive, and ambivalent feelings throughout the process of pregnancy, birth, and mothering, both during the war and in its aftermath. Moreover, our study has highlighted the ways in which war and organized mass violence shaped, informed, interrupted, and, in many ways, tainted women's motherline stories and realities. During the war, girls and young women living in LRA captivity were forced into motherhood through rape, violence, and coercion—not by choice. The ways in which participants made sense of their experience of mothering, and their feelings toward their children and their maternal role, were complex and varied. They ranged from fierce love and protectiveness, to ambivalence or hatred, whereas, at other moments, they struggled with conflicting instincts to save and protect themselves or their children.

Returning from the bush, participants struggled with maintaining a connection with the child. Others wanted a fresh start in a new marriage, and to

separate their LRA life and identity from their present life, which often meant distancing themselves from the child, both physically and emotionally. Others, through counselling and prayer, grew to accept and love their child over time.

Ultimately, responses to motherhood and the relational dynamics between mother and child shifted across time; they were influenced by environmental forces, such as the level of social and emotional support. In situations where mothers received little or no support from family and community members, mothers tended to see themselves as acting in solidarity with their CBC against a hostile world. Participants commonly spoke of struggling alone with their children. The motherline was therefore a dynamic and interactional process between mother and child— illustrated by some mother's descriptions of the love and protectiveness the child had toward them and vice versa. Abbey notes that motherline stories can reflect generations of suffering and grief and that acknowledging feeling of rage allows intergenerational rifts to be resolved. Although war, armed conflict, captivity, forced marriage, and repeated sexual violence significantly affected and shaped women's motherlines and experiences of motherhood, their stories, framed within the context of the motherline, can be seen as a place where powerful forms of intergenerational and shared trauma were acted, reenacted, and, in some cases, resolved.

Women formerly abducted into the LRA, and their children, are in dire need of local, national, and international supports and services to not only facilitate their postwar reintegration into society but foster meaningful relationships with one another and the wider community. As part of this research project, interviews with mothers explored their service provision needs and participants' recommendations for both policy and practice. Although participants suggested multiple areas for improved service provision, we conclude by highlighting three areas they deemed vital to their and their children's long-term wellbeing.

Livelihood Programs

The most important area identified by participants was the need for livelihood programs targeting their socioeconomic marginalization and fostering self-sufficiency through income-generating activities. Participants recommended livelihood programs such as livestock rearing and agricultural projects, vocational training and other income-generating activities for both mothers and CBC. These programs would enable mothers to feed their children, afford their children's school fees, rent land (reducing the pressure to remain with an abusive husband), and access medicine and healthcare. Significantly, mothers highlighted livelihood programs directed at alleviating socioeconomic strain that would allow women and their children to become self-sufficient and combat stigma. Their family and community members would view them more positively as productive and responsible members of the community.

Community Sensitization

Participants stressed that their community needed to be taught how to live well together with formerly abducted populations and their children. Through their meaningful participation in society, mothers and CBC can play a role in challenging negative attitudes and combatting stigma. However, to fully foster acceptance, social integration, and healthy relationships between mothers, CBC, family, and community members, sensitization at every level—from family to the government level—was deemed essential. Participants presented strategies such as educational workshops directed at school teachers and administrators, students, family members, and community leaders, including radio talk shows broadcast widely across the country. These strategies will build awareness of the hardships and the strengths of those returned from captivity.

Psychosocial Support

Because of the dearth of follow-up support services available to mothers, and the widespread denial surrounding their children's plight, participants underscored the need for follow-up support for CBC and their family members in the form of home visits, psychosocial counselling, and psychoeducational workshops that address the concerns, needs, and challenges facing parents and caregivers. Topics identified by mothers included coping with war-related trauma and relational issues—such as family violence, parenting skills, communication, and managing disclosure with their children in terms of their origins, their fathers, and family heritage. In the remote rural regions of northern Uganda where supports of any kind are scarce, participants stressed the need to mobilize and train local supports such as religious and local political leaders as well as other formerly abducted persons who are already well established in the community.

Under the most extreme circumstances of rape, coercion, and war, mothering was at times experienced as burdensome and dangerous, and as strengthening and hope giving. It was fundamental to the motherline and influenced mothers' experiences and sense of identity. The participants' experiences illustrate how the motherline—and the relationship between mother and child—is fraught with complexity and is influenced by time and context. Through the shared experience of enduring suffering and transcending adversity, a profound connection was woven, and many mothers and CBC later came to rely on each other for solidarity, support, and love. These women often attempted to rebuild motherlines that had been severed, which showed their profound resilience. By addressing the immediate and long-term service provision needs identified by participants, the realities of mothering in challenging contexts and the ambivalence of mothers to children born of war can be acknowledged and directly addressed. Scholarship on children's rights and protection has often shown that supporting and protecting mothers is one of the most vital ways to

protect children (Veale et al.). In the context of northern Uganda, supporting mothers will help the individual and collective lives of a group of women who have endured multiple forms of violence and trauma, but this support will also trickle down and positively impact the lives of their children. Culturally relevant and community-based support that aim to build on existing capacities and support self-sufficiency—while focusing on the relational dynamics between mother and child—will ultimately improve the health and psychosocial wellbeing of both mothers and their children born in captivity, their family, and their broader community.

Endnote

[1]Interviews were also conducted with seventy children born of wartime rape, twenty-one extended family members of these children, and four primary school teachers for a total of 122 participants. These interviews are not included in this analysis.

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TATJANA TAKŠEVA

Motherhood Studies and Feminist Theory

Elisions and Intersections

The study of motherhood has had an uneasy and ambivalent relationship to feminism and feminist theory. Ranging from radical feminist rejection of motherhood on the perceived basis of its inherent oppression of women, and the view that "motherhood has everything to do with a history in which women remain powerless by reproducing the world of men" (Allen 316), to more moderate accounts of that ambivalence that caution against the "recent positive feminist focus on motherhood" that romanticizes motherhood by drawing heavily on sexist stereotypes (hooks 135), feminist thought continues to traverse with difficulty the complex terrain linking motherhood and maternal activity to feminist concerns. In this paper, I argue that there are complex intersections between feminist theory and motherhood studies that become particularly evident when motherhood is considered within a "third wave" context. By highlighting the development of motherhood studies within the context of third-wave feminism and its consistency with broad feminist ideals of female empowerment and social justice, I advocate for the systematic inclusion of the study of motherhood as a central aspect of women's experience into established feminist, women, and gender studies agendas.

The study of motherhood has had an uneasy and ambivalent relationship to feminism and feminist theory. Ranging from radical feminist rejection of motherhood on the perceived basis of its inherent oppression of women, and the view that "motherhood has everything to do with a history in which women remain powerless by reproducing the world of men" (Allen 316), to more moderate accounts of that ambivalence that caution against the "recent positive feminist focus on motherhood" that romanticizes motherhood by drawing heavily on sexist stereotypes (hooks 135), feminist thought continues

to traverse with difficulty the complex terrain linking motherhood and maternal activity to feminist concerns.

In this paper, I argue that there are complex intersections between feminist theory and motherhood studies that become particularly evident when motherhood is considered within a "third wave" context. Tracing these trajectories is important because, as Samira Kawash observes, "motherhood studies needs the perspective and commitment of feminism as well as the institutional resources that feminism and women's studies has accumulated over the past four decades. At the same time, feminism cannot possibly hope to remain relevant without acknowledging motherhood in all its contradictions and complexities" (997). And although it is undeniable that motherhood studies—the scholarly study of motherhood in its contradictions and complexities—would benefit from the commitment of feminism in the terms Kawash outlines, growing evidence suggests that the field has been developing steadily even without this commitment. Over the last two and a half decades, a growing body of scholarship on motherhood and mothering, informed by a feminist theory and politic, has highlighted the complexity of mothering experiences and developed theories of motherhood that move beyond preexisting understandings of motherhood as a biological imperative.[1]

At the same time, however, feminist scholarship in gender and women's studies tends to exclude or sideline mothering as a viable feminist concern and motherhood studies as a theoretically diverse scholarly area. The varied practices of mothering and advances made in maternal theory over the last two decades are seldom, if ever, systematically explored with respect to the connections between motherhood as an institution and a theory, and feminist thought. Recent collections of essays in women and gender studies that purport to "ask challenging and provocative questions about how WGS [women's and gender studies] has produced its own knowledges," (Orr et al. 2)—such as the 2012 volume *Rethinking Women and Gender Studies*—do not acknowledge even in passing the presence of growing scholarship in motherhood and its methodologies. Another example is the 2013 volume *Gender and Women Studies in Canada: Critical Terrain*. The collection, intended for use as a textbook in undergraduate and graduate classrooms, is conceptualized as a comprehensive survey and an introduction to "a field that is at the forefront of critical thinking about inequalities and social justice" (Hobbs and Rice xvii). As such, its professed aim is to offer "a broad selection of writings from a range of authors and perspectives" (xvii). However, out of the sixty-nine chapters the collection contains, only one briefly addresses the topic of motherhood and only from the limited perspective of mother-blame in the context of psychoanalysis. In her recent book on matricentric feminism, Andrea O'Reilly documents "the disappearance of motherhood in twenty-first century academic feminism" by

providing statistical information about the vanishing percentage of scholarship on motherhood represented in the syllabi of introductory women's studies courses; articles and books on motherhood reviewed in feminist and women's studies journals; and papers presented at the National Women's Studies Association annual conference (*Matricentric*, 185-86).

Outside of the academic context, according to recent census information, there are two billion mothers in the world, of whom 85.4 million live in the U.S., whereas 4.1 million live with children under the age of eighteen in Canada. The numbers themselves raise troubling questions about elisions of motherhood evidenced in recent feminist scholarship. For example, women and gender studies claims to be dedicated to "the practice of intersectionality, gendering and queering of women's studies, indigenizing and decolonizing women's studies" as well as to "globalizing, internationalizing and transnationalizing women's studies" (Hobbs and Rice xix). Yet the globally pervasive, historically persistent, and diverse experience of motherhood in relation to women's intersectional, queer, Indigenous, Third World, and transnational identities appear to exist largely outside dominant disciplinary trends. These omissions have serious intellectual and institutional implications. They call into question some of the fundamental premises of feminism and women and gender studies regarding issues of representation, inclusion, and social and gender justice; they raise further troubling questions, such as "whose feminism and whose women's studies is being called upon, or passed on, and where and by whom?" (Braithwaite et al 31).

Much of what we have come to accept as normative, liberal, or academic feminist scholarship in women and gender studies has a distinctly negative stance toward motherhood. Bypassing motherhood within larger, established feminist discourses reveals that feminist theory is still to a large extent determined by universalist and essentialist histories of motherhood that are the basis of much feminist theorising of gender, femininity, and motherhood. Many accounts still "equate the feminine and the maternal," thereby assuming the "naturalization of maternal identity in terms typical of patriarchal understandings of femininity" (DiQuinzio 10-11). According to this logic, the discourse of being a mother, and a good mother, is seen as implicated in the discourse of being a wife, and a good wife, with all of its concomitant oppression and lack of power typical of a patriarchal domestic and social context.

Dominant feminist theory and the imaginary boundaries established around the field of women and gender studies are still constructed upon the assumed link between women's oppression in relation to larger social and political structures—including the assumed normative presence of the nuclear family and the public-private dichotomy—and mothering. This essentialist form of thinking rests on the notion that gender-neutral individualism defines or

should define feminist subjectivity, which renders motherhood problematic, since discussion of the maternal by necessity "accentuate[s] the gendered and relational dimensions of maternal subjectivity" (O'Reilly, *Matricentric* 200). The growing body of work in motherhood studies has long since rejected this form of essentialism. Claims for and about mothers have been replaced with pluralist perspectives regarding maternal subject positions and mothering practices, continuing to foreground inclusive and intersectional methodologies aimed at allowing women as mothers the opportunity to describe and theorize their own experiences. Scholarship in motherhood studies and maternal theory unambiguously demonstrates that subjectivity, agency, and autonomy need to be understood as concepts that are actualized within a complex set of social, collective, and relational influences always constitutive of self-definition.

In this paper, I use as a conceptual framework the four themes pertaining to the discipline of motherhood studies in the new millennium—experience, identity, policy, and agency (O'Reilly, *21st Century Motherhood*)—and I trace some of the continuities, overlaps, and intersections between motherhood studies and third-wave feminism within a theoretical context informed by foundational feminist concepts, such as critique of patriarchy, social justice, and the empowerment of women. My contention is that when looked upon in this context, the traditional friction between motherhood and feminism recedes, and, in many cases, disappears altogether. In that sense, this essay critiques the exclusion and essentialism in dominant feminist theory when it comes to its unwillingness to engage adequately with the fact that scholarship in motherhood studies has rethought and reshaped "mother" as a subject position in various historically and culturally specific ways. By highlighting the development of motherhood studies within the context of third-wave feminism and its consistency with broad feminist ideals of female empowerment and social justice, I advocate for the systematic inclusion of the study of motherhood into women and gender studies programs and agendas.

Motherhood and Feminist Thought: Traversing the Blind Spot

The relationship between feminism and motherhood is complex. Some studies conceive of motherhood as "taken-for-granted dimension of women's normal adult role" so that it becomes "one of the key sources of women's oppression" (Gimenez 199). They criticize the mainstream U.S. women's liberation movement for their "unqualified support of motherhood as one of the most important women's rights," which is seen as being "insufficiently critical of its oppressive dimensions" (199). Such criticism concludes that "women's liberation from male dominance is inextricably linked to women's and men's liberation from compulsory parenthood" (Gimenez 289). The oppressive dimensions

of "compulsory parenthood" are being increasingly theorized by motherhood scholarship seeking to problematize and deconstruct "the patriarchal construct of a mother as a biological and essential category" (O'Reilly, *21st Century* 7). The deconstruction of "mother" as an essential and biological category that characterizes much recent scholarship in maternal theory exposes the second-wave liberal feminist ideology inherent in these views.

Second-wave feminism critiques sex and gender roles, marriage, and the nuclear family as a nexus of female oppression. It is concerned with women's right to full control over reproduction, and its theoretical and activist efforts are often focused on the analysis of the exploitation of women not only sexually and psychologically but also as housewives and mothers. Jeffner Allen's radical call for the rejection of motherhood because "motherhood is dangerous to women" through the development and enactment of what she calls a "philosophy of evacuation" makes explicit what is implicit about much second-wave writing on motherhood:

> If woman, in patriarchy, is she who exists as the womb and wife of man, every woman is by definition a mother: she who produces for the sake of men. A mother is she whose body is used as a resource to reproduce men and the world of men.… Motherhood is dangerous to women because it continues the structure within which females must be women and mothers, and conversely, because it denies to females the creation of a subjectivity. (Allen 315)

There is power and potency in Allen's impassioned language, as it calls attention to the oppressive dimensions of the mother role as defined by Western patriarchy. At bottom, what this perspective argues for is the central tenet of feminism: the empowerment of women through breaking down current power relations and rebuilding them more equitably. Her approach also calls for women to exercise full agency over their reproduction. At the same time, however, Allen's perspective is built upon problematic universalizing assumptions about motherhood, as well as subjectivity. Allen sees motherhood as being inimical to the establishment of female subjectivity. This neoliberal, individualist view is based on a conception of autonomy and agency developed "at some distance from those attributes of human subjects, such as emotional or relational interdependence" (Abrams 806). Subjecthood and the formation of subjectivity are conceived of as existing and unfolding through competition with the "other" (Man as representative of patriarchy), and are fully realized only through a disconnection from others—from their impinging judgments and entangling commitments. This viewpoint espouses a moral theory that understands people only from a liberal political and economic position, according to which human

beings are seen as self-interested, independent, and autonomous units who cooperate only when the conditions can increase the results of each party (Barry 166). By modelling itself on traditional moral theory, this feminist ideology inadvertently duplicates the hierarchical and masculinist bias inherent in this form of philosophical thought, which remains disconnected from most lived realities. This traditional view of subjectivity remains blind to the "pervasive, plural social construction of the subject in the context of intersecting power inequalities" as well as the extent to which "the development and exercise of autonomy is frequently a collective enterprise, rather than an individual one" (Abrams 806). Thus, the position from which these assumptions are articulated not only ignores intersectional differences that speak to race, class, and sexual orientation, but also the diverse and varied lived contexts in which most mothering activity unfolds. It also ignores the reality that personhood is always to varying degrees relational and interdependent, morally and epistemologically. But the most glaring blind spot of this theoretical approach is that it disregards the love, pleasure and empowerment most mothers experience through their mothering—a blind spot upon which motherhood studies itself was founded.

Jeffner Allen, like Shulamith Firestone and Ti-Grace Atkinson, belongs to radical second-wave feminism, and their views on motherhood do not speak for all feminists. However, in 1984, when Allen's essay was first published, it had been almost a decade since the publication of Adrienne Rich's *Of Woman Born* (1976), in which Rich makes the crucial distinction between the patriarchal institution of motherhood and the experience of mothering, which is not inherently oppressive. Despite the publication of this important work, the elision of motherhood from subsequent academic feminist thought, especially over the last two decades, suggests that Allen's arguments persist, instead of Rich's—as well as those of other feminists who investigated the ways in which motherhood can be a source of power for women. Jeffner's argument is a product of the second-wave liberal feminist orientation toward critiquing a particular brand of Western patriarchy—with its concomitant neoliberal emphasis on the regulation of the nuclear family. According to this perspective, men are always the enemy, and motherhood forever stands at odds with the demands for complete individual female freedom, a sense of control and personal agency, and autonomous power in the public sphere.

Contestation and Revisioning

Motherhood studies has since addressed this blind spot. As a discipline, it is based upon the premise that mothering, namely the lived experience of being a mother, "is not a singular practice" and that the verb "to mother" cannot be understood as a monolithic category of practice, since "even among similar

mothers practices vary significantly" (Chandler 273). This premise has significant implications for how to understand identity, experience, and agency within not only motherhood studies but feminism as well. If mothering practices vary significantly even among mothers who are in some sense similar, and if practices do give rise to and shape the experience of mothering, then the experiences of mothering do vary significantly and result in different forms of identity and levels of agency that negotiate, critique, and resist patriarchal constraints in different ways. Just as the category of woman is not universal—a stance for which academic feminism has fought long and hard to establish—the practice and experience of motherhood is not universal either, nor are the ways mothers may acquiesce to or may resist oppressive structures.

Recent scholarship in motherhood studies has further challenged essentialism by beginning to differentiate between culturally specific forms of mothering and their implications for what constitutes empowerment for each group of mothers. Examples of such scholarship include: *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politic of Empowerment* (Collins 2002); *An Anthropology of Mothering* (Walks and McPherson 2011); *South Asian Mothering: Negotiating Culture, Family and Selfhood* (Gonsalves and Sangha 2013); *Mothers, Mothering and Motherhood Across Cultural Differences* (O'Reilly 2014); *A Recognition of Being: Reconstructing Native Womanhood* (Anderson 2016); and *Indigenous Experiences of Pregnancy and Birth* (Tait Neufeld and Cidro 2017). These works continue to refine the discussion through their intersectional investigation of the conditions that make motherhood an oppressive patriarchal structure in the dominant culture—such as mothering in the confines of a private, nuclear family household where the mother has almost total responsibility for child rearing, frequently assumed economic dependence on men and strict sex-role segregation. Yet, they also point out that these conditions are not constitutive of many different forms of mothering outside the dominant culture, especially African American or Indigenous mothering.

For example, African American mothering can be contrasted with motherhood as it is practised by the dominant white culture. Writing in 1990, bell hooks notes, "had Black women voiced their views on motherhood, it would not have been named a serious obstacle to our freedom as women. Racism, availability of jobs, lack of skills or education … would have been at the top of the list—but not motherhood" (133). Revealing the white, middle-class, liberal and essentialist bias of much of second-wave academic feminism, hooks points out that "early feminist attacks on motherhood alienated masses of women from the movement, especially poor and/or non-white women, who find parenting one of the few interpersonal relationships where they are affirmed and appreciated" (134-35).

Along similar lines, Patricia Hill Collins has identified the "antifamily" and

by implication, "antimotherhood" bias within mainstream academic feminism as a significant impediment to the theorizing of black motherhood. For Collins, feminist writing on motherhood reflects white, middle-class "angles of vision" dedicated to "demystifying the traditional family ideal and focused on the experience of White, middle-class women's experience of motherhood, and lacking an "an adequate race and class analysis" (*Black Feminist Thought*, 175). Black motherhood as an institution, Collins asserts, is "both dynamic and dialectical" through which black women "express and learn the power of self-definition, the importance of valuing and respecting ourselves, the necessity of self-reliance and independence, and a belief in Black women's empowerment" (Collins, *Black Feminist Thought* 176). Within black families, mothering "was not a privatized nurturing 'occupation' reserved for biological mothers" (Collins, "The Meaning of Motherhood" 277). African American communities have recognized that "vesting one person with the full responsibility for mothering a child may not be wise or possible," which has resulted in othermothers—"women who assist bloodmothers by sharing mothering responsibilities"—being central to the institution of black motherhood. (Collins, *Black Feminist Thought* 178; Troester). Furthermore, motherhood in the African American context is not linked to economic dependency on men, as black women are structurally central to their families in terms of economic support; mothers and motherhood are accorded a culturally high status, and childcare is seen as a collective rather than individual responsibility (Collins, "The Meaning of Motherhood" 277). Nor is the centrality of women and motherhood in African American extended families, Collins contends, "predicated on male powerlessness" (*Black Feminist Thought* 178). These insights show that female subjectivity and mothering practice are seen as compatible and complementary in black feminist theory. They also reveal that empowerment is not incompatible with caregiving as an attribute or practice and that agency and autonomy function as multifaceted competencies developed within the context of other forms of lived experience, which in the case of African-American women is deeply intertwined with issues of race and class.

Similarly, recent work on traditional Indigenous mothering reveals its differences from white, middle-class oppressive ideals of the good mother. Along with African American mothering, Indigenous motherwork is culturally valued, understood as a collective responsibility, and seen as equivalent to any other work structurally important to the community. Kim Anderson points out that "Indigenous ideologies of motherhood are distinct from patriarchal western models of motherhood, and this means that strategies for empowered mothering are also distinct" (Anderson, "Giving Life" 775). Understanding this ideology, Anderson asserts speaking to Indigenous mothers "means having to unlearn what Western society has taught … about motherhood

… away from the Western ideology that condemns the mother to the role of family servant without any decision-making power" (Anderson, *Recognition* 147). In Indigenous worldviews, "producing life and raising children are understood as the creation of a people, a nation and a future"—a sacred and highly valued social responsibility that Indigenous mothers are given the authority to exercise (*Recognition* 148). Far from being seen as the embodiment of women's individual annihilation, motherhood here is seen as the assertion of leadership and authority for women, which is linked to life giving and community building and not dependent on whether the women biologically produce children. Childcare is understood as both an individual and a social responsibility for Indigenous communities; sometimes, women "choose not to have biological children so they can better fulfill their roles of aunties or grannies or serve the community" (*Recognition*, 150). The auntie and granny roles are also maternal in the sense that they "teach, nurture, and heal all people, not just their own" (149). In contrast to Western ones, Indigenous understanding of gender roles are fluid and complimentary, and all responsibilities are valued as "contributing to restoring and maintaining the balance of the universe" (154).

Moreover, Indigenous motherhood involves understanding the reciprocal relationship existing between mothers and children, which honours the subjectivity of both mother and child and contrasts with patriarchal and oppressive ideologies of mothering. A reciprocal relationship leaves enough psychic space for both mother and child to find their own unique place in the relationship, thus rendering less likely the conditions under which maternal and child interests may be seen as existing in conflict (Takševa 158).

Emerging scholarship on South Asian motherhood also provides a more nuanced understanding of motherhood by showing how it is a source of empowerment for women in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and surrounding areas, despite being entrenched in patriarchal understandings of motherhood, which place excessive demands, expectations, and responsibilities on mothers in these areas. For example, in her work on South Asian motherhood, Jasjit K. Sangha points out that South Asian experiences of mothering are informed not just by gender but by "other systems of oppression that intersect with gender such as race, caste, class, sexuality and ability" as well as the conditions of migration (415). Within these intersecting matrices of oppression, power, and decision-making ability operate differently for different South Asian mothers, since "a mother may have access to power because of her caste, class and social status and yet succumb to restrictions on her mobility and sexuality in order to maintain her *izzat* (honour)" (Sangha 415). Similarly, "a mother may have privileges due to her geographic location after migration, yet face a severe decrease in her standard of living due to barriers obtaining paid work" (415).

Situating South Asian motherhood within a more complex understanding of its varied contexts, Sangha demonstrates that "expressions of agency by South Asian mothers can take many forms"—such as "finding appropriate services for their disabled child after facing stigma in the South Asian community, or growing their child's *kesh* (hair) as a visible marker of their Sigh religion while living in the diaspora" (416). In many cases, as Sangha and Gonsalves point out, agency is encoded in the resistance that South Asian mothers in the diaspora develop in response to the dominant culture's attempts to subordinate them via negative perceptions attached to them as Muslim mothers, queer mothers, or mothers whose children have a rare health condition. In all of these cases, the agency exercised has significant meaning for the mothers themselves, since resistance and activism inform their daily lived experience.

The deconstruction of motherhood as a monolithic identity exclusively linked to female oppression has also been addressed by a new area of feminism—feminist love studies. The love governing the parent-child relationship is being increasingly theorized as a prototype for the best kind of love, based on not only declarations but committed and active work (Gilligan; Noddings; Ruddick; Tronto; Bryson; Lowe; Overall). Recent feminist studies on love urge a more serious and sustained study of love; they recognize its importance as a significant creative, social, and biomaterial power capable of changing and shaping social and political forces, and a key element in ethics and epistemology (Ferguson and Jónasdóttir 2). In this sense, rather than conceiving of personal identity as fixed, unitary and inviolable in rigid, individualist neoliberal terms, it is the relational aspects of being that are stressed as making up the fabric of the self. This relational understanding of identity and experience in the context of love and care is, of course, central to voluntary motherwork. Beyond the self, feminist scholarship in the area of care ethics, spearheaded by the work of Virginia Held, understands this relationally understood identity to be foundational for profound social and political change based on a radically humane vision of social justice. Since one of the principal goals of feminist analyses of power is to rebuild relationships in more equitable ways, it is essential to attend to the carework mothering entails and to acknowledge the personal and collective implications of re-conceptualizing identity as a relational category.

Third-Wave Feminist Discursive Spaces: The Emergence of Motherhood Studies

These insights pertaining to motherhood emanate from a standpoint that has moved away from second-wave liberal feminist politics of identity. The new politics of feminist identity ushered in through diverse third-wave feminist

voices has paved the way for the emergence and development of motherhood studies. No rigid boundaries can be put in place between second- and third-wave feminism; second-wave liberal feminism still exists, and still represents the ideological core around which much academic feminism is structured. So, to "speak about a 'third wave' of feminism is to name a moment in feminist theory and practice" (Gillis et al. 1)—a temporality from within which issues relating to women and their empowerment can be considered. Postcolonial feminists of colour have called for feminism to reinterrogate its Eurocentric agenda, and have critiqued the implication that the third wave feminism trope seems to imply some sort of evolution in the progressive narrative of feminist history. Instead, they have stressed the need to develop a "differential consciousness" through the ideology of opposition (Chackaborty 205). And as a recent study shows, "a woman's understanding of what feminism means has more to do with where and when she entered the discourse than it does with the year of her birth" (Snyder 178; Aikau et al.). Third-wave feminism recognizes that "feminists are differently situated in relation to what the feminist movement has (and has not) accomplished." (Hogeland 107). Thus, third-wave feminism is a reaction to and a critique of the ingrained social definitions of what it means to be a feminist evident in much second-wave feminism (Whelehan 2007). The diverse and often discordant feminist voices over the last two decades make it clear that third-wave feminism is less of a label related to age than a particular approach to feminism as well as to issues of inclusion, multivocality, equity, and equality.

Although the seeds of motherhood studies are to be found within second-wave feminist thought (primarily in the work of Adrienne Rich and her 1976 book *Of Woman Born*), its formal beginnings and subsequent development are the result of a third-wave feminist approach and orientation, in which maternal subjectivity and experience are being increasingly theorized and positioned as one of the voluntary identity categories different people choose to occupy.

In *Of Woman Born*, Rich makes the crucial and hitherto unacknowledged distinction between the two meanings of motherhood. The first refers to the daily practice of mothering, which she defines as "the potential relationship of any woman to her powers of reproduction—and to children." The second refers to motherhood as an oppressive patriarchal institution whose aim to ensure that that potential and all women remain under male control (Rich 13). Andrea O'Reilly will later adopt the two terms—motherhood as institution and mothering as experience—and further develop them into a theoretical basis for a meaningful and systematic interrogation of the maternal.

Rich's separation between the institution and the experience of motherhood created the theoretical space from which motherhood studies could emerge; it created the possibility to achieve the following two discursive objectives:

- To theorize mothering and maternal subjectivity by providing the theoretical space in which individual as well as collective maternal subjectivities can be examined as separate from critiques of the patriarchal institution of motherhood
- To give voice to mothering in all of its diverse complexity and to open the possibility of empowering mothers in their carework by outlining the possible terms of maternal empowerment within a broad feminist context.

Since the broad aim of all types of feminism is the emancipation and empowerment of women in their private and public lives, both of these objectives are consistent with those aims. Sara Ruddick's 1989 *Maternal Thinking* is the first feminist study of mothering as experience. It starts from the philosophical premise that all practice and experience—including daily acts of care performed by mothers—gives rise to particular and distinct ways of thinking. The book aims to articulate a philosophy of mothering, with its distinct ways of thinking about the world. In her study, Rudick theorizes issues relating to maternal control, maternal and child vulnerability, the concept of "nature" and instinct with respect to motherhood, as well as a model of active maternal care she defines as attentive love (Ruddick 12). Ruddick systematically links maternal thinking as an "engaged and visionary standpoint" with a larger social dimension and a politics of peace and with the central feminist goal: to make the personal (the private) political. Ruddick's work paves the way for further developments.

Ruddick's philosophy of maternal thinking makes two essential contributions for the subsequent and ongoing development of the theory of motherhood, especially as it intersects with broad feminist principles. First, maternal thinking critiques the notion that motherhood, the work of mothering, and mother love are instinctive, and that women are primarily driven by emotion, not rationality. Second, Ruddick separates the biological acts of giving birth from the activity of mothering, which allows for a new definition of motherhood and mothering to emerge—an activity grounded in the conscious commitment to providing daily care to those who require care, nurture, and training. This definition frees considerations of motherhood from gender essentialism as well as biological determinism by allowing for maternal care activities to be well performed by anyone, such as othermothers, adoptive mothers, and fathers.

Along with Rich's and Ruddick's work, Lauri Umansky's *Motherhood Reconceived* and Sharon Hays's *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood* have also enlarged the theoretical framework concerning the study of motherhood. The formal beginnings of the discipline, however, are marked by the establishment of the Association for Research in Mothering by Andrea O'Reilly in 1997 at

York University—later to become the Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement. Building on Rich's and Ruddick's work, O'Reilly has been formulating a theory of feminist and empowered mothering since the late 1990s. In 2016, O'Reilly published *Matricentric Feminism,* in which she argues that the identity of mother is distinct from the identity of women and calls for a particular kind of feminism positioning mothers' concerns as the starting point for a theory and politic of empowerment.

In 2005, The Association for Research on Mothering launched a publishing division, Demeter Press, with the publication of Andrea O'Reilly's book, *Rocking the Cradle: Thoughts on Motherhood, Feminism, and the Possibility of Empowered Mothering.* As the first feminist press to publish books on and about motherhood, reproduction, sexuality, and family, it has actively encouraged and facilitated the growth of motherhood studies as a scholarly discipline. In November 2017, Demeter Press published its one hundredth title in the field of motherhood—a testament of success to O'Reilly's continued efforts to create an autonomous academic field of motherhood studies. The association and the publishing press were founded in response to a developing awareness that "motherhood scholars needed and wanted a space of their own, in which their research would be supported and respected" (*Matricentric* 190). The work published by MIRCI and Demeter Press not only reveals the diversity of approaches to motherhood and the richness of its interdisciplinary base but also highlights the "network of supportive scholars who are intentionally and self-consciously engaged in building a field of study and a network of collegial support" (Kawash 995). Most importantly, MIRCI and Demeter's existence ensures a platform for the publication of scholarship based on the experience and empowerment of mothers, and to engage within broader issues of politics, policy, and power.

These developments in motherhood studies do not unfold within a theoretical vacuum, but take place within wider social and cultural changes regarding feminism. The third feminist wave was reportedly kicked off by Rebecca Walker, when in a 1992 *Ms. Magazine* article, she famously proclaims, "I am not a postfeminism feminist. I am the third wave." And although Walker herself does not say anything about motherhood, she speaks from a strong intersectional perspective and against the ideological constraints imposed by second-wave feminist identities. In the decade following Walker's statement, a number of popular as well as scholarly books have been published presenting third wave feminism as a perspective that embraces a multiplicity of identities and accepts the messiness of lived contradiction. Some of these include *Listen Up: Voices from the Next Feminist Generation* (Findlen 1995); *Manifesta: Young Women, Feminism and the Future* (Baumgardner and Richard 2000); *Catching the Wave: Reclaiming Feminism for the 21st Century* (Dicker and Piepmeier

2003); and *Third Wave Feminism: A Critical Exploration* (Gillis, Howie and Munford 2004).

Although third-wave feminism includes diverse perspectives, the movement can be conceptualized on the basis of what Claire Snyder identifies as its "tactical approach … to some of the impasses that develop[ed] within feminist theory in the 1980s" (Snyder 175):

> First, in response to the collapse of the category of "women," the third wave foregrounds the personal narratives that illustrate an intersectional and multiperspectival vision of feminism. Second, as a consequence of the rise of postmodernism, third wavers embrace multivocality over synthesis and action over theoretical justification. Finally, in response to the divisiveness of the sex wars, third wave feminism emphasizes an inclusive and nonjudgmental approach that refuses to police the boundaries of the feminist political. In other words, third wave feminism rejects grand narratives for a feminism that operates as a hermeneutics of critique within a wide array of discursive locations, and replaces attempts at unity with a dynamic and welcoming politics of coalition. (176)

Third wave, thus, addresses the categories of experience, identity, policy, and agency in a way that rejects the perceived ideological rigidity of second-wave liberal feminism, according to which motherhood and female empowerment are incompatible. As such it has multiple implications for those same categories as they function within motherhood studies. The collapse of the category "women" as standing in perpetual ideological opposition to the category of "men" and a general category of "patriarchy" by default means that the identity of feminist and that of mother are no longer seen in opposition. As Leslie Haywood points out, third-wave feminism "respects not only differences between women based on race, ethnicity, religion and economic standing, but also makes allowance for different identities within a single person," which also means that "it allows for identities that previously may have been seen to clash with feminism"(xx). One of these identities is the maternal one.

Challenges and Possibilities

The ideological space opened by these developments—embracing the maternal identity as compatible with feminism—has, in fact, created a curious feminist backlash when it comes to mainstream dominant conceptions of motherhood, not unlike the backlash against feminism itself. The rhetoric of choice, multiplicity and multivocality has resulted in contemporary ideologies

of motherhood—such as intensive mothering and new momism—that recreate the old, oppressive, prefeminist dimensions of motherhood by promoting unrealistic and impossible to achieve ideals about the good mother. These ideologies combine the post-second-wave gains and freedom achieved by and for women with oppressive traditional family-life gender patterns and expectations so that through them, women are now encouraged to choose to mother traditionally and intensively while working outside the home. Thus, although third-wave feminism has widened the conception about feminism and its compatibility with a variety of identity positions and categories—mother included—it has also created the conditions through which older, oppressive, prefeminist forms of motherhood have been promoted and instituted in mainstream culture.

The maternal theory articulated over the last two decades—in large measure thanks to the writing and maternal activism of Andrea O'Reilly—has put forward an alternative vision of mothering whose governing principles and aims align squarely with progressive forms of feminism, which celebrate maternal subjectivity and empowerment regarding all four categories: experience, identity, policy, and agency. In her most recent book, O'Reilly puts forward the concept of matricentric feminism and its basic governing principles, and argues for its further development as an emergent form of multidisciplinary and multi-theoretical feminism. The principles informing matricentric feminism are rooted in O'Reilly's theory of empowered mothering, which is "essential to maternal well-being" and "it allows mothers to effect real and lasting change in their lives, in the lives of their children, and in the larger society" (O'Reilly, 67-6). Matricentric feminism and empowered mothering are a response to patriarchal mothering and are achieved through the development of critical consciousness allowing those who mother to achieve greater degrees of autonomy, agency, and authenticity in their motherwork. In this sense, matricentric feminism and feminist maternal theory are at the forefront of a new feminist worldview—initially made possible by third-wave feminist perspectives. Not only is matricentric feminism matrifocal and committed to social justice, equity, and gender equality, it is also multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and increasingly intersectional. It is consistently and unflinchingly feminist in orientation, as it actively "contests, challenges and counters the patriarchal oppressive institution of motherhood and seeks to imagine and implement a maternal identity and practice that is empowering" (O'Reilly, *Matricentric* 7) to all those who choose that identity. And finally, since it engages systematically with a subject, motherhood, which is central to the lives of billions of women worldwide but shunned traditionally by feminist scholarship, matricentric feminism represents a radical form of feminist inquiry whose content and methodologies stand at the forefront of new developments in women's and gender studies.

In this sense, dominant feminist theory and established women and gender studies programs have much to gain from the inclusion of motherhood studies. From its very inception, feminism has fought for the empowerment and equality of women; it has challenged the private-public divide by making visible the political, moral, and social relevance of all work traditionally coded as domestic and feminine—and, therefore, largely invisible, unpaid, and unvalued. Integrating maternal theory into the study of feminism would not only make visible the ways in which mothering is compatible with paid work and women's empowerment, but it would acknowledge feminist success in deconstructing the public-private binary. Teaching and learning maternal theory in the context of academic feminism would reposition maternal carework as valuable privately and publicly, and provide a better understanding of identity as embedded and relational, and consistent with feminist ethics. Women and others who choose to engage in maternal work can be seen as shaping their own lives, institutions, and society over time, which helps toward building a better, more socially just and equitable society. Given the continued centrality of motherhood in the lives of majority of women across the globe—as well as rapid developments in reproductive technologies facilitating a variety of parental configurations for both men and women of different sexes and gender orientations—women and gender studies programs must include the varied experiences of mothering across gender, class, race, and location as well as the growing body of scholarship speaking to the maternal experience.

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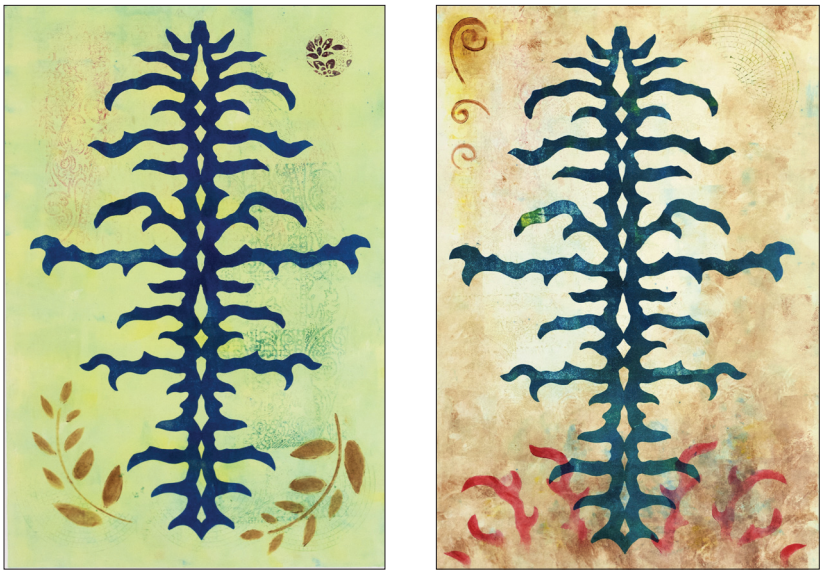
RACHEL EPP BULLER

A Hidden Garden

Rachel Epp Buller, "Arbor 24," 2016, monotype print, 12 x 9 inches.

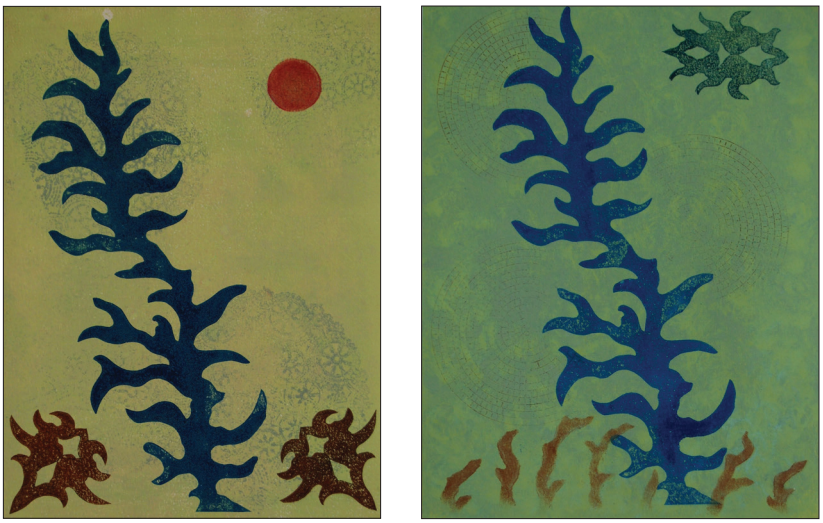


Rachel Epp Buller, left to right, "Arbor 30," and "Arbor 35," 2016, monotype prints, 18 x 12 in.

Rachel Epp Buller, left to right, "Arbor 37," and "Arbor 38," 2016, monotype prints, 18 x 12 in.

We pass on our family and cultural identities between generations, not only through our shared stories but also through our making. Through my recent monotype prints, I explore shared bodies of knowledge and traditions of making that historically were passed down from mother to daughter. Such matrilineal knowledge is not written down but is of the body—an embodied knowledge

Rachel Epp Buller, left to right, "Silva 1," 2017, monotype print, 18 x 12 inches; "Silva 6," 2017, monotype print, 12 x 9 inches.



Rachel Epp Buller, left to right, "Silva 8," 2017, monotype print, 18 x 12 inches; "Silva 12," 2017, monotype print, 12 x 9 inches.

transferred between hands. The *Arbor* and *Silva* monotypes make reference to the quiet traditions of fine handwork such as sewing, crochet, and cut-paper work known as *Scherenschnitte* done by my German and Swiss ancestors. Over time, my cut-paper shapes have become increasingly organic and I imagine them growing from a hidden garden.

Folio

Editor's Notes

It's a great pleasure to feature Patricia Jabbeh Wesley in this issue of *Folio*. A Liberian civil war survivor who immigrated to the United States with her family during the fourteen year Liberian civil war, Wesley is the author of five books of poetry: *When the Wanderers Come Home*, (University of Nebraska Press, 2016), *Where the Road Turns* (Autumn House Press, 2010), *The River is Rising* (Autumn House Press, 2007), *Becoming Ebony*, (Southern Illinois University Press, 2003) and *Before the Palm Could Bloom: Poems of Africa* (New Issues Press, 1998). She is also the author of a children's book, *In Monrovia, the River Visits the Sea* (One Moore Books, 2012). Her poem, "One Day: Love Song for Divorced Women" was selected by U.S. Poet Laureate, Ted Kooser, as an American Life in Poetry June 13, 2011 featured poem. Wesley's poetry and prose have been anthologized and published in literary magazines in the US, in South America, Africa and Europe; her work has been translated in Italian, Spanish, and Finnish.

As Nigerian poet and scholar Chielozona Eze notes, Wesley is "one of the most prolific African poets of the twenty-first century … and the most renowned of African women poets ("The Open Wounds of Being: The Poetics of Testimony in the Works of Patricia Jabbeh Wesley"). Among Wesley's many honors are a WISE Women Award from Blair County, Pennsylvania, the President's Award from the Blair County NAACP (2011), a Penn State University AESEDA Collaborative Grant for her research on Liberian Women's Trauma stories from the Civil War, a World Bank Fellowship. In 2010, she received the Liberian Award for her poetry and her mentorship of young Liberians in the Diaspora. Wesley is an Associate Professor of English and Creative Writing at Penn State University.

Poet and editor Frank M. Chipasula (*Bending the Bow: An Anthology*

of African Poetry and *Whispers in the Wings: New and Selected Poems*) has described Wesley's work as "brave and fearless" but also "necessary for the witness they bear to human folly while insisting on our capacity to love." In this selection, readers will encounter rhythmically rich and unforgettably detailed poems that meditate on the many meanings of home that mothers inherit and create. Whether she is reflecting on a child's desire for a pet, considering the ways childless women and mothers define maternal love, or offering consolation to bereft parents at a campus memorial, Wesley's poems pay tribute to the ties that connect generations and the distances that threaten to divide them.

In "Coming Home," the poet greets her college-aged daughter at the airport, recounting the many moves the family has made since their immigration to the United States. While the daughter takes in the unfamiliar terrain—"all these valleys and green, green hills" in the neighborhood where the family will be "the first black on this property"—her mother meditates on time's passage and memory's dizzying accumulations—the gains made, the distances traveled. As the speaker suggests, this homecoming summons a deeper, more resonant archetypal experience:

> Every girl becomes woman
> when she can come home, knowing how like her mother
>
> she is becoming—a woman like all the other women
> before her.

The mother's joy in having "all my children are under one roof in our new state" gives way to poignant recollections of family in Monrovia who "gather/ and discuss the many years we have been away from/home." No matter the new American holiday rituals the family practices, the homeland still remains inscribed in memory—"the true ghost story of lost peoples/ in the Diaspora." Here, as elsewhere in Wesley's poems, the complexities of belonging and displacement are sharply rendered.

In "You Wouldn't Let Me Adopt My Dog," the poet responds to a daughter who dreamt that her mother refused to adopt a pet with a wry humor that shines light on deeper concerns:

> Tell your dog that I do not have the résumé
> to tend an American dog. Tell him I am still
> African, in the way that my mother woke up
> each day, wondering where the food
> for us children would come from.

Wesley's poetry pays tribute to the challenges of exile and assimilation, offering readers a stunning vision of courage and beauty in a world of "havocs"; her own words about writing and its relation to mothering are equally powerful and are included below.

—Jane Satterfield

How Motherhood Influences and Informs My Craft

"There is something remarkably beautiful and rewarding about being a mother to an innocent child, to nurture that child, help them grow into adulthood, and take their place in the larger world. For me, that role of mothering against the challenges of successfully developing my writing career involved a negotiation of the two challenges. I knew that to succeed as a mother and writer, I needed to bring these two parts of me together. I was a writer before our children came; therefore, I wrote my way around the children, often, about them, sometimes, holding a child on my lap as I wrote a poem or sitting our four kids up in the family room as my first audience after a new poem was written. They gave me the inspiration I needed, the subject matter, the cause to laugh and poke fun at myself, and they were constantly there with me. I captured them as they grew up, sometimes to their dismay or pleasure. Mothering has always influenced my writing just as much as my writing has informed my place as mother. Without mothering, my work would be dull.

A poet writes about the world around them, explores the uneven parts of a world they must occupy, the havocs of their world, taking the unevenness of their world in an attempt to make meaning of it. Some of that unevenness may not always be the wars or difficulties and the realities of the inequality of their world, but often of the simplicity of child rearing, the morning wet diapers, the shrill cries in the deep night of a colicky infant, all of which are themselves the conflicts and tensions which poetry must negotiate. So, mothering gives me fuel for the fire of my poetry, gives me laughter to keep me going just as my writing establishes for me a balancing stand from which to view my very challenging world of mothering."

—Patricia Jabbeh Wesley

PATRICIA JABBEH WESLEY

Coming Home

for Besie-Nyesuah

Besie runs towards me, arms wide, despite the crowd
at the airport, she's screaming, "Mo-mm-m-m-ie,"

and everybody stares. Arms around me, my daughter
holds me tight, and we almost fall beside her suitcase

I have just lifted off the belt. At nineteen, she is now
a woman, tall, slender, her soft, small arms and fair skin

remind me of Ma Wadeh, my mother in-law. In a moment,
I am looking her all over, counting to see if she is not

too skinny for a girl her age. Every girl becomes woman
when she can come home, knowing how like her mother

she is becoming—a woman like all the other women
before her. "This is Pittsburgh," I say, "isn't it beautiful?"

We're driving past houses in the distant hills along
Pittsburgh's winding freeway, houses that lean and rush

past us as we also rush past them. Everything here leans
sideways, almost free, as if to fall into the merging rivers

down below. My college-age children are coming home
to Pennsylvania, where we are surrounded by hills

and valleys and cliffs, and the university where my
new students speak with an accent they refuse to admit.

"So this is home now?" Besie says as if to herself
while I turn into our new driveway in a neighborhood

of rolling hills and brick houses overlooking one another.
"We are the first black on this property," I say. But this

is going to be home—all these valleys and green, green hills
will be home. "But this is Pennsylvania," Besie says, as doors

bang and everyone rushes out to welcome her home after
too many months away. "We are all trying to find home,"

I say, as my words become lost in the din of screaming
children and my husband, lifting Besie up in the air

and swinging her around in circles. All my children
are under one roof again, I tell myself, for the first

time, all my children are under one roof in our new state.
But Michigan is that ghost that stands at the outskirts

of your new town, where your memory refuses to shut out
so many years, and that year when you arrived with

nothing and looking to find home among strangers,
where the cold, cold winds became a new friend.

Your second chance at finding home, now becoming
memory too. Michigan haunts the holidays, another

ghost to carry around among all the other ghosts we are
seeking to undo. In Monrovia, families will gather

and discuss the many years we have been away from
home. Monrovia is the true ghost story of lost peoples

in the Diaspora. In America, we are the new nomads,
the wanderers coming home or looking to make

home or running away from home among new people,
and one by one, our children, who will never know

where we really come from, are leaving only to come
back to decorative lights, Christmas trees, holiday

music, and turkey baking in the oven, stuffing,
and pies. We are becoming new people, I tell myself.

PATRICIA JABBEH WESLEY

After the Memorial

Today, another student died at school. Another boy
at twenty, another sophomore, another woman's only son.

A girl in my class told me the news just before my ten
o'clock class. She said, it was his heart- a bad heart.

Something that was always a part of him, she said.
Something in his heart was always loose—a thin line

somewhere. Where the heart was supposed to tighten
to pump blood from the heart to the brain to the hands

to the feet and belly buttons to the toes and back again
to the heart. Something must have snapped, she said.

Stephanie, a girl almost looking nineteen or twenty
or twenty-one or something. Bloody eyes, red hair, she

stood at my desk in tears, there she stood. Was I the priest
or counselor or something? The delicate lines already

making their way under her eyelids. This was her friend,
her boyfriend, her best friend. He was tall and blond

and smart and funny and walked like he'd bought the campus
and the whole world with just his looks. Someone told me

afterwards, it was heroin overdose and alcohol overdose
and everything overdose. No one called the police.

In a college dorm, where the party can run over the rim
of every glass and the fumes from everything everywhere

in the party room can penetrate every fabric of everything
alive, and everyone is red-eyed because something

else is smelling. And you know it is often too late to call
the police or the ambulance, and of course, not his parents.

He was supposed to come to, they'd said, on the floor where
everybody left him so he could come to. Last year, another

student died—my student—at home, in a bed that belonged
to him, where the sheets and the mattress were soft

and white and cool and personal. The sheets understood
the matter more plainly. They belonged to him. It was drug

overdose, someone said. When the news came on the phone,
I was at home. Tuesday—not a day for news. The Dean from

campus called to break the news to me. Why me, I thought.
I was scared. His Mom had asked to break the news gently

to this one teacher. She will take it hard, and my son loved
her like family, she'd said. I rushed to my bathroom, my

stomach boiling when I heard. All the hours I'd spent
tutoring this one kid until his writing skills which had nothing

to do with his writing skills, sharpened. His words had taken
on color and detail and precision just so he would die?

He had died quietly in his sleep, I was told. At the college
dinner after the memorial, his Mom held my hand tight,

staring. "He was our only child, you know." Silence.
"I understand completely," I said. "I understand incompletely."

PATRICIA JABBEH WESLEY

After So Long, We No Longer Send Photos

After so long, we no longer send photos
of ourselves back home, where sisters
and brothers have become like distant relatives.
Lost loved ones, separated not just by the miles.
The snow falls in white pellets.

Outside my window, the world has frozen again,
but we've adjusted ourselves so well,
the snow brings us simple laughter.

We used to rush outdoors at the first snow fall,
all cuffed and collared, scarves, falling off
as we grabbed on to toddlers that the children
were, and a camera, falling sometimes
in the snow pile.

Mlen-Too, sometimes on his knees for the missing
camera, as if in search of the missing years.
And I'd be there, keeping the children
from throwing off a scarf here or there.

The camera snapping, one child here in one arm,
another standing on a snow mountain
at the front yard, where Byron Center still
stands aloof as if becoming home, our new
borrowed homeland just for a while.

I'd be twisting and turning, begging the baby
to smile so Grandma and Grandpa would see
how a grandchild can sit on snow
and be an angel in the snow pile on the lawn.
Flashing camera, and neighbors staring

from behind silent windows. Today, when the snow
arrived, I looked outside, where the window
can hide everything else. All the children
are now taller than trees, and the snow mountain
has lost its sense of purpose.

Sometimes, I just want to get up and walk back
home, where my father, having given in to gray
hairs, sits despite the years and the loss
and the emptiness.

Sometimes, I can feel the snow falling
in my father's yard, in a land of no snow
and all the children in my father's neighborhood
are bracing for the chill, in boots and scarves,

with mittens on tiny fingers, running and screaming,
their parents, taking photos to send to us
here in America. Maybe it is snowing everywhere,
and all the world is the same. Maybe.

PATRICIA JABBEH WESLEY

You Wouldn't Let Me Adopt My Dog

A Poem for Ade-Juah

"Mom, you wouldn't let me adopt a dog in my dream,"
my daughter tells me. "Really? Go back to your
dream, my child, and adopt that dog," I say.

Tend to it, humor it, take it to the vet, clip its toe nails.
Give it antibiotics and let it run wild on our lawn.
Allow it to pull at the neighbors' flowers, let it dig
up their wooden fence, knock down other people's
flower pots, give it a name, and let it
roll under your comforter. Let it eat out of your bowl.

Tell the dog that its Grandmother loves it very much.
She loves it as long as it remains in the dream world
of uneven spaces, so improperly laid out,
the dreamer cannot bring back into the real world
what belongs to the dream world.
May your dog grow old and tired, beyond dog years,
and may it give birth to many dog babies
to help populate the dream universe.

I want to squat when I greet your dog,
and let it lick my ring finger clean.
I want your dog to linger upon my doorstep
while I stroke its head. I want to populate

your dream world with myself even as a dog
that I'm so afraid of, lives and leaps.
Go back, my sweet Ade, and tell the dog how
welcome it is, no matter what kind of dog it is.

But let it know that my knees now hurt; my back
wants to give way after too many babies,
and last night, my hip began to send new signals
my way, as if I were a bag of electric waves,
trying to tell the world I'm done.
Tell your dog that I do not have the résumé
to tend an American dog. Tell him I am still
African, in the way that my mother woke up
each day, wondering where the food
for us children would come from.

Tell your dog that I love dogs, but I wonder
if the child somewhere in my home village had
a bowl of dry rice and palm oil to eat this morning.
Tell him my father still needs me to send money
to feed a house full of motherless children
who have taken to living with him after the war.
Tell the dog that if I become rich and famous,

I'll let you cross over the threshold of the dream
world, into the real and bring him home
to meet his new family, where his Grandmother
stands over the kitchen sink, wet hands
and eyes, listening to Ade-Juah as if the things
that plague this world were not much
bigger than a dream, as if the life
of one small dog were larger than life.

PATRICIA JABBEH WESLEY

I Am the Mother of Children

I am the mother of children.
My friend has dogs for children.
All of her children do not have go to college,
and during breaks, they do not need
to travel abroad for spring break
or something of the sort.

Her dogs roll around in the snow, and at night,
they cuddle around her, a sofa,
their comforter, the fireplace, blazing.
When one of her dogs needs a doctor,
she throws him in the back of her car,
his nose out, air blowing at him,
happy just to be dogs.

I am the mother of children.
One by one, I throw them out into the streets,
we call 'school,' and when they grow up,
they return home, break down my old part,
still wanting to be pampered, fed,
their shoes line my front door
like driver ants, and when I tell them

that my parents fed me worms and spiders
to keep me alive, and when I say that
my stepmother was a witch,

they do not believe me, and when I say
I went to school with torn shoes,
and when I tell them I was lucky
we had to wear uniforms,
they do not believe me.

One day, I heard a child of mine tease me
that when I am old and helpless,
they'll have to plot out where
I'll spend my last days in a nursing home,
where old people sit and beg their
god to rescue them with death.
Was this a way of bribing me
or what, I do not know.

But my other friend has cats, furry
meowing cats, fat belly cats, sad cats,
happy cats, but if you ask me whether
I have ever seen a happy cat,
I will laugh at you.
But what do I care about cats?
After all, I'd rather have my children

than a sad face cat, meowing all day
as if starved. You never know what
a cat has on its mind.
But another friend keeps stuffed animals.
After all, there's no need for vets,
animal food nor do they need a walk,
and the only way a stuffed animal
goes to college is with someone
who is somebody's child.

I am a mother of children, happy
children, crazy going children, children
who come back home with their dirty laundry
just to discover they still have

to do their own dirty laundry,
and when you think you've reached
the bottom, there they are,

my children, a hug, a snuggling grip,
a funny word, some fire in their eyes.
I am a mother of children. Our people say
"There's no jungle bad enough where
an angry mother can
throw away her evil child."

Book Reviews

The Pregnancy ≠ Childbearing Project: A Phenomenology of Miscarriage

Jennifer Scuro
Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017

REVIEWED BY DANIELA JAUK

I was immediately drawn to this book as the promise of disentanglement of the phenomenon of pregnancy from the phenomenon of childbearing (as expressed in the ≠ [does-not-equal] in the title) seemed new and important. In her experimental feminist phenomenological project, Scuro takes miscarriage as entry point to write against the neoliberal expectation of results that is mirrored in the trope of productive pregnancies. She also "attempt[s] to deinternalize the shame and grief of a compartmentalized and suppressed memory" (xi), and aims at making space for solidarity between "the woman who has miscarried, as she might recognize herself in the woman who has aborted her pregnancy, and again each with the woman who has "successfully" given birth" (xiv). In my opinion, Scuro has brilliantly kept her promises and her book is a powerful statement against the isolation and nation of women* with postpartum experiences.

The book is divided in four parts. The longest, first part, is titled "Miscarriage or Abortion? (Or, #shoutingmyabortion in a Graphic Novel)" and is an impressive and very personal narrative in 175 images. She reveals that she

spontaneously miscarried her first pregnancy at week six. She gave birth to a daughter subsequently, and got pregnant shortly after this birth. What followed was a pregnancy that proved very difficult, with excessive bleeding and many weeks of bed rest. It had to be terminated half way through, in order to save the author's life. Scuro is guiding us through this challenging journey with much honesty, intimacy, and also humor at times. She has created an artful visual narrative that takes the form of collages as photocopies and photographs are incorporated in her compelling drawings.

Teary-eyed I follow how she is sitting in a recovery chair, and a woman is sitting beside her sharing that she was almost seven weeks pregnant and really can't have a baby right now. Scuro feels an amazing solidarity with this woman in this moment. The fact that this woman did not want her pregnancy, while she herself had wanted it, did not make them all that different. Both needed to be where they are, in the recovery chairs after "abortions." Scuro's point is to highlight an underdeveloped point of solidarity among women, as pregnancy is always temporal and substantial. Once pregnant, all women will find themselves postpartum, whether or not a child is born. Only a few pages later she is hustled by a pro-life activist as she tries to reach her car with her husband, in pain, and bleeding. What follows is a painful process of grieving, of bodily recovery, of trying to parent an infant and "function" as a person, and an academic, in the aftermath of the bodily experience of pregnancy ≠ childbearing, as well as trying to re-construct partnership and meeting a partner again emotionally.

Part II takes two personal experiences as entry point to philosophical theory. Scuro shares how (while she is laying on the operating table after a C-section) doctors were joking around, and how at a philosophical conference a (male) attendee discounted the relevance of miscarriage for philosophy. Synthesizing several authors who theorized pregnancy she pushes back against dominant assertions of "what counts." With her visual narrative as philosophical allegory contextualized by critical theory, she provides material to free the condition of pregnancy from childbearing ideologies. In doing so she creates a powerful argument against neoliberal ideology invading pregnant bodies. That kind of neoliberalism that demands us to produce results, and to get over it quickly if we don't, and that leaves mothers feeling as failures for having survived "unsuccessful" pregnancies.

Part III is a phenomenological reading of miscarriage and a powerful argument against what she calls childbearing teleology (the idea of the end goal of pregnancy being able to bear a child) exercised through a medical and cultural complex of instruction and guidance for pregnant bodies. In this perspective, miscarriage is read as a failure, a non-event. In every case the loss that occurs at the end of each pregnancy is grounds for solidarity no matter the pregnan-

cy outcome. Scuro links a healthy full-term pregnancy with the possibility of miscarriage and concludes that all pregnancy participates in some kind of postpartum experience. She makes a strong argument here against (pro-) life-oriented interpretations for pregnant embodiment which suffocates the possibility of meaning for miscarriage and enables its silencing. She summarizes that a) there is a lack of scientific study related to causes and effects of miscarriage, b) there is a lack of ritual for miscarriage, and c) this challenges the "sociopolitical discourse on "life" as it belongs to a baby or fetus equal or greater to she-who-is-pregnant is a formulation of value that silences and sabotages women." (216).

In the brief Part IV, Scuro addresses griefwork and "how to get over what you cannot get over." Her goal here is to politicize griefwork and situate her own story in the larger project of making space for societal griefwork, as well as to share the burden of grief –independent from childbearing! – among those who have been pregnant. Making space for grieving the postpartum experience means to expose the intersection of misogyny, racism and ableism, that renders women's lives and experiences invisible more effectively and define our shame and blame culture. Instead, Scuro calls for an understanding that all pregnancies end with expellation (which is a feminist ethicoexistential defense for griefwork), and that griefwork is neither women's work, nor should there be there a moral demand to "move on."

Scuro skillfully connects the personal experience of miscarriage with the macro-economic system and contemporary discourses on reproductive rights. She substantiates in very accessible ways her idea that pro-life, ableist, and neoliberal ideologies enhance each other with the expectation of birth as result of pregnant embodiment. This erases the experience of miscarriage and undermines the solidarity that arises out of the possibility of death and the postpartum experience that belongs to every pregnancy. Scuro is well aware of her "cis-white-het" subjectivity (and starts her graphic novel with this contextualization), yet does not specifically mention experiences of transgender parenthood in her theoretical explorations. We might add that solidarity may well stretch to include pregnant persons who do not identify as women (thus my * in the first paragraph of this review in women*).

In conclusion, I recommend the book for everyone. It is particularly attractive for teaching, as Scuro runs a Facebook site https://www.facebook.com/pregnancydoesnotequal/, on which she posts articles, news clippings and other material related to the book and opens a space for interaction. As a scholar, teacher, and cis-woman who shares the experience of (aborted, miscarried, and healthy) pregnancies, I have gained insight, inspiration and joy from this work personally and academically.

The Balancing Act: Gendered Perspectives in Faculty Roles and Work Lives

Susan J. Bracken, Jeanie K. Allen, and Diane R. Dean, eds.
Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, 2006

REVIEWED BY KRISTIN MARSH

In *The Balancing Act: Gendered Perspectives in Faculty Roles and Work Lives*, editors Susan J. Bracken, Jeanie K. Allen, and Diane R. Dean bring together six very different studies of faculty life. As a collection, they offer evidence of the challenges facing women and men faculty as they navigate career and family within a high-demand professional context. This volume elucidates a basic contradiction: academe was not designed with the whole person in mind; rather, faculty work and family lives were long kept separate, rendering invisible the diverse needs of faculty. This may have worked well (theoretically) for a narrow swath of workers: white heterosexual men with non-employed wives maintaining the home and caring for children. Although white women and women and men of color have found increasing representation among the ranks of academic faculty, the rules of the game of academic success have remained largely the same. High stakes publishing expectations, rigid teaching responsibilities, and service obligations that grow as one's career progresses leave little time for family responsibilities, especially for (potential) mothers.

Each chapter in *The Balancing Act* presents meaningful findings reflecting rigorous research by reputable scholars. Mason, Goulden, and Wolfinger set a discouraging stage, establishing the stifling relationship between academic careers and family formation. Compared with men, women academics are less likely to consider children a viable option alongside career. And mothers are much less likely to choose an academic pathway. Embodying the contradiction between work and family, women see few models of work-life balance and know they will have to make a choice (one not facing their male counterparts). Questions the volume tackle include, if academe is incompatible with family, perhaps universities could change? And likewise, how might women and men faculty strategize to meet demands across work and family?

The second, individual-level, question is privileged in the volume. Colbeck challenges the zero-sum assumption that "time spent in paid work is necessarily time not devoted to personal or family activities" (34). She examines the extent to which faculty integrate or segment their roles, suggesting that an integrative approach (with more flexibility and permeabili-

ty between roles) can enhance balance and satisfaction. Creamer examines strategies of co-working couples, finding a prevalent early-career strategy of downplaying the extent of collaboration, in defense against free-riding assumptions. And Neuman, Terosky, and Schell explore strategies of learning among newly tenured faculty at research universities. The challenge is maintaining personally-fulfilling professional development while taking on new service and leadership responsibilities, and the authors delineate alternative approaches. Although these authors recognize that institutional structures shape an imperative for careful strategy at many levels, their studies nevertheless suggest that it is really up to individual faculty to find what works in their personal search for balance.

Other chapters address the university context more explicitly. Wolf-Wendel and Ward emphasize that different institution types have different expectations for faculty, thereby shaping the kinds of autonomy faculty have access to. The commonality, however, is that women faculty at all institution types struggle with balance. To the limited extent that universities offer accommodating policies, these policies are not well known and the onus is on individual faculty to arrange for classes to be covered, etc. The authors outline concrete steps universities could and should implement to provide climates that are more family friendly. Finally, Hart's chapter on the outcomes of campus climate studies at one large university examines the potential for consciousness raising and faculty-driven change efforts, highlighting the simultaneous need for faculty to stay vigilant collectively, as well as the limits of faculty unity if administrators lack the will to support change.

Implications for institutional reform inform this volume. Pay and promotional equity, daycare options, transparent leave policies, etc., are crucial. However, these accommodations usually exist alongside marginalizing assumptions about productivity. Quantifying and prioritizing publishing records over teaching, service, and leadership, ignore the fact that work itself is gendered. Women and men tend to teach and mentor differently, women and racial/ethnic minorities do more service work (particularly equity work), and students and administrators evaluate effectiveness through a male-privileging gendered lens. Recognizing these differences and re-evaluating what matters to universities, and what counts as productivity, could improve the sense of balance and job satisfactions for all faculty.

This collection was timely when published, and several chapters now represent larger contributions to the gender and academe literature (see, for example, Mason, et al; Ward and Wolf-Wendel). But the importance of *The Balancing Act* remains, as faculty continue to face difficult choices in combining a productive work life with personal goals; unfortunately, the issues we face appear timeless.

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Muslim Mothering: Global Histories, Theories, and Practices

Pappano, Margaret Aziza and Dana M. Olwan, eds.
Bradford, Ontario: Demeter Press, 2016

REVIEWED BY DANIELLE ROTH-JOHNSON

Within the current global context and throughout history, Muslim women have often been stereotyped as a silenced and monolithic group deprived of individual agency by religious strictures. Such representations often drastically oversimplify the wide-ranging and diverse situations of women in the contemporary Islamic diaspora. In order to provide a more accurate and complex account of their lives and religious views, more works written by Muslim women themselves are needed. To that end, Margaret Aziza Pappano and Dana M. Olwan's *Muslim Mothering: Local and Global Histories, Theories, and Practices* offers readers an interdisciplinary examination of the varied and complex ways Muslim mothers conceptualize and rework notions of Islamic motherhood in their daily lives. In their introduction to the edited volume, the authors say they assembled this edited collection to demonstrate "how Muslim mothers experience mothering" (3). Featuring a diverse group of contributors from around the globe tackling a wide range of topics, this collection of essays and academic studies endeavors to deconstruct stereotypes about Muslim women and mothers through works that showcase the multifaceted nature of their experiences and the challenges they face. To accomplish this task, the editors first endeavor to place the articles in their proper historical context in their introductory chapter, "Muslim Mothering: Between Sacred Texts and Contemporary Practices." In this essay, they begin by discussing the hallowed status of mothers in Islamic sacred texts and about

how the advent of Islam improved the situation of women and mothers on the Arabian Peninsula. At the same time, however, they also acknowledge that the actual lives of contemporary Muslim mothers are often at odds with long-established sacred models. Pointing out that almost all women still live in male-dominant cultures, they stress that many of the cultural conventions to which current-day Muslims adhere do not necessarily stem from Islamic principles, but from patriarchal practices that existed in those cultures before the arrival of Islam.

In order to more fully document the variety of circumstances of women in the Muslim diaspora while simultaneously focusing on issues that they face in common, the editors chose to divide the volume into five sections with the following themes: (1) Muslim mothering in the midst of war and violence, (2) the manifold ways kinship is being reconstructed in contemporary societies, (3) Muslim mothering in the diaspora, (4) reproduction and maternity in Muslim societies, and (5) a look at Muslim mothering as a form of academic inquiry.

Given the constant conflict that plagues the modern Middle East and the regions surrounding the area, the first section of the book brings together a collection of writings that focus on the challenges that Muslim mothers must face when it comes to protecting and caring for their children in contexts of war and militarization. In the first piece, "Empowered Muslim Mothering: Navigating War, Border Crossing and Activism in El-Haddad's Gaza Mom," for example, Nadine Sinno examines the experiences that Laila El-Haddad, a Palestinian journalist and activist, has described in her blog about her daily struggles as a mother trying to raise her son in the shadow of occupation. Sinno's article is followed by Nouf Bazaz's "'God as My Witness': Mothering and Militarization in Kashmir," which spotlights the hardships that Kashmiri mothers must bear when male family members disappear under suspicious circumstances and their reliance upon their religious faith as a survival strategy. Finally, in "Mourning Mothers in Iran: Narratives and Counter-Narratives of Grievability and Martyrdom," Rachel Fox reflects upon how mothers transform the private mourning of their lost children into public activism.

In the second part of the volume, the authors examine how concepts of kinship are being transformed by Muslim single mothers, adoptive mothers and co-mothers. To that end, in "Constructing Counter-Narratives of the 'Good' Muslim Mother in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Audrey Mouser Elegbede examines how Muslim mothers in the Malaysian capital are turning to Islam in search of what constitutes "good" mothering practices and as a source in their construction of arguments in favor of divorced mothers, who have generally been socially marginalized and stigmatized due to their marital status. The other two articles, "Between Blood and Milk, East and West: Muslim Adop-

tive Mothering in a Transnational Context" and "'Sister Mothers': Turkish American Muslim Mothers' and Grandmothers' Networks in Diaspora," analyze how women create and foster transnational kinship bonds between members of the religious community who are not related by biological ties.

The third section of the collection offers readers a glimpse into the challenges that Muslim mothers must confront in the diaspora, such as the complexities of nurturing a positive Muslim identity in their children as members of a minority within Islamophobic contexts. In these three pieces, the authors investigate how Muslim mothers are faring within such diverse locales as Canada (Ontario), Germany and the United States.

The studies in section four, "Reproduction and Maternity in Muslim Societies," center upon social and religious constructions of motherhood in Indonesia and their impacts upon expectations of ideal family size, the confinement practices of young Malay Muslim mothers and the impact of beliefs about maternity on the reproductive health of individuals in Muslim societies.

The volume closes with a reflection on why there is a need for a theoretical approach to the study of the intersections of Islam and motherhood. Through such scholarly research, Irene Oh believes that important insights may be gained concerning the current crises confronting the world and that more may be learned about the intersections of women, gender, and religious beliefs and practices. A timely and much-needed anthology, *Muslim Mothering* offers readers an excellent variety of perspectives on all of those intersections.

Mothering in Marginalized Contexts: Narratives of Women Who Mother in and through Domestic Violence

Caroline McDonald-Harker, Ph.D.
Bradford, Ontario: Demeter Press, 2016

REVIEWED BY DIANE L. SHOOS

Research on domestic violence and on motherhood-mothering as independent topics has grown considerably in recent decades. However, despite the fact that being a mother dramatically increases the likelihood that a woman will be abused (Mirlees-Black, 1999), few studies have addressed the confluence of these two experiences, and even fewer have done so from the perspectives of abused women themselves. *Mothering in Marginalized Contexts:*

Narratives of Women Who Mother in and through Domestic Violence by Caroline McDonald-Harker, Ph.D., is a welcome, important exception. Between May 2009 and June 2011, McDonald-Harker conducted face-to-face interviews with twenty-nine abused women who were living in nine different shelters in and around Calgary and Alberta, Canada; half of these women are Aboriginal. She examines the subjective narratives of these "experiential experts" (54) in terms of three main areas of inquiry: how they understand and perceive the expectations that mothers are held to and evaluated by, as articulated in Andrea O'Reilly's categories of "intensive mothering" (2006); how they employ, negotiate, and resist various "good" and "bad" mothering discourses as they construct their mothering identities; and—in a direct response to the call for intersectional research on motherhood and on domestic violence by feminist scholars such as Patricia Hill Collins (1994) and Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991)—how they think that gender, race, and social class impact how they are seen as mothers. What is most impressive and noteworthy about McDonald-Harker's book is the way that it not only incorporates but foregrounds the voices of abused mothers, reminding us of the human cost of domestic violence but also demonstrating the resilience of victim/survivors, thereby taking a step toward better understanding the individual, diverse circumstances and, ultimately, the agency of these women.

Taking a feminist, sociological perspective, McDonald-Harker's book carefully contextualizes the complex issues it investigates and explores their implications. An early chapter summarizes the major insights of the limited research on mothering in domestic violence as well as its gaps, particularly in terms of its strong reliance on quantitative methods such as standardized questionnaires and its failure to directly examine the impact of ideologies of mothering as well as sociocultural factors on women's own perspectives. The core of the book is the presentation of abused mothers' narratives in their own words about these little-examined issues, and it is here that McDonald-Harker's study makes its greatest contribution. Speaking of the tendency to view abused women as "bad mothers," one of the subjects, Coreen, an Aboriginal single mother of five children, comments, "In a way, I think they think that abused mothers are really weak and can't stand up for themselves, you know, can't say what they need. But they can and they do! But nobody listens! . . . they were giving me help in a way I didn't need help [laughs], you know like what meals to feed my kids. Like hello, I need clothes here! I don't need you to tell me how to cook for my kids" (147). A twenty-seven-year-old Native woman of seven children, Makayla, relays how her experience of racism in a women's shelter affected her sense of self and her actions: "So my point of view is that Native women are looked down upon. Like right away if we're abused, boom, well got to get the kids out of there. But if it's a white person

they're trying to work with them, you know what I mean? So I got scared and afraid to go to shelters" (227).

As these testimonies suggest, McDonald-Harker's study yields significant and, in some cases, unexpected findings. She concludes that the majority of the abused mothers in the study expressed, challenged, and resisted the constraining and oppressive ideology of intensive mothering. She further observes that these women constructed empowering identities for themselves as mothers that point to and question the cultural construction of normative notions of motherhood. Most surprisingly in terms of biases about single parenthood, race, and social class, abused mothers who were single, poor, and non-white were more likely to resist this ideology in constructing their own, positive mothering identities. Coreen comments, "Being abused has affected me a lot. Like really not negative! I think I feel strong as a mother cuz I've made it through you know, and my kids are okay, and they're all safe now…." (239). Despite its relatively small number of subjects, McDonald-Harker's insightful study provides a pointed corrective to a culture of mother- and victim-blaming and to the silencing of the individual voices of abused mothers, voices which challenge our assumptions, condescension, and complacency.

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Contributor Notes

Rola (Hamed) Abu Zeid-O'Neill is a PhD student in the Department of Sociology at University College Cork (UCC), Ireland. She is a ccordinator of diploma in Women's Studies as well as the diploma in Development and Global Human Rights Studies at ACE-UCC. Rola is a political and feminist sociologist with interests in memory, ethnicity, gender, conflict, and immigrant communities. Rola has presented and taught several courses and lectures within these fields, including the Middle East, Modern Asia, and Islam.

Janet Arach is co-founder of the community-based organization Watye Ki Gen (We Have Hope) in northern Uganda. Her organization's members are women formerly abducted and held in Lord Resistance Army's captivity. They work to advance the social and economic rights and welfare of children born in captivity.

Linn Baran is a graduate of York University with degrees in English Literature and Women's Studies. Her maternal activism, frontline work, and community research continues to support the empowerment and social inclusion of diverse mothers with young children in service provisions and family supports. Her chapter entitled "Mother Outlaws: Building Communities of Empowered Feminist Mothers in the Motherhood" is included in the collection *The 21st Century Motherhood Movement* (Demeter Press, 2011). She is co-editor of the forthcoming Demeter Press collection entitled *Monstrous Mothers*: *Troubling Tropes*.

Rachel Epp Buller is a feminist printmaker art historian and mother of three

whose art and scholarship often speak to these intersections. Her prints and books have been exhibited in solo and group shows around the United States, and she speaks and publishes widely on the maternal body in contemporary art. She is a board member of the National Women's Caucus for Art, a regional coordinator of The Feminist Art Project, and current Associate Professor of Visual Arts and Design at Bethel College (U.S.).

Myriam Denov is a full professor at McGill University and holds the Canada Research Chair in youth, gender, and armed conflict. Her research interests lie in the areas of children and families affected by war, migration, and its intergenerational impact.

Joanne L. DeTore, Ph.D. is an Associate Professor of Humanities and Communication at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach. Her essays, critical articles, and poetry have been published in numerous journals and books including *Reed Magazine*, where she was a finalist for the 2016 Edwin Markham Poetry Prize. She is the mother of two children.

Sarah Epstein, PhD is a feminist mother and lecturer in social work at Deakin University, Geelong, Australia. Her current research interests focus on the intersections between feminism and masculinity, critical feminist social work pedagogy, and maternal ethics of care in social work practice with mothers.

Kryn Freehling-Burton is a senior instructor in the women, gender, and sexuality studies program at Oregon State University where she also coordinates the online major. She is a co-editor for Demeter's *Performing Motherhood: Artistic, Activist, and Everyday Enactments* (2014) and *Women's Lives Around the World: A Global Encyclopedia* (ABC-CLIO 2018). Kryn and her partner have three mostly-grown children and one in high school.

Jill Goad is an assistant professor of English at Shorter University. She has published articles and chapters on Toni Morrison and Natasha Trethewey. Her research interests are reconfiguring psychoanalytic depictions of the mother and exploring the corporeal power of the mother in southern American literature

Amber Green holds a MSW from McGill University, where she worked on a research project led by Dr. Myriam Denov on children born of wartime sexual violence. She currently works as a clinical therapist in child and adolescent mental health in Nova Scotia, Canada.

Fiona Joy Green is a feminist mother and professor of women's and gender studies at the University of Winnipeg. She's interested in the agency of children and mothers, in gender socialization and gender identity, and in the ability of matroreform and feminist motherlines to contribute to feminist theorizing and praxis. She's the author of *Practicing Feminist Mothering* (Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2011) and is co-editor of three books addressing feminist parenting and maternal pedagogies published by Demeter Press.

Michelle Hughes Miller is an associate professor in women's and gender studies at the University of South Florida. As a sociologist specializing in gender and justice, she researches discursive constructions of motherhood, systemic responses to violence against women, and diversity within STEM.

Daniela Jauk is an educator, researcher, and activist in local and transnational feminist communities in Austria and the U.S. She received her PhD in Sociology as a Fulbright student at the University of Akron, Ohio, in 2013. Her research and teaching focuses on feminist strategies of resistance, transnational feminisms, and qualitative methods.

Atim Angela Lakor is the founder of Watye Ki Gen (We Have Hope), a Ugandan organization whose members are formerly abducted women held in the bush, and who work for the rights and the welfare of children born in captivity.

Therese Madden is an associate professor at Notre Dame de Namur University, located near San Francisco, California. The caregiver challenges of many of her nontraditionally aged students inspired her to share her family crisis and her subsequent research about the challenges and importance of self-care.

Kelsey Marr is a graduate student of medical anthropology and a graduate teaching fellow at the University of Saskatchewan. Her research interests include (in)fertility, assisted reproductive technologies (ARTs), assemblage theory, and student culture. She is currently examining the extent to which ARTs factor into imagined reproductive futures.

Kristin Marsh is program director of women's and gender studies and associate professor of sociology at the University of Mary Washington, where she teaches courses on gender and work, sociological theory, stratification, and aging and society. Her current research examines the intersection of gender, motherhood, and age in academe. Kristin earned her PhD from Emory University in 2001.

Andrea O'Reilly, PhD, is professor in the School of Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies at York University. O'Reilly is founder and director of the Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement, founder and editor-in-chief of the *Journal of the Motherhood Initiative*, and founder and publisher of Demeter Press. She is editor or author of twenty-one books, including *Matricentric Feminism: Theory, Activism, and Practice* (2016).

Danielle Roth-Johnson is currently assistant professor-in-residence in gender and sexuality studies in the Department of Interdisciplinary, Gender, and Ethnic Studies at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Her current work focuses on public and environmental policies on women's health and women's activism in environmental justice movements around the world.

Jane Satterfield is a graduate of the Iowa Writers Workshop and the recipient of awards in poetry from the National Endowment for the Arts, Bellingham Review, Ledbury Poetry Festival, Mslexia, and more. Her books are *Her Familiars, Assignation at Vanishing Point, Shepherdess with an Automatic,* and *Apocalypse Mix*, winner of the 2016 Autumn House Poetry Prize, as well as *Daughters of Empire: A Memoir of a Year in Britain and Beyond*. She is married to poet Ned Balbo and lives in Baltimore where she teaches at Loyola University Maryland

Josephine L. Savarese is an associate professor in criminology and criminal justice at St. Thomas University in Fredericton, New Brunswick. She wrote about the murder of Hilary Bonnell in "Analyzing Erasures and Resistance Involving Indigenous Women in New Brunswick, Canada"—a chapter in a collection edited by Memee Lavell Harvard and Jennifer Brant titled *Forever Loved: Exposing the Hidden Crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in Canada* (Demeter Press, 2015).

Diane Shoos is associate professor of visual studies in the Humanities Department at Michigan Technological University where she teaches and publishes on film, feminism, and visual media. She is the author of *Domestic Violence in Hollywood Film: Gaslighting* (Palgrave 2017).

Ann Marie A. Short teaches English, gender and women's studies, and intercultural studies at Saint Mary's College in Notre Dame, Indiana. Her scholarship focuses on Anglophone, postcolonial, and immigrant women writers and motherhood studies, and her research has appeared in *Literature Compass*; *MELUS: The Society for the Study of Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States*; and *Anthurium: A Caribbean Studies Journal*. Later this year, her edit-

ed collection, *Breastfeeding and Culture: Discourses and Representation,* will be published by Demeter Press.

Deidra Somerville is currently a PhD candidate in the community psychology program at National-Louis University. She actively pursues theory and practice around mother's empowerment strategies, whether tied to informal network practices, community organizing and activism, or resource redistribution. Her dissertation is a phenomenological study of black maternal activism in Chicago.

Tatjana Takševa is associate professor of English language and literature and women and gender studies at Saint Mary's University, Halifax, Canada. She has published extensively in the area of motherhood studies, the ideology of intensive mothering, mother love and maternal ambivalence, and mothering children born of rape. She is the co-editor, with Arlene Sgoutas, of *Mothers under Fire: Mothering in Conflict Areas* (Demeter Press, 2015).

Mariana Thomas is a PhD candidate and lecturer in contemporary women's writing at the University of Southampton, UK. Her research is concerned with the contemporary mothering experience in the woman writer's narrative, focusing on their approach to subjectivity, time, and the mother-daughter dynamic.

Jessica Spring Weappa is an educator, mythologist, and narrative practitioner with a background in the arts, integral education, and women's spirituality. She holds a master's degree in human development and is currently a graduate level teaching assistant and doctoral candidate at California Institute of Integral Studies in the School of Consciousness and Transformation.

Patricia Jabbeh Wesley is a Liberian civil war survivor who immigrated to the United States with her family during the fourteen year Liberian civil war. She is the author of five books of poetry: *When the Wanderers Come Home* (2016), *Where the Road Turns* (2010), *The River is Rising* (2007), *Becoming Ebony*, (2003) and *Before the Palm Could Bloom: Poems of Africa* (1998). She is also the author of a children's book, *In Monrovia, the River Visits the Sea* (2012). Her poem, "One Day: Love Song for Divorced Women" was selected by U.S. Poet Laureate, Ted Kooser, as an *American Life in Poetry* June 13, 2011 featured poem. Patricia has won several awards and grants, including a 2016 WISE Women Award from Blair County, Pennsylvania, 2011 President's Award from the Blair County NAACP, the 2010 Liberian Award for her poetry and her mentorship of young Liberians in the Diaspora, a Penn State University

AESEDA Collaborative Grant for her research on Liberian Women's Trauma stories from the Civil War, a 2002 *Crab Orchard* Award for her second book of poems, a World Bank Fellowship, among others. Her poems have been nominated twice for the Pushcart Awards. Her individual poems and memoir articles have been anthologized and published in literary magazines in the U.S., in South America, Africa and Europe, and her work has been translated in Italian, Spanish, and Finnish. She is an associate professor of English and Creative Writing at Penn State University.

Bianca Williams is currently a PhD candidate in gender, sexuality, and culture at the Australian National University. She has over a decade's experience in the community sector and has long held an interest in the community arts. She has project managed and has contributed to a number of women's community art projects.

CALL FOR PAPERS

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MOTHERS, MOTHERING, HEALTH, AND WELL-BEING: PHYSICAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL, SOCIAL, SPIRITUAL, CULTURAL, AND EVIRONMENTAL APRIL 12-14, 2019

YORK UNIVERSITY, TORONTO, ON

This conference examines the ethical, political, sociocultural, economic, historical, racial, spiritual, physical, psychological, and environmental dimensions of maternal health to consider wide and diverse topics and perspectives including the following: the ways in which culturally dominant ideologies about motherhood and health are taught or challenged; ways in which various paradigms of maternal thinking, being, and acting are constructed, negotiated, embedded, enacted, or resisted in specific health and social situations; ways the medical system can empower or disempower mothers; and the maternal ways of engaging in activism and advocacy work on maternal health from cross-cultural perspectives and on behalf of marginalized and oppressed mothers, childless women, and children. Moreover, the conference will explore the perceptions, patterns, implications, and intersections of maternal health and wellbeing across a wide range of perspectives, themes, and topics.

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CALL FOR PAPERS

The editorial board is seeking submissions for Vol. 10.1
Journal of the Motherhood Initiative for
Research and Community Involvement (JMI)
This issue will be published in spring/summer 2019
MATRICENTRIC FEMINISM: THEORY, ACTIVISM, POLITICS, PRACTICE AND REPRESENTATION

We welcome submissions from scholars, students, activists, artists, writers and community workers and mothers. We are open to a variety of types of submissions including academic papers from all disciplines and creative submissions and alternative presentations including creative writing and art. Community based and participatory/action research is encouraged.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES:
Articles should be 15-18 pages (3750 words) including references. All should be in MLA style, WordPerfect or Word and IBM compatible.

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DEMETER PRESS
Forthcoming

February 2019

Stories We Live and Grow By: (Re)Telling Our Experiences as Muslim Mothers and Daughters

Edited by Muna Saleh

February 2019
330 pages $34.95
ISBN 978-1-77258-175-1

Interweaving my experiences as a Canadian Muslim woman, mother, (grand)daughter, educator, and scholar throughout this work, I write about living and narratively inquiring (Clandinin and Connelly, Narrative Inquiry; Clandinin) alongside three Muslim mothers and daughters during our daughters' transition into adolescence. I was interested in mother-and-daughter experiences during this time of life transition because my eldest daughter, Malak, was in the midst of transitioning into adolescence as I embarked upon my doctoral research. I had many wonders about Malak's experiences, my experiences as a mother, and the experiences of other Muslim daughters and mothers in the midst of similar life transitions. I wondered about how dominant narratives from within and across Muslim and other communities in Canada shape our lives and experiences. For, while we are often storied as victims of various oppressions in media, literature, and elsewhere, little is known about our diverse experiences—particularly the experiences of Muslim mothers and daughters composing our selves and lives alongside one another in familial places.

Alongside three mothers (Safaa, Ayesha, and Layla) and their daughters (Rayyan, Zahra, and Maya), I make visible many of the personal, familial, intergenerational, institutional, linguistic, cultural, temporal, faith-based/religious, and social narratives we live by, with, and in (Clandinin). Together, in over two years of being in relation, we inquired into many of the stories that have been planted in us, the stories we are planting in ourselves and others, and the stories we are relationally shaping and reshaping as Muslim mothers and daughters. Reverberating across the stories we shared and inquired into are our experiences of living in the midst of, and in relation to, multiple arrogant perceptions (Lugones) and single stories (Adichie) from within and across Muslim and other communities in Canada. However, sharing, living, and inquiring into these stories alongside one another foregrounded the many ways we live stories of relational resistance (Saleh) to these unhealthy narratives. Within our chosen communities (Nelson), we speak back to these narratives and illuminate the many ways we are continually (re)composing our selves and our lives with imagination and improvisation (Bateson, Composing a life) … and always in relation (Huber).

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DEMETER PRESS
Forthcoming

January 2019

Mothers Without Their Children

Edited by Charlotte Beyer and Andrea Robertson

January 2019
307 pages $34.95
ISBN 978-1-77258-173-7

Conceiving of and representing mothers without their children seems so paradoxical as to be almost impossible. How can we define a mother in the absence of her child? This compelling volume explores these and other questions from a range of interdisciplinary perspectives, examining experiences, representations, creative manifestations, and embodiments of mothers without their children. In her 1997 book, entitled *Mother Without Child: Contemporary Fiction and the Crisis of Motherhood*, the critic Elaine Tuttle Hansen urged for critical and feminist engagement with what she described as 'the borders of motherhood and the women who really live there, neither fully inside nor fully outside some recognizable "family unit", and often exiles from their children'. This book extends and expands this important enquiry, looking at maternal experience and mothering on the borders of motherhood in different historical and cultural contexts, thereby opening up the way in which we imagine and represent mothers without their children to reassessment and revision, and encouraging further dialogue about what it might mean to mother on the borders of motherhood.

Charlotte Beyer is Senior Lecturer in English Studies at the University of Gloucestershire, UK. Her background is in Women's Studies, and she has a long-standing interest in motherhood and maternal studies. Charlotte has published widely on crime fiction and contemporary literature. Her edited monograph Teaching Crime Fiction will be published in summer 2018. Charlotte's co-edited monograph for Demeter Press, *Travellin' Mama: Mothers, Mothering and Travel* with Janet MacLennan, Dorsía Smith Silva, and Marjorie Tesser will be published in spring 2019. She is on the Editorial Boards for the journals Feminist Encounters, The New Americanist, and American, British and Canadian Studies, and is Area Editor for The Literary Encyclopedia (post-1945 crime fiction).

Andrea Robertson, RM, MHSc: I have been a Registered Midwife in Ontario, Canada since 2003 and member of faculty in the Midwifery Education Program at Ryerson University since 2010. My path to midwifery includes frontline work in shelters and services for women experiencing past or current violence, housing instability, and mental health issues. Along with close colleagues, I am committed to improving access to midwifery for populations who typically experience marginalization. I am grateful for the unrelenting support of my partner and children, and to each person who has included me in their pregnancy and birth experiences.

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DEMETER PRESS
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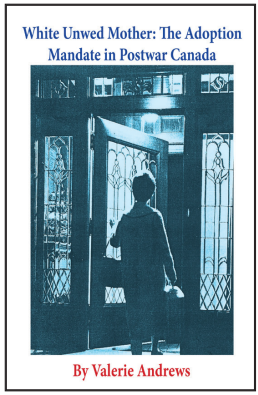
November 2018

White Unwed Mother: The Adoption Mandate in Postwar Canada

By Valerie Andrews



November 2018
307 pages $34.95
ISBN 978-1-77258-172-0

For the majority of "unwed mothers" in postwar Canada, having a child "out-of-wedlock" invariably meant being subject to the adoption mandate. Andrews describes the mandate as a process of interrelated institutional power systems which, together with socio-cultural norms, ideals of gender heteronormativity, and emerging sociological and psychoanalytic theories, created historically unique conditions in the post WWII decades wherein the white unmarried mother was systematically separated from her baby by means of adoption. Postwar elements that came together as a kind of "perfect storm" created an unprecedented locus in history wherein unmarried mothers surrendered their babies for adoption in the hundreds of thousands in Australia, New Zealand, the UK, Canada and the United States.

This volume uncovers and substantiates evidence of the mandate in Canada, interrogates social work policies and practices, revisits the semi-incarceral "homes for unwed mothers", and quantifies the mandate through an extensive review of provincial reports; ultimately finding that approximately 300,000 unmarried mothers in Canada were impacted by illegal and unethical adoption practices, human rights abuses, and violence against the maternal body.

Valerie Andrews is an adoption activist, a Masters graduate from York University in Gender, Feminist and Women's Studies, and the Executive Director of Origins Canada. Some of Valerie's works include The Language of Adoption, Crimes Against the Unmarried Mother, Sales and Marketing in Modern Domestic Adoption, #Flip the Script on Teen Mothers, Motherhood Denied: Canada's Maternity Homes, and Scripting/Disrupting "Birthmother" Identities.

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DEMETER PRESS
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November 2018

Heavy Burdens: Stories of Motherhood and Fatness

Edited by Judy Verseghy and Sam Abel

November 2018
195 pages $29.95
ISBN 978-1-77258-174-4

Heavy Burdens: Stories of Motherhood and Fatness seeks to address the systemic ways in which the moral panic around "obesity" impacts fat mothers and fat children. Taking a life-course approach, the book begins with analyses of the ways in which fatphobia is enacted on pregnant (or even not-yet-pregnant) women, whose bodies immediately become viewed as objects warranting external control by not only medical professionals, but family members, and even passers-by. The story unfolds as adults recount childhood stories of growing up fat, or growing up in fear of being fat, and how their mothers' relationships with their own bodies and attempted weight-loss experiences shaped how food, exercise, and body management were approached in their homes in sometimes harmful ways. Finally, the book concludes with stories of women who have since become mothers, examining the ways in which having their own children altered their views on their own bodies and their perceptions of their mothers' actions, and working to find fat-friendly futures via their own parenting (or grand-parenting) techniques.

This book contains the artwork, stories, and analyses of nearly 20 contributors, all of whom seek to change the ways in which fatness is perceived, experienced, and vilified. It is the editors' hope that these works will compel readers to reconsider their negative views on fatness and to retain softness toward every mother and child who are simply fighting to exist in the face of fatphobia.

"*Heavy Burdens* takes up the important discussion of fat and motherhood by blending both scholarly and personal analyses. This collection looks both "up" at mothers (from a child's view) and "down" from motherhood, complicating ideas about motherhood, responsibility, and individuality through the rocky terrain of weight stigma."
–Dr. May Friedman, Associate Professor, School of Social Work, Ryerson University

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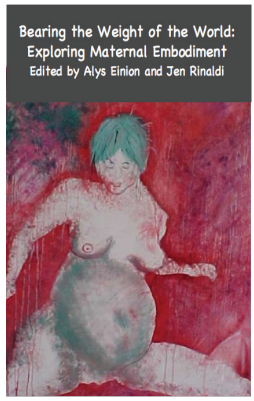
DEMETER PRESS
Forthcoming

October 2018
Bearing the Weight of the World: Exploring Maternal Embodiment
Edited by Alys Einion and Jen Rinaldi



October 2018
285 pages $34.95
ISBN 978-1-77258-171-3

The maternal body is a site of contested dynamics of power, identity, experience, autonomy, occupation, and control. Representations of the maternal body can mis/represent the childbearing and mothering form variously, often as monstrous, idealized, limited, scrutinized, or occupied, whilst dominant discourses limit motherhood through social devaluation. The maternal body has long been a hypervisible artifact: at once bracketed out in the interest of elevating the contributions of sperm-carriers or fetal status; and regarded with hostility and suspicion as out of control, such arguments being. deployed to justify surveillance mechanisms, medical scrutiny, and expectation of self-discipline.

This volume helps to develop a more critical understanding of what it means to be an embodied woman, an embodied mother. The materiality of female experience, and its centrality to family and social life, remains too often viewed as a 'fringe' subject, the province of feminists, activists, hysterical women. For too long, women have been subject to 'expert' advice, guidance, censure and control. We are at risk of being commodified and diminished, having our bodily realities reduced to mechanistic functions and our lived experience disregarded. From art to medical surveillance, from genetics to radioactivity, goddess to breastfeeding, poetry to indigenous community, dance to body size; the critical eye of the academic and the lived experience of the mother bring into being in this work a body of understanding, of expression, of knowledge and the power and authority of the lived experience, through and about the embodied mother. This critical-creative work encompasses new insights, new research and redeveloped perspectives which combine the personal with the pervasive and point to new meaning-making in critical motherhood studies via the medium of the maternal body.

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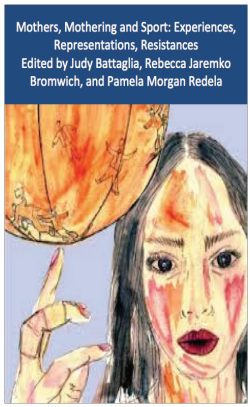
DEMETER PRESS
Forthcoming

September 2018

Mothers, Mothering and Sport: Experiences, Representations, Resistances

Edited by Judy Battaglia, Rebecca Jaremko Bromwich, and Pamela Morgan Redela



September 2018
172 pages $29.95
ISBN 978-1-77258-170-6

Mothers and mothering have been a longtime focus of research and study in various academic disciplines, and common topics of interest in mainstream press and popular culture, yet the experiences of mothers and mothering in the area of sport have been less explored. This innovative, interdisciplinary collection provides a space for exploration of the complex dimensions of intersections between mothers, mothering, and sport, as athletes, players, participants, parents and discursive figures. Topics discussed are wide-ranging, from motherwork in sport, mothers as athletes, the athlete mother in sports, representations and expectations of motherhood and health, legal regulation of sports and parenting, as well as sexuality and gender in sports and gaming.

Mothers, Mothering, and Sport introduces a necessary discourse of the relationship between motherhood and sports. The multigenerational voices and experiences dismantle the heteronormative and patriarchal misconceptions and myths of what it means to be female in the sports community, launching nuanced and intersectional areas of notable discussion.
–Elizabeth Megrabyan, Media strategist and writer with works focused in intersectional feminism, body politics, and social justice. Master of Communication Management, University of Southern California

"There is no other text like it. The articles provide watershed feminist theorizing about the process and practices of mothering athletes from intersectional feminist perspectives from all over the world. There are no other anthologies that I know of that critique the world of sports for children with a focus on gender from a mother's point of view or a theoretically grounding in intersectional feminism. The chapters in this book challenge cissexism, interphobia, racism, classism, hegemonic feminism, and mother blame. These critiques turn the heteronormative, masculinist, cisgender world of competitive sports on its head.

The authors approach the world of youth sports teams and individual sports from a myriad of voices—relational voices, embodied voices, voices of mothers, and mothers who coach. They challenge and resist masculinist and misogynist views of sports."
-Paige P. Edley, Ph.D., Communication Studies Professor at Loyola Marymount University

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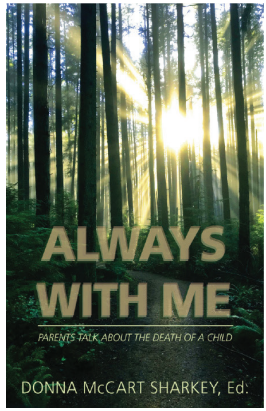
August 2018
Always With Me: Parents Talk About the Death of a Child
Edited by Donna McCart Sharkey



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250 pages $29.95
ISBN 978-1-77258-169-0

How does a parent cope after the death of a child? Each essay in *Always With Me: Parents Talk About the Death of a Child* reveals the experiences of parents who have lived through the devastation and upheaval of their child's death. Parents describe the maelstrom they face in their inner landscapes, coping strategies, and realigned place in the world. The writers in this collection of stories take on such topics as shock and isolation, despair, guilt, and how they attempt to make sense of their shattered lives. They offer insights into how their grief and loss are worked through, and why certain personal connections are severed, others strengthened. Importantly, they describe how, with lives altered indelibly, they try to press forward to find a new place in the world.

For readers who have lost a child, this book will speak to many aspects of their experience. For other readers trying to understand this experience, this book will encourage compassion and an open perspective. Readers will admire the courage of those who have written their stories.

"Despite my longstanding work with death and dying, I was deeply moved by the immediacy of this book's stories and the candour of the writing. Between its pages, I have found new insights and food for thought on the nature of loss, grief and hope. These heartfelt testimonies, so different and yet so representative of what it means to be human, provide as close an understanding of grieving as can be gained outside first-hand experience. One by one, these stories change us for the better. As a health professional and a member of my community, I now feel closer to my fellow humans and more skilled to be there for them in times of profound pain. After the last word was read and the last page was turned, I was left with a deep sense of compassion and gratitude for those who had so generously shared their journey. True to its title, this book will always be with me."
—Rachel Thibeault, Ph.D. FCAOT, O.C., Sisyphus Resilience Consulting

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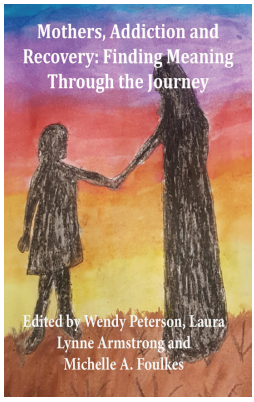
DEMETER PRESS
Forthcoming

July 2018

Mothers, Addiction and Recovery: Finding Meaning Through the Journey

Edited by Wendy Peterson, Laura Lynne Armstrong and Michelle A. Foulkes



July 2018
320 pages $34.95
ISBN 978-1-77258-168-3

This anthology is a collection of personal accounts and research exploring women's experiences of mothering in the context of addiction and various approaches to treatment and recovery. Individual chapters focus on a variety of addictions during pregnancy or mothering including misuse of substances, food and smartphones. Part I focuses on women's lived experiences of mothering through their own or their adolescents' addiction and recovery. The chapters in part II describe various approaches to promote recovery. A central theme of the book is the meaning of women's maternal identity as key to recovery.

"This book addresses the topic of motherhood and addiction and clearly articulates that there are many different roads to recovery. The inclusion of lived experience is important as well as the need for non punitive approaches and access to programs where both women and their infants/children my attend. This would be a valuable book for anyone considering working in the field of addictions as childbearing women will make up at least half their practice."
—Sarah Payne, Retired, Senior Practice Leader, Perinatal Addictions, BC Women's Hospital

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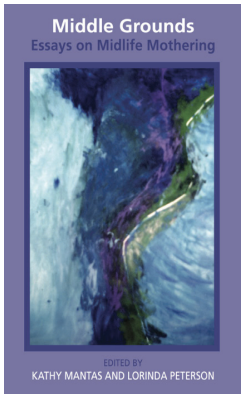
June 2018

Middle Grounds: Essays on Midlife Mothering
Edited by Kathy Mantas and Lorinda Peterson



June 2018
284 pages $34.95
ISBN 978-1-77258-159-1

Although motherhood writings are rich and emerging, the available literature on midlife motherhood and mothering is incomplete and often presented from a narrow perspective. Middle Grounds: Essays on Midlife Mothering fills this gap, widening the lens on a sociological phenomenon that is expanding in the twenty first century. It brings together scholarly and creative essays from diverse disciplines and cultural perspectives to reflect a more contemporary viewpoint — that motherhood and mothering is not limited by the stages of life or chronological age. It echoes distinct voices speaking about experiences that represent a global reality for midlife mothering practices. In essence, this collection demonstrates that everything can transpire in the middle period of a woman's life. Thus, in midlife, we encounter a broad range of mothering experiences and practices, and ways of representing and expressing them.

"This powerful collection of essays explores the timely and important topic of mothering and midlife. One of the strengths of this collection is the variety of voices and genres, including scholarly chapters, personal reflections, and graphic narratives. Women today face professional responsibilities and caregiving pressures from multiple directions, and the chapters of Middle Grounds: Essays on Midlife Mothering offer scholars important insights and reassuring narratives to those working to reconcile competing demands. As the contributors poignantly demonstrate, mothering from the middle poses challenges as well as exciting possibilities."
—Abigail L. Palko, co-editor of *Mothers, Mothering and Globalization* and *Cultural Representations of Breastfeeding*

"*Middle Grounds* opens up the possibilities that so much transpires in the middle of mothering between joy, suffering, tensions and limits. In reading these authors from diverse perspectives and forms, we are beckoned to conscious mothering, as their tales dance us between light, shadow, dark and colours. This is a book that calls forth a turning from scared to sacred, reaffirming the connection between the personal and universal. These authors caress the details with depth, nuance and wisdom and sing into the world; shifting midlife out of the doldrums of predictability. Packed with insights and wisdom, artfully crafted, I am beckoned to once again honour every moment."
—Celeste Snowber, author of *Embodied Inquiry and Wild Tourist*

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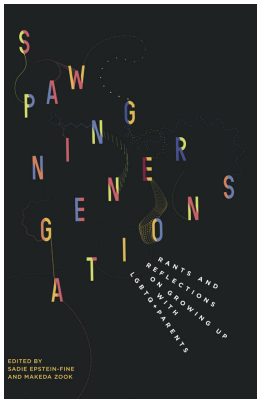
May 2018

Spawning Generations: Rants and Reflections on Growing Up with LGBTQ+ Parents

Edited by Sadie Epstein-Fine and Makeda Zook



May 2018
208 pages $29.95
ISBN 978-1-77258-163-8

Spawning Generations is a collection of stories by queerspawn (people with LGBTQ+ parents) spanning six decades, three continents, and five countries. Curated by queerspawn, this anthology is about carving out a space for queerspawn to tell their own stories. The contributors in this volume break away from the pressures to be perfect, the demands to be well adjusted, and the need to prove that they turned out "all right." These are queerspawn stories, airbrushed for no one, and told on their own terms.

Thoughtfully curated by co-editors who identify as queerspawn themselves, this astute anthology highlights stories by people with LGBTQ+ parents ready to share their experiences without glossing over the complexities of family, truth, community, and culture. Spawning Generations deftly demonstrates how authentic voices emerge when queerspawn have the opportunity to speak for themselves.
-Abigail Garner, Author of *Families Like Mine: Children of Gay Parents Tell It Like It Is*

This groundbreaking book provides a lovely and personal entry into the world of queerspawn. As both a queerspawn and queer parent, I felt real gratitude to these brave writers for sharing their stories—they provide insight into my own life as well as parenting guideposts.
-Shoshana Magnet, Associate Professor, Institute of Feminist and Gender Studies, University of Ottawa

Queerspawn answer, on their own terms, the litany of questions proposed to them by friends, co-workers, strangers, as well as anyone and everyone who have asked what it's like to be raised by queer parents. Sometimes these questions are asked in genuine and loving ways, but too often, they are voyeuristic, titillating, and upsetting. They don't want to be your circus sideshow, your poster child, or your role model. They have claimed the pages of *Spawning Generations* to share their complicated stories of playgrounds, potlucks, pride marches, secrets, family, dancing, desire, mourning, and an intimate view of the best and worst of queer culture.
-Karleen Pendleton Jiménez, Author of *How to Get a Girl Pregnant*

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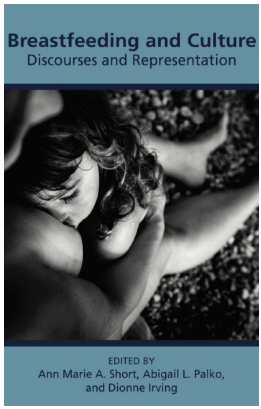
April 2018

Breastfeeding & Culture: Discourses and Representations

Edited by Ann Marie A. Short, Abigail L. Palko, and Dionne Irving



April 2018
308 pages $34.95
ISBN 978-1-77258-155-3

For myriad reasons, breastfeeding is a fraught issue among mothers in the U.S. and other industrialized nations, and breastfeeding advocacy in particular remains a source of contention for feminist scholars and activists. Breastfeeding raises many important concerns surrounding gendered embodiment, reproductive rights and autonomy, essentializing discourses and the struggle against biology as destiny, and public policies that have the potential to support or undermine women, and mothers in particular, in the workplace. The essays in this collection engage with the varied and complicated ways in which cultural attitudes about mothering and female sexuality inform the way people understand, embrace, reject, and talk about breastfeeding, as well as with the promises and limitations of feminist breastfeeding advocacy. They attend to diffuse discourses about and cultural representations of infant feeding, all the while utilizing feminist methodologies to interrogate essentializing ideologies that suggest that women's bodies are the "natural" choice for infant feeding. These interdisciplinary analyses, which include history, law, art history, literary studies, sociology, critical race studies, media studies, communication studies, and history, are meant to represent a broader conversation about how society understands infant feeding and maternal autonomy.

"*Breastfeeding & Culture: Discourses and Representations* reminds us that, although thought of as a "natural" activity, breastfeeding is a site of intense social interest and regulation with complex personal and political meanings and consequences. Indeed, these essays reveal that breastfeeding is caught up in discourses of biology, religion, philosophy, medicine, law, and social policy, and is represented in cultural expressions that span media forms and symbols. This volume responds to the need for interdisciplinary investigations into breastfeeding and contributes to feminist knowledges of gender, bodies, reproduction, care work, and motherhood."
—MARY THOMPSON, Coordinator, Women's and Gender Studies Program, James Madison University

"The topic of breastfeeding is shown in this book to both empower and out- rage mothers. The wide variety of disciplines represented in the volume make it perfect for both general and academic readers. Book clubs, mothers' clubs, undergraduate and graduate courses in women's studies, health education, communication and the like all would find it of value."
—HELEN M. STERK, Professor and Head of the Department of Communication, Western Kentucky University

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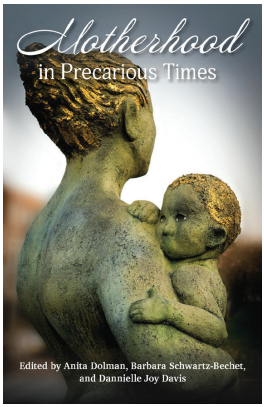
DEMETER PRESS

Recently Released

March 2018

Motherhood in Precarious Times
Edited by Anita Dolman, Barbara Schwartz-Bechet, and Dannielle Joy Davis



March 2018
178 pages $24.95
ISBN 978-1-77258-142-3

Parenting brings countless hopes and worries. But when external factors create fear and cast a shadow long and deep across motherhood, what happens to the act of mothering? Through personal and academic essays and poetry from Canada, the United States, and Palestine, these authors explore what it means to mother through times of struggle, uncertainty, danger, and change.

From doctors and professors, to writers and environmentalists, women of different ages, cultures, and backgrounds share their insights and perspectives on what it is to mother when life, society, and the very future of those you mother are precarious. Sharing ideas, best practices, models, research, and creative work, this book's writers explore the decisions made by mothers and potential mothers in the face of violence and trauma, environmental and political upheaval, career insecurity, uncertainty in a new country, discrimination, and other barriers.

"*Motherhood in Precarious Times* explores through reflections and academic analyses in poems, stories, and essays how environmental, socio-economic, political, and cultural and gendered threats shape mothering. The diverse voices combine powerfully in this vital anthology that will undoubtedly shape many debates from choosing Mother Earth vs. Motherhood, to fatherhood's role in emergent maternal independence."
– Sylvie Hill, Writer, Poet and University Continuing Education Professor of provocative literature courses on sexuality, relationships, and female "awakenings."

"What remarkable insights into mothering! Each author presents a different perspective using their own unique linguistic lens, including poetry, stories, and research. Through these different writing styles, characteristics of precarious times are woven into the book that definitely adds an extra element to exploring mothering. As a mother of two adult children, and a speech-language pathologist who has championed many mothers, I know this book will open up dialogue and keep up hope for all who read it."
– Carrie L. Knight, PhD, CCC-SLP, SLP (C)

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DEMETER PRESS
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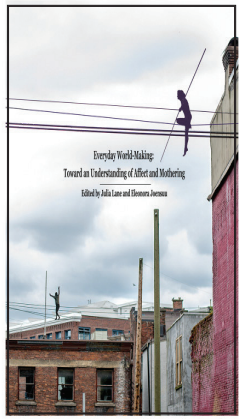
February 2018

Everyday World-Making: Toward an Understanding of Affect and Mothering

Editors: Julia Lane and Eleonora Joensuu



February 2018
274 pages $34.95
ISBN 978-1-77258-140-9

This cross-disciplinary collection considers the intersection of affect and mothering, with the aim of expanding both the experiential and theoretical frameworks that guide our understanding of mothering and of theories of affect. It brings together creative, reflective, poetic, and theoretical pieces to question, challenge, and re-conceptualize motherhood through the lens of affect, and affect through the lens of motherhood. The collection also aims to explore less examined mothering experiences such as failure, disgust, and ambivalence in order to challenge normative paradigms and narratives surrounding mothers and mothering. The authors in this collection demonstrate the theoretical and practical possibilities opened up by a simultaneous consideration of affect and mothering, thereby broadening our understanding of the complexities and nuances of the always changing experiences of affect and mothering.

'Maneouverability is a fresh, authentic and inclusive opening to a question we don't give enough space to: what can affect theory bring to our understanding of the mothering(s) we witness and experience in this moment? Helpfully, the book also seeks to answer an opposing question: what can the mothering(s) we know and see bring to an understanding of this vast and growing thing, affect theory? This will be an important reader for scholars and classes looking for a multi-genre collection of works exploring the relationship between affect and the maternal in its various forms. A pleasure to read, and an exciting opening to a much-needed conversation."
-Kim Mulder MA, BC teacher of Secondary English and Researcher with the Canada's Early Women Writers Database.

"This book provides a beautiful, visceral and expansive conceptualization of mothering, legitimizing the contradictions and messy everydayness that exists alongside the moments of pure wonder and revealing the interconnectedness of it all. The editors bravely expose the intimate realms of affect and mothering, a space that is theoretically far too underexplored. It is an empowering book that makes one feel like anything is possible. A book that actively defies westernized theories of the autonomous self, revealing instead the communal, relational, and always changing aspects of mothering."
-Melinda Vandenbeld Giles, Editor of *Mothering in the Age of Neoliberalism*

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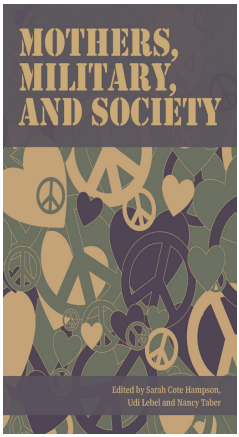
DEMETER

February 2018
Mothers, Military, and Society
Editors: Sarah Cote Hampson, Udi Lebel, and Nancy Taber



February 2018
268 pages $34.95
ISBN 978-1-77258-141-6

"Motherhood" and "military" are often viewed as dichotomous concepts, with the former symbolizing feminine ideals and expectations, and the latter suggesting masculine ideals and norms. Mothers, Military, and Society contributes to a growing body of research that disrupts this false dichotomy. This interdisciplinary and international volume explores the many ways in which mothers and the military converse, align, contest, and intersect in society. Through various chapters that include in-depth case studies, theoretical perspectives and personal narratives, this book offers insights into the complex relationship between motherhood and the military in ways that will engage both academic and non-academic readers alike.

"Mothers, Military, and Society contributes to limited scholarship on motherhood and war. This edited volume opens by usefully analyzing the various theoretical models offered to explain the relationship between motherhood and the military. This is an interdisciplinary collection containing empirical research (e.g. ethnographies and content analyses) and personal essays. The chapters cover mothers in the military, public discourse, and personal reflections on military service. Mothers, Military, and Society, is an insightful and often intimate examination of the relationship of motherhood to militarism."
– Wendy M. Christensen, Ph.D. Associate Professor of Sociology, William Paterson University

"This collection of essays brings new perspectives to military mothers from different countries like Pakistan and Israel as well as North America and different class experiences. Through personal experiences and their historical, cinematical and sociological analyses, real windows into real lives are opened. These windows provide fresh connections that make us go beyond mere militarization of motherhood discourses, helping us view motherhood as agency rather than a tool for those with power. Some of the articles are very dense this way and many are very easy to read, which can make the volume appealing to readers from different walks of life."
– Elif E. Akşit, Ankara University, Political Science and Gender Studies

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DEMETER PRESS
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December 2017
The Music of Motherhood: History, Healing, and Activism
Co-editors: M. Joy Rose, Lynda Ross, Jennifer Hartmann

December 2017
250 pages $34.95
ISBN 978-1-77258-134-8

Mothering and music are complex and universal events, the structure and function of each show remarkable variability across social domains and different cultures. Although mother studies and studies in music are each recognized as important areas of research, the blending of the two topics is a recent innovation. The chapters in this collection bring together artists and scholars in conversations about the multiple profound relationships that exist between music and mothering. The discussions are varied and exciting. Several of the chapters revolve around the challenges of mothering partnered with a musical career; others look at the affordances that music offers to mothers and children; and some of the chapters examine the ways in which music inspires social and political change, as well as acknowledging the rise of the mom rock phenomenon.

"*Music of Motherhood* is a fascinating read—both an engaging set of short stories and also an academic gem. M. Joy Rose, Lynda Ross, and Jennifer Hartmann have put together an intriguing set of chapters involving a range of methodological approaches and narrative that span the range of insightful research to interesting and moving narrative. The book could just as easily be assigned reading for a music course or example of research methods as it could be a gift for a friend, parent, or musician."
-A. S. Cohen Miller, PhD

Martha Joy Rose is a musician, concert promoter, museum founder, and fine artist. Her work has been published across blogs and academic journals and she has performed with her band Housewives On Prozac on Good Morning America, CNN, and the Oakland Art & Soul Festival to name a few. She is the NOW-NYC recipient of the Susan B. Anthony Award, her Mamapalooza Festival Series has been recognized as "Best in Girl-Power Events" in New York, and her music has appeared on the Billboard Top 100 Dance Charts. She founded the Museum of Motherhood in 2003, created the Motherhood Foundation 501c3 non-profit in 2005, saw it flourish in NYC from 2011-2014, and then pop up at several academic institutions.

Lynda Ross is a professor of women's and gender studies in the Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies at Athabasca University in Alberta. She graduated with a doctoral degree in psychology from the University of New Brunswick in 1998. Lynda's research interests focus on the social construction of theory and 'disorder,' attachment, and motherhood. Tying together these interests, her first book on the subject, *Interrogating Motherhood*, was published by the AU Press in December 2016.

Jennifer Hartmann is an ethnomusicologist, violist, and liturgical vocalist who holds a BMus (history and literature) from Dalhousie University and a MA (musicology) from McGill University. She is currently a PhD candidate at Memorial University of Newfoundland, where her primary research involves the cultural study of wedding string quartets, with a focus on the occupational folklife of gigging musicians. She has also conducted research on the use of bellydance as a coping strategy during pregnancy and labour, inspired by her own experience as an amateur dancer. She lives in Iowa with her husband and two young daughters.

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The Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement (MIRCI) (formerly the Association for Research on Mothering) is the first activist and scholarly organization devoted specifically to the topic of mothering-motherhood. MIRCI is an association for scholars, writers, activists, professionals, agencies, policy makers, educators, parents, and artists. 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 committed, in both membership and research, to the inclusion of *all* mothers: First Nations, immigrant and refugee mothers, working-class mothers, lesbian mothers, mothers with disabilities, mothers of colour, and mothers from other marginalized communities. We welcome memberships to MIRCI and submissions to the *Journal of the Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement* (formerly the *Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering)*, our biannual publication, from all individuals.

This special issue on "Motherlines" features sixteen articles, four book reviews, and a poetry folio featuring the work of Patricia Jabbeh Wesley. Articles include:

- **Empowering mothers and daughters through matroreform and feminist motherlines**
- **Motherhood studies and feminist theory: elisions and intersections**
- **Ancestral feminist healers in the origins of medicine**
- **Creating a feminist motherline for mother-daughter connection and empowerment**
- **Progressive Judaism and the Bar Mitzvah**
- **Re-imaginings: a mother's remembrance of her murdered daughter**
- **Mothering in the aftermath of forced marriage and wartime rape**
- **A new understanding of maternal self-care during family crisis**
- **Performing femininity at the intersections of motherhood, womanhood, and the academy**
- **And many more…**

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